

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JULY2024

Israel takes its medicine

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 28:1-15; 29:1-14.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 36.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. Zedekiah and Israel were poised to "take their medicine" and enter into captivity for a season determined by God. While their impending bondage to Babylon humbled Israel, they could have accepted the discipline of God and made the best of their situation by cooperating. A contrite spirit would have continued the good favor that King Zedekiah had with the reigning king of Babylon, fostering a strong witness of God's providence and care. Unfortunately, the human tendency to avoid punishment and seek alternatives becomes an irresistible temptation. False prophets offered a more palatable solution to their impending captivity, claiming: "This is what the LORD . . . , the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon' " (Jeremiah 28:2, 3, NIV).

Ellen White declares: "It was especially important that those in captivity should seek the peace of the land into which they had been carried. This, however, was contrary to the inclinations of the human heart; and Satan, taking advantage of the circumstances, caused false prophets to arise among the people, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, who declared that the yoke of bondage would soon be broken and the former prestige of the nation restored" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 440). False prophets could not recognize that the Babylonian captivity was allowed by God as a disciplinary measure in response to the abuses and disobedience that characterized the chosen nation. So these false prophets fabricated the notion that they could still overcome their enemy.

This week's lesson focuses on God's life-shaping discipline and the stubborn resistance of the human heart.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God's plan for our peace and prosperity is real. *(Know)*
- Deepen their confidence in God's providence. *(Feel)*
- Decide to embrace God's methods for renewal instead of trusting in the shortcuts. *(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. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share

this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (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.*

This week's activity challenges young people to examine how they approach the discipline of God—or any discipline for that matter. Have the students rank the excuses given in the *What Do You Think?* exercise and invite them to share their first response. Also, you might have them examine the responses given and connect them to biblical characters that exhibit that behavior.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"On May 23, 1960, in Hilo, Hawaii, sirens began to shriek in the night. A tidal wave was headed toward Hawaii at 450 miles an hour. Residents had three hours and fifteen minutes to evacuate. But Hilo had been through so many tidal-wave alerts, and in the past nothing had happened. Some people moved to higher ground; others didn't bother.

"Suddenly the sirens stopped. All was quiet. It was like a death hush. Then came the rumbling like the roll of a distant drum. It was almost inaudible at first; then it grew louder. And then, with fierce rumbling and a force impossible to describe, it was there, a wall of water 30 feet high and moving with the speed of a jet. The screams of anguish were drowned in the deafening roar. Then there was an awful silence.

In the morning, 78 bodies were recovered from the ruins—78 people who didn't need to die. They heard the warnings and the sirens. They understood the risk. They just didn't bother to do anything about it."—Henry Feyerabend, *Slices of Life*, p. 159

What obvious conclusions do you see in this illustration about the consequences of disregarding the warning signs?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It's not hard to see the results of ignoring the warning signs that are meant to save our lives. Judah and the children of God were faced with another season of captivity. Even though God promised a peaceful era of renewal, the false prophets and king sought to opt for a more manageable punishment. Read the story and respond to the questions in the *Out of the Story* section.

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.*

Invite the students to examine the behavior of the two prophets Hananiah and Jeremiah, and discuss how they depict the human struggle to avoid the truth when it is painful or discipline when it is inevitable. Below are a few key lessons you may want to discuss.

1. God's discipline may often be uncomfortable, but it is always the sure way to becoming whole. What other examples in Scripture depict people trying to take a shortcut from character-shaping discipline? Read Jeremiah 28:1-15 (especially verses 8-10) and compare the events in that passage to this one.
2. Avoiding the impact of sin only leads to self-reliant behavior. The false prophets minimized their rebellion instead of repenting of it. When people fabricate their own solutions to their sin problem, the problem only gets worse.
3. How you respond to seasons of discipline conveys a powerful witness to others about who you are and especially about the God you serve. Think of people in Scripture who embraced God's will even though it exposed their weaknesses and challenged them

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Jigsawing

When a particular story includes several chapters, you might divide the chapters up between two or three groups and have each group summarize the salient points of the story. In this week's lesson you could divide the class into three groups and give each group a chapter (27–29). This maximizes time and allows everyone to contribute. Jig-sawing, as this method is often called, enables you to scan or overview whole books of the Bible as well. You might divide the book of Proverbs evenly between the class (a chapter per person or pair) and ask the students to find a wise saying that speaks to this week's story.

greatly. How did their approach benefit them in the end?

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week's story conveys a message to God's people as they enter into another season of captivity—this time it's not Egypt, but Babylon. God's promise that comes through the prophet Jeremiah is basic: "Take your medicine!" If the Hebrews entered this time with humility and a desire to follow God's plan, the 70 years would be a time of renewal and influence to others. But in Jeremiah 28 false prophets try to derail the people and offer another "message from God" that is much more palatable.

Remember in Jeremiah 27 that God told Jeremiah to wear a yoke and demonstrate visually the soon-coming discipline of God. God promised everyone that if they humbled themselves under the yoke of Babylon, He would bless them (Jeremiah 27:2, 8, 11, 12).

When Jeremiah checks Hananiah publicly, the false prophet takes the yoke off of Jeremiah and breaks it to illustrate his prophecy. The whole drama is a war of two wills: the will of God and the will of man.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In the same way God had Jeremiah wear a yoke to dramatize the impending discipline of God's children, invite the students to pair up and devise an illustration that conveys a message about God's plan and promise to us today. Or you can ask the students: "If God were to use a visual device to arrest our attention today (such as the yoke in Jeremiah 27–29) what visual symbol do you think would make

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.*

the greatest impact on people today?" The students can either share an example or describe a symbol that would be effective.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is hard to face the truth when you are wrong. The people of God had wandered so far from God that the only way to bring them back again was to send them into captivity in Babylon. God's plan wasn't to punish them but to prepare them to become the kind of people they were destined to be to the world. The path to become God's true ambassadors to the world is not an easy road, and the journey often includes moments in which your weaknesses, faults, and even sinful behaviors are exposed. But God's grace and mercy are always there to reach you and teach you about the abundant life.

