PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Genesis 3:15 (NIV) • “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Acts 1:9-11 (NIV) • “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’ ”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV) • “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

Jude 14, 15 (NIV) • “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’ ”

Revelation 1:7 (NIV) • “Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’; and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be!”

Revelation 21:3, 4 (NIV) • “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ ”

Isaiah 2:4 (KJV) • “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Revelation 21:25-27 (NIV) • “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”
B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "HOME AT LAST"

The promise of the Second Coming of Christ infuses human existence with meaning, purpose, and closure, for it satisfies our longing for a world without sin, war, disease, and death. Our longing for Eden restored. Our craving to have departed loved ones restored to us. Our desire for face-to-face communion with our Creator.

While gospels, epistles, and Jesus Himself confidently predict His soon coming, they warn that world conditions preceding it will be laden with difficulties. For one thing, an ungodly society will pressure and tempt His followers to renounce their faith. Even religious figures will circulate dangerous errors about His coming and the end of the world. As a result, we are warned to live in constant expectation of His literal coming and not be entangled in worldly affairs or religious heresies.

Having irrevocably committed ourselves to the One who is the source of our faith, we will hail His coming with assurance, crying, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9, KJV). At long last, sin’s reign of terror and suffering will be over and that of love, joy, and peace forever instituted!

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "HOME AT LAST"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:
1. Recognize that Jesus’ second coming is near.
2. Understand that His coming is literal.
3. Prepare themselves and others for this climactic event.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity) an adult church member who has always been a Seventh-day Adventist, believing in the literal, visible coming of Jesus; index cards on which questions are written.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Bibles.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

>> Song service
>> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist Mission for youth and adults at www.realtimereadings.net)
>> Service project reports

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively and with one another) and to study from the Word.
A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Select a “youth-friendly” adult who has always been a Seventh-day Adventist. Their frank answers to the students’ questions will reinforce the biblical view of Jesus’ return.

Get set • Give the students index cards on which questions are written. (For example: How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? What is important about the name Seventh-day Adventist? According to the Bible, how will Jesus take His people away when He comes? How should we regard Christians who believe differently?)

Go • Have selected students read the questions, allowing time for the guest to answer them one at a time. Thank the guest for coming, allowing the students to express their appreciation also.

Debriefing • Ask: What struck you most about the guest’s answers? What parts of Scripture are their views based on? How do they seem to feel about their beliefs? Why do you think many Christians misinterpret what the Bible says about Jesus’ coming? What is the benefit of believing all of what the Bible says about the Advent?

Present the following ideas in your own words:

All Christians are looking for Jesus’ second coming, but some do not believe that His coming will be known by everyone. If Jesus came secretly, as some believe, many would not take advantage of their opportunity to accept Jesus now. It is always best to believe the Bible and to follow His Word.

B. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:
In God’s Smuggler, Brother Andrew recalls a remarkable experience from his youthful days in the late 1940s fighting in the Dutch army against President Sukarno. A few weeks after buying a young gibbon (a small, tailless ape), which he kept as a pet in the barracks, he observed that the animal’s waist seemed to hurt. Embedded in a welt around the gibbon’s middle, he found a wire, which someone had tied there when the pet was a baby. As the animal grew, the wire cut deeper into his flesh, causing him much pain. That night Andrew shaved the hair from around the welt. With the gibbon patiently looking up at him, as if to say, “I understand,” he cut gently into the flesh until he reached the wire, cut it, and threw it away. Immediately the gibbon leaped up, somersaulted, and jumped onto Andy’s shoulders, jerking his hair with delight. Afterward the two became inseparable, each identifying with the other—the gibbon with Andy because of the removed wire, and Andy with the gibbon because the wire seemed similar to the guilt binding him and from which he himself longed to be delivered.


Debriefing • Ask: How are the gibbon and our world today alike? (They are both sick. The gibbon was sick physically, and our world is sick spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.) How is the solution to their problems alike? (The gibbon could not get rid of its problem by itself. It had to cooperate with Andrew, who got rid of the wire that was embedded deep within its flesh. Our world cannot get rid of its problems, for they are caused by sin, which is deeply embedded within our nature. However, when we cooperate with Jesus, He removes our sin and replaces it with righteousness and power. At His second advent, He will also cleanse the world of sin and re-create it.)

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Today we focus on an event that has been anticipated for almost six thousand years. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, we have longed for the coming of the One who would bring sin and suffering to a close—Jesus. However, as eagerly as we have awaited His return, our feelings can’t begin to compare with...
His own yearning to be with us and to make all things and us new.

