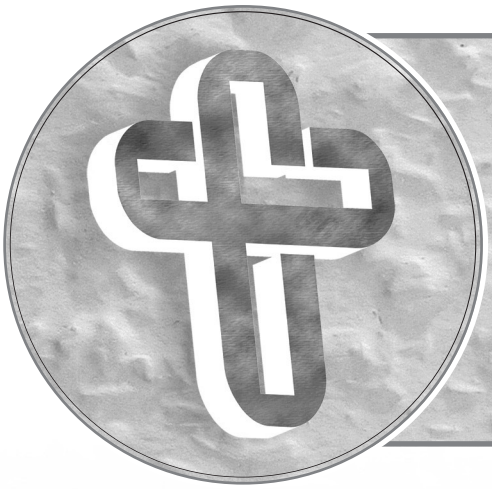


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 13 2026

the revelation

Scripture Story: Revelation 1:1-11.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 56.
Key Text: Revelation 1:9.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Persecution. The very word discomforts believers of every faith, and Christians are no exception. We are not masochists. We take no special pleasure in pain, yet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ declared: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18, NIV).

The apostle John was keenly aware that his belief in Christ put him at odds with Jewish leaders and Roman authorities. He saw believers murdered, and endured the execution of his brother James in A.D. 44. Yet John was undaunted in his love for God and the truth. His preaching and miracles aroused the ire of the Roman emperor Domitian, who first tried boiling him in a caldron of oil before exiling him on Patmos. Many years earlier he stood with his brother James assuring the Savior that he could indeed drink the cup that Jesus would drink (Matthew 20:22). At the time he had not envisioned that Jesus' cup would cost him so much.

As is often the case, that which humanity intends for evil, God uses for His glory, and He did this when John was persecuted.

Your students need to know that persecution is not to be feared. It was in the crucible of trial, stuck on an island in the Aegean Sea, that God revealed Himself to John and gave him a revelation of Jesus Christ and the events that would usher in the end of the world and the return of the Savior. In his senior years John returned from the Isle of Patmos with his testimony sharpened, and he used his experience to continue to build up the Christian faith. He was a faithful witness until his death—of natural causes. Whether we die from persecution or not, God has promised to give us the grace needed to endure.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that belief in God will always require sacrifice. *(Know)*
- Understand that God never calls us to endure that for which He does not prepare us. *(Feel)*
- Accept the challenge to live their faith in the face of trial. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 19

"The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and there-

fore strengthens Christian witness" (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

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.*

The everyday annoyances that upset many teenagers and adults today pale in comparison to the persecution many Christians around the world are currently enduring for their belief in God. The object of this activity is to get the students talking and discussing some of the common irritants that bother them when compared with the real challenges faced by Christians in, say, China or Saudi Arabia.

After the students complete and discuss their answers, consider asking them whether or not any of the annoyances listed in the activity rise to the level of persecution. It is not uncommon to hear teens describe minor irritations in the starkest terms.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"In the Belgian Congo, September 1956, missionary Lois Carlson strained to listen to the static from a shortwave radio. Simba nationalists had overrun Dr. Paul Carlson's hospital.

"Once in a while Dr. Carlson could sneak out a brief message on the shortwave. Lois caught this sentence: 'Where I go from here I know not, only that it will be with Him.'

"Days later, another message: 'I know I'm ready to meet my Lord, but my thought for you makes it more difficult. I trust that I might be a witness for Christ.'

"When witnesses discovered Dr. Carlson's body, slain at the hospital, they found a New Testament in his jacket pocket. Inside, the doctor had written the date—the day before his death—and a single word: 'Peace.'

"Peace in the face of the worst of circumstances. Peace in the most troubling times. Peace in despair, peace in disaster, peace in the face of death. God's peace is His special gift for you today. Whatever the circumstances of your life, . . . grasp this simple promise by faith: 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people' (Psalm 85:8, NKJV)" (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 101, 102).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Some believe that humans are evolving into a higher, more enlightened state, but you'd never know it from the religious hatred and bigotry engulfing our world. Religious beliefs and disputes are at the heart of most conflicts creeping up around the world today.

