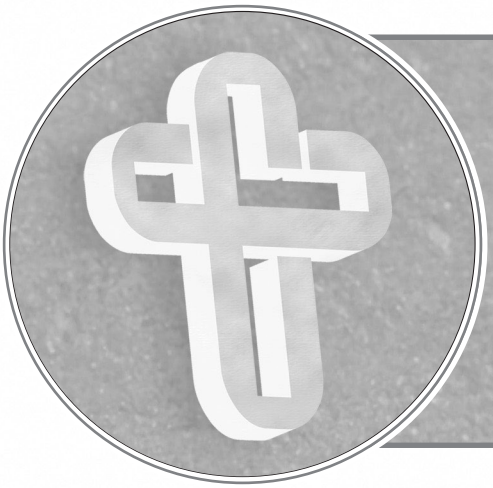


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 22 2024

what legacy?

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. Manasseh was literally hell-bent on defying God's leadership and guidance. It was written about Manasseh: "He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 33:6, NIV). Even though he experienced a last-minute repentance, the effects of his sin bore fruit in his son Amon.

Amon "increased his guilt" and sinned, causing others to sin boundlessly during his brief two-year reign, but was assassinated by officials of his own court with the support of the people. The depravity of idolatry and self-absorbed behavior prompted the people to choose Josiah, a God-fearing child, to be king. While Josiah was not perfect, he led God's people faithfully, causing a much-needed reform in Israel.

This lesson arrests many angles for discussion, but consider a few areas of emphasis: 1. God has and will discipline leaders, such as Manasseh, who lead His people astray, in whatever way is necessary to bring about repentance. 2. Leaders don't always repent but respond to God's voice by a more earnest rebellion, as Amon illustrated. 3. Many great themes emerge from Josiah's reign about how allegiance to God while we are young is crucial, or how the cooperation between faithful children and godly elders produces blessings and growth. But another amazing facet of Josiah's leadership is that he completely changed the direction his father postured before him. As a young person, he personified what it means to "go against the flow." Josiah led a reformation against the tendencies of his own heritage, against the religious apathy of unconverted leaders, and against the habitual idolatry of three generations of Israel.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Deepen their knowledge of the storied lives of the kings of Israel. *(Know)*
- Sense the urgency of choosing to be loyal to God while young. *(Feel)*
- Decide to live deliberately for God and avoid evil. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Great Controversy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 8

"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. . . . (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:4; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. Once done, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity. Why do you think the leadership qualities you chose are essential? In what ways can these qualities help you to resist negative peer pressure?

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Finley's devotional, Solid Ground*:*

Pastor Mikhail Azaroz's faith landed him in a Siberian prison camp. Among the men crowded together in his cell was a blood-thirsty giant named Yura. He and his criminal gang spent much of their time terrorizing other prisoners. They never touched Pastor Mikhail, but the shrieks and groans of the victims were heart-rending.

As the pastor began to pray about this a verse in Luke came to mind. "I give you the authority to trample . . . over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

Mikhail felt God was directing him to do something. That night when Yura began shouting his usual order, "I want to see blood!" the pastor took hold of his arm and said, "Yura, the Scriptures say, don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you."

All eyes froze on the scene. Yura pulled his arm away and barked, "I don't want to hurt you, old man. Go sit on your bunk."

But the pastor persisted. "Let's make a deal. You give me just one hour to talk, and I'll tell you about my past."

Yura thought for a moment. He knew that Mikhail always told the truth. Turning to his gang members, he asked, "Should we let him talk?"

They shrugged. Yura said, "Go ahead!"

So the pastor started talking. He told them about his faith and about the persecution that believers had to endure. He talked for an hour. Then two hours. Then three hours. By then the guards had come to turn off all the lights.

Amazingly enough, Yura wanted to hear more. Mikhail promised to continue the next evening. And that's what he did night after night, telling these men about Jesus. The savagery in that cell ended.

This lone Christian pastor had proved that even in the gulag God is stronger than brutality. He's bigger than the wild beast within human hearts.

God changed the entire prison environment through the Christian witness of one individual. That's not surprising. God changed the course of history through Moses. God changed Babylon through Daniel. God changed Persia through Esther. God changed Rome through Paul. God can change your family, your workplace, your school, your neighborhood, your apartment complex—through you.

