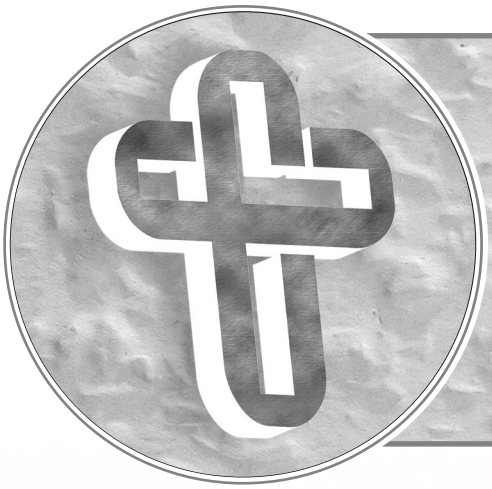


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MAY 16 2026

a good report

Scripture Story: Colossians; Philippians.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders),* chapters 44, 45.
Key Text: Colossians 3:17.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The *Flashlight* quote of the week speaks about the apostle Paul's trials and his imprisonment for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The trials that Paul faced were instrumental in drawing more attention to the gospel. It even gave him opportunity to witness to the prison guards in Caesar's court. In your presentation of the lesson for this week you can show how the daily challenges and difficulties we may face in school, at home, on the job, or in our neighborhoods can be opportunities for witnessing, simply in the way we choose to handle these difficult situations. It may even be that God allowed certain circumstances to arise in our lives for the specific purpose of blessing, helping, or witnessing to someone else. There are several Bible examples that can be used in comparison to Paul's experience. Joseph found himself in a dreadful situation because of betrayal, but the Lord used his circumstances to help save the lives of thousands of people during a time of famine (see Genesis 41:55-57). In the story of Mordecai and Esther, Mordecai challenged Esther to have courage in facing the king when he said, "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14, NKJV).

Though none of us want to face difficulties and trials, we can see these times as opportunities for lifting up the name of Christ in our words and deeds. Just as in the cases of Joseph, Queen Esther, and Paul, in the end we will be rewarded for our loyalty to the Lord.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that trials and even persecution may be opportunities for witnessing. *(Know)*
- Feel the desire to be Christ's representatives in word and deed in every circumstance of life. *(Feel)*
- Make the commitment to be a blessing and a light to others. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children" (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15).

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.*

Have the class participants work in twos or threes to complete the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. Tell each group to add at least three things that are not listed that they consider to be everyday acts of faith. After a few minutes, discuss with the class the correlation between our actions and our influence on those around us. Be prepared to give a couple of examples yourself.

Illustration

Read the following quotes from *The Great Controversy*, pages 39 to 41, to the class, or share the account in your own words. It depicts the state of the early Christian church not long after Jesus left the earth and ascended into heaven:

"The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They 'endured a great fight of afflictions.' Hebrews 10:32. They 'had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.' Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy.

". . . Christians were falsely accused of the most dreadful crimes and declared to be the cause of great calamities—famine, pestilence, and earthquake.

"Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were hunted like beasts of prey. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. 'Destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.' Verses 37, 38. . . .

"Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ."

- Why do you think the early Christian church experienced such persecution?
- How can we prepare each day to stand faithful to Jesus regardless of the circumstances?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Have you ever been accused of doing something you didn't do? Have you ever been punished when you were innocent of all charges? This week we will discuss the imprisonment of Paul the apostle, who was placed on house arrest and tried, even though he committed no crime. And we will learn that many other Christians were persecuted and punished for preaching the gospel. We will discover that in our own experiences as Christians we may face unjust treatment. But even in the face of such trials, we must persevere and continue to uplift the name of Jesus by our words and actions.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Read or review the Into the Story *section with your class. Then complete and discuss the following activity with the group:*

1. Name three positive things that happened as a result of Paul's imprisonment.
2. Give an example of something in your own life that reminds you of Paul's experience.
3. Name someone else in the Bible who was thrown in prison or punished for preaching or for their loyalty to God.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Genesis 41:37-57; Esther 4:1-16.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on specific aspects of the story for your students.

1. Before Paul became a believer he persecuted Christians. He really believed that they were going against the will of God by preaching that Jesus was the Son of God. When he was converted and became a Christian himself, many believers were afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had been converted. After hearing about his experience on the road to Damascus, of how Jesus appeared to him and how Paul became a true follower of Christ, the Christian

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Ten Tips for Teachers (From Award-Winning Teachers)

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. Ask for feedback; be grateful for criticism.

(Adapted from www.psychologicalscience.org /observer/getArticle.cfm?id=174)

believers finally accepted him and welcomed him into their fellowship (Acts 9:20-28).

