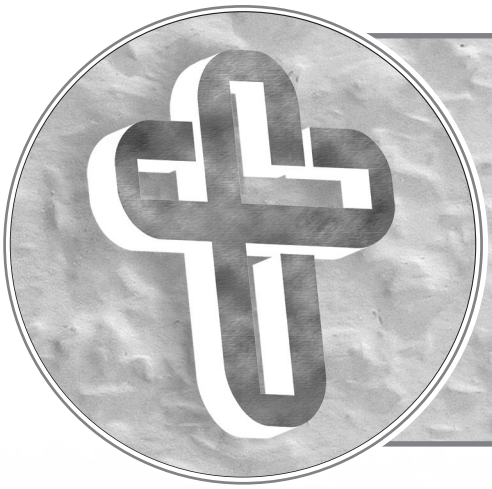


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MAY 23 2026

a part, not apart

Scripture Story: 2 Timothy.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders),* chapters 46, 47.
Key Text: 2 Timothy 4:9.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

To illustrate the theme of this lesson, we look to the words of Ellen White: "The desire for love and sympathy is implanted in the heart by God Himself. Christ, in His hour of agony in Gethsemane, longed for the sympathy of His disciples. And Paul, though apparently indifferent to hardship and suffering, yearned for sympathy and companionship. The visit of Onesiphorus, testifying to his fidelity at a time of loneliness and desertion, brought gladness and cheer to one who had spent his life in service for others" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 491).

This lesson helps students see that being a follower of Christ does not mean automatic immunity against the struggles of life. There are still irritations, loneliness, doubts, and frustrations. Staying focused on godly things and perspectives can prove difficult while dealing with their own self-disappointments and questions. This is why God created the church and sacrificed His own Son, so that we can be adopted into this spiritual family (see Ephesians 1:5).

The church is meant to be a spiritual family that will love and honor each other. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul exhorts them to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10, NIV). Paul himself was blessed to experience the very comfort and "good" deeds of fellow believers during his time of imprisonment and loneliness. His experience of authentic fellowship is underscored in 2 Timothy—this week's Scripture story. God provided comfort to Paul through the loving-kindness of Onesiphorus and other like-hearted believers.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that being a Christian is not without challenges. *(Know)*
- Realize that God formed the church—His spiritual family—to be His extension of encouragement and empowerment. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to assess their role and commitment as a part of God's family and reach out to other hurting people around them. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 12

"The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will

present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish" (Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:3-7; Matt. 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9).

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.*

Take your students outside (or into a large room with enough space for them to spread out). Choose two of your more confident students to participate in a little experiment. They should move far enough away that they are unable to communicate but still close enough to see and hear that something is going on back in the main group. Ask these two students not to say anything, but just sit there until you call them back.

Start a fun discussion about something your students will enjoy talking about. After a while, call the two volunteers back to the group and ask these questions:

- How did you feel when you were separated from the group?
- Did you have stuff you wanted to add to the conversation?
- How did not being allowed to participate make you feel?
- Is being alone easy or difficult for you? Why?

Then to the entire group ask: "Do you think it's possible to be sitting with a group and still be lonely?" Ask them to explain their responses.

Illustration

Do the following activity with your students:

Have your students stand and see how long they can balance on one foot while holding their other leg out behind them (not touching the floor) and stretching out their arms like airplane wings. After a few minutes, it should become difficult for most students to maintain their balance.

Ask: "What are a couple of ways we could train our bodies to allow us to balance for a longer period of time?" Let your students share their suggestions.

Now have them do the activity again, except this time line them up side by side and instruct them to grab hands with the students on each side of them and help each other remain balanced. Afterward, ask your students to explain the point of this illustration as it relates to the body of Christ.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

There is a misconception that when you become a Christian you will never feel angry, sad, depressed, lonely, or any other negative feeling. However, that cannot be further from the truth. Look in the Bible and you will find that many of the great leaders, at some point or another, felt despair. Elijah was persecuted and fell into a state of depression, while Paul was imprisoned and no doubt experienced bouts of loneliness. Both had their pain alleviated by a simple, caring gesture from another human being. We were not meant to live alone. We were made to live as a community.

