

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JULY 13 2024

storm warning

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 25 (esp. 1-14); 36.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 35.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jeremiah's call, as we saw last week, was to tell the people and rulers of Judah that God's patience had finally run out. Time and again the call to repentance had been made, along with warnings of divine punishment if the people did not return to God. Now the message was stronger: Disaster *is* coming. Judah should prepare to be attacked and overrun by her enemies, because she had refused to listen to the repeated call of God's prophets.

When Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch prepared a scroll to be read to the people declaring God's message, the scroll found its way into the hands of the king. As the leader of the nation, the king should have led the way in heeding God's warning and setting an example of repentance. Instead he made a very public show of his contempt for God's message, tearing up the scroll piece by piece and burning it in the presence of his courtiers and advisers.

Most of us, like the king of Judah, don't like to hear words of warning. We'd prefer to think that things are going just fine, even when we're clearly headed down the wrong path. Though Jesus' message was one of love rather than of fear, He, like the Hebrew prophets, did warn of God's judgment and the consequences of our sin. Today, there is still a place for words of warning.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that bad choices lead to negative consequences. *(Know)*
- Feel God cares enough to give us warnings. *(Feel)*
- Choose to respond to God's warnings and change behavior as a result. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"

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.

Divide the class into groups of three to five students and present each group with one of the following situations. (For large groups, use the same situation with several different groups.) Say: When you get into your groups, read aloud the situation you've been given and discuss what you would do in that situation. How do you think the different people in this scenario would respond?

- Your group of friends has been close since elementary school, but one in the group is starting to get into trouble. You know that he's hanging out with a different group of friends who drink heavily and use drugs, and you suspect your friend is doing the same things. You really care about him and want to help him before he gets in too deep, so a few of you decide to try talking to him about it.
- One of the girls you hang around with has a new boyfriend whom no one in your group likes. He's jealous, possessive, and has a bad temper. One day your friend comes to school with a black eye. You've seen her boyfriend treat her badly before, and you suspect he might be abusing her. You want to raise the subject with her without getting her too upset.
- Your younger sister has been on a diet for months. She thinks she's making great progress and looking terrific, but you think she might have an eating disorder. She seems too thin to be healthy, and she's obsessed with losing even more weight. You discuss with your parents how you could help her.
- Several of your closest friends have been making life miserable for a guy in your class. You recognize that he has some problems, including some mental health issues, that make it hard for him to fit in. Your friends seem to take delight in teasing him and making fun of him. You haven't been joining in, but you haven't told them that what they're doing is wrong, either. You believe that as a Christian you need to stand up for this guy, but you don't want to lose your friends.

After each group has had time to discuss their situation, bring the groups back together and give them an opportunity to report on their discussion and ask the larger group how they might respond. In each case there are two main questions to consider: how would you deliver a message of "warning" to someone you care about, and, if you're the person getting the warning, how would you respond?

If you have time and your group is comfortable with it, invite a couple of groups to role-play their situation.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 2000 U.S. Senator Al Gore ran against George W. Bush for president of the United States. In the closest election result in U.S. history, the two men almost tied for the most important job in the country—but Bush won. Al Gore was left, like any losing politician, to decide what he'd do next.

Rather than immediately prepare for another election, or retire into private life, Al Gore decided to use his role in the public eye to bring people's attention to what he believed was the most important crisis in the world—the issue of global warming. The documentary he narrated and promoted around the world was called *An Inconvenient Truth*. Gore warned people that environmental disaster and human suffering would happen if global warming weren't stopped.

Regardless of whether or not you agree with Gore's conclusions about global warming, it's hard not to admire his dedication. To him, this message is the most urgent thing the world needs to hear today, and as a result he chose to throw his time, energy, popularity, and money into getting that warning out to the world.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Caring for our environment is an important message to get out there. But even more important is the message that we need to live according to God's Word so that we can live happier lives in the short term and enjoy eternity in heaven with Him. Just as God gave Jeremiah a message of last-minute warning for the people of Judah, He gives His church today a warning for the world: Get ready

for His coming. How do we respond to warnings from God's Word?

