

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER 21 2026

discovering daily disciplines

Scripture Story: Daniel 6:3-10; Exodus 20:8-11.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 37.
Key Text: Psalm 119:9-16.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Few of us would say no to a lasting and meaningful relationship with God. At least not consciously. The challenge is that while we want a deep communication with Him, we never seem to pause long enough to spend the time needed to cultivate that relationship with Him. Often our distractions are insidiously disguised as purposeful activities—fulfilling work deadlines, studying hard to maintain good grades. We are addicted, not to drugs or alcohol, but to tasks, work, and "doing."

However, God has an answer to our problem! He has given us a way to deeply root our lives in Him—daily communication and Sabbath rest. Prayer is one form of communicating with God. Other forms include reading His Word, and contemplating His Word and the experiences He has brought us through. Daily communication is simply setting aside time each day to talk, listen, and reflect with God. With Sabbath rest we are called to stop, slow down, center our thoughts on God, and enjoy being in His presence.

It is critical to remember that daily communication and Sabbath rest are not meant to be other "to-do" items in our long checklist of deadlines and commitments. It is rethinking the way we live each day. The key is not the length of the communication but the frequency. It is going against the grain of our fast-paced culture and choosing instead to create regular times in our day to pause, for no other reason than to simply experience being loved and loving in return. These times anchor us to God and serve as oases of time to reflect and reorder our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that in order to develop an authentic relationship with God, we have to spend time with Him. *(Know)*
- Realize that knowing the truth is only the first step; spiritual disciplines (such as prayer and daily study of the Word) are necessary to build the psychological and emotional "muscles" needed to stand up against opposition and pressure. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to begin taking the steps needed to build up their spiritual strength and root themselves in God's Word. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 20

"The gracious Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration

of God's creative and redemptive acts" (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Lev. 23:32; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. Discuss their responses to the activity.*

Let friends pair themselves up. Then tell them you are going to test which pairs of friends know each other best. Have one person from each pair leave the room. Ask the remaining students what answers they think their partners will give to the following questions:

1. If you could have an all-expenses-paid dinner with any person in the world (alive or dead), who would it be?
2. Knowing that you were going to crash anyway, which would you choose to be riding? A bicycle or a skateboard?
3. If you had to choose one punishment, would it be not eating supper for a week or having your car keys taken for the week?

Bring their partners back into the room and ask them to give their answers. Which answers were close? Or wrong? Now tell the class you are going to give them five minutes to chat. They can talk about anything, and then it will be their partner's turn to try to guess their answers to the same questions.

Was it easier to know more about someone before or after spending some time talking to each other?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There are stories about farmers in the Midwest who prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house to their barn nearby. It was necessary that even during a blizzard, they take care of their livestock. The rope served as a guide to ensure they could return home safely. Blizzards appear quickly and are very dangerous.

When blizzards blow at full force, you cannot see the end of your hand. Many farmers have frozen to death in blizzards because they could not see where they were going. If they lose their grip on the rope, they would not find their way home. Some have frozen to death just a few steps from their front door, never seeing how close they were to safety.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Many of us live in a blizzard—we are overwhelmed with work, tasks, to-do lists, and responsibilities. Multitasking is seen as an admirable skill, but we multitask so much that we are overscheduled, burned out, hurried, tense, pressured for time, and our over-productivity becomes counterproductive. We have no time to spend cultivating relationships with our family, our friends, our God.

Then when troubles and trials blow into our lives suddenly and unexpectedly, we become lost and lose our way. We need a rope to guide us home.

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 Daniel is in here? How did he get there? What is happening to him? What roles do the other characters play?
- Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
- Daniel was taken by force from his home and country. In Babylon he was given a prestigious education and a high-level job in government. The pressure on him to conform to the worldly, pagan values of Babylon was great. What were some examples of problems that he faced? How did he resist them?
- Sabbath is engaging in a regular pattern of stopping, resting, delighting in, and contemplating God for 24 hours each week. What are you doing now to experience this Sabbath rest? Is there anything stopping you from fully embracing this time of rest and reflection?
- What might you want to consider changing in your life after thinking about these things?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Matthew 6:25-27; Genesis 2:1-3.

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.

According to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, the name Daniel means "God's judge," "God is judge," or "God is my judge." Daniel was born into a noble family from the lineage of King David.

Although Daniel was just a young man, his skills in administration and interpreting dreams were quickly displayed and he served as a high-ranking government official in four dynasties of Babylonian and Medo-Persian power.

