

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 22, 2023

law and love revisited

Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 4–6; 28.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*); chapter 42.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson is based on chapter 42 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, “The Law Repeated.” It tells the story of the Israelites preparing to enter the Promised Land. Because of his sin at Kadesh, however, Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan. The role of leadership for the Israelites was given to Joshua. Moses was then “directed to rehearse to them the history of their deliverance from Egypt and their journeyings in the wilderness, and also to recapitulate the law spoken from Sinai” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 463).

Ellen G. White goes on to describe the scene: “Moses stood before the people to repeat his last warnings and admonitions. His face was illumined with a holy light. His hair was white with age; but his form was erect, his countenance expressed the unabated vigor of health, and his eye was clear and undimmed. It was an important occasion, and with deep feeling he portrayed the love and mercy of their Almighty Protector” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 463).

This lesson offers an opportunity to portray the “love and mercy” of our Almighty Protector. By presenting the law in a positive light, students should be able to make the connection between God’s law and His love. By obedience to God’s law, the Israelites enjoyed the rich benefits of God’s way of life. Conversely, by disobeying God’s guidelines, the Israelites tasted the bitter consequences of life apart from God. In the end, God’s way always represents the best way to live.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the value of being obedient to God’s law. (*Know*)
- Make the connection between obedience to God and a more abundant life. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to obey God’s laws. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 19

“The great principles of God’s law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God’s covenant with His people and the standard in God’s judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)”

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson and discuss their responses.

Illustration

Our world is governed by all sorts of laws: municipal, state, national, religious, natural, ceremonial, economic, environmental, moral, etc. Some laws seem senseless. Other laws are essential to our freedom and security. To introduce the topic of laws, give the following true or false quiz about crazy laws in the United States, or research some in your own country:

1. In Lawrence, Kansas, it is illegal to walk down the street with bees in your hat.
2. It is against the law in Michigan to hitch a crocodile to a fire hydrant.
3. In Lebanon, Tennessee, it is illegal for a husband to kick his wife out of bed for having cold feet, but a wife can kick her husband out of bed for any reason at any time.
4. In Atlanta, Georgia, it is illegal to tie a giraffe to a signpost.
5. In Danville, Pennsylvania, it is mandated that every fire hydrant must be checked one hour before every fire.
6. In Woonsocket, Rhode Island, it is illegal to remove icicles from buildings by taking pot shots at them with a rifle.
7. In Lexington, Kentucky, it is illegal to carry ice-cream cones in your pockets.
8. You can be arrested in Minneapolis for teasing a snake.
9. In Arkansas it is illegal to blindfold a cow if you're near any public highway.
10. In Topeka, Kansas, it is illegal to annoy a squirrel.

When the students have finished the quiz, grade it by telling them that the answer to every question is “true.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Laws are a part of life. Not all laws, however, make

a lot of sense to us. Some laws seem reasonable only when we get older. For example, maybe when you were a young child you didn't understand why it was dangerous to run out in the street.

Only as we mature do we see the value of the laws our parents enforced. In the same way, it is only as we mature as God's children that we understand how God's laws are given only to provide freedom and security. God's laws are never the senseless demands of a dictator who revels in restricting His children. As Paul writes: “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (Romans 7:12, NIV).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section together, expand the discussion about God's laws by explaining how some laws are specific to a time, place, and culture, while other laws represent timeless principles. Read the following laws (NIV) and have the students go to either the corner of the room that is labeled “Specific to time, place, and culture,” or the other corner of the room marked “Timeless principles.”

- Exodus 20:13: “You shall not murder.”
- Leviticus 19:27: “Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.”
- Leviticus 18:21: “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God.”
- Matthew 22:37-39: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ . . . And . . . ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”
- Leviticus 11:26: “Every animal that does not have a divided hoof or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches *the carcass* of any of them will be unclean” (emphasis added).
- Deuteronomy 21:18, 19: “If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.”

Questions for Discussion:

- What timeless principles might be behind the laws that are specific to time, place, and cul-

ture? (See *Sharing Context and Background* for help with the answer to this question.)

- How does someone differentiate between God's laws that are no longer binding and timeless laws that are eternal?
- How does knowing the lawgiver help someone keep the law?
- What role does God's law play in making decisions?
- Is there any difference between God's law and guiding principles? If so, what?
- Do any of God's laws obstruct our freedom and happiness? Explain.
- Why do you think Moses was so specific in spelling out the blessings and the curses that correlate with keeping the law? Do the blessings still come as a result of obedience? Do the curses still come as a result of disobedience? Discuss your answers.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

One of the issues that emerges from this lesson centers on the relevancy of laws for Christians today. Are the laws given to Israel still binding today? The commentary in the footnotes of the *Life Application Bible* offers this answer:

"God's laws are designed to guide all people toward lifestyles that are healthy, upright, and devoted

to God. Their purpose was to point out sin (or potential sin) and show the proper way to deal with that sin. The Ten Commandments, the heart of God's law, are just as applicable today as they were 3,000 years ago because they proclaim a lifestyle endorsed by God. They are the perfect expression of who God is and how He wants people to live.