How do we as Christians face a tide of opposition and the specter of personal bodily injury? How should we respond? Should we "turn the other cheek" and pretend that we haven't been hurt? How does God relate to us when we face adversity?

These are a few of the questions many Christians want answered, and this week's lesson offers us a case study from which we can glean fear-dispelling insights.

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.*

This week's *Into the Story* scripture introduces us to John in one of the most challenging periods in his life. Exiled to a penal colony off in the sea, John somehow remains optimistic and upbeat. As you process the Scripture with your class, be sure to pay special attention to John's tone. He is happy in spite of his circumstances—a "skill" that every Christian must learn.

Also, consider the role that God plays in this brief narrative. What is John saying about God? What is God saying to—and through—him? Is God willing to speak to us in our times of need, or is His voice reserved for great Christian lights such as John? God is speaking to John as though he were the only person on the planet.

Finally, John's message brims with encouragement for God's people down through time. What does Revelation 1:4-6 tell us about Jesus Christ? What comfort can we draw from the fact that Jesus, our conquering King, overcame the adversity and trials He faced while on earth? John's call to exalt Jesus

should be a source of great hope for us because we know that one day Jesus will return to free us from this world.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 4:7-11; Matthew 10:16-20; Romans 8:16-18.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The Man Who Exiled John. His name was Titus Flavius Domitianus, born on October 24, A.D. 51. Like many other Roman emperors, Domitian was insecure, and his personal insecurities led to virulent brutality. He trusted no one, and some historians report that every room in his palace had mirrors so that he could see who was behind him at all times. In political affairs he commanded strict loyalty from the Roman senate, executing some members with whom he disagreed. He insisted on being referred to as *Dominus et Deus* ("Lord and God").

Persecutions of the small Christian sect in Rome began under the emperor Nero in A.D. 64. After a fire consumed nearly three quarters of Rome, Nero deflected attention from those who suspected that he started the fire for his amusement by rounding up Christians, torturing them until they implicated others, then putting scores of them to death in the most horrific ways imaginable. This persecution killed the apostle Paul, and two decades later the emperor Domitian attempted to kill another powerful witness—John. Most scholars believe that it was during the reign of Domitian—A.D. 85-96—that John wrote the book of Revelation from the visions given him by God.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Keep It Simple

In a Sabbath School lesson such as this one there are many points that can be made, but you'll certainly not have enough time for all of them. One of the teaching secrets that made Jesus effective was His simplicity. Jesus knew ordinary people—how they talked, how they thought, etc.—because He studied people, and because He came in contact with them in His father's carpenter shop. Jesus made sure that everything He taught was applicable to some real-life challenge that His students were facing or would face. He spoke in simple language, using everyday "props" to make His points.

Jesus' hearers often missed the deeper layers of meaning in His teachings, but they left with more than enough to pique their interest. As you teach this week's lesson, consider what items from the teens' world you can use to build modern-day parables around the truths in this lesson. What language would make the message most simple? Ask God to give you the gift of simplicity that Jesus had when He taught.

cornerstoneconnections

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.*

2. Before the Emperor. Ellen White sets the scene of John's trial before the emperor. "John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. Here before the authorities the apostle's doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him of teaching seditious heresies. By these accusations his enemies hoped to bring about the disciple's death.

"John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor that his words had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his wisdom and eloquence. But the more convincing his testimony, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was filled with rage. He could neither dispute the reasoning of Christ's faithful advocate, nor match the power that attended his utterance of truth; yet he determined that he would silence his voice.

"John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* pp. 569, 570).