Daniel's faithfulness to God (and God's resulting blessing upon him) exposed him to attacks by jealous rivals. Knowing his unwavering fidelity to God, his enemies had him thrown into the lions' den for praying to God rather than King Darius.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary writes about Daniel's persistence in prayer despite knowing about Darius's decree: "Persecuting laws are always made on false pretences; but it does not become Christians to make bitter complaints, or to indulge in revilings. It is good to have hours for prayer. Daniel prayed openly and avowedly; and though a man of vast business, he did not think that would excuse him from daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable are those who have but little to do in the world, yet will not do thus much for their souls!

"In trying times we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we are guilty of cowardice in

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Orchestrating Your Teaching

Good teaching should be entertaining. However, does this mean that it lacks in substance? No. Effective teaching is not about reading word by word from a guidebook or having your eyes fixated on a slide projector while you drone on. Good teachers work the room and every student in it. They realize that they are the conductors and the class is the orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies. Here are some ideas for engaging students:

- Greet your students, by name, at the door when they enter the classroom.
- Start the class on time.
- Encourage students to ask questions at the beginning of the class. Write these down on the whiteboard (or chalkboard) and check each off as you answer them during your lesson.
- Note who is absent. Write a personal note or call them.
- During the week, call your students and ask about their day. Listen attentively and respond kindly (no nagging!). Before ending the call, ask permission to pray for them over the phone.

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 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.*

the cause of God. All who throw away their souls, as those certainly do that live without prayer, even if it be to save their lives, at the end will be found to be fools. Nor did Daniel only pray, and not give thanks, cutting off some part of the service to make the time of danger shorter; but he performed the whole.

"In a word, the duty of prayer is founded upon the sufficiency of God as an almighty Creator and Redeemer, and upon our wants as sinful creatures. To Christ we must turn our eyes."

To quote *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary:* "The plotters did not have to wait long to see Daniel disregard the king's prohibition. Decree or no decree, this man of God felt that he should continue his regular prayer habits. God was to him the source of all his wisdom and success in life. The favor of Heaven was dearer to him than life itself. His conduct was the natural result of his trust in God."[1]

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Using a stereo, play a favorite Christian song as loud as you can without disturbing other classes. Read a favorite Bible verse very quietly while it is playing. Stop the music when you've finished reading. Ask the students if they could hear you clearly? If not, why not?

Our lives are sometimes filled to the brim with noise—the noise can be the busyness of work or our pride pushing us to do more and more to prove our worth. But if we are surrounded by so much noise, and do not take the time to stop the noise, we cannot hear God's still small voice.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

There is a story told of a wagon trail of Christians traveling on their way from St. Louis to Oregon. This community observed the habit of stopping for the Sabbath during autumn, but as winter approached some in the group began to panic. They feared they would not reach their destination before the snows began. So the ones who were afraid suggested that they cease their practice of stopping for the Sabbath and travel seven days a week. Not everybody in the community agreed with this proposal. So the wagon train was divided into two groups. One would press on for seven days a week; the other would stop every Sabbath to rest.

It turns out that the group that rested arrived in Oregon first. Their horses and people were so rested by their Sabbath observance that they could travel more efficiently the other six days.[2]

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[1] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), vol. 4, p. 812.

[2] Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting,* pp. 65, 66.



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*), chapter 37.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Daniel 6:3-10; Exodus 20:8-11.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 37.

discovering daily disciplines



Photo by A Truman

flashlight

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will."

"Even youth of little experience presume to insinuate doubts concerning the fundamental principles of Christianity. And this youthful infidelity, shallow as it is, has its influence" (*The Great Controversy,* pp. 595, 600, 601).

keytext

"How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word. . . . I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you've done it. I relish everything you've told me of life, I won't forget a word of it."

(Psalm 119:9-16, *The Message*)

what do you think?

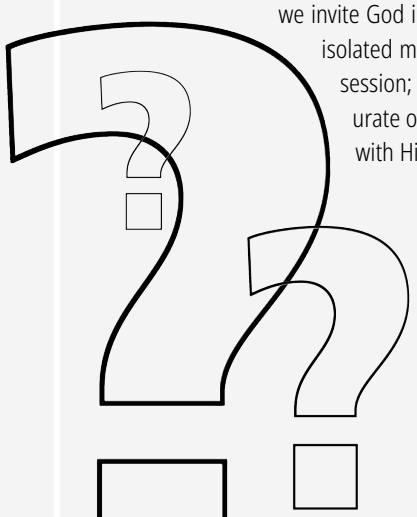
Jesus wants very badly to have an honest relationship with you. He wants very much to give you gifts and blessings, and to help you live a fulfilled life. What does "an honest relationship with God" look like? sound like? How can you have a relationship with a Being you can never see?

