



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
 SEPTEMBER 02 2023

real estate section

Scripture Story: Joshua 10:40-43; 11; 14-22.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*); chapter 48.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Joshua is a book of high drama—and careful recordkeeping. The message is clear: Stay faithful to God, and He'll be faithful to what He's promised you. And in the settling down of the Israelites in their long-awaited land, there are lessons to learn about relationships, trust, God's grace, faith in action, and brotherly love.

The story begins with the Israelites on the move, taking one city-state after another by God's direction and power. Then Caleb reminded Joshua about a piece of land they had seen generations ago. Caleb was ready with God's help to take that land.

That kind of sanctified bravado couldn't help bringing a lump to Joshua's throat, and he bade Caleb Godspeed. If anyone deserved an easy retirement it was Caleb, but Caleb wouldn't think of it. Caleb conquered Hebron, driving out the three sons of Anak, and pushed on to claim a few more towns for good measure.

Then there are the cities of refuge, each strategically located within half a day's journey of anywhere in Israel. Ellen White writes that God didn't yet choose to abolish the custom of vigilante justice, but He appointed these cities, that no one should be executed for an accidental murder or on the testimony of but one witness. The inadvertent murderer was safe as long as he remained within the city's walls.

The story of the Gadites' and Reubenites' altar is a cautionary tale of snap judgments within a community, yet with a happy ending (and, alas, the last such happy

ending the Bible will offer for a while).

These tales of Israel's celebrations and challenges give us plenty to chew on. Lead your students to discover points such as these:

- God will empower us when we follow His Spirit's leading.
- Grace tempers our actions against those who have done us wrong, and Christ is our shelter as long as we remain in Him.
- We must avoid rash judgments of others' motivations. Hurling accusations is Satan's trait (Revelation 12:10, NIV, calls him "the accuser of our brothers and sisters," and the Greek word *diabolos* means "slanderer").

II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* that God desires His people to be bold, yet humble; fearless, yet patient.
- *Feel* the courage of Caleb, the surety of Christ as shelter, and the urgency of unity.
- *Respond* by making application of these stories' principles to contemporary situations.

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in

cornerstoneconnections

Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.)”

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Sound judgment. The three subjects of this week’s lesson—Caleb’s “better late than never” conquest of Hebron, the cities of refuge, and the unexpected controversy over the Reubenites’ and Gadites’ altar—all illustrate the importance of wisdom in everyday life, especially when relating to others. Like the ancient Israelites, we face issues of honesty and discernment with our fellow Christians.

Ellen White wrote: “Treat every man as honest. Speak no word, do no deed, that will confirm any in unbelief” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 122). With the Holy Spirit’s help, we too must treat everyone with gentleness and respect.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A new pastor greeted his small-town, mostly older congregation. The church members eyed him warily, this young man would be trying to fill some very big shoes. He decided to break the first-day tension with a joke—about another new pastor.

“A new pastor moved in and found a burned out lightbulb in the janitor’s closet. ‘Well, this I can fix right quick,’ he thought, and rummaged around until he found a fresh new bulb. Just as he was about to change the lightbulb, though, he heard a gasp. It was the church treasurer, standing behind him, aghast. ‘You can’t change that!’ the treasurer sputtered. ‘My great-grandpa donated that bulb!’ ”

If you’ve never seen controversy in a church over something that seemed innocent and innocuous—

moving a pulpit across the stage, replacing old orange carpet, or putting song lyrics on a screen—you probably haven’t been attending very long. People fight innovation for all sorts of reasons, but the biggest reason is fear—fear that something spiritual will be lost in the transition.

This week’s lesson tells tales of people trying to do something new—and those trying to make sure the community doesn’t lose its way. It tells of people jumping to conclusions, and God instituting safeguards to protect those who could be hurt—be they those trying to honor God in their own way, or someone who has accidentally killed a person. And in the story of Caleb, we find someone whose love and zeal for God knew no fear.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

An old cartoon shows a dog having finally “caught” the family car after a few thousand chases down the driveway. The caption? “Now what?” You won the trophy. You’ve got the guy or girl. You reached the Promised Land. This is where real life begins. And it’s not always pretty.

