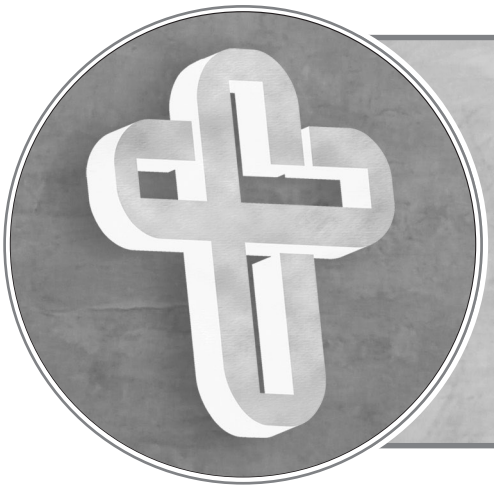


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MARCH 14 2026

faith works

Scripture Story: Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-17.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.
Key Text: Ephesians 4:13, 14.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The call to share the good news of God's forgiveness and His gift of salvation is a personal call (Isaiah 6:1-9). Two thousand years ago we received the Great Commission to go into the entire world to preach the gospel to all peoples and to make disciples of the nations. This world is not some untouched corner of the Amazon jungle. This world is our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, our friends, our families.

Ellen White's words resonate with as much relevance today as they did years ago: "The Greeks sought after wisdom, yet the message of the cross was to them foolishness because they valued their own wisdom more highly than the wisdom that comes from above" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 240). This begets the question of how we can share the gospel in this increasingly urban world imbued with hubris from an overabundance of information, technology, and medical advancements.

Our youth live in a culture that espouses living and believing whatever you want as long as it is right for you. Truth has become relative. That is why simply teaching our kids to believe in the right things isn't going to be enough to enable them to stand strong and make right choices in today's culture. It is critical that our youth are taught skills that will empower them to be firmly grounded in the Word of God. This will strengthen them spiritually, morally, and emotionally to stand firm against a world in which philosophies of pluralism and relativism impact them in a very real way. Ellen White emphasizes: "The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 230). Our youth need to be so thoroughly convinced of the truth that they will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences.

In these times of loneliness and despair, we have been given a great and precious gift. It is our God-given responsibility to stay undeterred and keep sharing the message of freedom and an abundant life to a world crying out for hope and belonging.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize some of the barriers to accepting and believing God's message of salvation. *(Know)*
- Experience the urgency to be firmly grounded in their beliefs so that they are prepared to face the inevitable challenges that come with following God's command to spread His message of salvation. *(Feel)*
- Adopt Bible study skills and apply them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 13

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith

of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4).

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 and guide them to understand the concept of how beliefs influence our behaviors.*

Illustration

Share this illustration in your words with your class:

"God's Word gives us hope in times of discouragement. It brings comfort in times of affliction. It imparts life in times of despair. Pastor Pyoter Rumackik was imprisoned in a Soviet gulag for his faith. He discovered that even in our darkest times, God provides strength for our daily needs.

"His experience became almost unbearable when prison officials took his Bible away. A few days later, a fellow prisoner handed him a notebook and said, 'Here, read this poem.' The pastor glanced up and couldn't believe his eyes. It was a poem about Christ's sufferings on Calvary. His spirit soared as he read it. He began flipping the pages and discovered more scripturally based poems and numerous passages of the Bible. They filled the entire notebook. . . .

"Later the Christian pastor discovered . . . that the prisoner who gave him the notebook was a Mongolian shepherd who became fascinated with Christian radio programs. They lifted his spirits and provided inspiration during his solitary nights. He would tape programs and copy portions in notebooks to pass the time. Somehow he managed to smuggle one of his notebooks into the prison. He then felt inspired to give it to Pyoter. For the pastor, this [Mongolian] shepherd seemed like the ravens that brought food to the prophet Elijah in the wilderness. God found a way to provide for his needs. . . . God's living Word provides strength for our daily needs in all of the varied circumstances of our lives" (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* p. 15).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Followers of God believe that the Bible is more than just a book. God's people value the power that the Bible imparts. We believe that the Word of God is not only useful in challenging non-Christians on their worldview, but also for us to challenge ourselves concerning our own views.

If you wanted to read the Bible now, where would be the nearest place you could get one? Your home? Your desk? Or even in your schoolbag? In many countries, it's easy to get hold of a Bible. However, in many other places, Bibles are hard to come by, and Christians living there either have to travel very far to read the Bible or face persecution if caught with one. In places such as these, people value the Bible and treasure every opportunity they can get to read it.