"But God gave other laws besides the Ten Commandments. Are these just as important? God never issued a law that didn't have a purpose. However, many of the laws we read in the Pentateuch were directed specifically to people of that time and culture. Although a specific law may not apply to us, the timeless truth or principle behind the law does.

"For example, Christians do not practice animal sacrifice in worship. However, the principles behind the sacrifices—forgiveness for sin and thankfulness to God—still apply. The sacrifices pointed to the ultimate sacrifice made for us by Jesus Christ. The New Testament says that with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Old Testament laws were fulfilled. This means that while the Old Testament laws help us recognize our sins and correct our wrongdoings, it is Jesus Christ who takes our sins away. Jesus is now our primary example to follow because He alone perfectly obeyed the law and modeled the true intent."^{*}

In his parting address to Israel, Moses reiterated the importance of obedience to God's laws. The apostle Paul said: "The law . . . does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. . . . The law was our guardian

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **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 *Patriarchs and Prophets*. 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

Affirmation

One of the marks of an ideal learning environment is that it feels safe. When discussing a potentially controversial topic such as the law, it is important to affirm all opinions expressed by group members. Let each person know that their comments are appreciated—even if their opinions differ from your own. Remember, affirmation does not mean agreement. Affirm even those comments that you believe to be heretical. By doing this, you communicate that everyone has a right to express an opinion. When a comment is made that you believe to be way off base, you can kindly offer an alternative point of view for people to consider. Never condemn or attack the person who made the comment.

RABBI 101

rather to provide guidelines regarding the best way to live. By choosing God's way we are choosing life. For an activity that highlights this point, have the students read Deuteronomy 30:15-18 and then write a short children's story based on this text. The story should underscore the importance of wise choices. When the students have the story written (and illustrated if there's an artist in the group), arrange for them to go and share their story with younger kids in another Sabbath School class.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

To bring this lesson to a fitting close, use a beach ball to illustrate that keeping God's law is not a matter of trying real hard to be good. Will power won't cut it when it comes to the law. Explain how some people approach spiritual life as if it were an assignment to keep a hundred beach balls submerged in the Pacific Ocean at the same time. Explain: "You may keep a ball under water with your feet and a couple more submerged with your hands, but soon you'll feel defeated and exhausted."

Similarly, some people think, *If I can just hide my failures to obey the law and keep my sins like pride and gluttony and lust under the surface so others don't see them, then maybe I'll at least look like a Christian.* That approach to keeping the law is a sure recipe for failure.

So what's the answer? Get out of the water and into the boat with Jesus. The key is not to try harder to keep every law; rather, the key is to live in the presence of the One who perfectly fulfilled the law in our behalf. For sin and Jesus cannot coexist in the same heart. The goal of spiritual life is to always remain in the presence of God in order to let His life be willed through you.

*Life Application Bible, New International Version (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 286.

until Christ came that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:17, 24, NIV).

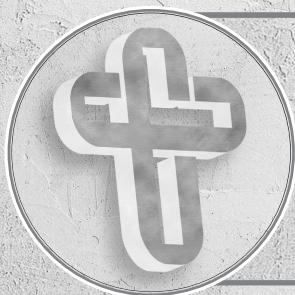
Here's the bottom line: It is important to keep God's laws. In essence, Moses told the children of Israel that their eternal destiny was in their own hands. God's hands are tied by the choice we make. We can choose life by accepting Christ's fulfillment of the law and living in the transforming power of His grace. Or we can choose death by disobeying the laws of God; consequently, we are not led to Christ "that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24, NIV).

III. CLOSING

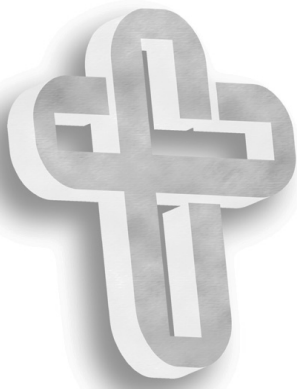
Activity

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

God gave us laws, not to wreck our lives, but



Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 42.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 22 2023

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 4–6; 28.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets (or Beginning of the End)*, chapter 42.