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.*

- How do you think the king of Judah felt when he heard the message in Jeremiah's scroll?
- In the Bible passage, pick out words and phrases that tell us about the king's reaction. Why do you think he reacted in this way?
- How do you feel when someone tells you you're doing something wrong?
- If we have a message of warning for the world, how do we present that in a spirit of love rather than of condemnation? Can you think of examples in today's world of people who talk about God's judgment in ways that are loving—or condemning?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Jonah, chapters 3 and 4—see below for discussion.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Discussing Real-Life Situations

When giving students situations like those used in the "Getting Started" section to discuss in small groups, you may want to select the groups yourself to provide some balance. That way you can be sure that most of the students will be in groups where they feel comfortable talking and sharing their views. Before breaking into groups, remind students there are no wrong answers in this type of activity and no one should ignore or dismiss someone else's response. The goal of the activity is to explore how your students would react if this were a real-life situation. They may not reach a consensus; some students might feel they would react very differently than others in their group would, and it's OK for this diversity of opinion to be reflected in the group response.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It's interesting to contrast this story from the book of Jeremiah with the story of Jonah and his warning to the city of Nineveh (as found in the book of Jonah, chapters 3 and 4). In both cases, God sent a prophet with a warning of imminent destruction. This is no casual suggestion for improvement—the message is clear. Your city will be destroyed; you have rejected God and He has turned His back on you.

The pagan city of Nineveh, according to the book of Jonah, repented at once upon hearing this message. The king of Nineveh took the leading role

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.*

in public repentance, even putting on sackcloth as a sign of mourning.

By contrast, Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, upon hearing Jeremiah's warning, reacted with scorn and mockery. To demonstrate how little he cared about God's warning, he burned the scroll on which it was written. Jeremiah 36 tells us that although the priests and people initially responded to the call for repentance, the king and his advisers showed no outward signs of fear or repentance. Their reaction, instead, was one of defiance.

Though Jonah gave the people of Nineveh no hint that God's warning was conditional, upon seeing their repentance God chose to stay His hand and refrain from punishing the Ninevites. Jeremiah's warnings made it clear that God had already set the wheels in motion for the Babylonian conquest of Judah to occur, yet in Jeremiah 36:7 we see again the call for change, the possibility that God's wrath can be turned away if the people change their ways.

Two very similar messages presented to two nations and their kings. A pagan nation chose to respond with repentance, while God's chosen people rejected the message and the messenger. Why? To the people of Nineveh, a message from the God of Israel was something new, something to be taken seriously. To the people of Judah, such warnings were old news. They had become so used to ignoring God's calls to repentance that they no longer paid attention. We, too, can get so used to hearing God's warnings that our consciences are no longer touched.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Pass out index cards and pencils to the class. Say: We've talked about the warning messages God sends to us and how we should respond to them. Do you think there's something in your life today that God needs to send you a message about? Something you need to change? On the index card, write what you think God is telling you today and what your response is. Keep this private—take it home with you and pray about it.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that judgment was coming if they didn't change their ways. They'd had plenty of warnings, but all those warnings had done was get them in the habit of ignoring God's prophets. Their hearts had become hardened, and that attitude was demonstrated by King Jehoiakim when he tore up and burned the scroll on which God's message for the people was written.

God has messages for us today—through His Word, through our consciences, through our Christian friends, parents, and teachers, and through His church. We don't always respond as we should when we get a warning—sometimes we feel guilty but don't do anything; sometimes a warning makes us more rebellious and determined to do our own thing. If you're getting a message about something that needs to change in your life—and you're convinced because of your study of the Bible that it's not just one person's bossy opinion but something God really wants you to do—then you need to set aside some time with God in prayer and ask Him to help you change what you're doing, so your life will be in line with His will. Remember, God knows best what's best for us. His warnings are always for our own good!



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 35.

*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.

LESSON 2

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 25 (esp. 1-14); 36.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 35.

storm warning



Photo by Terrill Thomas

keytext

"Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin."

(Jeremiah 36:3, NIV)

flashlight

"When men's hearts are softened and subdued by the constraining influence of the Holy Spirit, they will give heed to counsel; but when they turn from admonition until their hearts become hardened, the Lord permits them to be led by other influences. Refusing the truth, they accept falsehood, which becomes a snare to their own destruction" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 425).

what do you think?

When somebody gives me a warning or tells me bad things are going to happen if I don't change my behavior, I

____ thank them for the warning and make changes right away.

____ ignore them.

____ later think about it and make changes.

did you know?

For many years while the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were divided, the Assyrian Empire was the most powerful nation in that part of the world. It was the Assyrians who conquered the kingdom of Israel and sent the 10 northern tribes into exile. But by the time of Jeremiah, the power of Assyria was on the way out. Egypt was still a mighty nation, and the king of Judah relied heavily on his alliance with the Egyptians. But an even greater power was on the rise—the Babylonian Empire. It was the newly powerful nation of Babylon that had its eye on the kingdom of Judah. The fall of Judah to the Babylonians was, in one way, a natural consequence of picking the wrong side in the power struggles that were going on in the region at the time. But in another sense, as the book of Jeremiah makes clear, it was God's way of sending a message to His people—if they were not faithful to Him, they would suffer the consequences of their disobedience.