Remember the promise God spoke in Jeremiah 29:11: " 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " If your desire is to embrace this plan for your life, then be willing to receive the instruction and adversity God brings your way to grow you as a child of God.



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 and Ruin*), chapter 36.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 28:1-15; Jeremiah 29:1-14.
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Photo Getty Images

keytext

"This is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' "

(Jeremiah 29:10, 11, NIV)

flashlight

"To the end of time, men will arise to create confusion and rebellion among those who claim to be representatives of the true God. Those who prophesy lies will encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When the terrible results of their evil deeds are made manifest, they will seek, if possible, to make the one who has faithfully warned them, responsible for their difficulties, even as the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes. But as surely as the words of Jehovah through His prophet were vindicated anciently, so surely will the certainty of His messages be established today" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 442).

what do you think?

Bad choices lead to unfavorable consequences. As humans, we often seek to find other ways to deal with our situation rather than owning the problem. Which method of denial do you think is most common today? Rank them according to the way you tend to respond. (1 most common, 5 being the least.)

When my actions cause unpleasant circumstances I tend to . . .

____ justify my actions by comparing them to much worse actions of others.
____ minimize what is wrong.
____ avoid the truth by filling the time with busy behavior.
____ consider alternative perspectives.
____ focus on the seemingly judgmental spirit of my oppressors.

did you know?

The men who bear responsibilities in the cause of Christ should be men of prayer and humility. They are to act like men who in all their dealings with their brethren are guided by the Spirit of God. They are to give an example of righteousness."—Ellen G. White, *Christian Leadership*, p. 52

"Hold fast to the truth, the precious, sanctifying truth. You are then in the best of company, and the very highest intelligences are beholding your course of action. You are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."—Ibid., p. 64

"Living faith will prompt to energetic action. The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people."—Ibid., p. 22

INTO THE STORY

"This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.) He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:

"This is what the LORD . . . , the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.' Yes, this is what the LORD . . . , the God of Israel, says: 'Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,' declares the LORD.

"This is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,' declares the LORD, 'and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.' "

(Jeremiah 29:1-14, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this section of Scripture *underline* the parts you think are key. List what you think are the key points in the story and the ideas they convey.

Circle the people mentioned in this passage, and try to identify who they are and their contribution to the story.

Put a *rectangle* around the words or phrases that are repeated in this passage. In this story, is there a . . .

- truth to believe?
- promise to claim?
- behavior to adopt?

According to verse 2, this message was delivered after the children of God went into exile. Why do you think the message of comfort and promise comes after they are made captives?

Why do you think this passage is in the Bible?

What is the message God has for you in this story?

In a sentence, write what you think the good news is in this passage.

punch lines

" 'I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only in due measure; I will not let you go entirely unpunished' " **(Jeremiah 30:11, NIV).**

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" **(Hebrews 12:11, NIV).**

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

"Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty" **(Job 5:17, NIV).**

"You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty" **(Psalm 18:27, NIV).**

further insight

"God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service if they will yield themselves to Him. . . . Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God, develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness."

—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 285

"All who in this world render true service to God or man receive a preparatory training in the school of sorrow. The weightier the trust and the higher the service, the closer is the test and the more severe the discipline."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 151

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 12:11.

Respond to the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What does today's Bible verse say about the way we relate to discipline? Why do you think it is so easy to find another way rather than face up to discipline?

Sunday

Read Job 5:17.

Read the passage in the *Into the Story* section of the student lesson and respond to the study questions provided. What parts of this story are new to you, and what insights have you gained from this passage?

Do you think if we could see the big picture of God's will we would embrace adversity better, or do you think we would turn away from the challenges that lie ahead?

Monday

Read Jeremiah 29:10, 11.

Consider the message of the *Key Text* in this week's lesson. While this promise is one of the well-known passages of Scripture, the message of hope comes as a precursor to 70 years of submission to Babylon. How does knowing the context of this promise change the impact of the passage on you personally?

Tuesday

Read James 4:17.

In this week's *Flashlight* quote from *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White refers to the way people at the end of time will "look upon sin as a light thing." How do you see this as true to life today? In what areas of your experience do you see the world minimizing the sinfulness of sin? As you think about great leaders in your life, whom do you know that models sensitivity to the wrongfulness of sin but still manages to walk in the promise of God's plan?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson and identify the passage that is speaking to you today. Why does this Scripture seem to be so relevant to you now? What do you think God is trying to say to you?

Continue to reflect on the passages about how we grow through discipline and ask God to give you an opportunity to share your insights with someone else this week.

Thursday

Read Psalm 18:27.

In this week's lesson there are false prophets who try to persuade the people of God to minimize their need for discipline and subvert God's plan for their growth. Their message was popular and easier to receive than Jeremiah's, but completely untrue. Identify some of the voices that are "false prophets" in your life—voices that urge you to take the easy way instead of the right way. Maybe you have a close friend who struggles with honesty, or you find yourself wrestling with habits or temptations that derail your focus on Christ. Measure those voices against the promise of God in this week's key text and choose firmly to walk with God even though the future may seem unpleasant. Discover for yourself that God's promise is sure!

Friday

Read Revelation 3:19.

Reflect on the way God has guided you through seasons of learning that, although not pleasant, brought about real change and growth in your life. Perhaps you can identify with a person in Scripture that made a similar journey. Understanding the nature and purpose of God's discipline deepens our trust in God and our loyalty to His cause in our lives.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 36.

**Royalty and Ruin* 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.