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 main characters in this story.
- What is the situation that Paul is in here? What is happening to him?
- Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
- Paul mentions some people who have helped him and some who have hurt him. What can we learn from their actions and consequences?
- What are your goals in life? What do you spend your time on and what do you need to start spending more time with?
- Are your relationships your first priority? What can you do to ensure that they are? What sacrifices do you need to make?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Romans 1:12: "When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours" (NLT).

It is easier to stay consistent in our faith when we are surrounded with nurturing and caring fellow believers. Repeatedly in the New Testament we are told to do different tasks for "one another" and "each other."

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Effective Praise

The book *Common Sense Parenting* describes a technique called "effective praise," which is more powerful than merely saying "Good job" or "Fantastic." It consists of three steps:

1. Showing your approval (e.g., Thanks for preparing for this week's lesson at home).

2. Describing the positive (e.g., I'm really glad that you took the time to fill in all the questions and look up each Bible text).

3. Giving a reason (e.g., Preparing in advance shows that you're committed to these sessions and that my efforts to teach you are rewarded).

For really exceptional behavior, you may want to add a fourth step: reward. It doesn't have to be a gift, even a special privilege will suffice.

You are not responsible *for* the rest of the church family. However, you are responsible *to* them. God expects you to do your best to help each other.

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. Setting. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* reveals that this was Paul's last letter, written when he was virtually alone in prison, except for Luke "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11, NKJV). At the time of writing this letter to Timothy, the emperor, Nero, had already sentenced Paul to death.

2. Theme. This letter has been referred to as Paul's last will and testament. It is a personal letter to Timothy but also to the church in general. Interspersed through this letter, Paul asks for visits from his friends and for his scrolls. In these last words he reveals his loneliness and strong love for his family in Christ.

3. Outline. Paul pours his heart into this last letter, and it reveals his priorities and goals. In this letter he exhorts Timothy to be a faithful successor, encouraging him to continue the work of building God's church. He also gives an insight into the traits of a good leader, advising believers on the methods of communicating God's truth, and offers warnings of perilous times to come and final words of encouragement and edification. This reveals a man with steadfast faith, confident endurance, and a lasting love.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

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.*

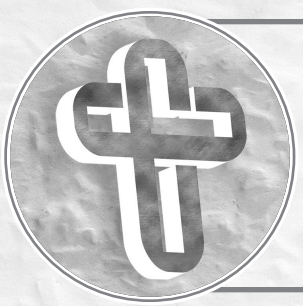
Sit the students in a circle. Give each student a piece of paper and a pen. Instruct them to write their name at the top. Now pass the paper clockwise (or counterclockwise). The person receiving the paper should look at the name and write down an encouraging word, a note affirming the contributions that person has made to the group, or compliments on their unique qualities, etc.

When the papers have completed the round, each students should get back their own paper. Allow some time for your students to read their papers and then ask: Do you feel differently about the group now that you have had a chance to read the positive messages other people have written? Was it easy to write positive messages? How did it feel?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

We do not help others out simply because it is a command from our Father. We help because it can also alleviate our own pain. Instead of focusing on our own needs and becoming consumed with self-pity, focusing on the needs of others enables us to channel our energies in a more productive manner. Paul exemplified this in 2 Timothy 4:17. Despite imprisonment, his goal was still to share God's message of hope and healing.



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 46, 47.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

MAY232026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Timothy.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 46, 47.

