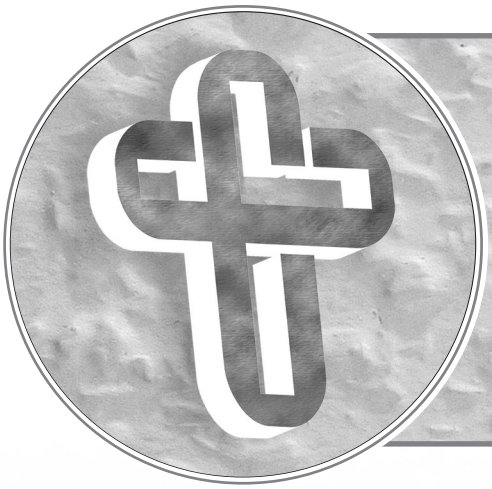


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 18 2026

God's heart for you

Scripture Story: Romans; Galatians.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 35, 36.
Key Text: Galatians 5:1.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Today's young people are growing up in a world more tolerant of alternative lifestyles. This lesson offers an opportunity to tackle a sensitive subject that is on the minds of many young people. Since the culture is not shy about perpetuating a certain view on the topic, it is especially important that our young people hear what the Bible has to say. Fortunately, the Bible is not silent on the subject. So dive into the discussion with Bibles open and hearts receptive to what God would want you to know and do. It is important to emphasize how Christians and the church can love the individual and yet not compromise with sin.

Since the scope of this study embodies both the books of Romans and Galatians, you have wide boundaries to explore and yet remain within the text of this teaching. Both Romans and Galatians contain very insightful teaching on the topic of salvation. Many young people today are starving for solid, biblical teaching about the assurance and experience of salvation. These books of the Bible give you that opportunity to share the good news of salvation.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Hear about the freedom that results from a life of obedience to God. *(Know)*
- Sense God's passion to save every person. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to experience the assurance that comes by following God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 10

"In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment" (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8).

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.*

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Illustration

"Anna was caught in . . . an intense struggle. Her . . . apartment was located in the center of Honolulu's drug district. . . . [Anna] seemed powerless to resist the drug dealers who daily urged her to buy another joint. Frequently she gave in, indulging her growing habit.

At the conclusion of [an] evangelistic meeting she pleaded [to the evangelist], 'Pastor, I'm so weak! I seem powerless to resist!'

"[The evangelist] pointed her to God's promise: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (Philippians 4:13, NKJV), and Anna made a marvelous discovery. A new sparkle flashed in her eyes. Jesus would really help her! He would actually supply the power to deliver her.

"Two of [the evangelist's] associates visited Anna almost daily," and finally she decided to leave her old lifestyle behind and give her heart to the Lord.

"Anna's discovery can make a powerful difference in your life, too!

"The Christian life is not an initial commitment to Christ and then failure. It is not endless struggle against temptation on our own. . . . The Christ who redeems us from sin's condemnation delivers us from sin's power. The Savior who died to forgive us lives to empower us. We do not save ourselves; God saves us. We cannot deliver ourselves; Christ delivers us" (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 29, 30).

Through Christ alone we are set free from the addictions, bad habits, harmful practices, and sinful pleasures that bind us. In Him we can experience true freedom!

Bridge to the Story

Romans 1:28-32 describes a sinful culture of the day in this way: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Teaching Sensitive Topics

Here are some teaching tips for conducting class discussions. These suggestions are adapted from the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development at San Francisco State University:

1. Create a classroom environment that sets ground rules for discussion and makes it clear that all students are included in the work of the class.
2. Recognize the diversity of opinions and backgrounds of your students.
3. Be prepared. Even if you do not think there will be a reaction to an issue you raise, plan ahead what you will do if you encounter one. Know yourself and your own emotional triggers. Don't personalize remarks.
4. Focus the discussion on the topic, not the individual student.
5. Protect all students equally during moments of potential conflict. Seek to draw out understanding and communication as well as opinions.
6. Foster an environment of debate and dialogue in which it is OK to disagree.
7. If a student suffers from an emotional reaction or angry outburst because of a sensitive topic discussion, acknowledge it, and ask them if they would like to remain or leave for a while.[1]

judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them" (NKJV).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read Into the Story *with your students, use the following questions to process it with them.*

Read Romans 1:28-32. Paul goes on to portray the depraved mind that is "filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity" (NIV). Note the specific sins that Paul includes in his list. Are there any sins in the list that surprise you? Why? Are all the sins in his list equally evil? In the eyes of God are murderers as offensive to a holy God as gossips? Why or why not? How would you explain Paul's observation in Romans 1:32 that even though they know that the consequence of their sin is death, they continue in their unrighteous behavior?

