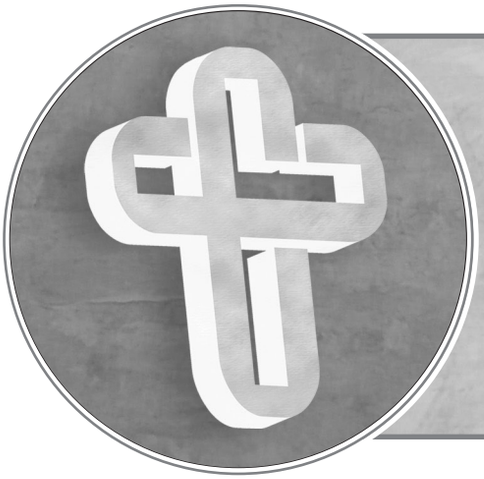


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 31 2026

power. perseverance. purpose.

Scripture Story: Acts 5:12–6:7.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 8, 9.
Key Text: Matthew 5:11.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

God has a purpose for everything. Even our problems serve to benefit us if we confront them with the right attitude and adequate preparation. God could have saved Peter and John from flogging, kept Paul and Silas out of jail, and prevented Daniel from being thrown into the lions' den. Yet, He didn't. And as a result, every one of them deepened their relationship with God.

This lesson aims to help young people recognize that God not only empowers them to overcome tribulation, but has planted seeds of potential in them that if attended to appropriately can develop into purposeful skills and talents to be used for His glory.

Ellen White reiterates this in her writings:

"What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 85).

"The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 89).

Our students can make a difference today—in our churches and in their worlds. They are gifted, they are empowered, and God wants to use them. In this lesson they'll be encouraged to be open to how God wants to use them today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that not only their strengths serve a purpose, but even their problems and weaknesses can. *(Know)*
- Desire to be constantly tapped into God's power. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to discover their spiritual gifts; finding avenues to apply and develop them. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is

protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

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.*

Beforehand, prepare cards or decorative notepapers. Instruct students to write notes of encouragement to someone they know who is going through a difficult time. Alternatively, if any of your students are currently feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, encourage them to write notes of encouragement to themselves.

If they absolutely cannot think of anyone to write a note to, have a list of sick or shut-in members available.

If it's possible, have your students share what they have written with the class. Plan to make time at the end of the session to pray for the people mentioned here.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

For this illustration, prepare the following items: flashlight, batteries for flashlight, table lamp.

Bring out a flashlight that has no batteries in it. How useful is it? What does it need?

(Give the students time to share their answers with the class.)

Put the batteries in. Now it works. But what will happen if you leave it on for a few days or months?

(Give the students time to share their answers with the class.)

They run out of power. This is a metaphor for our relationship with God. We cannot do what we were made to do until He gives us power to do it. We can last for a little while, until our "batteries" run out.

(Now take out a lamp and plug it in.) Compared to a flashlight, how long can the lamp keep shining? We need God's constant power in our lives if we are truly going to make an impact for Him in the lives of the people around us. We need to tap into that power source—constantly and consistently.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When we chase after God with all of our hearts, when we make every effort to get to know Him better, He reveals to us our purpose for existing. He tells us the plans He has for us. He gives us courage to face whatever problems may come our way. In order to make this happen, we need to tap into His ultimate power source. Then we can begin not only to see the purpose in everything, but to become purposeful ourselves!

