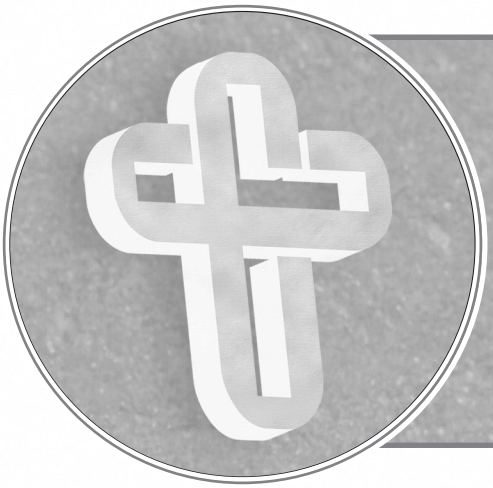


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL–JUNE 2024

focus on prophets

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Chapters 17 and 18 of *Prophets and Kings* are based on four stories from the life of Elisha. Each story offers worthwhile lessons to explore with your students. Consider focusing on the following themes that emerge from the stories:

1. *God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).*
   Just as it was in ancient days, so it is today. God needs modern-day Elijahs who will disciple and mentor young people in the ways of the Lord. Moreover, God needs Elishas who are open to God's leading and will forsake everything to follow His calling. Perhaps God is calling you to the ministry of Elijah, and this lesson will be the impetus you need to initiate a conversation with an Elisha in your youth group that you can mentor and disciple in spiritual life.
2. *Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).*
   Elisha's request for a double measure of the Spirit demonstrates a great deal of spiritual maturity on his part. Similar to the request that Solomon made for wisdom, God was eager to reward this longing to have an extra portion of the Spirit. You might focus on this story and use it to engage your students in a conversation about the role and work of the Holy Spirit.
3. *The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).*
   Ellen White shares this commentary: "The healing of the waters of Jericho was accomplished, not by any wisdom of man, but by the miraculous interposition of God. Those who had rebuilt the city were undeserving of the favor of Heaven" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 231). Building on this observation, you might choose to talk about God's healing grace. We are all undeserving, and yet it is freely given by a Father who recklessly, passionately loves each one of us.
4. *Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).*
   This is an interesting story that raises some sobering questions about respecting spiritual leaders. Dialogue with your class about what this story has to teach us today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See that just as God called Elijah and Elisha many years ago, He still calls young people today. *(Know)*
- Catch a glimpse of God's heart to pour out His Spirit upon every person today. *(Feel)*
- Have an opportunity to answer God's call. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17

"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. . . . (Acts 6:1-7; Rom.

12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

To whom do your kids look for guidance? Ask your class, "Whom do you admire or respect in society—either past or present? Why?" Make a list of the people whom your kids consider to be role models. What do the people on your list have in common? How can we know who the best role model is that we ought to follow? What do good role models do that makes them worthy of admiration or respect?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Emanuel Ninger's reputation as a counterfeiter is legendary. Known as "Jim the Penman," he drew, by hand, $50 and $100 legal tender notes. Relying on his naked eye, he worked for weeks at a time on each note, using pen, pencil, and brush with colored inks. Thus he gained a reputation as an extraordinary artist. In fact, his counterfeit notes circulated among the wealthy as works of art.

Prior to his capture, Ninger had been cranking out cash for two decades. Then on March 28, 1896, *The New York Times* reported that the Secret Service found $244.25 of "good and bad money" in Ninger's home. Because of his clumsy, farmer-like hands, Secret Service agents did not believe Ninger to be the culprit they were hunting. He simply didn't match the physical profile that forgers were supposed to fit. Even after Ninger confessed, they didn't believe him.

Now, Ninger's story had reached mythic proportions. During the raid, three oil paintings were discovered. Experts estimate that it took Ninger as long to create one counterfeit bill as it did to paint one painting. After his arrest Ninger's paintings sold for more than $5,000 each. In other words, he could have earned a lot more from his artwork than he did for his forgery.

Ninger's reign as King Counterfeiter came to an end when he entered the Cortlandt Street Saloon and bought a glass of Rhine wine with a $50 bill. Picking up the bill from the wet counter, the bartender noticed some of the ink on his fingers. The bartender called the police and Ninger was caught while boarding the Cortlandt Street Ferry. Ninger was convicted and served his time before disappearing into anonymity.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Emanuel Ninger is a case of a man with a rare talent that, if used properly, could have benefited society in significant ways. Instead, he employed his gifts illegitimately.

Similarly, you have unique talents. God has gifted you in ways unlike any other person on the planet. Perhaps you can sing. Maybe you can rebuild a carburetor. Or you might be the best babysitter in the state. I don't know what your gifts are, but I know you have special talent on loan from God. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha to a special work, so He is calling you.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following discussion starters to elaborate on each of the four stories.*

1. Elisha's Calling

How do you reconcile Elisha's request to return home before following Elijah with the following story in Matthew 8?