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

In modern times, there have been several persons claiming to be Jesus. But they were discovered to have been false Christs because they did not do several things that the Bible said that Jesus would at His second coming. They did not come as Jesus said He would. They did not bring an end to sin. They did not raise the righteous dead and take them to heaven with the righteous living who awaited Jesus’ return. Despite the growing confusion about the Second Coming, the Bible gives unmistakable facts about it.

Ask a volunteer to find and read Genesis 3:15. Ask: What does this passage, the first reference to Jesus’ coming, say that He would do then? (Destroy sin and its author, Satan) Have volunteers find and read the following verses (have them listen for the sights and sounds of Jesus’ second coming): Revelation 1:7; Jude 14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and 2 Peter 3:10. Ask: How do the sights and sounds we’ve noticed show us that Jesus’ return will be literal and not secret? (Sight: Everyone on earth will see Him coming with His angels in the clouds; every dead Christian will be resurrected; Jesus will carry all living and resurrected Christians to heaven with Him. Sound: Jesus will shout and trumpet His joy at being reunited with His followers; all sinners will cry with fear and disappointment at His return; the heavens will pass away with a tremendous explosion, and the world will be destroyed.)

Say: Jesus’ return will bring an end to sin. We will be with Him in Heaven and will enjoy eternity without pain and suffering.

We will experience peace and happiness.

Ask: Is heaven a real place? Let’s find and read about that in Revelation 21:3, 4 and Revelation 21:25-27. Ask: What do these verses say about it? (God the Father Himself will be there. Tenderly He will wipe all tears of disappointment, pain, and regret from our faces. Only righteous individuals will inhabit heaven; sinners will have no place there.)

Say: Jesus wants to come to earth even more than we want Him to come. Let’s look for evidence of this in the Bible. Ask someone to find and read 2 Peter 3:9 and Revelation 3:20.

Ask: What do you think (or feel) about what these verses tell us?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Ask: “The Case of the Absent Homeroom Teacher” reminds us of the parable of the 10 virgins. Can you think of another parable that this story reminds you of? (The parable of the absent landlord, etc). How is it like these parables? (Answers will vary: Jim’s group is like the five foolish virgins, while Susan’s is like the five wise virgins; Mrs. Williams represents the bridegroom, and the substitute teacher represents the person announcing the bridegroom’s return. Mrs. Williams also represents the absent landlord who leaves his home for a while, and Jim and Susan represent the servants that he left in charge of things.)

Ask: What can we learn from this modern parable? (We should get ready and stay ready for Jesus’ literal return, for it will be unexpected. We should be prepared enough to help those who are unprepared.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE
Pose the following scenario:

“Remember the school bus will leave at exactly 7:00 for our field trip. We will not wait for anyone. We have just enough time, if we leave on time, to get there, have our tour, and return by the end of the school day,” the teacher said.

“Sam, you need to prepare for tomorrow’s field trip before going to bed tonight. Please fix your lunch and lay out your clothes for tomorrow. You won’t have time to do it in the morning,” Sam’s mom told him.

But Sam, busy doing other things, did not listen to his mom’s advice. The next morning found Sam rushing around the house looking for his favorite shirt. Finally, Sam rushed out without a lunch and ran to the school. Just as he turned the corner toward the school, he saw the school bus pulling out of the parking lot and turning down the street away from him.

He had missed the bus. He had missed the field trip.

Say: Sam’s situation is like that of many persons just before the Second Coming. Just as Jesus predicted events that would announce His soon return, Sam’s teacher had set a time that the school bus would depart.

Say: Let’s find and read 1 Peter 5:8 and Jude 14, 15. Have the verses read aloud. Ask: How is Sam’s situation the same as (or different from) that of Christians at Jesus’ second coming? (Sam got engrossed with other things; he didn’t listen to what his mother had said. Some Christians will not go with Jesus because they became involved in worldly matters and forgot what Jesus said. Just like Sam, they will miss going home with Jesus because they are not ready. Now is the time to prepare for Jesus’ return. Now is the time to get ready. What are you doing to prepare to go home with Jesus? (Students’ answers may vary—studying the Bible, praying, helping others, going to church, etc.)

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Separate the class into two groups. Group One is to describe brief scenarios in which someone is left behind and write each one on one side of an index card. (For example: someone’s being left behind because they neglected to raise the required sum for an outing; missing a bus or airplane because someone overslept; missing a semester at school, a term at summer camp, etc., because someone turned in their application after the deadline; missing a big sale at a department store because one got the date confused, etc.)

