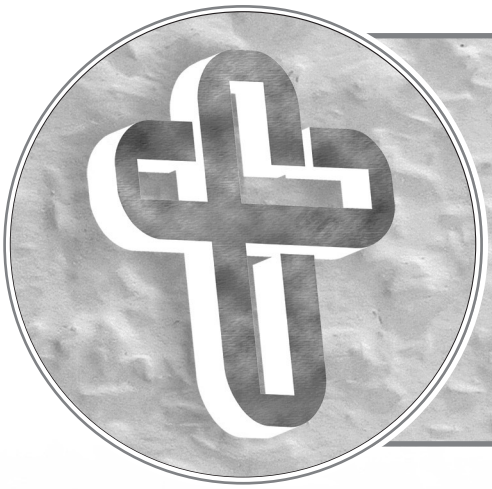


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 30 2026

army of one

Scripture Story: Luke 21:12; 2 Timothy.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 48, 49.
Key Text: 2 Timothy 4:8.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Share the following with the class as an introduction to the lesson:

The apostle Paul had to stand trial before Nero, but he did not have an advocate. There was no one willing to speak in his behalf—no one to defend him. We may find ourselves in situations where we have to stand for what is right, for what we believe in, and there may not be anyone else to side with us or to defend us. We may have to stand alone. Are you willing to stand for the truth, for the Word of God, even if it means standing alone? That is a question every Christian will have to answer someday, if not today. Many believers must stand for the right on their jobs, or at school. Sometimes young people must make the choice to stand for the right among their friends or peers, and they may have to stand alone, because no one else is willing to speak up or to side with them.

There will come a day when all must stand before the Great Judge of the universe. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10, NKJV). But on that day we can be sure that we will not have to stand alone. It's a promise. First John 2:1 tells us that Jesus is our Advocate, and Jude 24 tells us that He is able to present us faultless before the throne of God. Since we know that He will stand for us and with us on that day, let us make the choice to stand for Him today, even if it means we must stand alone. But we know that we are not really alone. He is with us—even today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that every Christian will have to defend his faith. *(Know)*
- Feel the heartfelt desire to stand for what is right even if it means standing alone. *(Feel)*
- Choose to do the right thing no matter the consequences. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 4

"God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things" (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2).

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 class members work in twos or threes to complete the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. After a few minutes, have each group share their examples with the entire class. Which of the Bible examples given had to stand alone? Which of the examples had someone to stand with them or support them?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words.

In March 2009 two American journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, were filming in China near the North Korean border. The two young women were soon arrested by North Korean authorities, and charged with crossing into North Korean territory with hostile intentions. Although they were innocent of any crime, the two journalists were sentenced to 12 years of hard labor. Often innocent people are accused falsely and even punished for crimes they did not commit. This week we will continue to study the life of Paul. False accusations were raised against Paul, which led to his arrest and trial before Nero, and later his death.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words.

We must make choices every day. What clothes should I wear today? Should I finish my homework? Who will my friends be? What music will I listen to? Will I obey my parents? Everything that we do and say is the result of a choice. Often, we aren't even aware that we are making a choice. It's just second nature. We do it without thinking about it. In this lesson we will focus on choosing or making the decision to stand for what is right, whatever the outcome may be.

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 things that Paul says will happen to people in the last days. How should Christians respond to the people who do these things?
2. What is the reason Paul is suffering and how does he feel about it?
3. Was there ever a time you were ashamed or embarrassed to speak out about something but you had to anyway? Share this experience with the class.

RABBI 101

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Socratic Questioning

Socrates was a great educator who taught by asking questions. He used six types of questions, attempting to challenge accuracy of thinking as well as completeness. Critical thinking skills are important for our youth so that they can be thinkers and not mere reflectors of others' thoughts and opinions.

Below are listed the six types of questions he used, as well as a sample from each category.

