

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JULY 18 2026

light of the world

Scripture Story: Psalm 119:105; Matthew 10:17-22.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 5, 6.
Key Text: Psalm 119:105.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

About 92 percent of Americans own at least one Bible; the average household has three. Two thirds say it holds the answers to the basic questions of life. It remains unrivaled as the world's all-time best seller. And yet Americans are showing themselves to be remarkably ignorant of biblical basics.

One Gallup survey, for example, shows that fewer than half of Americans can name the first book of the Bible (Genesis), only one third know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount (many named Billy Graham, not Jesus), and one quarter do not know what is celebrated on Easter.[1]

Chances are good that many students in your Sabbath School class are not well-versed when it comes to the Bible. This lesson presents an opportunity for you to open the Word of God and show your youth group that it is not a collection of irrelevant information. Nor is it a dull read. It's a love story, self-help text, autobiography and biography, book of prophecy, how-to manual, and an assortment of love letters all wrapped up in one!

In the words of Ellen G. White: "The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God's word, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts! The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One."[2]

Seeing the Bible as "God's voice speaking to us" helps us to grasp why men such as Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome were willing to die for it. They endured unspeakable torture because they understood that the Bible is more than a nice history book or a collection of sayings; it is the wellspring of life. Seize this opportunity to challenge your youth to anchor their lives in the Word of God—just like the martyrs of old.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the Bible as the Word of God. *(Know)*
- Sense that the Bible is the primary vehicle through which God communicates with us today. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged (through stories of martyrs willing to die for the Bible) to spend priority time each day with God in His Word. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration" (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think?

section of their lesson. After seeing where students position themselves on the wall between "Yes" and "No," discuss their responses.

Illustration

Every book has a central theme. The central theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ. It is the story of the perfect world He created, sin's rebellion, the consequences of disobedience, and the efforts of a loving God desperate to save His lost children. The Bible is the story of Jesus plunging into the arena of human affairs to save a people who could not save themselves. In a world of self-centeredness, Jesus revealed the selfless love of God. In a world that did not love Him, Jesus loved unconditionally. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NKJV).

I have seen this incredible love story touch the lives of millions around the world in our It Is Written meetings. During our meetings in Madras, India, one of the local Bible instructors asked to be assigned to the worst area in town—a barrio known for its gangs, thieves, drugs, and drunkenness. One day while she was visiting people in that area, Jesus came face to face with the local gang leader. The gang leader confronted her and said, "Old woman, get out of here with your Jesus."

"Young man," she replied, "tell me why you don't love Him as I do." The gang leader began to curse and yell. She patiently listened. When he calmed down, she told him about the Jesus who changed her life. The Jesus who filled her heart with love and joy and peace. The tough, hardened gang leader began to weep. "Old woman, please come with me to all the gang members in this barrio to tell them about the love of Jesus too."

The Christ of Scripture transformed this doubter's heart. There is a love that flows from the pages of Scripture that changes our lives also. There is nothing we can do to change God's love for us. All of our sins will not keep Him from loving us.

The Bible speaks to us of a love so amazing, so incredible, so unparalleled, so matchless, so awesome, that if we let it, that love will change our lives. —Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* p. 16.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Unfortunately, many people don't know their Bibles. This is unfortunate because the Bible represents the best resource we have for managing the daily grit of life. For example, do you struggle with a favorite sin? Read Romans 6. Is your mom battling cancer? James 5:14-16 and Psalm 56:11 tell you what to do. Are you dreading the chemistry final next week? Put Proverbs 2:5-7 on your study notes.

Simply put, the Bible is the best recipe we have on how to live. So read it regularly and put it into practice. You'll be glad you did—especially if you ever have an interview with the membership committee!

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following excerpts from* The Great Controversy *to summarize the stories of three Reformers. Ask the students how the stories of Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome enlighten the verses from* Into the Story*.*

John Wycliffe—"As a professor of theology at Oxford, Wycliffe preached the Word of God in the halls of the university. So faithfully did he present the truth to the students under his instruction, that he received the title of 'the gospel doctor.' But the greatest work of his life was to be the translation of the Scriptures into the English language. . . .

"The Word of God was opened to England. The Reformer feared not now the prison or the stake. He had placed in the hands of the English people a light which should never be extinguished."[3]

John Huss—"With daily increasing boldness Huss thundered against the abominations which were tolerated in the name of religion; and the people openly accused the Romish leaders as the cause of the miseries that overwhelmed Christendom. . . .