One man, one woman, one young person—plus God—equals a majority.[1]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Mikhail was a father figure to Yura in the Siberian prison camp. Yura knew that Mikhail would not inflict harm on him or his gang, thus there was no need to hurt Mikhail. God guided Mikhail to lead Yura on a less destructive path and change his ways, so that he would be saved by our loving and forgiving Lord. God gives all His children the opportunity to change and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Identify and *circle* the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)

—Manasseh—Amon—Josiah

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

This story is mostly about . . . (choose three and explain)

1. Obedience to God
2. Influence of parents/leaders
3. Results of sin
4. Blessings of faithfulness
5. Selfishness and idolatry
6. Moral courage

Some might perceive God's punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them, and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

To what degree do parents shape their children's faithfulness to God?

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Acts 5:29; Daniel 3; Exodus 10; Matthew 18:4; Romans 2:4.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Manasseh: From One Extreme to the Other

Consider Manasseh's claim to fame as a leader: "Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites" (2 Kings 21:9, NIV). In 2 Chronicles 33:6, it says, "He [Manasseh] sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD" (NIV). But a few verses later the Bible says: "In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom" (verses 12, 13, NIV). Furthermore, Manasseh is one of the kings listed in the proud lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1). Clearly this man made a last-minute turnaround, going from reckless idolatry to genuine humility. It might be helpful to discuss with the students the impact of amazing conversion stories. In what way are these conversion experiences inspirational? What do they teach about the matchless power of God's grace?

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Teach by Storytelling

The unmistakable quality of stories is that everyone—young and old—connect with narratives personally. Lists and equations, acronyms and paradigms, and clever sayings may lodge themselves in the mind, but stories evoke the human experience to action. William Barclay says it well when he states: "To teach in parables is to teach in pictures, and most men think in pictures" (William Barclay, *The Mind of Christ*, p. 95). Another rich quality of storytelling is that stories don't necessarily tell people "the truth," but engage the listener in a thoughtful journey through which he/she discovers the truth for themselves. As we teach, we can trust the story to do more than we will ever do by trying to explain. Some teachers simply tell the story or have students read it and ask: "What does this story teach you?" or "What is the central truth of this story?" or even "Why do you think this story is meaningful?"

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.*

What might be the downside to such stories?

2. Amon: Like Father, Like Sun

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states that Amon's name is "identical with that of the Egyptian sun-god Amen. It would appear that Manasseh selected this name for his son to show his regard for that Egyptian deity" (vol. 2, p. 971). The commentary continues by asserting that "Manasseh's apostasy had left a stamp of evil upon Amon that shaped his life beyond recall" (p. 971). Apparently, the pattern of behaving badly became so deeply ingrained in his childhood that he simply increased his sin over time. After reigning for only two years, he was assassinated by palace officials. Some think this might have been a grudge against the king while others infer that it was a reaction to the horrible direction Amon was taking the nation. Either way, his miserable reign was short (he died at age 24; his son Josiah was 8). Imagine what it must have been like for Josiah. How did he maintain the sensibilities to God while living with such an evil parent? What are some truths you glean from looking at the odds Josiah faced as a believer in God and as a young leader of a nation?

The more you dig into the details given in Scripture about these three men, the more you marvel at what God can do with seemingly impossible situations.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Fill one bowl with hot water (hot enough to touch but not burn) and another with ice-cold water. Invite the students (or volunteers) to place their right hand in the cold water long enough for it to get a little uncomfortable, then dry the cold hand off and immediately place it in the hot water. Clearly, a cold hand experiences the contrast in the hot water more keenly than if you were to place your room temperature hand directly in the hot water. The students can try it with the other hand to note the difference. You can also have them go from cold to hot. You might also make available two other bowls of water (one lukewarm and the other only slightly cool) and note the contrast.

Ask: What are some spiritual truths that this exercise illustrates? (Have them get into groups of two or three to discuss and share their responses.)