1. **Conceptual clarification**—Get them to prove the concepts behind their argument. *What exactly does this mean?*
2. **Probing assumptions**—Get them to think about their presuppositions. *You seem to be assuming . . .*
3. **Probing rationale, reasons, and evidence**—Dig into their reasoning. *How do you know this?*
4. **Questioning viewpoints and perspectives**—Show that there are other, equally valid viewpoints. *What alternative ways of looking at this are there?*
5. **Probe implications and consequences**—Do the logical implications make sense? *How does . . . fit with what we learned before?*
6. **Questions about the question**—Bounce the ball back into their court. *Why do you think I asked this question?*

(Taken from http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm.)

Sharing Context and Background

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

In Acts chapters 21 though 28 we read of Paul's trials and persecution by the Jews in Jerusalem who wanted to kill him because of his teachings. We read of his arrest and imprisonment in Rome. Read through these chapters to get a fuller understanding of the suffering that Paul experienced. Use this information to help you with your presentation of this week's lesson.

"St. Paul, whose earlier Hebrew name was Saul, was 'of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews' and in religious respects 'as touching the law, a Pharisee' (Philippians 3:5). Acts identifies Paul as from Mediterranean Tarsus, (in present-day south-central Turkey), well-known for its intellectual environment. Acts also claims Paul said he was 'a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee' (Acts 23:6).

"According to his own testimony, Paul [as Saul according to Acts] 'violently persecuted' the 'church of God' (followers of Jesus) prior to his conversion to Christianity (Galatians 1:13, 14; Philippians 3:6; and Acts 8:1-3).

"Paul asserted that he received the gospel not from [any] person, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11, 12).

"Paul's conversion can be dated to around A.D. 33 by his reference to it in one of his letters. According to the Acts of the Apostles, his conversion . . . took place on the road to Damascus, where he experienced a vision of the resurrected Jesus, after which he was temporarily blinded (Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-22; 26:9-24). . . .

"Most scholars agree that a vital meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem church took place in A.D. 49 or 50. Paul refers to this meeting in Galatians, and Luke describes it in Acts 15. Most think that Galatians 2:1 corresponds to the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. The key question raised was whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised (Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:1). At this meeting, Peter, James, and John accepted Paul's mission to the Gentiles. . . .

"[After spending some time traveling] Paul [returned to] Jerusalem A.D. 57 with a collection of money for the congregation there. Acts reports that the church welcomed Paul gladly, but [he was soon arrested]. Paul caused a stir when he appeared at the Temple, and he escaped being killed by the crowd by being taken into custody. He was held as a prisoner for two years in Caesarea until, in A.D. 59, a new governor reopened his case. He appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen and was sent to Rome for trial. Acts reports that he was shipwrecked on Malta where he was met by St. Publius (Acts 28:7) and the islanders, who showed him 'unusual kindness' (Acts 28:2).

"He arrived in Rome A.D. 60 and spent two years under house arrest. Tradition has said that Paul was beheaded, while Peter was crucified upside down. This account fits with the report from Acts that Paul was a Roman citizen and would have been accorded the more merciful execution [of death by the sword]" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle).

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.*

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

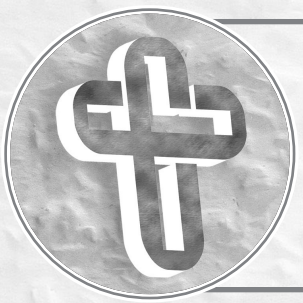
Pass out paper and pencils to class members. Have each person make a list of situations in which they have had to choose between doing the right thing or taking the easy way out. After each situation listed answer the following questions:

1. What was your choice in this situation?
2. Do you think you did the right thing? If not, what will you do differently next time?

If time permits, let those who are willing share their responses with the class.

Summary

Say to your class members: "The question 'What would Jesus do?' has been used in many trite ways—even to market merchandise! But it's a valid question to consider. It is a question that helps us prioritize Jesus in everything. How different life would be if we would always be interested first of all in what Jesus wants us to do before we pursue any course of action! I challenge you, in everything that you do and say this week: first ask yourself this question—What would Jesus do?"