a part, not apart

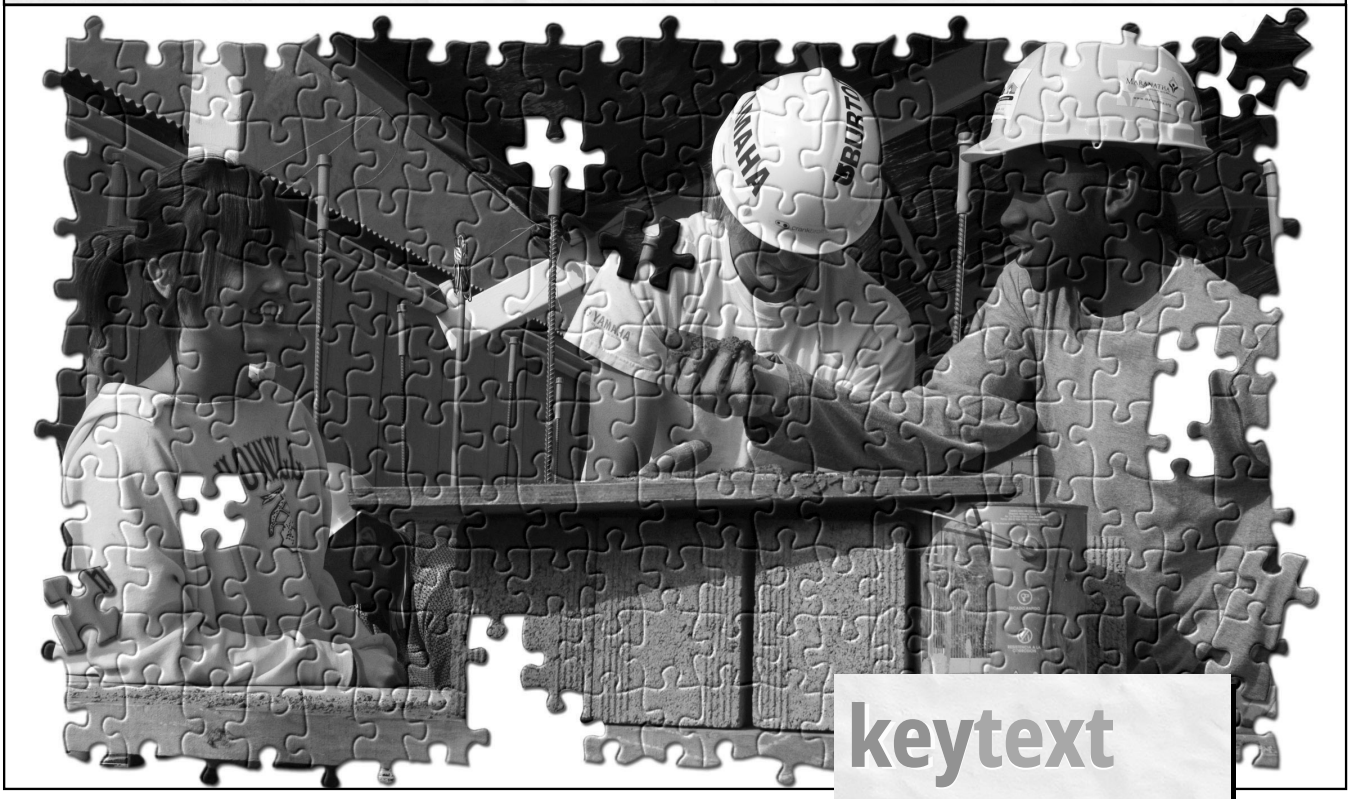


Photo by Tompaul Wheeler/Digital photocomposing by Truman

keytext

"Do your best to come to me quickly."

(2 Timothy 4:9, NIV)

flashlight

"The desire for love and sympathy is implanted in the heart by God Himself. Christ, in His hour of agony in Gethsemane, longed for the sympathy of His disciples. And Paul, though apparently indifferent to hardship and suffering, yearned for sympathy and companionship. The visit of Onesiphorus, testifying to his fidelity at a time of loneliness and desertion, brought gladness and cheer to one who had spent his life in service for others" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 491).

what do you think?

According to various scientific researches, people who are actively involved in church tend to experience improved health and longevity.[1] Why do you think that is? Do a bit of reading up, and make a list of the top three possible reasons why being part of church community would lead to better health. Share your answers with your class.

_____

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did you know?

The trials and anxieties that Paul had endured had preyed upon his physical powers. The infirmities of age were upon him. He felt that he was now doing his last work, and, as the time of his labor grew shorter, his efforts became more intense. There seemed to be no limit to his zeal. Resolute in purpose, prompt in action, strong in faith, he journeyed from church to church, in many lands, and sought by every means within his power to strengthen the hands of the believers, that they might do faithful work in winning souls to Jesus."—Ellen G. White, The *Acts of the Apostles,* p. 488.