"When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'

"Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'

"Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'

"But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' " (Matthew 8:18-22, NIV).

2. Elisha's Request

Calvin Seereld once said, "You can have certain creaturely talents which are amazing, often. But if they are misdirected, not in praise to the Lord but in

praise to oneself, or in praise of reason, or in praise of the almighty dollar, then the sin has ruined the good creaturely gift God has given us." Contrast this quote with Elisha's plea for a double measure of the Holy Spirit. What gifts has God entrusted to you that must not be misdirected?

3. The Healing of the Waters

What stories in the Bible best illustrate for you the healing grace of God?

4. The Jeering of Elisha

Read Psalm 8 and discuss God's love for all people. How does understanding God's love for us inform the way we are called to love one another? Is showing love for someone the same as showing them respect? Explain. How should a Christian respond to someone who's bullying them, especially if that other person is not a Christian? (For resources on the topic of bullying, go to https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/bullying-and-cyberbullying/.)

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following insights to help bring the text alive.

1. 1 Kings 19:19

When Elijah cast his mantle over Elisha, this was a symbolic act to signify that the power and authority of Elijah, the retiring prophet, were being transferred to the younger prophet. This call of Elisha had made Elijah's mantle a symbol of the prophetic office; the 50 men who were sons of the prophets viewing from afar in 2 Kings 2:7, 8 shows us a symbol of God's power (see Exodus 17:9) upon His prophet.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Earning Respect

One lesson that emerges from the Bible story of the bears attacking the young people highlights the importance of showing respect to elders. It's one thing to teach students about the importance of showing respect. The truly successful teachers, however, understand that respect is earned. It is the natural and inevitable fruit for teachers who live exemplary lives of integrity. By investing yourself in the lives of students in significant ways outside of the Sabbath School class, you will be earning, not just demanding, their respect. Kathy Mellor, a teacher in North Kingstown, R.I., who was honored by President George W. Bush as teacher of the year, understands the importance of earning the respect of students. *The Washington Times* reports, "Mrs. Mellor urges teachers to reach beyond the classroom and understand their students' lives. She is known for setting high but realistic standards and for earning so much respect that students want her at their first Communions and backyard dances."[1]

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* Prophets and Kings. *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 speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

2. 2 Kings 2:9

The *KJV Life Application Study Bible, Third Edition* offers this commentary on Elisha's desire to receive a double portion of God's Spirit: "God granted Elisha's request because Elisha's motives were pure. His main goal was not to be better or more powerful than Elijah, but to accomplish more for God. If our motives are pure, we don't have to be afraid to ask great things from God. When we ask God for great power or ability, we need to examine our desires and get rid of any selfishness we find."

3. 2 Kings 2:19

The waters of Jericho used to be plentiful and pure but had become tainted and unhealthy. Consequently the plush valley was becoming unfruitful. It appeared as if the curse on the man who was to rebuild Jericho (see Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34) extended to blight the land as well.

4. 2 Kings 2:23, 24

The youths from Bethel, the center for idolatry in the northern kingdom, were probably threatening Elisha not to preach against their immorality as Elijah had done. They weren't just teasing Elisha about his baldness, but demonstrating blatant disrespect for Elisha's message and God's authority. They may also have been showing their disbelief in the chariot of fire that had taken Elijah. Notice that when Elisha cursed the young people, he didn't call out the bears himself. This was an act of judgment by God for their calloused hearts.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Gather the names of older men and women in your congregation who have led rich, meaningful lives for God. Then have your students write to some of these people, asking them to share the ways God has given their lives meaning and purpose. You may want to include a cover letter explaining the reason for the request. Then in the weeks that follow share their responses with the Sabbath School class.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

In closing, remind your young people that God longs to pour out an extra measure of His Spirit upon every one of them. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha so He is calling each of them. Challenge them to use their spiritual gifts to honor God and craft a life of purpose and significance. God can be trusted to equip every one of us to do His pleasure.

Close with this benediction from Hebrews 13:20, 21 (NIV):

"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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[1] *Life Application Bible*, New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 606.



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 *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 13 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

focus on prophets



Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

flashlight

"To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot, saying, 'Here am I; send me.' . . .

"Ministry comprehends far more than preaching the word. It means training young men as Elijah trained Elisha, taking them from their ordinary duties, and giving them responsibilities to bear in God's work—small responsibilities at first, and larger ones as they gain strength and experience" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222).

keytext

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?'

"'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied."

(2 Kings 2:9, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following people in terms of how much they guide you. (Circle 5 if they offer you a great deal of guidance in life, 1 if they offer no guidance, or some number in between that indicates the amount of guidance they give you.)