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 48, 49.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MAY302026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Luke 21:12; 2 Timothy.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 48, 49.

army of one



Photo by Terrill Thomas

keytext

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

(2 Timothy 4:8)

flashlight

"Among the Greeks and Romans it was customary to allow an accused person the privilege of employing an advocate to plead in his behalf before courts of justice. By force of argument, by impassioned eloquence, or by entreaties, prayers, and tears, such an advocate often secured a decision in favor of the prisoner or, failing in this, succeeded in mitigating the severity of the sentence. But when Paul was summoned before Nero, no man ventured to act as his counsel or advocate; . . . Among the Christians at Rome there was not one who came forward to stand by him in that trying hour" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* pp. 492, 493).

what do you think?

The apostle Paul faced great persecution for preaching about salvation in the name of Jesus Christ. Can you name two other individuals in the Bible who faced persecution because of their faith and/or obedience to God? Give a brief description of each person's experience.

1. _____
_____
_____
2. _____
_____
_____

did you know?

Once more Paul has an opportunity to uplift before a wondering multitude the banner of the cross. As he gazes upon the throng before him—Jews, Greeks, Romans, with strangers from many lands—his soul is stirred with an intense desire for their salvation. He loses sight of the occasion, of the perils surrounding him, of the terrible fate that seems so near. He sees only Jesus, the Intercessor, pleading before God in behalf of sinful men. With more than human eloquence and power, Paul presents the truths of the gospel."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* pp. 494, 495.

INTO THE STORY

"So don't be ashamed of the message about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. Instead, join with me as I suffer for the good news. God's power will help us do that. God has saved us. He has chosen us to live a holy life. It wasn't because of anything we have done. It was because of his own purpose and grace. Through Christ Jesus, God gave us this grace even before time began. It has now been made known through the coming of our Savior, Christ Jesus. He has broken the power of death. Because of the good news, he has brought life out into the light. That life never dies. I was appointed to announce the good news. I was appointed to be an apostle and a teacher. That's why I'm suffering the way I am. But this gives me no reason to be ashamed. That's because I know who I have believed in. I am sure he is able to take care of what I have given him. I can trust him with it until the day he returns as judge."

"There will be terrible times in the last days. People will love themselves. They will love money. They will brag and be proud. They will tear others down. They will not obey their parents. They won't be thankful or holy. They won't love others. They won't forgive others. They will tell lies about people. They will be out of control. They will be wild. They will hate what is good. They will turn against their friends. They will act without thinking. They will think they are better than others. They will love what pleases them instead of loving God. They will act as if they were serving God. But what they do will show that they have turned their backs on God's power. Have nothing to do with these people."

"I give you a command in the sight of God and Christ Jesus. Christ will judge the living and the dead. Because he and his kingdom are coming, here is the command I give you. Preach the word. Be ready to serve God in good times and bad. Correct people's mistakes. Warn them. Encourage them with words of hope. Be very patient as you do these things. Teach them carefully."

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is a crown waiting for me. It is given to those who are right with God. The Lord, who judges fairly, will give it to me on the day he returns. He will not give it only to me. He will also give it to all those who are longing for him to return."

(2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2, 7, 8, NIrV)

OUT OF THE STORY

In 2 Timothy 1:8 Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed to be a witness for the Lord, and also not to be ashamed of Paul because of his sufferings for the Lord. Have you ever been embarrassed because of another person's witness? Have you ever had to defend another person's witness? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Reread the quote under *Flashlight.* When Paul had to stand before Nero, he did not have an advocate. There was no one present to speak in his defense. Who will speak for us when we need an advocate? (Read 1 John 2:1.) When will this take place?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What is the good news that Paul is talking about?

_____
_____
_____

How can you, like Paul, announce the good news to your family, friends, and neighbors?

_____
_____
_____

Why would a person suffer for giving good news?