Whatever our temptation—whether drug addiction or sexual sin or something else—if we battle alone we are powerless. The enemy is much too strong. The living Christ offers to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He offers us His power, His strength. As we open our hearts to Him He will deliver us from the chains of sin that bind us. He is our Almighty Deliverer.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This lesson covers two letters that the apostle Paul wrote around A.D. 50. Getting a broader view of the letters can be helpful in understanding the overall message that Paul was trying to convey. Whatever teaching from the book(s) you wish to emphasize, it should always be presented within the framework of the bigger picture. Use the following thumbnail overviews to ensure that your teaching is consistent with the historical and cultural context.

Romans

Overview: Like a skilled attorney, Paul presents a carefully organized statement of his faith in this letter to the believers in Rome. While Paul knew about the church in Rome, he had never been there. The church had been formed by Jews who had come to faith during Pentecost (Acts 2). They shared their faith in Rome and the church grew. Although it does not have the form of a typical letter, Paul does spend considerable time greeting people in Rome at the end of it. The purpose of the letter was to introduce himself to the Romans and to share his message of righteousness by faith and the gospel before his journey to Rome.

Major Themes

- Sin
- Salvation
- Growth
- Sovereignty
- Service

The Blueprint

Chapters 1-11: Paul shares what to believe. He presents an airtight argument for the lostness of humankind and the necessity for God's intervention.

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.*

He goes on to share the good news that we can experience salvation through the forgiveness of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary and we can live above the clutches of sin's grasp.

Chapters 12-16: Paul shares how to behave. The Christian journey is not an abstract theology disconnected from real life. It has practical implications that impact choices and behavior each day. It is not acceptable to merely know the gospel; we must live it.

Galatians

Overview: The book of Galatians was written to the churches in southern Galatia. It is the charter of Christian freedom. In his letter Paul declares the reality of our liberty in Jesus—freedom from the law and the power of sin. Paul refutes the teachers who were making the claim that in order for Gentiles to be saved they must obey the Jewish laws. Moreover, it is an appeal to Christians to live out their faith and find total freedom in Christ.

Major Themes

- Law
- Faith
- Freedom
- Holy Spirit

The Blueprint

Chapters 1-2: Paul speaks to the authenticity of the gospel.

Chapters 3-4: Paul outlines the superiority of the gospel.

Chapters 5-6: Paul proclaims the freedom of the gospel.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Encourage your group members to ask questions and engage in honest conversation on the topic of salvation by faith in the merits of Christ alone.

Share the following passage and engage students in discussion about the implications of this truth to their lives: "As we meditate upon the perfections of the Savior, we shall desire to be wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. There will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to become like Him whom we adore. The more our thoughts are upon Christ, the more we shall speak of Him to others and represent Him to the world" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ,* p. 89).

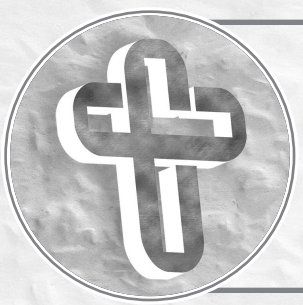
Summary

Share the following passage and discuss it with your students.

"Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness—all depend upon our union with Christ" (*Steps to Christ,* p. 69).

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[1] Adapted from https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/top-10-tips-for-addressing-sensitive-topics-and-maintaining-civility-in-the-classroom/.



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 35, 36.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 18 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Romans; Galatians
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 35, 36.

God's heart for you



Photo by Colleen Cahill/Model not subject of this lesson

keytext

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

(Galatians 5:1, NIV)

flashlight

"Paul pleaded with those who had once known in their lives the power of God, to return to their first love of gospel truth. With unanswerable arguments he set before them their privilege of becoming free men and women in Christ, through whose atoning grace all who make full surrender are clothed with the robe of His righteousness. He took the position that every soul who would be saved must have a genuine, personal experience in the things of God" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 388).

what do you think?