	(No guidance)				(Much guidance)
My friends	1	2	3	4	5
My mom	1	2	3	4	5
My dad	1	2	3	4	5
A teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Television stars	1	2	3	4	5
Myself	1	2	3	4	5
My pastor	1	2	3	4	5
Another relative	1	2	3	4	5
God	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other sources of guidance in your life? If so, who?

_____

did you know?

The name Elijah means "Jehovah is my God." The Hebrew version of the name Elisha means "God is my salvation." In Latin, Elisha is a girl's name and it means "sweetly blissful."

According to Jewish tradition, Elijah lived in a cave on Mount Carmel in the 9th century BCE, during the reign of King Ahab and his wicked wife, Queen Jezebel. The Hebrew form of the name Jezebel means "not exalted."

INTO THE STORY

"So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,' he said, 'and then I will come with you.'

" 'Go back,' Elijah replied. 'What have I done to you?'

"So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant."

"Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?'

" 'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied.

" 'You have asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.' . . .

"The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.' And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. . . .

"The people of the city said to Elisha, 'Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.'

" 'Bring me a new bowl,' he said, 'and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him.

"Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: "I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive." ' And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

"From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Get out of here, baldy!' they said. 'Get out of here, baldy!' He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD.

Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria."

(1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:7-25, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

The Bible passage contains four primary stories about Elisha. Next to each story below write the lesson that you think God wants you to learn from it.

1. God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).

God's lesson for me: _____
_____
_____
_____

2. Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).

God's lesson for me: _____
_____
_____
_____

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).

God's lesson for me: _____
_____
_____
_____

4. Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).

God's lesson for me: _____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully" **(Romans 12:6-8, NIV).**

"It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

"How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation" **(Daniel 4:2, 3, NIV).**

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" **(1 Timothy 4:8, NIV).**

"The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed" **(Proverbs 3:33, 34, NIV).**

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" **(1 Peter 2:21, NIV).**

further insight

"The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. He does not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications we lack; but while we use that which we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 353

Sabbath

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

1. When you were younger, did you ever get lost or separated from your parent? Describe how that made you feel.

2. If you were to go anyplace in the world to explore, where would you go? Why? Who would you want as a guide with you?

3. Do you believe we need a guide to get us through life? Why or why not? Who has been a guide for you?

4. In what way did Elijah serve as a guide to Elisha?

Sunday

Read 2 Kings 2.

(Use the Notes pages at the back of your Bible study guide to write your answers to the rest of this week's questions.)

1. God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).

What is your calling? Is there someone God has put into your life as a mentor? If so, who?

2. Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear someone talk about the Holy Spirit? How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a friend? What can the Holy Spirit do for you? In Acts 2 we read of how the Holy Spirit came to the disciples at Pentecost in a dramatic way. How do you think the Holy Spirit comes to people today? Do you think God will grant you a double portion of His Spirit if you ask?

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).

Ellen White offers this commentary on the story of the healing of the waters:

"The healing of the waters of Jericho was accomplished, not by any wisdom of man, but by the miraculous interposition of God. Those who had rebuilt the city were undeserving of the favor of Heaven; yet He who 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' saw fit in this instance to reveal, through this token of compassion, His willingness to heal Israel of their spiritual maladies. Matthew 5:45.

"The restoration was permanent; 'the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.' 2 Kings 2:22. From age to age the waters have flowed on, making that portion of the valley an oasis of beauty.

"Many are the spiritual lessons to be gathered from the story of the healing of the waters" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 231).

What do you see as the "spiritual lessons to be gathered" from this story? What symbols do you find in the story (the cruse, salt, spring, etc.)?

4. Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).

What does this story teach us about respecting God's chosen representatives? Do you think God acted too harshly against the young people? Why or why not?

Monday

Read 1 Timothy 4:8.

Can you think of anyone today who has been blessed by God with a double portion of the Holy Spirit? Share who you think that person is and why you believe he or she is doubly blessed by God.

Tuesday

Read Romans 12:6-8.

Ellen White tells us: "To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222). What is this "work for others" that God has for you to do? Discuss possible service projects your youth group could get involved in.

Wednesday

After reading the *Punch Lines*, write one parable that illustrates the lessons that the combination of these texts teach us.

Thursday

Read Luke 6:38; Song of Solomon 4:15.

Chapter 18 of *Prophets and Kings* ends with these texts: " 'Give, and it shall be given unto you;' for the word of God is 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.' "

What does this promise mean to you?

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

Consider this question: God has given me a unique mix of spiritual gifts. What are these gifts and how is He calling me to use them to build up His kingdom—this week?

Whom has God called you to mentor? What's keeping you from doing it?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

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