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 event is occurring here?
- Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
- Peter and the apostles did not back down even though the circumstances were so intimidating. What can we learn from their actions?
- God sent an angel to open the jail doors for the apostles. What does that reveal about God?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- *Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Read Acts 6:1-7. The apostles could withstand beatings. They dared to rebuke people in positions of authority. Yet they needed to outsource the job of administrative duties in the church to seven others. What does this say about abilities and talents?
- Read Ephesians 2:10. God planned for us to do good things. He has a purpose for us. Peter said: "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10, NLT). What talents and abilities do you have? (Sometimes students will refer to performance-based abilities, such as singing, drawing, or playing a musical instrument as talents. This is a good opportunity to broaden their understanding that our talents

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Quitting Time

Sometimes in class students may act up, appear tired, or seem uninterested in the lesson. They may even request for the class to end early. However, if you do give in to temptation and dismiss the class prematurely, you would have indirectly sent a message to the students who put in extra effort to be in class that their sacrifices are not valued or respected and that the time together studying God's Word is unimportant. It also sets a precedent that would make it harder for you to overcome later.

and abilities can also include listening, problem solving, or compassion.)

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. The Power to Change. Despite his initial character flaws and shameful denial of his association with Christ (Mark 14:66-72), after Christ's resurrection Peter was a changed man. He preached fearlessly and performed many miracles. His actions clearly pointed to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit—through which there is no task insurmountable. The Holy Spirit is still available to empower believers today. God promised (John 16:1-16) the believers a source of power and help—the Holy Spirit. We should turn to the Holy Spirit to give us strength, courage, and insight to accomplish God's work for us.

Ellen White offers this insight on the power of the Holy Spirit: "What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 85). What can you do today to better experience this life-changing and life-empowering infusion of the Holy Spirit?

2. The Power of Purpose. The apostles declared that they "must obey God," echoing their earlier rhetorical question in Acts 4:19. Their statement emphasizes their conviction to fulfill God's plans and purposes no matter the cost. Previously, Jesus had commanded them (Acts 1:8) and now, the angel of the Lord was directing them (Acts 5:20). Naturally, the apostles knew their purpose.

Although Romans 12:18 encourages us to live at peace with everyone and Jesus laid down the principle of obeying both Caesar and God (Matthew 22:21), yet when a choice is to be made, we can pledge allegiance to only one master. How many times have we chosen the approval of men over God's approval? Is it because we are unclear as to what God wants from us and has planned for us? How can we attain clarity on this? If we are sure but are avoiding His directives

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 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.*

because they do not align with our desires, what can be done to recalibrate our moral compass?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

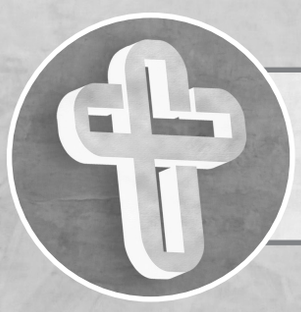
- Design a simple blank business card that says I AM MADE FOR GOD'S PURPOSE and a place for students to sign their name.
- Hand them out and challenge your students to sign their cards. Next, have them pick a Bible verse from the *Punch Lines* section of their lesson and write it down on the back of the card.
- Encourage your students to put this card in their wallets or purses and whenever they are waiting in line, or for a bus, to take out this card and memorize the text.

During the week pray for your students, that as they read and memorize the text, God will show them opportunities to fulfill His purposes. Discuss the results the following week in Sabbath School.

Summary

Share the message of the following quote in your own words:

"Sometimes the process of being shaped by God can be painful and difficult, but if we can look up from the problems of the moment, in the distance we should glimpse the joy of knowing that wonderful things happen when we live our lives according to God's purpose" (*Great Talk Outlines for Youth Ministry*, p. 281).



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 8, 9.

LESSON 5

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 31 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Acts 5:12–6:7.
Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles (or Unlikely Leaders), chapters 8, 9.

power. perseverance. purpose.

