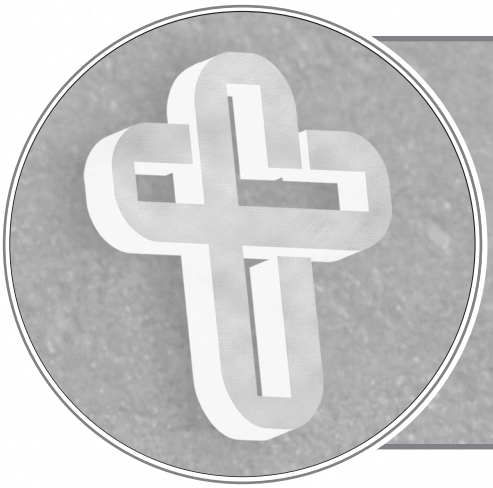


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 06 2024

just scratching the service

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Ahab and Jezebel offers a smorgasbord of topics to discuss with students. Evil, selfishness, judgment, idolatry, spiritualism, values, compromise—these are just a few of the themes you could emphasize in this lesson.

Still today the name "Jezebel" is synonymous with evil. Her name means "not exalted" or "impure." There are certainly many women in our culture today (and men for that matter) who exert the same kind of evil influence as Jezebel did. You could draw parallels between "pop star" Jezebels today and the Bible character. This discussion would help young people to put contemporary faces on the ancient story.

A point of application that Ellen White brings out in this chapter connects it to idolatry. She writes: "The spirit of idolatry is rife in the world today. . . . Every day adds its sorrowful evidence that faith in the sure word of prophecy is decreasing, and that in its stead superstition and satanic witchery are captivating the minds of many" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 210).

Another natural theme that emerges from this story has to do with the perils of selfishness. Ellen White points out that Ahab was "fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204). In a positive twist, the antidote to selfishness is the calling to serve. It is toward this theme that the major portion of the teacher's helps will be focused.

All in all this study gives you an opportunity to put a dent in the prevailing attitude today that it's "all about me." Television shows such as *America's Got Talent* and *The Voice* only serve to reinforce this attitude. The stories of ancient kings and queens who worshipped idols and self remind us that there is a better way to live. In reality, it's all about God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the connection between selfishness and misery; conversely they will see the connection between service and joy. *(Know)*
- Sense the emptiness of a self-absorbed life. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to serve. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Nature of Humanity, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 7

"Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. . . . (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:4; 4:7, 8, 11, 20.)"

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.

Bring several recent, local newspapers to class. Break the students into small groups. Give each group some of the papers and ask them to search for articles that identify needs in your community. Have each group choose one article and report it to the rest of the group, defining the need and possible solutions or resources that could help meet this need. On a white/chalkboard write the problems and solutions from each group. After the presentations, discuss with all the students the possibility of following up on some or all of the proposed solutions. Could your Sabbath School class help to meet these needs and make a difference in your community?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

An employer put the following scenario to potential employees as part of the interview process. Assuming you were applying for the job, how would you respond in this situation?

You're driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop and see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old woman who looks as if she is about to die.
2. Your best friend who once saved your life.
3. A famous person you really admire and have wished you could meet one day.

There can be only one passenger in your car, and you can't return to the bus stop once you have left it. To whom would you offer a ride?

You could make a compelling argument for any one of the three. You could pick up the old woman, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first. Or, you could take your best friend because he/she once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him/her back. However, you may never be able to find the famous person you dreamed you could meet one day. How rare is it to find a famous person on the street, so why miss out on this opportunity of a lifetime?

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss their solution with the person next to them.]

Would you like to hear the correct answer? There were 200 applicants for this job. Only one wrote the answer that the employer was looking for. The candidate who was hired had no trouble coming up with his answer.

He said, "I would give the car keys to my old friend and let him take the old woman to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus and talk with the famous person I always wanted to meet."

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Ask the students if anyone came up with the same answer. Then share the following in your own words:

Sometimes our solutions to dilemmas we face in life are not as creative as the applicant's answer. Too often we cater first to our own interests and show little concern to how our decisions might affect others. And yet, when we think outside the box and put others first, the result is often a win-win solution for everyone. Thinking selflessly is the key.

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.*

1. *Circle* the main actors in this story.
2. *Underline* the parts of the story that are essential to understanding it.
3. God reacted to Ahab and Jezebel's sin in harsh judgment. Discuss what this teaches us about God.
4. What new thing about God have you learned from Ahab's story? Explain.
5. *Draw a rectangle* around the emotions, actions, and adjectives that enrich this story.
6. What lesson does Jezebel's life teach us?
7. What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
8. *Put a star* next to the words or phrases that capture the various emotions of this story.

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

Read John 13:1-17 and compare Jesus' heart to serve with that of Ahab's greed to get. Which represents a better way to live? Why?

Read Philippians 2:3-8. Ahab clearly did not model the verse that says to "value others above yourselves" (verse 3, NIV). How might his legacy be different had he lived out the calling of Philippians 2:3-8?

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and compare it to the story of Jezebel. In what ways did Jezebel fail to model true love?