God's servant did not wilt under the pressure of the Roman emperor. John never recanted his faith, and the testimony coming from the cauldron of burning oil cut the Roman emperor to the quick. He removed John and later sent him to Patmos. If God can protect His servant under such dire circumstances, can He not do the same for us?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the class to form a circle and hold hands. Tell the class that you are going to call out some situations, and that you want each class member to pray for the person on their right and left as if the situation you call out is true for the people whose hands they are holding.

Say: What would you tell God if you were holding the hand of:

A. Someone who is afraid of the time of trouble and the end of the world?
B. Someone who loves God, but isn't sure of whether or not they would be true to God under trial and adversity?
C. Someone who is struggling to live for Jesus in their school?

Close with a prayer asking God to give us the strength to be faithful to Him!
(Source: https://www.creativeyouthideas.com /resources/?s=adventure+prayer)

Summary

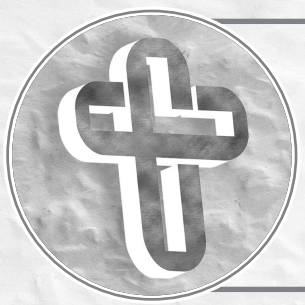
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This week's lesson reminds us that Christians aren't made overnight. Trials are one of God's appointed means of perfecting our characters and drawing us closer to Him. John learned this several times throughout his life.

His brother James was beheaded in A.D. 44. Philip was scourged in Phrygia, thrown into prison, and later crucified in A.D. 54. Matthew was killed with a halberd in A.D. 60. James the Less, the brother of Jesus and writer of the book of James, was stoned to death at the age of 94 by Jews. And the list goes on and on.

John knew that there would be attempts on his life, yet he remained faithful to God. How can we stand strong in the face of adversity? John's life tells us how: John gave his life to Jesus and he esteemed the sacrifice of God to be so precious that it was an honor for him to share the fellowship of Christ's suffering. We are not to worry about whether or not we'll be able to stand in a similar trial. Our only responsibility is to be faithful to God each day and trust Him to supply our every need in the hour of trial.

Furthermore, if we remain faithful we too, like John, will see fresh revelations of Jesus Christ.



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*), chapter 56.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 13 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Revelation 1:1-11.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 56.

the revelation



Photo by JupiterImages Corporation © 2010/Digital photocomposing by Truman

keytext

"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

(Revelation 1:9, NIV)

flashlight

"The rulers of the Jews were filled with bitter hatred against John for his unwavering fidelity to the cause of Christ. They declared that their efforts against the Christians would avail nothing so long as John's testimony kept ringing in the ears of the people. In order that the miracles and teachings of Jesus might be forgotten, the voice of the bold witness must be silenced. John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. Here before the authorities the apostle's doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him of teaching seditious heresies. By these accusations his enemies hoped to bring about the disciple's death" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 569).

what do you think?

Rank the following items on a scale of 1 (highly upsetting) to 10 (no sweat) based on how much they annoy you.

____ Losing keys
____ Your sibling eats all the food and leaves you none
____ Cell phone dies
____ A "D" on a final exam
____ A paper cut
____ iPod gets stolen
____ A friend tells lies about you
____ Fender-bender accident
____ Internet access goes down for three days

did you know?

Did you know that the island of Patmos, the place where the apostle John received the vision found in the book of Revelation, still exists today? The island of Patmos is located in the Aegean Sea and has about 3,000 inhabitants. Today it is a tourist destination for people seeking a getaway far off the beaten path. However, during the time of John, Patmos was a penal colony where prisoners worked harvesting rocks out of ancient quarries on the island. It was backbreaking work meant to humble the toughest criminals.

INTO THE STORY

"The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

"John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

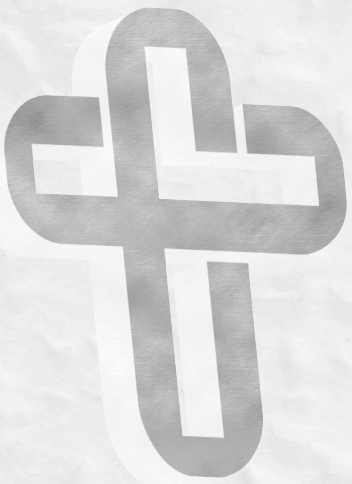
"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

"'Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him'; and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him.' So shall it be! Amen.

