



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 18 2020

Israel takes its medicine

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 28:1-15; 29:1-14.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 36.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. Zedekiah and Israel were poised to “take their medicine” and enter into captivity for a season determined by God. While their impending bondage to Babylon humbled Israel, they could have accepted the discipline of God and made the best of their situation by cooperating. A contrite spirit would have continued the good favor that King Zedekiah had with the reigning king of Babylon, fostering a strong witness of God’s providence and care. Unfortunately, the human tendency to avoid punishment and seek alternatives becomes an irresistible temptation. False prophets offered a more palatable solution to their impending captivity, claiming: “This is what the Lord . . . , the God of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon’” (Jeremiah 28:2, 3, NIV).

Ellen White declares: “It was especially important that those in captivity should seek the peace of the land into which they had been carried. This, however, was contrary to the inclinations of the human heart; and Satan, taking advantage of the circumstances, caused false prophets to arise among the people, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, who declared that the yoke of bondage would soon be broken and the former prestige of the nation restored” (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 440, 441). False prophets could not recognize that the Babylonian captivity was allowed

by God as a disciplinary measure in response to the abuses and disobedience that characterized the chosen nation. So these false prophets fabricated the notion that they could still overcome their enemy.

This week’s lesson focuses on God’s life-shaping discipline and the stubborn resistance of the human heart.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God’s plan for our peace and prosperity is real. (*Know*)
- Deepen their confidence in God’s providence. (*Feel*)
- Decide to embrace God’s methods for renewal instead of trusting in the shortcuts. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Secularism/worldliness
- Consequences
- Pride

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.

This week’s activity challenges young people to examine how they approach the discipline of God—or any discipline for that matter. Have the students rank

the excuses given in the *What Do You Think?* exercise and invite them to share their first response. Also, you might have them examine the responses given and connect them to biblical characters that exhibit that behavior.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

“On May 23, 1960, in Hilo, Hawaii, sirens began to shriek in the night. A tidal wave was headed toward Hawaii at 450 miles an hour. Residents had three hours and fifteen minutes to evacuate. But Hilo had been through so many tidal-wave alerts, and in the past nothing had happened. Some people moved to higher ground; others didn’t bother.

Suddenly the sirens stopped. All was quiet. It was like a death hush. Then came the rumbling like the roll of a distant drum. It was almost inaudible at first; then it grew louder. And then, with fierce rumbling and a force impossible to describe, it was there, a wall of water 30 feet high and moving with the speed of a jet. The screams of anguish were drowned in the deafening roar. Then there was an awful silence.

In the morning, 78 bodies were recovered from the ruins—78 people who didn’t need to die. They heard the warnings and the sirens. They understood the risk. They just didn’t bother to do anything about it.”—Henry Feyerabend, *Slices of Life*, p. 159

What obvious conclusions do you see in this illustration about the consequences of disregarding the warning signs?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It’s not hard to see the results of ignoring the warning signs that are meant to save our lives. Judah and the children of God were faced with another season of captivity. Even though God promised a peaceful era of renewal, the false prophets and king sought to opt for a more manageable punishment. Read the story and respond to the questions in the *Out of the Story* section.

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.

Invite the students to examine the behavior of the two prophets Hananiah and Jeremiah, and discuss how they depict the human struggle to avoid the truth when it is painful or discipline when it is inevitable. Below are a few key lessons you may want to discuss.

1. God’s discipline may often be uncomfortable, but it is always the sure way to becoming whole. What other examples in Scripture depict people trying to take a shortcut from character-shaping discipline? Read Jeremiah 28:1-15 (especially verses 8-10) and compare the events in that passage to this one.
2. Avoiding the impact of sin only leads to self-reliant behavior. The false prophets minimized their rebellion instead of repenting of it. When people fabricate their own solutions to their sin problem, the problem only gets worse.
3. How you respond to seasons of discipline conveys a powerful witness to others about who you are and especially about the God you serve. Think of people in Scripture who embraced God’s will even though it exposed their weaknesses and challenged them greatly. How did their approach benefit them in the end?

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 week’s story conveys a message to God’s people as they enter into another season of captivity—this time it’s not Egypt, but Babylon. God’s promise that comes through the prophet Jeremiah is basic: “Take your medicine!” If the Hebrews entered this time with humility and a desire to follow God’s plan, the 70 years would be a time of renewal and influence to others. But in Jeremiah 28 false prophets try to derail the people and offer another “message from God” that is much more palatable.

Remember in Jeremiah 27 that God told Jeremiah to wear a yoke and demonstrate visually the soon-coming discipline of God. God promised everyone that if they humbled themselves under the yoke of Babylon, He would bless them (Jeremiah 27:2, 8, 11, 12).

When Jeremiah checks Hananiah publicly, the false prophet takes the yoke off of Jeremiah and breaks it to illustrate his prophecy. The whole drama is a war of two wills: the will of God and the will of man.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Jigsawing

When a particular story includes several chapters, you might divide the chapters up between two or three groups and have each group summarize the salient points of the story. In this week's lesson you could divide the class into three groups and give each group a chapter (27–29). This maximizes time and allows everyone to contribute. Jig-sawing, as this method is often called, enables you to scan or overview whole books of the Bible as well. You might divide the book of Proverbs evenly between the class (a chapter per person or pair) and ask the students to find a wise saying that speaks to this week's story.

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tion that conveys a message about God's plan and promise to us today. Or you can ask the students: "If God were to use a visual device to arrest our attention today (such as the yoke in Jeremiah 27–29) what visual symbol do you think would make the greatest impact on people today?" The students can either share an example or describe a symbol that would be effective.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is hard to face the truth when you are wrong. The people of God had wandered so far from God that the only way to bring them back again was to send them into captivity in Babylon. God's plan wasn't to punish them but to prepare them to become the kind of people they were destined to be to the world. The path to become God's true ambassadors to the world is not an easy road, and the journey often includes moments in which your weaknesses, faults, and even sinful behaviors are exposed. But God's grace and mercy are always there to reach you and teach you about the abundant life.

Remember the promise God spoke in Jeremiah 29:11, 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.'" If your desire is to embrace this plan for your life, then be willing to receive the instruction and adversity God brings your way to grow you as a child of God.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In the same way God had Jeremiah wear a yoke to dramatize the impending discipline of God's children, invite the students to pair up and devise an illustra-

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the 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 Prophets and Kings. 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 speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.



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 *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 36.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.