As Group One finishes writing a brief scenario on a card, the leader quickly takes the card to Group Two. Their task is to relate the scenarios to their spiritual counterpart, missing out on Jesus’ second coming, and write their comparison on the other side of the card. They should also include advice for avoiding “being left behind” when Jesus comes.

When Group Two has finished writing their responses on Group One’s cards, read the cards one at a time, both sides, encouraging discussion.

Debriefing • Ask: How does missing out on any of the above situations compare to missing out on Jesus’ coming? (Not as disastrous) Why or why not? (Allow students to elaborate.)

Ask: If we were as serious about Jesus’ coming as we are about things we really like, would we be more prepared for Jesus’ return? (Pause for phrase responses.) Why or why not? (Allow individual explanations.)

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do prayer, churchgoing, and Bible reading relate to Jesus’ return? How much of them do we have to do to get to heaven?
2. How much more do we love Jesus and heaven than we love people and things? Or do we?
3. How can we get this love if we do not have it? How can we nurture this love if we have it?
4. Which two signs would you identify to show that Jesus’ return is near?
5. Why is Jesus coming a second time? Is it just to destroy sin and those still filled with it?
6. How important is Jesus’ second coming to you? Is heaven worth our efforts to be there?
7. How can we best prepare ourselves and others for the Second Coming?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words conclude with the following ideas:

Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed, each of us has consciously or unconsciously longed for someone to make us whole and take us somewhere that is free from the results of sin. Jesus alone satisfies these persistent longings. Having experienced our human frailties firsthand for 33 years, He identifies with our yearning for wholeness. As our high priest, He accepts our faith in Him and makes us into new creations, for “the old has gone, [and] the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). This faith relationship enables Him to deliver us from a world teetering on the brink of destruction at His second coming. At that time, He will take us and our resurrected loved ones to heaven, where we will never be separated from Him and where sin and its debilitating effects will never torment us again!

May that long awaited day come soon! Amen.
Sabbath FOR STUDY

» Memory Text: “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:25-28, NKJV).

» Our Beliefs, no. 25, The Second Coming of Christ: “The Saviour’s coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die.”

» Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 408-412

THE CASE OF THE ABSENT HOMEROOM TEACHER

“Class,” Mrs. Williams told her ninth-grade students with a twinkle in her eyes, “starting Monday, I’ll be on maternity leave.”

Everybody gasped. They had hoped she would be with them on the class trip.

“That’s great!” Susan Wiltshire said, collecting herself. “If it’s a girl, name her Susan!”

“No way!” Jim Usher joined in. “It’s going to be a boy, and she’s naming him after me.”

“Well, as great as you all are,” Mrs. Williams smiled, “the names are already chosen. If it’s a boy, he’ll be named after my husband, and if it’s a girl, she’ll be named after me.” She hurried on to cushion the class’s disappointment. “While I’m gone, though, I want Jim to make sure Team A finishes their science project, and Susan can do the same with Team B.”

“How long will you be gone?” Jim asked.

“A few weeks, but a substitute will be here to teach you. Since you’ve just about finished your projects, pass them in by 9:00 May 14, a month from today.”

“That’s when we go on the class trip!” Susan gasped. “If we don’t finish our projects, we can’t go!”

“Not to fear, Susan,” Mrs. Williams replied. “You’ve got more than enough time to finish.” Then, her eyes twinkling, she added, “And I’ll work on being here for the 10:00 class trip.”

After Mrs. Williams went on leave, the groups worked hard on their projects. Then everybody gradually slacked off, figuring they’d finish everything later. However, Susan’s group made its materials, while Jim’s group waited for a department store sale to buy theirs.

Then one day the substitute teacher reminded them, “Today’s May 14, and your projects are due at 10:00 A.M. when Mrs. Williams gets here!”
They all stopped. “Guys,” Susan yelled, heading for the last of the materials. “Let’s finish everything now!”

“Hey,” Jim bellowed, “we need materials . . . Quick, Susan, lend us some of yours.”

“Sorry, Jim. We don’t have enough for our group and yours. Hurry to the store!”

Jim’s group left in a cloud of dust. While they were gone, Susan’s group finished their project, and Mrs. Williams came and took the jubilant Team B on their exciting class trip.

Sunday
RESPONDING

» Read John 3:1-3.