INTO THE STORY

"In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 'Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.'

"So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll. Then Jeremiah told Baruch, 'I am restricted; I am not allowed to go to the LORD's temple. So you go to the house of the LORD on a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll the words of the LORD that you wrote as I dictated. Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns. Perhaps they will bring their petition before the LORD and will each turn from their wicked ways, for the anger and wrath pronounced against this people by the LORD are great.'

"Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do; at the LORD's temple he read the words of the LORD from the scroll. . . .

"The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him. It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them."

(Jeremiah 36:1-8, 21-26, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

At this point in the story, was God still prepared to hold back punishment if the people of Judah repented?

What was the purpose of Jeremiah getting Baruch to read the scroll to the people? Why did Jeremiah not read it to the people himself?

What was the response of the king and his counselors to Baruch's scroll? What do you think the king wanted to indicate by doing this?

What do you think is the best way to warn people about the consequences of their actions? What kind of warnings do you tend to listen to?

punch lines

"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" **(Ezekiel 33:11, NIV).**

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" **(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).**

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' " **(Matthew 4:17, NIV).**

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" **(2 Peter 3:9, NIV).**

further insight

"Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 23

"It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 27

Sabbath

Read Jeremiah 36:21-23.

Remember the last time a teacher, a parent, or someone else told you that what you were doing was wrong? How did you feel? Look over your answers to the *What Do You Think?* section.

_____
_____
_____

People respond to correction in very different ways. Sometimes it depends on how we're feeling. Sometimes it depends on who's doing the correcting—it's much easier to take correction and warnings from someone we respect and have a good relationship with.

The king of Judah was presented with a warning from God. How did he choose to respond?

_____
_____
_____

Sunday

Read Ezekiel 33:11.

Read the *Into the Story* section, then read and think about the *Out of the Story* questions. The king of Judah had a hard time accepting correction and rebuke. He didn't want to hear Jeremiah's warning.

Often we don't like to hear words of warning. We may respond by attacking the person who's warning us. Some people choose to ignore God's Word. But even if the warnings are ignored, the message is still there; there's a storm on the horizon, and we need to be prepared.

Monday

Read Jeremiah 36:3; Exodus 19:5; Luke 13:9.

Read this week's *Key Text.* Mark the statements below true or false based on what you read in that text:

T F God was planning to punish the people of Judah for their sins.

T F God had His mind made up, and nothing was going to change it.

Many of the predictions and warnings that the prophets brought to God's people were conditional. *If* they continued in their wicked ways, destruction would come. But *if* they were willing to change, the outcome would be different.

Most of the warnings we face are conditional too. They're what computer programmers call "if-then" statements—*if* you do this, *then* this will happen. *If* you watch TV instead of studying, *then* you'll fail your exam—but *if* you change your ways and study, *then* you'll pass.

Think of some other if-then warnings that relate to your everyday life:

IF I . . .	THEN . . .
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Even the final destruction of sin at the end of time is something we can avoid. *If* we turn away from sin and put our trust in Jesus, *then* we'll enjoy eternity in heaven with Him.

Tuesday

Read Matthew 4:17.

The *Flashlight* suggestion for this week suggests that the more often we ignore God's warning and refuse to repent, the harder it will be for us to change.

Get in the habit of listening to God! Read your Bible, pray, and pay attention to the advice of Christian friends, teachers, parents, and leaders. *If* you get used to responding to God's guidance, *then* it will get easier to follow!

Wednesday

Read through the *Punch Lines* texts and then use a Bible concordance to look up some more verses about repentance. In your own words, complete the statements below:

God has to punish sin because _____
_____.

Repentance means _____
_____.

If we repent, *then* God will _____
_____.

Thursday

Read Proverbs 12:1; 13:18; 15:5, 31, 32.

As we've seen, some people take correction better than others.

Below are some positive responses you could give to someone who offers a warning or correction. Can you add a few of your own?

- "Thanks for pointing that out. I'll think and pray about it."
- "I'm sorry. I'll try to do better next time."
- "I never thought of it that way before. . . . Thanks."

_____
_____
_____

Friday

Read John 14:26; Hebrews 3:7, 8.

Can you think of things in your life that the Holy Spirit wants to convict you about?

What are you prepared to change in your life in response to God's call?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 35.

**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.