law and love revisited

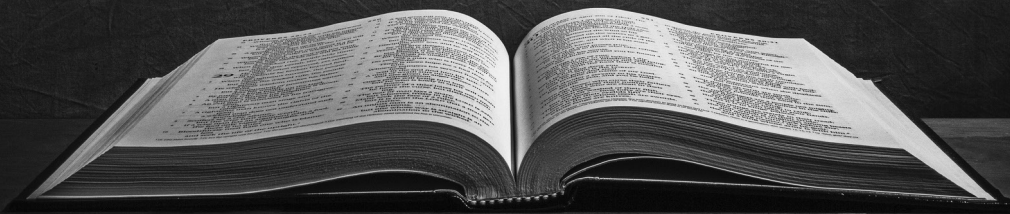


Photo © Thinkstock 2023

flashlight

“After the public rehearsal of the law, Moses completed the work of writing all the laws, the statutes, and the judgments which God had given him, and all the regulations concerning the sacrificial system. . . . Still the great leader was filled with fear that the people would depart from God. In a most sublime and thrilling address he set before them the blessings that would be theirs on condition of obedience, and the curses that would follow upon transgression” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 466).

key text

“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

(Deuteronomy 7:9, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think? Write your opinion next to each statement: A (Agree), NS (Not sure), D (Disagree). Explain your answers.

- ___ If I keep God's commandments I will experience optimal happiness.
- ___ Nobody can perfectly obey God's law.
- ___ There is no absolute standard of right and wrong.
- ___ All teenagers know the difference between right and wrong.
- ___ The Bible can be a helpful guide when facing a difficult decision.
- ___ As long as we do our best to obey God's law, we're assured of going to heaven.
- ___ Females are better at keeping God's law than are males.

did you know?

The Hebrew term for "law" is *tôrâh*; this often refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Scripture and includes the idea of "direction" and "instruction." According to Jewish tradition, there are 613 laws contained in the *tôrâh*—365 negative commands and 248 positive commands. There were various types of laws such as moral, ceremonial, civil, and health laws. When studying the Bible today, it is important to distinguish (by carefully looking at the context of the passage) what type of law is being referred to. In ancient Israel, however, all the laws were considered to be commands from God. Thus, the Jews of old did not distinguish between the various kinds of laws and held every law to be sacred.

—Siegfried H. Horn, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing, 1979), p. 660.

INTO THE STORY

“Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.”

“You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.”

“Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may

live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.”

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.”

“If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.”

“However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you:

“You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. . . . You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.”

(Deuteronomy 4:1, 2, 35, 39, 40; 6:5, 6; 28:1-3, 15, 19, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the words that highlight the sovereignty of God.

Underline the commands of God.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and list some of the blessings that God promises will be the result of obeying His commands:

Now add to that list of blessings any other benefits that you have discovered as a result of obeying God's commands:

Read Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and list some of the curses that God says will be the result of disobeying His commands:

Now add to that list other negative consequences that you have discovered from disobeying God's commands:

Read Matthew 22:37-40. How does seeing God's commands that way help explain the idea of blessings and cursings?

punch lines

"So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12, NIV).

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right" (James 2:8, NIV).

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

Jesus replied: ' "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments' " (Matthew 22:34-40, NIV).

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17, 18, NIV).

further insight

"True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 97.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

Reflect on the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV).

Review your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Does Jesus' statement about the law change any of the opinions you expressed in that exercise?

Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 7:9.

So often the law is seen as something negative. However, this is clearly an absurd notion. Try to imagine a world devoid of laws. What would it be like? The *Key Text* reminds us of God's faithfulness. Reflect on the virtue of faithfulness. Who is your most faithful friend?

After reading the *Into the Story* excerpts, write a psalm of praise thanking God for the blessings and benefits of keeping His laws.

Monday

Read Deuteronomy 4:35.

How would your closest friends rate your faithfulness factor? How can you be more like God in this area?

The *Key Text* also references a "covenant of love" that God makes with us. How would you define this covenant? In what ways has God kept this covenant with you? How might you live out this covenant with your friends and family members?

Tuesday

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-18.

Ellen White mentions that Moses "was filled with fear that the people would depart from God." Thus, he tried to communicate clearly both the benefits of following God and the pain of disobeying Him. Moses set before the Israelites "the blessings that would be theirs on condition of obedience, and the curses that would follow upon transgression" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 466).

Identify from Moses' life those experiences through which he learned about the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. What can we learn from the experience of Moses?

Wednesday

Based on the texts listed in *Punch Lines*, would you say the picture of the law in Scripture is generally positive or negative? Explain your answer.

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5.

Every day you are bombarded with countless decisions. Some of these decisions could impact your life in significant ways ("Will I experiment with drugs?"); other decisions seem much more menial ("Should I wear my blue shirt or my red one?"). In the end, your life will simply be the sum total of these decisions. So what will you base your decisions on? A hunch? Your parents' advice? A book? Obviously there are many options.

Suppose now that you committed to making all your decisions—big and small—consistent

with the laws of God. How might you benefit? Is there any downside to building one's life on the teachings of God?

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

Write a modern paraphrase of this closing challenge that Moses put before the Israelites: "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20, NIV).

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 42.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.