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. **Naboth's refusal of Ahab's request.** It is interesting to note Naboth's vehement refusal of Ahab's request to purchase his vineyard. You can sense his horror as he responds to Ahab: "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors" (1 Kings 21:3, NIV). No man could ultimately sell any part of the parental inheritance; it might be sold or mortgaged until the year of Jubilee, but at that time it would revert to its original owner, if it had not been redeemed before (see Leviticus 25:14-17, 25-28). The *Adam Clark Commentary* explains: "Ahab most evidently wished him to *alienate* it *finally*, and this is what God's law had expressly forbidden; therefore he could not, consistently with his duty to God, indulge Ahab; and it was high iniquity in Ahab to tempt him to do it; and to covet it showed the depravity of Ahab's soul."[1]

   Is God any less disturbed by the insatiable greed and materialism that seem so prevalent today? Why do you think God does not seem to act as resolutely today against greedy individuals as He did in the case of Ahab? How do you explain Naboth's fate? After all, he was simply defending his God-given rights, and yet he was stoned to death.
2. **The curse against Ahab.** Elijah's no-nonsense curse against Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-24 is identical to the curse uttered against Jeroboam and against Baasha (see 1 Kings 14:10, 11; 16:3, 4). We read in 1 Kings 21:27-29, however, that Ahab humbled himself before God. As a result, God explained to Elijah that "because [Ahab] has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son" (verse 29, NIV).

   Even a feeble act of repentance (as it was in Ahab's case) moves God to mercy. What does this picture of grace in a most unlikely story teach us about God? Had Jezebel repented of her wrong, do you think God would have responded in the same way toward her? Why or why not?
3. **God's displeasure with Ahaziah.** Ellen White offers this commentary on Ahaziah's sin: "God had cause for displeasure at Ahaziah's impiety. . . . He had been a very present help to all who sought Him in sincerity. Yet now the king of Israel, turning from God to ask help of the worst enemy of his people, proclaimed to the heathen that he had more confidence in their idols than in the God of heaven. In the same manner do men and women dishonor Him when they turn from the Source of strength and wisdom to ask help or counsel from the powers of dark-

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 quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

"Ten Tips for Teachers From Award-winning Teachers" (adapted from www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=1745):

1. Know the content.
2. Study the science and art of teaching.
3. Observe great teaching and reflect on what might work for you.
4. Meet with people who value teaching.
5. Be willing to experiment.
6. You won't always be effective, but strive to daily give your best.
7. Be enthusiastic!
8. Genuinely care about students.
9. Get to know your students.
10. Always ask for feedback; be grateful for criticism.

RABBI 101

ness. If God's wrath was kindled by Ahaziah's act, how does He regard those who, having still greater light, choose to follow a similar course?" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 211).

How might we be tempted today to seek the wisdom of the world rather than from God?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite the students to create a list titled "Top 10 Ways to Stop Selfishness." When they have finished, have each student read their list. After everyone has had the chance to share their ideas, have the students vote on their top 10 favorites. Compile those into a master list and type it up, photocopy it, and ask them to put it in a place where they can read it often. Challenge them to put the ideas into practice and then discuss the results the following week in Sabbath School.

Summary

Share this story from Kevin Harney's book, Seismic Shifts:

A little boy sat on the floor of the church nursery with a red rubber ball in each arm and three Nerf balls clenched on the floor between his pudgy little knees. He was trying to protect all five from the other children in the nursery. The problem was, he could not hold all five at once, and the ball nearest to his feet was particularly vulnerable to being stolen. So, whenever another child showed an interest in playing with one of the balls, he snarled to make it clear these toys were not for sharing. . . .

For about five minutes, this little guy growled, postured, and kept the other children away from the balls. Like a hyena hunched over the last scraps of a carcass, this snarling little canine was not in the mood for sharing. The other kids circled like vultures around the kill, looking for a way to jump in and snatch a ball without being attacked and bitten. I honestly did not know whether to laugh or cry as I watched.

Then it struck me: This little boy was not having any fun at all. There was no cheer within 10 yards of this kid. Not only was he unhappy, but all the other kids seemed sad as well. His selfishness created a black hole that sucked all of the joy out of that nursery.[2]

---

[1]As quoted at www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=1ki&chapter=021.

[2]Kevin G. Harney, *Seismic Shifts* (Zondervan, 2005), as quoted at PreachingToday.com.



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 16.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 06 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

just scratching the service



Photo by The Crystal Lenz

keytext

"There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel."

(1 Kings 21:25, 26, NIV)

flashlight

"Naturally of a covetous disposition, Ahab, strengthened and sustained in wrongdoing by Jezebel, had followed the dictates of his evil heart until he was fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness. He could brook no refusal of his wishes; the things he desired he felt should by right be his" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204).

"A reformation followed. Those who took part in acclaiming Joash king, had solemnly covenanted 'that they should be the Lord's people.' And now that the evil influence of the daughter of Jezebel had been removed from the kingdom of Judah, . . . 'the city was quiet.' 2 Chronicles 23:16, 21" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 216).

what do you think?

Take the following service quiz by filling in the blanks with the first answer that comes to mind.