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

You are not trapped by your genetic makeup. You, like Abraham (whose father was an idolater), are endowed with the potential to choose God whether your parents have or not. Manasseh was evil, and God rattled him through failure and shame. But he responded in the sunset of his life—although too late to really make a positive difference in the lives of others. Perhaps you know someone who lived a life of rebellion against God for the majority of their life but finally turned to the Savior in the final hour. And like Amon, some don't repent. This story can easily seem like a sensational testimony of bad guys who turn good or bad guys who stay bad, but maybe this story is more about God's desire and ability to save the worst of sinners. You might appeal to the students, saying, "Maybe you feel as if you have refused God's promptings too much to be saved. As long as your heart beats in your chest God can redeem and restore your life. It simply takes a humble response to God's voice speaking to you now. Let's pray. . . ." Invite the students to use this story to evaluate their journey with God, gleaning positive attributes of faith they have learned from their parents and asking, "How can I move closer to God and be more faithful to His leading in my life?"

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[1]Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 190.



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*), chapter 32.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 22 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

what legacy?



Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

"Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father's steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 384).

keytext

"In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God."

(2 Chronicles 33:12, 13, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think are the most essential qualities in a leader? Rank them in order of importance (1–most important; 8–least important).

___ confidence
___ compassion
___ humility
___ selflessness
___ courage
___ honesty
___ wisdom
___ perseverance

What are the three qualities you ranked to be the most necessary in a leader? Why? Who do you know that exemplifies these qualities, and how have you seen such attributes in action?

INTO THE STORY

"The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

"Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah.

"He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

"The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers. Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made. But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD; Amon increased his guilt.

"Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place."

(2 Chronicles 33:10-25, NIV)

did you know?

Current research suggests that parents have a lot more influence than they realize. Not only are their kids listening, but more important, they are watching closely and modeling their lives after them. Whether you believe it or not, parents are the biggest influence in their children's lives. But at what point do you begin to assume responsibility for your relationship with God on your own?

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle and identify the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)
Manasseh _____
Amon _____
Josiah _____

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

_____
_____

This story is mostly about (choose three): obedience to God, influence of parents/leaders, results of sin, blessings of faithfulness, selfishness and idolatry, moral courage. Which one do you see exhibited the most among God's people today? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Some might perceive God's punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

_____
_____
_____

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

_____
_____

To what degree do parents shape their children's faithfulness to God?

_____
_____

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 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" **(Romans 12:1, 2, NIV).**

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them' " **(Ecclesiastes 12:1, NIV).**

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" **(James 4:10, NIV).**

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" **(Matthew 23:37, NIV).**

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent" **(Revelation 3:15-19, NIV).**

further insight

"The true, joyous life of the soul is to have Christ formed within, the hope of glory."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 46

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 5:6.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Which quality did you choose as a primary attribute of a leader? Why? Today's Bible passage points out that success and abundant living are the result of humility. Read this passage and write it out in your own words. Reflect on the lives of people in the Bible who followed this principle.

Sunday

Read James 4:10.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study, you will notice three kings who responded to God in three different ways. What key insights emerge in this story for you? What is the message you think God is trying to say to you in this week's lesson?

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

Today's Bible passage is a promise that God will use any means necessary to bring His people back to a right relationship with Him. Clearly, the choice to respond to God's voice, the still small voice or the roaring wake-up call of discipline, is ours to make. Manasseh responded to an abrupt wake-up call of being captured, tortured, and ridiculed. Amon chose not to listen and respond. Are there areas of your life in which you are getting a wake-up call? What are they?

When will you begin to make this change? And to whom will you hold yourself accountable to make the changes you promised to God?

Tuesday

Read Revelation 3:15-19.

Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson. Think about your legacy of faith. How have your parents and leaders shaped your walk with God? What are some examples you want to follow? What are some patterns you need to avoid?

Examples to follow:

Patterns to avoid:

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today? What can you do this week to respond actively to the message in this Scripture?

Thursday

Read Romans 12:1, 2.

In *Prophets and Kings* we are told that Josiah had "few counselors" urging him in the right direction. Do you ever feel alone in your desire to be more devoted to God? Take some time this week to find someone you admire as a spiritual leader. Ask them to share with you one spiritual insight that God has revealed to them. Also, ask them how they would like for you to pray for them so that they can continue to be faithful and filled with God's Spirit.

Spiritual Insight

Prayer Request

Friday

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Reflect on the three kings referred to in this lesson and consider how God labored with each of them to different ends. Consider the many ways God has labored with you, patiently prompting you to deeper devotion. Are you listening to His voice? How are you going to respond?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

**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.