How important is the Bible for you? If you had to walk for an hour to get to a Bible, would you still go to read it?

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.*

- *Circle* the different cities mentioned in this story. What happened at each venue?
- In every place, Paul preached God's Word blatantly, with passion and courage. However, he achieved varying degrees of success. What can we learn from this?
- The people in Athens were not uneducated. They valued the pursuit of knowledge. They spent "all their time discussing the latest ideas." Why, then, did they reject the truth that Paul was sharing with them? What did their actions reveal about their beliefs and values?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?

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

- **Mark 16:15—**God divinely commissioned every-

one who has ever heard or read this command to "preach the gospel" and draw people into following Him. What does it mean to "preach the gospel"?

- **Matthew 7:24-26—**In this story of the wise and foolish builders, Christ uses this analogy of house building to describe two categories of people. On the surface, both houses appear the same but without the right foundation (James 3:13-17) their end can be disastrous. A good foundation is daily obedience (Psalm 111:10), service, Bible study, and prayer. What kind of foundation are you building your "house" on?

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. Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest and most influential cities in Macedonia. Athens was the center for Greek culture, philosophy, and education. According to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Berea was a "small Macedonian city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. The city was of far less commercial importance than Thessalonica" (vol. 6, p. 344). Are there any similarities in the way Paul's preaching was received and the way God's Word is received in today's megacities?

2. The Stoics and the Epicureans. The Stoics valued logic over emotions and, as a result, they attempted to attain a harmonious life by suppressing their desire for pleasure. In contrast, the Epicureans valued the pursuit of happiness or pleasure as the primary goal in life. What values did Christ impart and how was that reflected in His actions while on earth?

3. "May we know?" *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* sheds light on the nuance of this question: "An idiomatic expression, which may

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Be Prepared . . .

Allocate at least one hour each week for lesson preparation. The more you prepare, the better your Sabbath School lesson will go for both you and your students.

This teachers' guide was prepared to make your job easier, so use it. Make an effort to understand how the lesson develops. How does one activity lead into another? What is the purpose of the various questions? When you analyze and understand the different elements, you can own and adapt the lesson with increased effectiveness.

Where possible, attend training sessions for Sabbath School teachers. When you are trained for a task, you feel more competent, understand how to do it well, and enjoy doing it more.

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite 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* The Acts of the Apostles. *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 spoke 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.*

here be rendered: 'Is it possible for us to know?'—a question that may have been courteous, sarcastic, or ironical. The Epicureans and Stoics had no doubts about their own ability to understand all that Paul might say to them but they were obviously eager to hear about his strange teaching" (vol. 6, p. 349). What are your beliefs or notions about God and the Bible? Are they derived from hearsay or diligent and humble self-study?

4. Dionysius, Damaris, and a number of others. Although the majority of people in Athens did not accept and believe Paul's words, there were a few who believed. As a result, a church was founded. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* proposes that the church in 2 Corinthians 1:1 ("the saints which are all in Achaia") is the result of the conversion that Dionysius and the others experienced. What can you infer about God's plans from this?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Divide the class into groups for a role-playing session.

Hand out four or five scenarios to the groups (e.g., being an unpopular, bullied child; someone the class dislikes wanting to join in your game; your close friends deciding to do something you do not agree with).

Ask each group to create a short role play to enact the scene, keeping in line with the values that Jesus espouses.

Summary

Share the following summary in your own words:

When there are no standards, everybody thinks they are right, and there can be a lot of misunderstanding and arguments. It's difficult to compare anything unless you have a standard of comparison. The Bible is the standard to evaluate the Christian's life.

When we compare ourselves with God's law, with God, and with Christ, we realize that none of us measures up. None of us can meet His standards. We learn what the wise thing to do is, as well as the unwise. The Bible is a standard for living. But in order to live our lives accordingly, we need to know the standards from our personal experience. We need to look to Christ, read the Bible, and search the truth for ourselves and not simply rely on the hearsay of others.

However, no matter how far we fall short, Jesus has already bridged the gap between us and God so that He can accept us according to His standard of righteousness.

Reminder, next week is Global Youth Day. Are you ready?