"Enfeebled by illness and imprisonment—for the damp, foul air of his dungeon had brought on a fever which nearly ended his life—Huss was at last brought before the council. . . . When required to choose whether he would recant his doctrines or suffer death, he accepted the martyr's fate."[4]

Jerome—"In the presence of his judges, Jerome kneeled down and prayed that the divine Spirit might control his thoughts and words, that he might speak nothing contrary to the truth or unworthy of his Master. To him that day was fulfilled the promise of God to the first disciples: 'Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake. . . . But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or

what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' Matthew 10:18-20."[5]

Sharing Context and Background

While Ellen White offers great commentary in The Great Controversy *on these three Reformers, you may find it helpful in teaching about them to read brief summaries of each man. This simple, factual overview of each Reformer provides context and a point of reference to assist you in working through the broader narrative that Ellen White provides.*

John Wycliffe . . . (mid-1320s–31 December, 1384) was an English theologian, lay preacher, translator, [and] Reformist. . . . [Wycliffe] was known as an early dissident in the Roman Catholic Church during the fourteenth century. His followers are known as Lollards, an Evangelical movement which preached a New Testament gospel. He is considered the founder of the Lollard movement, a precursor to the Protestant Reformation (for this reason, he is sometimes called "The Morning Star of the Reformation"). He was one of the earliest opponents of papal authority influencing secular power.

Wycliffe was also an early advocate for translation of the Bible in the common tongue. He completed his translation directly from the Vulgate into vernacular English in the year 1382, now known as the Wycliffe Bible. It is probable that he personally translated the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and it is possible he translated the entire New Testament, while his associates translated the Old Testament. Wycliffe's Bible appears to have been completed by 1384, with additional updated versions being done by Wycliffe's assistant John Purvey and others in 1388 and 1395.[6]

John Huss . . . [1369-1415] was a Czech Catholic priest, philosopher, Reformer, and master at Charles University in Prague. He is famous for having been burned at the stake for what the Roman Catholic Church considered to be his heretical views on ecclesiology. Huss was a key contributor to the Protestant movement whose teachings had a strong influence on the states of Europe, most immediately in the approval for the existence of a reformist Bohemian Church, and, more than a century later, on Martin Luther himself.[7]

Jerome of Prague (c. 1365-1416) was a Bohemian religious Reformer, born in Prague. He studied at the University of Oxford, in England, where he adopted the unorthodox doctrines of the English theologian John Wycliffe. On returning to Prague in 1407, he became an associate of the Bohemian religious Reformer John Huss and joined him in preaching against the abuses of the church hierarchy and the profligacy of the clergy. When Huss was denounced by the Council of Constance and arrested, Jerome hastened to Constance to defend him, but on learning that he, too, would be condemned, he tried to return to Prague. Arrested in Bavaria and returned to Constance, he recanted his views. Later he withdrew his recantation and was burned at the stake as a heretic.[8]

Teaching From the Lesson

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 Great Controversy. *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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Reenactment of History

One of the best ways of teaching history is by reenacting it. For example, rather than lecturing about a certain event in history a teacher may take the class to the place where the event happened. This kind of learning tends to be more experiential, and thus more memorable.

The same teaching technique could be implemented in this lesson by reenacting the Council of Constance. Taking what Ellen White says about the council (see *The Great Controversy,* pp. 95, 104-112) and digging for additional details online, you can have the students reenact the trials of the Reformers. Have them use their Bibles and defend the truths Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome defended many years ago. Chances are the students will remember this much better than if you simply lecture them about it.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Break your group into smaller groups and have them brainstorm ways to get into the Bible. For example, they may recommend student versions of Bibles such as the NIV Student Bible (Zondervan, www.zondervan.com). Another group may spend the time you allow for this activity by surfing the Web on their phones for online Bible study tools such as www.biblegateway.com. Conclude by having each group share their ideas with the whole class.

Questions to consider:

- Am I taking full advantage of the freedom I enjoy to study the Bible whenever I like?
- What is it about the Bible that so many martyrs throughout the centuries have been willing to die for it?
- Do I primarily depend on others interpreting the Bible for me or do I read it for myself?

Summary

As grizzly as the accounts of Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome may be, we must not think that this is something that just happened "back then" to "those people." Persecution continues today for believers who refuse to compromise their belief in the Bible. Consider these recent headlines:

"Christians in Nepal Speak Against New Law Making Religious Conversion Illegal" (September 11, 2017)

"Iraqi Christians in U.S. Face Deportation" (September 6, 2017)

"Pastors Arrested in Sudan as Government Moves to Take Over Church" (August 28, 2017)

"Militants Kill Four Men in Eastern Kenya for Their Christian Faith" (August 21, 2017)

You can find dozens of similar news stories at www.persecution.org and https://www.christianheadlines.com/. While you're there, be sure to check out the Web page that answers the question "What can I do?" There you'll find lots of great suggestions on ways that you can help to curtail the persecution that persists. Whether it's through your prayers or a letter to your state representative or a contribution to International Christian Concern, there are dozens of ways that you can make a difference.