2. From the very beginning of Paul's ministry the Jews sought to kill him, the man they had known as Saul (Acts 9:23). After his conversion, he spent some time in Damascus preaching and teaching about Jesus. He then went on to Jerusalem and stayed with the believers there. Again, the Jews tried to kill him for speaking out about their pagan practices. So Paul moved on to travel to other regions, preaching the gospel (Acts 9:20-31).

3. Believers were first called Christians in a place called Antioch (Acts 11:26). In many places the gospel was preached only to the Jews. But in Antioch the message of the gospel was preached to the Greeks also (Acts 11:19-21). Paul spent a whole year in Antioch with a faithful man name Barnabas, preaching and teaching in the churches there (Acts 11:24-26). The Lord spoke to the ministers in Antioch, telling them that He had a very special work for Paul and Barnabas. So they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and prayed a special prayer of blessing over them. Then they sent the two missionaries off to do the work that God had called them to do (Acts 13:1, 2). Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel not only to the Jews, but to the non-Jews also (Acts 13:16, 43-48).

4. Paul and Barnabas traveled to many regions. On one occasion they returned to Antioch. There they found a dispute among the believers about whether or not the non-Jewish believers should be circumcised. Some of the Jewish Christians thought that those who were not circumcised could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas spoke to the people about their ministry to non-Jews, and of how many people were converted and accepted Christ. They spoke of the many miracles that had been performed among the non-Jewish believers. Peter was there also, and gave testimony of how God also had called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. After much discussion, many of the

Teaching From . . .

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 quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Jewish Christians agreed that some of the old Jewish laws were not a requirement for salvation (Acts 15:1-35).

III. CLOSING

Activity

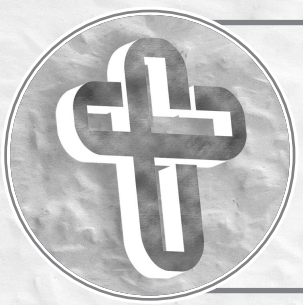
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Hand out paper and pencils to class members. Have each person write a short paragraph describing something they will do differently in the upcoming week to show the love of Christ, or to be a witness in word or deed to someone they may interact with on a regular basis. Tell class members to focus on situations that have been difficult for them before. After a few minutes, ask those who wish to participate to trade papers with another class member. Have a few people read the paragraph of their partners out loud to the whole group. (Example: Mary's paragraph says she will . . .) Read two or three, or as many as time permits.

Summary

Share with the class the following passage, which was written by Paul to the Romans:

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14-21, NIV).



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 44, 45.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MAY162026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Colossians; Philippians.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 44, 45.

a good report



Photo by Alden Ho

keytext

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

(Colossians 3:17)

flashlight

"It could not be expected that Paul, a poor and friendless prisoner, would be able to gain the attention of the wealthy and titled classes of Roman citizens. To them vice presented all its glittering allurements and held them willing captives. But from among the toilworn, want-stricken victims of their oppression, even from among the poor slaves, many gladly listened to the words of Paul and in the faith of Christ found a hope and peace that cheered them under the hardships of their lot. Yet while the apostle's work began with the humble and the lowly, its influence extended until it reached the very palace of the emperor" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 461).

what do you think?

The apostle Paul showed great faith even though he was a prisoner. Check the things in the list below that are expressions of faith:

___ Praying for something that seems impossible
___ Forgiving a friend
___ Loving those who don't love you
___ Making your own breakfast
___ Trusting in people who are not trustworthy

did you know?

If we use the analogy of an iceberg, our conscious mind can be understood as the small part of the iceberg that is above water that everyone can see. The subconscious mind is the much larger and vaster part of the iceberg submerged under the water that cannot readily be seen. Our deepest conflicts reside in the deepest part of the iceberg and are the most difficult to uncover.

As we contemplate the life of Christ and fill our minds with the stories and principles found in God's holy Book, we will be storing powerful images in our conscious mind. These images will shape our thoughts and prompt us to do and say the things that will be becoming of children of the King. One of the greatest witnesses is the Christlike actions of the child of God.

INTO THE STORY

Paul is under house arrest in Rome for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even in his chains, he expresses great joy in his letters to some of the churches throughout the region. His joy is not dependent on external circumstances. It comes from knowing Christ and spreading the good news of salvation to others. Paul counts it a privilege to be a minister of the gospel and to be a servant to his fellow believers. Even as a prisoner he asks his Christian brothers and sisters to pray that he would have more opportunities to share his faith. He writes to the churches that he has heard good reports of their diligent work for the gospel. He admonishes them to continue in the faith, and in love and unity with one another. He reminds them that if they continue in their walk with Christ, they will have a great reward in heaven.

In the following passages, written to the Philippians, Paul wants the believers to know that his trials are for good—for the furtherance of the gospel. And he encourages them to continue the work.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. I am happy because you have joined me in spreading the good news. You have done so from the first day until now. . . . And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns. . . .