"'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'

"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.'"

(Revelation 1:1-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever read any portions of the book of Revelation? What strikes you about the beginning of John's writing?

_____
_____
_____

To whom is John writing? Who is the audience for this message?

_____
_____
_____

What is the tone of John's message? Does he sound sad? Is he happy? Write a sentence describing the tone of John's opening message.

_____
_____
_____

Where was John when He received this vision from God? What was he doing?

_____
_____
_____

Read verse 9 again. Why was John sent to the island of Patmos? What were the charges against him?

_____
_____
_____

What new thing have you learned about the author of the book of Revelation from the introduction to the book of Revelation?

_____
_____
_____

What does John's message teach us about persevering through trials?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" **(2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, NIV).**

"All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God" **(John 16:1, 2, NIV).**

"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region" **(Acts 13:49, 50, NIV).**

"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all" **(Psalm 34:19, NIV).**

"The Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous" **(Psalm 146:8, NIV).**

further insight

"Through trial and persecution the glory—the character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones."— Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 576

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17 and 2 Corinthians 11:25.

Did you complete the *What Do You Think?* activity? Do any of the scenarios listed get you really upset? How do you handle the irritations you face from day to day?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17. How does the apostle Paul refer to the challenges that he and his fellow witnesses faced?

Now read 2 Corinthians 11:25-28 to get a picture of the "light" afflictions of which Paul spoke. People tend not to undergo such punishment willingly. Why did Paul do it?

How do you think Paul's faithful witness affected John during his time of persecution? Is there someone from whom you draw strength in times of crisis?

Sunday

Read Psalm 34:19.

Read the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson, and answer the *Out of the Story* questions. You were asked to consider the tone of John's writing, given that he is enduring hard labor in a colony of prisoners on the island of Patmos.

Scan the Scripture story and make a list of all the different things that John writes about Jesus Christ and God. Share some of them.

Did you notice that John's troubles have been forgotten as he looks upon God and the vision? What does this teach you about how to respond to trials and adversity?

Monday

Read Revelation 1:9.

This week's *Key Text* makes it clear that John knew exactly why he had been imprisoned. He preached God's Word and he shared his testimony that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah.

What phrase in Revelation 1:9 tells us how John is undergoing this test of his faith?

Now read Revelation 14:9-12. This verse refers to Christ's followers who will be living right before Jesus' second coming. How will they handle the adversity of the times?

What's your biggest trial right now? Do you trust God to handle it? Will you wait on Him?

Tuesday

Read Luke 6:22.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation from Ellen G. White. John was brought before the emperor Domitian on false charges. He had done nothing wrong, yet the false testimony of evil men was going to doom him.

What counsel did Jesus give when dealing with people who wrongly accuse us (Luke 6:22)?

How should we respond to people who seek to do us harm (Luke 6:27-36)?

Is this realistic advice? In your own words, explain how you can be a person of peace, yet not be a doormat for bullies at your school.

Wednesday

Read John 16:1, 2.

Check out this week's *Punch Lines*, all of which relate to the challenges of enduring trials and adversity. Consider John 16:1, 2. Jesus told the disciples that some people will harm you and claim that they are serving God in the process.

People do all kinds of things in the name of God. What would you say to a Christian who believes that abortion is murder, and therefore the killing of doctors who perform abortions is justified?

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 3:12.

Most of us will never be called to make the sacrifices that the apostle John made for his faith. But, at some point, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Based on your current walk with God, complete the following statement:

If I ever had to explain why I believe in Jesus Christ before my friends at school or in my neighborhood, I would say:

Friday

Read Romans 8:28-39.

Choose one verse to paraphrase in your own words and write it here:

Ask God to make the assurance found in your verse real to you today.

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 56.

**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.