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[1] "Bible Illiteracy Rampant in America: Many quote it, buy it and revere it, but few read it" by David Gibson, Kansas City *Star,* December 1, 2000.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), vol. 6, p. 393.

[3] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), pp. 87, 88.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-107.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 112

[6] Taken from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wycliffe.

[7] Taken from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Huss.

[8] Taken from www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=213191.



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 Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 5, 6.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Psalm 119:105; Matthew 10:17-22.
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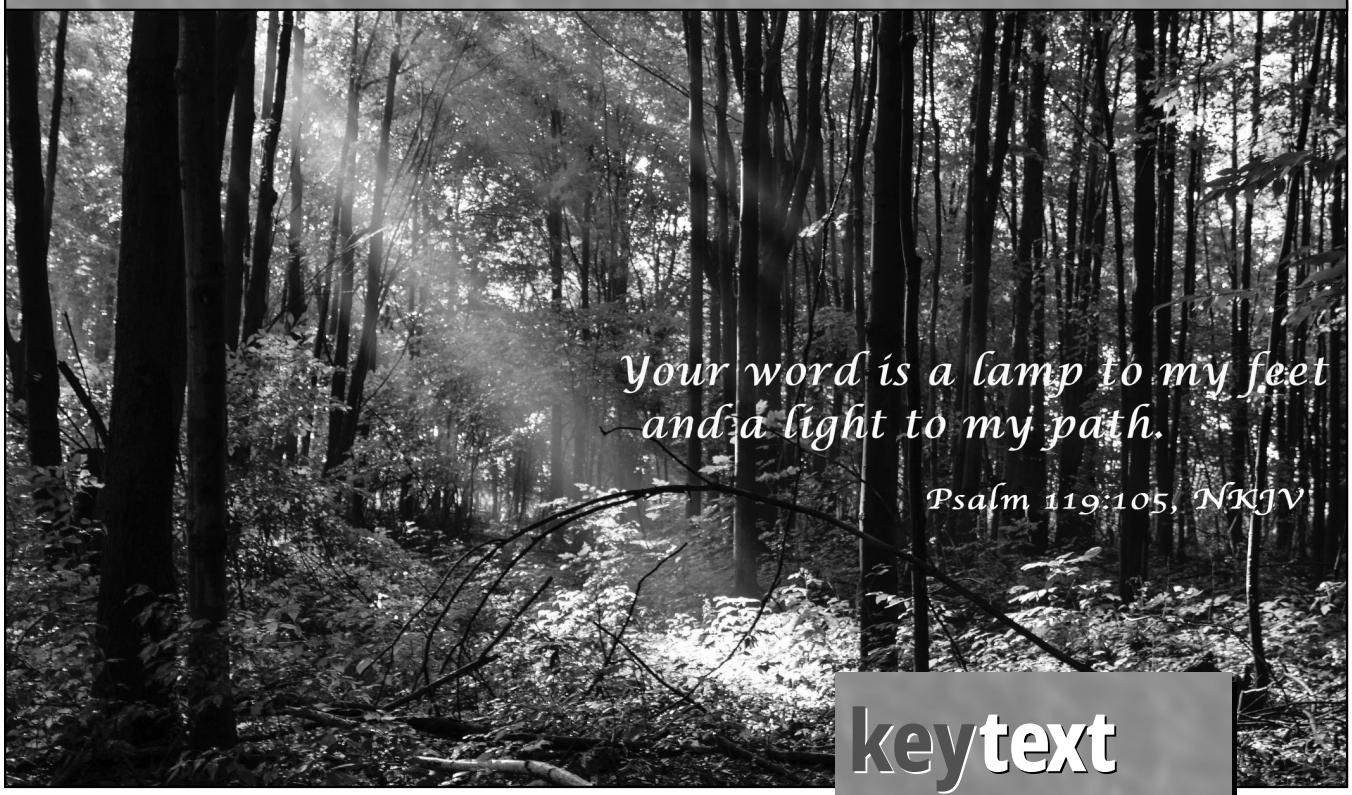

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keytext

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

(Psalm 119:105, NIV)

flashlight

"The character of Wycliffe is a testimony to the educating, transforming power of the Holy Scriptures. It was the Bible that made him what he was. The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, sharpens the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage, and fortitude; it refines the character and sanctifies the soul" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 94).

what do you think?

Choose a wall in the room. The far right-hand side of the wall represents the answer "One hundred percent absolutely YES!" The far left side of the wall represents the answer "One hundred percent absolutely, unequivocally NO!" Respond to the following statements by standing somewhere along the continuum of the wall to reflect your answer.