1. I think the best example of a selfless servant who is alive today is _____.
2. The biggest reason some teens don't get involved in service is _____.
3. The biggest reward in serving is_____.
4. Besides Christ, the most selfless person in the Bible is _____.
5. The most selfish person in the Bible is _____ _____.
6. Serving others makes me feel _____ _____.

did you know?

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, and being clothed with humility, possessing that love that is pure, peaceable, and easy to be entreated, full of gentleness and good fruits, is not an easy attainment. . . . The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 376

INTO THE STORY

"Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, 'Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.'

"But Naboth replied, 'The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.'

"So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.' He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.

"His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, 'Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?'

"He answered her, 'Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, "Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place." But he said, "I will not give you my vineyard." '

"Jezebel his wife said, 'Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' . . .

"Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, "This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?" Then say to him, "This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!" ' "

"Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she put on eye makeup, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, 'Have you come in peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?'

"He looked up at the window and called out, 'Who is on my side? Who?' Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. 'Throw her down!' Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot.

"Jehu went in and ate and drank. 'Take care of that cursed woman,' he said, 'and bury her, for she was a king's daughter.' But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands."

(1 Kings 21:1-7, 17-19; 2 Kings 9:30-35, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What does the story of Ahab and Naboth teach us about selfishness?

_____
_____
_____

Is service the best antidote for selfishness? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

What was it about Jezebel that was most offensive to God?

_____
_____
_____

Do you think Jezebel's life exhibited the principle "whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7, ESV)? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

How do you reconcile this story of God's harsh judgment against Jezebel with the loving nature of Christ? Why do you think God acts in judgment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Based on this story, what would you identify as the highest value for Ahab? Naboth? Jezebel? Jehu? What can we learn from their story that might help to inform us about what we choose to value today?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" **(Matthew 5:16, NIV).**

"A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare" **(Proverbs 21:6, NIV).**

"Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" **(Philippians 2:4, NIV).**

"But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" **(Luke 6:35, NIV).**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" **(2 Corinthians 5:10, NIV).**

further insight

"Following Christ's example of unselfish service, trusting like little children in His merits, and obeying His commands, we shall receive the approval of God."—Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares*, p. 310

"However lowly, any work done for God with a full surrender of self is as acceptable to Him as the highest service. No offering is small that is given with true-heartedness and gladness of soul."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 359

Sabbath

Read Psalm 34:14; Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Corinthians 9:19; 1 Timothy 6:18, 19; James 2:17; 1 Peter 2:12.

In a small group of friends share the answers you gave in the *What Do You Think?* section. Then think about and discuss with someone today's Bible passages in light of their message.

Sunday

Read Proverbs 21:6.

Think about the story of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard. Reflect on the following questions:

Have I ever wanted something so badly, only to be disappointed when I got it? What does this teach me about materialism?

_____
_____
_____

Jezebel was a very destructive influence in Ahab's life. Do I have anyone in my life who is leading me into destruction? How would God have me deal with these influences in my life?

_____
_____
_____

Monday

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Think about how Ahab is remembered still to this day ("There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. . . . He behaved in the vilest manner" [1 Kings 21:25, 26, NIV]). If there was a text that people would read a thousand years from now about you, a verse that summarized your legacy, what would it say? Write it below.

_____
_____
_____

Tuesday

Read Philippians 2:4.

In chapter 16 of *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White mentions a number of lesser-known characters following the reign of Ahab. Review the chapter in *Prophets and Kings*. Identify the following people and note how they fit into the story:

Ahaziah _____
Jehoram (Ahaziah's brother) _____
Jeroboam _____
Jehoshaphat _____
Jehoram (Jehoshaphat's son) _____
Athaliah _____
Jehu _____

Wednesday

Apply the selected *Punch Lines* to your life. "Let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Here is one way that I can let my light shine today: _____
_____
_____

"Not looking to your own interests but . . . to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:4, NIV). Here is one person God has called me to take an interest in today:
_____

"Love your enemies" (Luke 6:35, NIV). This is what that command is calling me to do today:
_____
_____

Thursday

Read Luke 6:35.

Speaking of Ahab's selfishness, Ellen White writes: "This dominant trait in Ahab, which influenced so disastrously the fortunes of the kingdom under his successors, is revealed in an incident which took place while Elijah was still a prophet in Israel. Hard by the palace of the king was a vineyard belonging to Naboth, a Jezreelite. Ahab set his heart on possessing this vineyard, and he proposed to buy it or else to give in exchange for it another piece of land" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204).

So intense was Ahab's desire for this vineyard that when it was not satisfied he was taken ill. What does this teach us? How can we be so filled with Christ that He overwhelms any hint of selfishness? In what other ways can selfishness bring great harm?

_____
_____
_____

Friday

Read Matthew 5:16.

Consider the words of Ellen G. White from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668, "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service."

Whom do I need to help me take the next step in my commitment to God?

_____
_____
_____

What one thing do I need to do to help someone this week?

_____
_____
_____

[1] William Strauss, "Today's Teens Are Less Selfish Than Some Adults Think," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 5, 2007, www.csmonitor.com/2007/0305/p09s02-coop.html.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

**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.