INTO THE STORY

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

"So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.

"That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

"Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.

"As you know, everyone from the province of Asia has deserted me—even Phygelus and Hermogenes.

"May the Lord show special kindness to Onesiphorus and all his family because he often visited and encouraged me. He was never ashamed of me because I was in chains. When he came to Rome, he searched everywhere until he found me. May the Lord show him special kindness on the day of Christ's return."

"Timothy, please come as soon as you can. Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry."

"But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death. Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen. . . . Do your best to get here before winter."

(2 Timothy 1:7-18; 2 Timothy 4:9-11, 17-21, NLT)

OUT OF THE STORY

List the people mentioned in these passages. What does Paul say they have done or are to do? What actions helped Paul and what hurt him?

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In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul lists three characteristics of a Holy Spirit-filled life. In your own words, write them down. Now read Galatians 5:22, 23 and add to the list. How does this list supplement Romans 12:4, 5?

_____
_____
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These passages speak of "wholesome teaching" that Paul taught. What are some examples of wholesome teaching that you've learned?

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Paul writes: "But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear" (2 Timothy 4:17, NLT). Paul was lonely and nearing the end of his life, but he never forgot his life's goal: to help other people. What is your goal?

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punch lines

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" **(Hebrews 3:13, NIV).**

"If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble" **(Ecclesiastes 4:10, NLT).**

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" **(Romans 12:12, 13, NIV).**

"For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" **(1 Corinthians 12:13, NIV).**

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" **(1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV).**

further insight

"The work of many a burden bearer is not understood, his labors are not appreciated, until death lays him low. When others take up the burdens he has laid down, and meet the difficulties he encountered, they can understand how his faith and courage were tested. Often then the mistakes they were so quick to censure are lost sight of. Experience teaches them sympathy."

—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing,* p. 484

Sabbath

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

Read and respond to the ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. It takes courage and humility to forge an authentic relationship. It means being honest and open about our own flaws and accepting and forgiving toward others.

What is one thing you can do today to cultivate a more honest and heartfelt relationship with another believer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How can the following character traits help me to have authentic relationships?

Power _____
_____

Love _____
_____

Self-discipline _____
_____

Sunday

Read Hebrews 3:13 and Romans 12:5.

Hebrews 3:13 and Romans 12:5 remind us that as a family of God, we have a responsibility to take care of one another, to be involved in one another's lives.

What does the level of your involvement in your church reveal about your commitment to God's family?

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Monday

Read 2 Timothy 4:9.

The *Key Text* to memorize this week contains the words of Paul urging Timothy to come (2 Timothy 4:9, 21). When you're apart from your friends and family, loneliness can set in.

Can you think of someone that you need to call? Is there someone you can write a letter of appreciation to? Is there somebody whom you can help to relieve of their loneliness?

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Tuesday

Read Galatians 6:2.

Read the quote from the *Flashlight* section of this week's lesson. In times of trouble and difficulties, our faith in God can sometimes falter. During those times, we need a trusted group of people who will have faith in God on our behalf and use that faith to pull us through those tough times.

What is one step your class or small group can take this week to fulfill Galatians 6:2?

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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?

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Thursday

Read Romans 12:18 and 2 Corinthians 5:18.

Because we are imperfect and have our own idiosyncrasies, it is not uncommon to experience conflict with others from time to time. Read Romans 12:18 and 2 Corinthians 5:18. Is there someone you need to heal a broken relationship with today? If so, how can you begin that healing process?

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Friday

Read Colossians 3:14.

There are many reasons to be disillusioned with the family of God: hypocrisy, legalism, pettiness, and many other reasons. It is only natural that we encounter bad behavior, because we are all sinners.

What are you doing, on a personal level, to protect the unity of the church and nurture an environment of Colossians 3:14?

_____
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[1] www.godandscience.org/apologetics/religionhealth.html.

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 46, 47.

**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.