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 *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 14 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-17.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.

faith works



Photo by Juan Gonzalez

flashlight

"In every effort to reach the higher classes, the worker for God needs strong faith. Appearances may seem forbidding, but in the darkest hour there is light above. The strength of those who love and serve God will be renewed day by day. The understanding of the Infinite is placed at their service, that in carrying out His purposes they may not err. Let these workers hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, remembering that the light of God's truth is to shine amid the darkness that enshrouds our world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 242).

keytext

"This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching."

(Ephesians 4:13, 14, NLT)

what do you think?

In his book *Kingdom Education* Glen Schultz says: "At the foundation of a person's life, we find his beliefs. These beliefs shape his values, and his values drive his actions."*

Define belief and values in your own words.

Belief is _____

Values are _____

did you know?

Instead of indulging in poetic descriptions and fanciful representations, which might please the senses and feed the imagination, but which would not touch the daily experience, Paul sought by the use of simple language to bring home to the heart the truths that are of vital importance. Fanciful representations of truth may cause an ecstasy of feeling, but all too often truths presented in this way do not supply the food necessary to strengthen and fortify the believer for the battles of life. The immediate needs, the present trials, of struggling souls—these must be met with sound, practical instruction in the fundamental principles of Christianity" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 252).

INTO THE STORY

"That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men. . . .

"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.

"He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, 'What's this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he's picked up?' Others said, 'He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods.'

"Then they took him to the high council of the city. 'Come and tell us about this new teaching,' they said. 'You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it's all about.' (It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

"So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: 'Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: "To an Unknown God." This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. . . .

"'God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.'

"When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, 'We want to hear more about this later.' That ended Paul's discussion with them, but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the council, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

(Acts 17:10-23, 30-34, NLT)

OUT OF THE STORY

List all the people and groups that responded positively to Paul's efforts. Next, list the ones who rejected him. What were the differences in attitude or beliefs that led to the different outcomes?

Compare the people in Berea with the people in Thessalonica and Athens. When people talk to me about God and the Bible, which group do I most resemble?

Paul was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw in the city. Do we find ourselves troubled by the godlessness around us? Should we be? Explain.

What do you think is the "big picture" of the passages above? In one phrase, sum up the main thought of the passages above. Share with the class why you made that statement.

What does Paul's discussion with the Athenians tell us about how we should relate to nonbelievers?

punch lines

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" **(Philippians 2:9-11, NIV).**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" **(Acts 1:8, NIV).**

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" **(John 3:18, NIV).**

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" **(1 John 5:13, NIV).**

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" **(Romans 10:17, NIV).**

further insight

"Those who are sincerely seeking for truth will make a careful investigation, in the light of God's Word, of the doctrines presented to them."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 232

"As [the Bereans] compared scripture with scripture, heavenly angels were beside them, enlightening their minds and impressing their hearts."

— Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 231

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 3:18.

Do you find that faith and spiritual values influence the choices you make in your life? If so, how?

Sunday

Read Romans 10:17.

As you read the Into the Story section and use the questions in the Out of the Story section, ask yourself: What did I learn that was new and I didn't know before? How does this change the way I relate to God and the Bible?

What does this text tell you about God? What does this text tell you about you? What does this text tell you about your relationship with God?

Monday

Read Ephesians 4:13, 14.

Break down this week's Key Text into a list of benefits that come from having an intimate relationship with God. The depth of a relationship is evidenced in the intimacy and trust we have with the other person. Until we come to know God personally, a relationship with Him will simply be a vague concept. How would you describe your relationship with God? As a vague concept or a reality enacted in your daily communications with Him?

The goal of our relationships with God and others is one of maturity. The Key Text shares how that maturity is achieved: through unity in our faith and our knowledge of Jesus. How are these attributes expressed in our relationships?

Tuesday

Read Acts 1:8.

Read the quote in the Flashlight section of this week's lesson. Then read Acts 18:1-17. What conclusions can you draw about God's promises?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week's lesson, which verse strikes you as particularly significant today? Why do you think this verse is especially relevant to you today?

How can these Punch Lines help you to be "mature in the Lord"?

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:9-11.

A personal testimony of your life-changing relationship with God is very powerful in underscoring His message of love and forgiveness. Prepare your personal testimony of how you became a Christian and practice it by sharing with the class. Keep it to three minutes, using the following outline:

- Before—What my life was like before I got to know Christ
- During—How I came to trust Christ
- After—In what ways I am different now

Friday

Read 1 John 5:13.

People invest time and energy into attaining better grades, developing their career, their bodies, and relationships, but often ne-glect the spiritual dimension of their lives. How do you invest time and energy into growing your relationship with God?

*Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), p. 39.

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* 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.