What do you think—Y (yes), N (no), or M (maybe)?

___ My choices do matter to God and do impact my future.
___ No matter how hard I try, I keep falling back into my bad habits.
___ As a Christian I am responsible for my choices.
___ I know I can do what is right only with God's help.

did you know?

Paul shows that God is abundantly able to transform the hearts of Jew and Gentile alike, and to grant to every believer in Christ the blessings promised to Israel. He repeats Isaiah's declaration concerning God's people: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma and been made like unto Gomorrah.'"—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 379.

INTO THE STORY

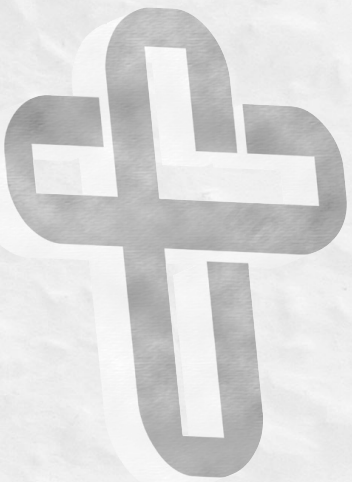
"Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. . . .

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. . . . You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

(Romans 1:28-32, NLT; Romans 5:1-11; Galatians 5:1-15, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read the passages in the *Into the Story* section and answer the following questions:

When Paul wrote, "So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself," what do you think that meant in the ancient world? What might that mean today?

_____
_____
_____

What was the truth about God that the people traded for a lie?

_____
_____
_____

Why do people think it foolish to acknowledge God?

_____
_____
_____

Is God's justification available to all sinners? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

What can I do to experience freedom in Christ?

_____
_____
_____

Read the passage in Romans 5 and reflect on the *assurance* of your salvation.

Read the passage in Galatians 5 and reflect on the *experience* of your salvation.

punch lines

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" **(1 Corinthians 6:18-20, NIV).**

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" **(Mark 16:16, NIV).**

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" **(Romans 8:35, NIV).**

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" **(Romans 5:8, NIV).**

further insight

"At the present time [the archenemy] induces many professing Christians, under pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt on the moral law and to teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every servant of God to withstand firmly and decidedly these perverters of the faith and by the word of truth fearlessly to expose their errors."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 387

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

What does it mean to you to be born again? How does the Bible passage above describe what leads to new life in Christ?

Review the statements in the *What Do You Think?* section that you have questions about. On what do you base your answers: opinion? Scripture? media? friends? Is that the best foundation for your belief? Explain.

Sunday

Read Romans 1:28.

Reflect on the verse: "Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done" (Romans 1:28, NLT).

How does the text above (Romans 1:28) shed light on Galatians 5:1, where Paul says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." What is the connection between foolishness and slavery?

Monday

Read Galatians 5:1.

Read the *Key Text* then write a modern paraphrase of it.

Tuesday

Read Mark 16:16.

Review the *Flashlight* section and reflect on these questions:

- Have you experienced the "first love of gospel truth"? If so, what was it like?
- What were the arguments that Paul used to challenge people to become free men and women in Christ?
- Are we to understand from Ellen White's statement that it is impossible to be saved without "a genuine, personal experience in the things of God"? Why or why not? What can we do to nurture that kind of experience with God?

Wednesday

Read Galatians 4:4-7.

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Knowing that God wants our physical body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit, why should we guard with great care the avenues to our souls?

How does sexual immorality and impurity soil the temple of the Holy Spirit and prevent us from experiencing a genuine relationship with Jesus?

Thursday

Read the following texts and then summarize what the Bible teaches about the experience of salvation.

- Jeremiah 31:34
- Ezekiel 33:11
- Mark 9:23
- John 3:3-8, 16
- Romans 5:6-10
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- Ephesians 2:8, 9

What do you learn from these Bible passages about Christ's gift of salvation? How can you extend God's grace to everyone in your circle of interest?

Friday

Read Romans 8:25.

Suppose a friend asked you how they can have the assurance and the experience of salvation. What would you say to your friend?

How can I show unconditional acceptance to a person with a bad reputation without compromising biblical standards?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 35, 36.

**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.