When people read the Bible, they should—

- believe and follow what it says.
- believe and follow what their pastor tells them it means.
- study carefully and then obey the teachings that are clear.
- look for principles rather than rules.

did you know?

The Bible's uniqueness does not come from its unparalleled political, cultural, and social influence, but from its source and its subject matter. It is God's revelation of the unique God-man: the Son of God, Jesus Christ—the Savior of the world" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe,* p. 11).



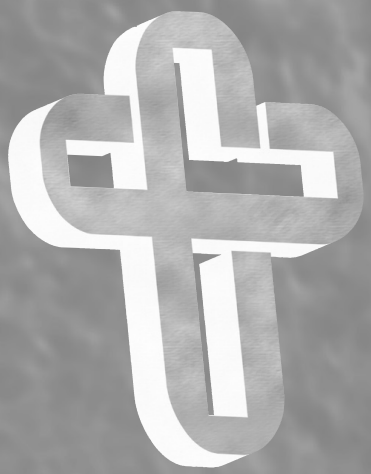
INTO THE STORY

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

"Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

(Psalm 119:105; Matthew 10:17-22, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read Psalm 119:105 and then compare it with the following verses:
- Proverbs 30:5
- Luke 11:28
- 2 Timothy 3:15, 16
- Hebrews 4:12

What is the one major theme that emerges from the five texts?

_____
_____
_____

What do these verses have to say to you personally?

_____
_____
_____

How might you benefit by increasing the time you spend reading your Bible?

_____
_____
_____

Read the entire chapter of Matthew 10. Reflect on the following questions:
How does the context of the story of Jesus sending out the 12 disciples illuminate verses 17-22?

_____
_____
_____

Is this passage more relevant, less relevant, or equally relevant for followers of Jesus today? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

How do the inevitable trials that Jesus warned us about impact a person's faith?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" **(Joshua 1:8, 9, NIV).**

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" **(Ephesians 6:13-18, NIV).**

"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" **(Luke 11:28, NIV).**

further insight

"The maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 102

Sabbath

Read Romans 10:17.

Review your ideas about the Bible in the *What Do You Think?* section. Expand the activity by using the same wall as a continuum to share your opinion on the following statements:

- Every word in the Bible is inspired.
- The Bible contains a lot of good, practical advice such as the golden rule.
- The Bible is more about rules than relationships.

Sunday

Use the video and/or camera feature of your cell phone to capture stories of church members that illustrate the Bible verses for this lesson. Use the following questions in your interview and then share these stories (along with pictures and/or videos) with the rest of your Sabbath School class.

- **Psalm 119:105**
  - In what ways has the Bible been a light to your pathway in life?
  - What is your favorite verse in the Bible and why?
  - Other than "light," what metaphors would you use to describe the Bible?
- **Matthew 10:17-22**
  - Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? If so, what happened?
  - Have you ever felt "the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:20)? What happened?
  - What has God taught you through the adversities and trials of life?

Monday

Read Psalm 119:105.

Review the *Key Text* and then consider this commentary on the passage from the *Life Application Study Bible:*

"To walk safely in the woods at night we need a light so we don't trip over tree roots or fall into holes. In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible can be our light to show us the way ahead so we won't stumble as we walk. It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. Study the Bible so you will be able to see your way clear enough to stay on the right path."[2]

Tuesday

Read 1 John 2:5.

Compare and contrast Ellen White's statement in the *Flashlight* section with this quotation:

"In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man's understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506).

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines*. Compile the commands included in the verses by writing the top 10 commandments found in Joshua 1:8, 9; Luke 11:28; and Ephesians 6:13-18.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Thursday

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

After reading chapters 5 and 6 of *The Great Controversy,* reflect on the main characters of the chapters. Ask yourself:

- What do I most admire about John Wycliffe? Why?
- What do I most admire about John Huss? Why?
- What do I most admire about Jerome? Why?
- What lessons do these three great Reformers have to teach me? (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

_____

_____

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

Reflect on the closing thoughts of chapter 6 in *The Great Controversy:*

"Steadfast to the gospel, the Bohemians waited through the night of their persecution, in the darkest hour still turning their eyes toward the horizon like men who watch for the morning. 'Their lot was cast in evil days, but . . . they remembered the words first uttered by Huss, and repeated by Jerome, that a century must revolve before the day should break. These were to the Taborites [Hussites] what the words of Joseph were to the tribes in the house of bondage: "I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out" ' " (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 119).

Pray over this question: "God, when I face trials and persecution, how can I have the resolve of a martyr?"

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[1] Brian Lowery, managing editor, PreachingToday.com; source: The Barna Update, "Americans Identify What They Consider 'Holy' Books," July 7, 2008.

[2] *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 1041.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 5, 6.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://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.