"Brothers and sisters, here is what I want you to know. What has happened to me has actually helped to spread the good news. One thing has become clear. I am being held by chains because I am a witness for Christ. All the palace guards and everyone else know it. And because I am a prisoner, most of the believers have become bolder in the Lord. They now dare even more to preach the good news without fear. . . .

"I completely expect and hope that I won't be ashamed in any way. I'm sure I will be brave enough. Now as always Christ will receive glory because of what happens to me. He will receive glory whether I live or die."

(Philippians 1:3-6, 12-14, 20, NIrV)

OUT OF THE STORY

In Colossians 3:2 Paul says to "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." What earthly things do you think he is referring to?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What difficult challenges are you facing because of your choice to follow Christ? What difficult challenges do you think you might face in the future as a follower of Christ?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How has your Christian experience influenced those around you (friends, family, neighbors, or classmates)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why do you think the Lord allowed Paul and others to be put in prison and persecuted for preaching the gospel? (See Philippians 1:12-14 for a clue.)

_____
_____
_____
_____

In his letters to the Philippians and Colossians Paul speaks of the good reports he has been receiving about the Christians in those churches. Do you think it is important for others to hear a good report about your conduct? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"I have learned to be content no matter what happens to me. I know what it's like not to have what I need. I also know what it's like to have more than I need. I have learned the secret of being content no matter what happens. I am content whether I am well fed or hungry. I am content whether I have more than enough or not enough. I can do all this by the power of Christ. He gives me strength" **(Philippians 4:11-13, NIrV).**

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven . . . if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven" **(Colossians 1:3-5, 23).**

"Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord" **(Philippians 4:4, NIrV).**

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" **(Colossians 3:17).**

"Praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains" **(Colossians 4:3).**

further insight

"In every generation and in every land the true foundation for character building has been the same—the principles contained in the word of God. The only safe and sure rule is to do what God says."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 475

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Colossians 3:17.

Read the *Key Text* for this week's lesson. On the lines below, write out the meaning of this verse in your own words. Give real-life examples of words and/or deeds that are reflections of Christ.

_____
_____
_____

Sunday

Read John 17:3.

A quote by Doug Batchelor in his book *To See the King: Seven Steps to Salvation* says that "nothing is more important than knowing [Christ] and preparing yourself and others for His return! If it isn't true, then nothing really matters." Why do you think nothing really matters if the good news about Jesus and what He has done for us is not true?

_____
_____
_____

Monday

Read 1 Corinthians 2:2.

Choose from the words in the box to write synonyms for the words in the list below.

Behavior	Testimony	Conviction
Observer	Visual	Announcement

Conduct _____ Witness _____
Example _____ Message _____
Report _____ Belief _____

Choose three words from those listed above and describe how they are important to you as a follower of Christ.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tuesday

Read Colossians 4:3.

Communication is a powerful tool that can be used for good or for evil. We can communicate thoughts, ideas, and beliefs verbally and nonverbally. Nonverbal communication comes in many forms such as: written, music, art, dance, behaviors, jesters, facial expressions, etc.

Choose three or four of the nonverbal communication tools above and give an example for each of how it can be used to witness or share your faith.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Wednesday

Read Colossians 1:3, 4, 23.

Joseph always conducted himself as a child of God, even in the face of adversity. He never retaliated or sought revenge on those who had done him wrong. Potiphar was so impressed with the way Joseph carried himself that he put Joseph, who was a slave, in charge of his whole household. When Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison, even the warden noticed Joseph's good behavior and trusted him to be over all of the other prisoners. Joseph's good reputation paid off in the end and he was made ruler of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. (Read Joseph's story in Genesis 39:1-23; 41:37-40.)

How does this example affect your life? What can you do differently as a result of this example?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thursday

Read Philippians 4:11-13.

Complete the following sentences.

1. "And the Lord will deliver me from every _____ _____ and _____ me for His heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18).

2. "For God has not given us a _____ of _____, but of power and of love and of a _____ _____" (2 Timothy 1:7).

3. "There is laid up for me the _____ of _____, which the Lord, the righteous _____, will give to me on that Day" (2 Timothy 4:8).

Friday

Read Philippians 4:4.

When Paul was under house arrest in Rome, he was hearing good reports of the Christian believers in the nearby cities and towns, reports of the good work they were doing to spread the gospel of Jesus, and of their loving interactions with one another. In turn he gave them a good report of his experiences in Rome. As a prisoner he was still rejoicing in the Lord and witnessing to the guards and those in Caesar's household. Paul's story is an example to us of how vital our Christian conduct is in witnessing and spreading the love of Christ. Many hearts can be won to Christ just by watching the good example of someone else. Can you name someone in your own life who has been a witness or a good example to you?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 44, 45.

**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 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.