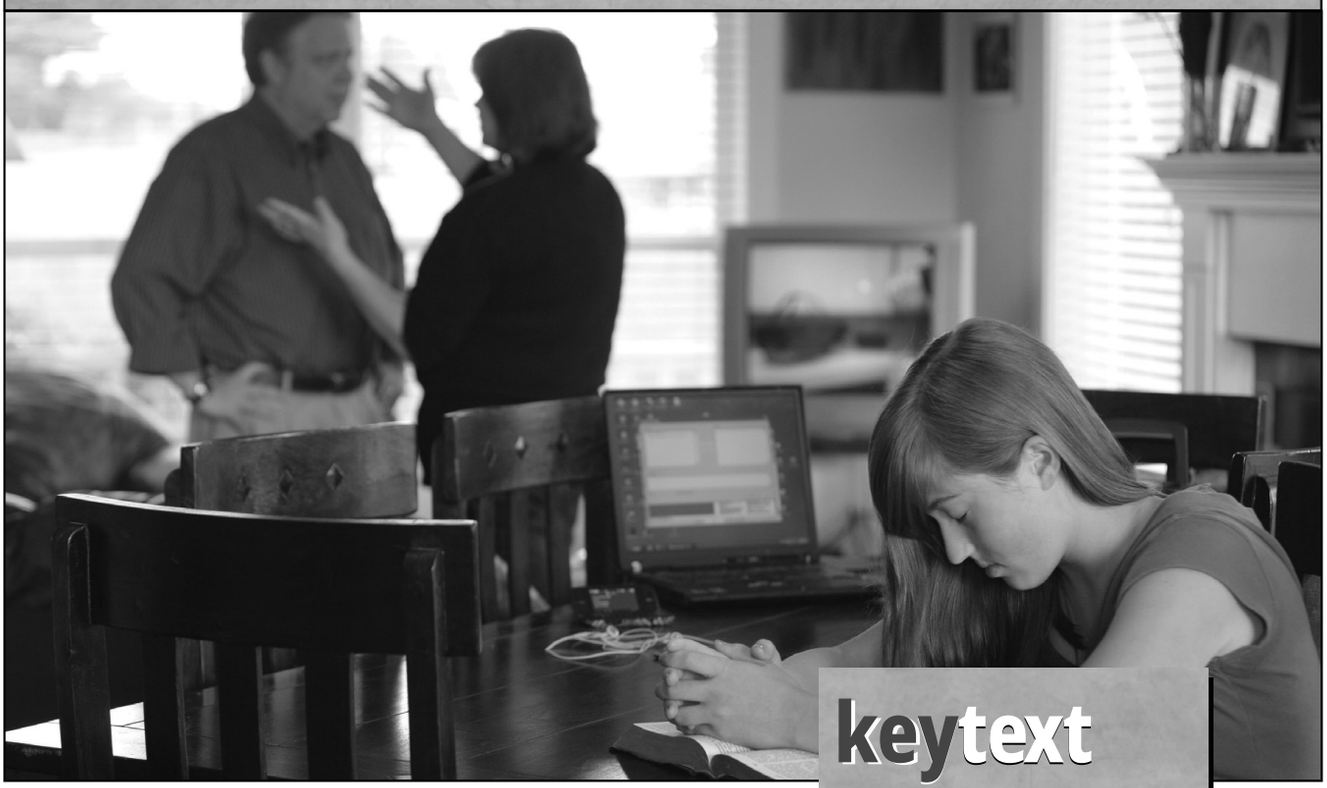


Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."

(Matthew 5:11, NIV)

flashlight

"The leaders in the Jewish nation had signally failed of fulfilling God's purpose for His chosen people. Those whom the Lord had made the depositaries of truth had proved unfaithful to their trust, and God chose others to do His work. In their blindness these leaders now gave full sway to what they called righteous indignation against the ones who were setting aside their cherished doctrines. They would not admit even the possibility that they themselves did not rightly understand the Word, or that they had misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures. They acted like men who had lost their reason" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 78, 79).

what do you think?

Read the following statements and, for each one, select one of these responses: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, or (4) Strongly Disagree:

____ I am confident sharing my testimony about Jesus to others anytime.

____ I enjoy telling others about God all the time.

____ I know what I am good at and what areas I need help in.

____ My non-Christian friends can tell I love God no matter what circumstances I am in.

did you know?

Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by his Savior than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 85).

INTO THE STORY

"Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people all about this new life.'

"At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

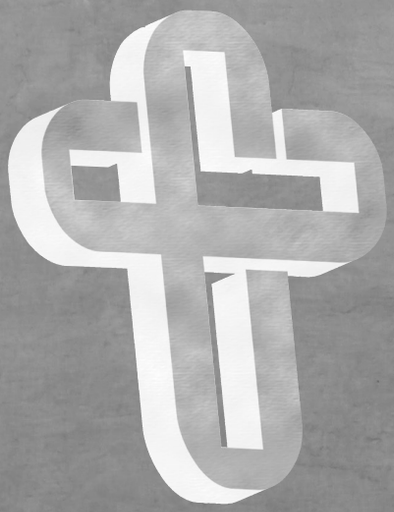
"When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 'We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.' On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

"Then someone came and said, 'Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.' At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

"The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'

"Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings!'"

(Acts 5:17-29, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why were the religious leaders "filled with jealousy"? Does this emotion play out in your life? If so, how?

_____
_____
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_____

The apostles stated that they had to "obey God rather than human beings!" From the passage here, what were the specific orders from God? What were the specific orders from "human beings"?

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What were some of the main problems the apostles faced? How did God solve them? What does this tell you about God?

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What were the apostles' responses to the problems they faced? Do I have the same responses to the problems in my life?

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What is one thing I can do differently from today onward that would change the way I tackle the problems I encounter?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" **(2 Timothy 1:7-9, NIV).**

"Through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth" **(Colossians 1:16, NLT).**

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" **(2 Corinthians 4:17, 18, NIV).**

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" **(Romans 5:3, 4, NIV).**

"'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" **(Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).**

further insight

"What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 85

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.

In Acts 5 it says that "more and more men and women believed in the Lord" (Acts 5:14, NIV). Despite seeing the apostles being jailed and beaten in Christ's defense, the people still believed and accepted Christ. Why?

As you consider your answers in the *What Do You Think*? activity, which one do you think contains the most compelling reason for others to believe and accept Christ? Explain.

Sunday

Read Romans 5:3, 4.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to prompt your study of the text, notice how the disciples' love and conviction for God grew deeper and deeper until, despite flogging, they left "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41, NIV). What impressions does their testimony evoke in you today?

Monday

Read Matthew 5:11.

Some people called Matthew 5:1-12 the "be" attitudes of the faith. Jesus concludes His beatitudes with the Key Text for this week's lesson. What blessings have you seen happen because you or someone else was being "persecuted because of righteousness"? Share your experiences with the class.

Tuesday

Read Acts 6:1-7.

Read the quote from *The Acts of the Apostles* in the Flashlight section of this week's lesson. What can you infer will happen to someone who rejects God's plans and purpose for them? What about those who recognize their talents and use them for God's work? What talents and abilities do you have?

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?

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 1:7-9.

Have you ever been judged or laughed at by others for doing what is right? It takes courage to do what is right (or not doing what is wrong) even though you know you could get into all kinds of trouble for it. It takes power to forgive those who mistreat us. This courage, this power, comes only from God. It has nothing to do with our wealth or fame. And it has nothing to do with privilege or good looks. It has everything to do with the presence of the Holy Spirit who lives within each of us who believe! How can you tap into this power? What activities can you add to your daily routine so that you remain constantly tapped into God's power?

Friday

Read Colossians 1:16 and Jeremiah 29:11.

When we seek God with our whole heart, we don't have to worry whether or not we're doing the right thing or what kind of purpose we are supposed to fulfill—it just comes naturally. But in order for that to happen, we need to fill our hearts and minds with His ultimate power source: the Holy Spirit. What more do you need to do to rely on God's power? How can you make Him more of a priority?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 8, 9.

* 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 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.