_____
_____
_____

What does the text say will keep us from becoming selfish, proud, greedy, disobedient, ungrateful, unloving, unforgiving, and thoughtless?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Give praise to the God who is able to keep you from falling into sin. He will bring you into his heavenly glory without any fault. He will bring you there with great joy" **(Jude 24, NIrV).**

"God is the God who gives peace. May he make you holy through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept free from blame. May you be without blame from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes. The God who has chosen you is faithful. He will do all these things" **(1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, NIrV).**

"You received Christ Jesus as Lord. So keep on living your lives in him. Have your roots in him. Build yourselves up in him. Grow strong in what you believe, just as you were taught. Be more thankful than ever before" **(Colossians 2:6, 7, NIrV).**

"Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus. Don't try to stop what the Holy Spirit is doing" **(1 Thessalonians 5:16-19, NIrV).**

"Do your best to please God. Be a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed. Teach the message of truth correctly" **(2 Timothy 2:15, NIrV).**

further insight

"After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be no doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 506

Sabbath

Read 2 Timothy 4:8.

Write out the meaning to this week's *Key Text* in your own words.

_____

_____

Sunday

Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

Second Timothy 2:15 says: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (KJV). What does the expression "rightly dividing the word of truth" mean? (If possible, read this verse in different translations of the Bible.)

_____

_____

Monday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 23.

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

Prisoner	Mistreatment	Embarrassed
Judgment	Convince	Defender

Persuade _____ Captive _____
Ashamed _____ Sentence _____
Persecution _____ Advocate _____

Tuesday

Read Jude 24.

Paul had to stand before Nero's court to defend his position. He was accused of blasphemy and heresy. Many of the Jews did not accept the teaching that Jesus was the Son of God. They considered this to be blasphemous. They also thought Paul was going against the traditional teachings and laws of the Jews. Paul was innocent of these charges. One day Jesus will come to judge the world, but His true followers will be found innocent of all charges against them. How is this possible?

_____

_____

Wednesday

Can you think of any Bible characters in the Old Testament whose life was threatened or who were killed for doing the right thing? (Read the following texts for a few examples: Esther 3:1-9; Genesis 4:1-8; 1 Kings 19:1-3.)

_____

_____

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 4:18.

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

Friday

Read Colossians 2:6, 7.

The apostle Paul was a great warrior for Christ. For many years to follow, men and women of God would arise to proclaim the gospel of Christ and uphold the truths found in the Word of God. And many would be persecuted for their faith. In the book *The Great Controversy* Ellen White writes of some of these men of God who suffered great trials for their stand for right and for proclaiming the truth. Contemplate the following account about John Wycliffe. He believed that ordinary men and women should have access to the Bible so that they could read and learn of the truth for themselves instead of simply accepting the interpretation of educated scholars and pontiffs, who would often teach false doctrine:

"While Wycliffe was still at college, he entered upon the study of the Scriptures. In those early times, when the Bible existed only in the ancient languages, scholars were enabled to find their way to the fountain of truth, which was closed to the uneducated classes. Thus already the way had been prepared for Wycliffe's future work as a Reformer. . . .

"When Wycliffe's attention was directed to the Scriptures, he entered upon their investigation with the same thoroughness which had enabled him to master the learning of the schools. . . .

"Here he saw the plan of salvation revealed and Christ set forth as the only advocate for man. He gave himself to the service of Christ and determined to proclaim the truths he had discovered.

"Devotion to truth could not but bring him in conflict with falsehood. The more clearly he discerned the errors of the papacy, the more earnestly he presented the teaching of the Bible. He saw that Rome had forsaken the Word of God for human tradition; he fearlessly accused the priesthood of having banished the Scriptures, and demanded that the Bible be restored to the people and that its authority be again established in the church" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 80, 81).

What is your position and response when you have to take a stand for God's truth as revealed in His written Word? _____

_____

_____

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 48, 49.

**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.