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did you know?

David's habit was to pray seven times a day (Psalm 119:164). Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). After Jesus' resurrection His disciples continued to pray at certain hours of the day (Acts 3:1; Acts 10:9). There are people who structure their workday around times of prayer. Others make it a point to stop in the middle of their day to take time to pray.

By including periodic times of prayer in our day, we invite God into more than an isolated morning (or evening) session; we invite Him to saturate our entire day's activities with His sacred presence.



INTO THE STORY

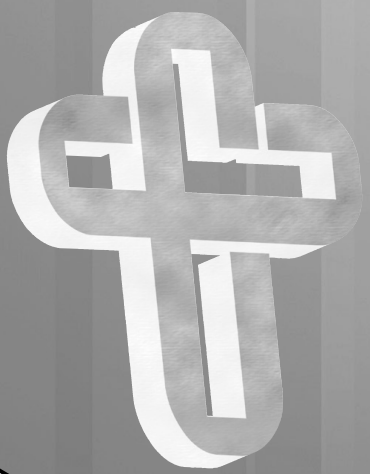
"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'

"So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: 'May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.' So King Darius put the decree in writing.

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

"Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy."

(Daniel 6:3-10, NIV; Exodus 20:8-11, NLT)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read Daniel 6:10. Which words or phrases stand out to you? Why?

Daniel broke the law when he went against Darius's decree. When is it appropriate for Christians to break the law?

What was the cost of disobeying Darius's decree?

What was it about Daniel's life and habits that made it so that his government colleagues found him trustworthy? (See previous chapters in Daniel.)

Daniel habitually prayed three times a day. How do you think this practice helped him to face this great pressure?

Read Exodus 20:8-11. Sabbath is about trusting God, slowing down to enjoy the gifts He gave us, resting from our schoolwork and being consciously aware of the blessings and promises God gives us—for 24 hours. What, if any, is your current practice of Sabbathkeeping?

What concerns, questions, or fears do you have that keep you from making this Sabbathkeeping practice a weekly habit?

punch lines

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" **(Ephesians 5:15-20, NIV).**

"For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation" **(2 Timothy 4:3-5, NLT).**

"Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace." **(Proverbs 3:13-17, NIV).**

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" **(Jeremiah 17:7, 8, NIV).**

further insight

"Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ,* p. 98

Sabbath

Read John 20:27-29.

In the *What Do You Think?* section of your lesson, you were asked to describe an honest relationship with God. Was it easy to do? difficult? Why or why not?

How can you have a relationship with a Being that you cannot see?

Sunday

Read Romans 12:1, 2.

Read the *Into the Story* section of your lesson, and do the question in the *Out of the Story* section.

Daniel didn't become trustworthy and faithful overnight. Character is not built in a moment, but as a result of many "moments."

What can you learn from these three biblical characters about developing positive habits and spiritual disciplines?

Joseph _____

Jesus _____

Mary (the mother of Jesus) _____

How can you begin today to build lifelong habits that will draw you closer to God?

Monday

Read Psalm 119:9-16.

Read the *Key Text.* What does this verse teach us about the importance of relationship in obedience? How does having a relationship with God keep obedience from being mere works?

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 13:7.

Using your own words, paraphrase what Mrs. White is saying in the *Flashlight* section of your lesson. Draw from your personal experiences and use familiar names and/or places to better illustrate your words.

How can we learn from spiritual leaders, such as pastors and teachers, without allowing them to have too much influence in our lives?

Having a relationship with someone simplifies direct communication with them. However, often we are more willing to listen to what others have to say about God than we are to hear Him personally.

Take 3 to 5 minutes to journal one small step you can take to begin to include daily communication and weekly rest with God.

Wednesday

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-5.

Read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson. What can you learn from each verse about what constitutes a strong and healthy relationship?

2 Timothy 4:3-5 _____

Proverbs 3:13-18 _____

Jeremiah 17:7, 8 _____

Ephesians 5:15-20 _____

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:2.

What obstacles are preventing you from stopping to be with God two or three times each day? Think about someone who has an active relationship with Jesus. How does this relationship show up in their life?

Friday

Read Psalm 119.

Read Psalm 119 in its entirety. Write a letter to God about your feelings and thoughts after reading it.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 37.

**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.