» Lately Sandra’s been going to church for more than meeting her friends, hearing the latest scoop, and planning after-Sabbath activities. She has a growing urge to know Jesus better. Once when the pastor preached on Jesus’ second coming, she felt that something—or Someone—was nudging her to accept Jesus publicly. But she knows that if she acts on these convictions, her group will label her “Holy Jane.” On the other hand, she wants to get ready for Jesus’ return.

» What should Sandra do? Is it possible to have it both ways? What will probably be the result either way she goes?

Monday
BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

» Read Matthew 24; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

» Jesus has told us to watch and prepare for His coming. We don’t know the exact moment, but we can know that it is close because of the things happening in the world and the condition of people’s hearts.

» How are you preparing for His coming?

Jesus’ second coming

Find the hidden words within the grid of letters. Words can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, and backward or forward.

angels dead eye every every oil lamps wise rise bridegroom Jesus clouds heaven virgins love

Saturday
REFLECTING


» Look around you. Everything in this world is in a mess, and doesn’t seem to be getting any better. Wars overturn governments, destroy buildings, and split up families. Everywhere there is death and there is loss. Mysterious diseases strike, threatening whole groups of humans, as well as animals. Natural disasters are on the rise, and crime keeps inventing new ways to inflict pain and terror.

» These events all shout that something big is about to happen. Just like a person dying from cancer or AIDS, our hopelessly sick world announces that it cannot last much longer. Life has strayed so far from what God
intended it to be that God must surely send His Son to destroy sin and restore earth to the wonderful, perfect place He created it to be.

But true to His nature of love, God has extended the time for us to get ready for Jesus’ return. The awful things we see around us He uses to warn us. But the time for making the choice to let Him get us out of this mess is almost over. Very soon He has to come and put an end to sin and rescue those of us who have chosen to let Him fix us up and get us out of here.

Why on earth would a wise person want to waste this last bit of time, when making the decision to follow Jesus out of all this will guarantee a forever life of peace, joy, and adventure?

**Wednesday**

**BIBLE INSIGHTS**

» Match the text with the verse.

Matthew 1:21 (NIV) ______
John 14:1-3 (NIV) ______
1 Peter 5:8 (NIV) ______
Matthew 24:24 (NIV) ______
Matthew 24:27 (NIV) ______
Luke 12:32 (KJV) ______
Isaiah 11:6-9 (KJV) ______
Isaiah 65:22 (NIV) ______

A. “No longer will they build houses and others live in them . . .”
B. “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus . . .”
C. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb . . .”
D. “Do not let your hearts be troubled . . .”
E. “Do not be afraid, little flock . . .”
F. “For as lightning that comes from the east . . .”
G. “For false messiahs and false prophets . . .”

H. “Be alert and of sober mind . . .”

**Thursday**

**CONNECTING**

» Read Matthew 24:27.

» Review the memory verse.

» The Second Coming is going to be the greatest event in history. It represents the victory of God’s way over Satan’s way. Accompanied by millions of rejoicing angels, Jesus comes to earth with a trumpet blast that wakes the dead. Like a champion who has defeated a powerful enemy, He shouts His joy about bringing sin and suffering to an end.

» Before your birth, He formed you, preparing your pathway for life. After birth, He stuck by you in good times and in bad. Despite your sins, He loved you as though you were the only person on earth. Now as He enters earth’s atmosphere, He looks for you. He itches to hug you, to take you away from every remembrance of sin and death forever, and, at long last, to introduce you to His Father.

» Would you disappoint Someone who loves you that much? Who did so much for you? Who values you so highly? Pleasure, money, and popularity can never compare with Him! Can never match the wonder of living with Him in a perfect world that daily increases your joy, peace, and love! Please make up your mind to accept this wonderful gift today.

» You’ll never regret it!
Read 1 Peter 5:8.

Think of all the things that you really love. Often what we value is determined not only by what we say about something but also by what we think of it and do about it. What, for instance, is it you think of most? What is it you spend a lot of time doing—or wishing that you could do? What is it that you could talk about for a long time—and not feel time pass? In short, what is it that really has your affections? Write a paragraph identifying these things.

After writing, ask yourself the following questions:
1. Can the things that I love compare with Jesus or match what He has in store for me in heaven?
2. Is what I love helping or hindering my preparation for Jesus' second coming?
3. If they are helping my preparation, how can I share them with others?
4. If they are hindering my preparation, are they worth my time and affection?

Write another paragraph recording your answers to the questions.

End the activity by asking God to reveal Himself to you as your best Friend. Ask Him to help you to continue loving the things that help you and others get ready for His return, and pray for strength to stop doing anything that hinders your relationship with Him or readiness for His coming.