The ancient Israelites faced all manner of growing pains when they finally reached Canaan. God promised to empower them in everything—but that meant setting them free. It was time for the Israelites to grow up or go bust. Manna no longer fell from the sky, so there were fields to hoe and crops to sow. New temptations beckoned, but the greatest remained: the temptation to forget just Who had brought them that far.

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.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31, NIV). If salvation is so simple, why is it so hard to accept that God is looking out for us? Why do people struggle with fear that they won’t make it to heaven after all? What’s salvation all about, anyway?

The cities of refuge provide us with an illuminating illustration of salvation. We’re all guilty of murder—the murder of Jesus Christ, Son of God. And yet there is a city of refuge—the very same Person, our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus. If we try to defend ourselves,

we'll end up victims of the devil's vengeance, but if we throw ourselves at Jesus' mercy, our protection and salvation are assured.

That's grace—grace at its purest and simplest. And yet there's another question: How then shall we live? It's a deep subject, and several books in the New Testament explore the topic. Have the students take turns reading from Romans 6:2-14.

That's the mystery and beauty of abiding in Christ. God's grace doesn't just cover our sins—it empowers us to live lives that reflect Christ's love.

Discuss with your students what the ideas of Jesus' sacrifice, Jesus' offer of forgiveness and salvation, and “abiding in Christ” mean to them. Do they wrestle with the assurance of salvation? Are they confused about grace, about whether or not they must somehow contribute to and “earn” their salvation? Discuss how when we walk with Christ daily, deepening our relationship with Him, the Holy Spirit will guide us in all we do so that others may see Christ in us—not so *that* we will be saved, but *because* of it, and so that *others* may be saved through our witness.

Sharing Context and Background

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

When thousands died in the desert, Caleb survived to enter the Promised Land. The essential difference? A positive attitude. After the people rebelled at Kadesh-Barnea, God considered striking them all down and just sticking with Moses' descendants. When Moses

interceded for the Israelites, God declared, “Not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (Numbers 14:22-24, NIV).

Caleb's “let's trust God and go for it” attitude is an inspiration to us today as we seek to stand for God. There will always be obstacles, especially if we look and focus on them, but a prayerful attitude sees opportunities for God to be glorified.

The cities of refuge remind us of the importance of abiding in Christ. The idea has led many to legalism, but the reality is that we're invited to enter into Christ's rest—a refuge from works-oriented religion, of thinking we must handle life on our own. Ellen White wrote: “There is need of constant watchfulness, and of earnest, loving devotion; but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. . . . God will accept every one that comes to Him trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour. Love springs up in the heart. . . . Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure” (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 353).

Ellen White describes the life in Christ as a life of transforming rest. “The conscience will find rest in Christ. He is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the

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

Role-Playing

Role-playing is an important component in applying what one learns. It probably won't be difficult for your students to think of examples they've seen of controversies similar to the Reubenites' and Gadites' altar. Guide them through a consideration of what both parties wanted in the Bible story—the other 10 tribes wanted to be sure that God was not being dishonored, and the two and a half tribes wanted to be sure their geographic separation didn't cause them to forget what they stood for.

Then help them consider controversy “closer to home,” and the guidelines this story suggests.

RABBI 101

sin of the world.’ As we believe Him, we are changed into His likeness. His image is engraved on the heart. His love is reflected to the world in our words and deeds. Thus is revealed to the world the power that truth has to sanctify the receiver. Under the bright, glorious beams of Christ’s righteousness, the human soul is made pure and holy” (*Southern Watchman*, July 9, 1903, par. 2).

The controversy over the unexpected altar brought back memories of the apostasy at Baal-Peor, when Israelites were led into immorality and death, and of Achan’s theft, when one man’s sin brought disaster to all of Israel. The Israelites were eager to defend the community from backsliding and idolatry. Fortunately Phinehas and the elders demonstrated what business and family expert Stephen Covey calls one of the “seven habits of highly effective people”—“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Because they

didn't rush to judgment. Not only was tragedy averted, but a beautiful harmony among people and a tribute to God was revealed.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to list the personal qualities that came through in this week's stories of Caleb and the leaders who dealt with the crisis of the Reubenites' and Gadites' altar. What qualities of Caleb kept Israel moving forward, and what qualities of Phinehas and the other elders kept Israel from falling apart? (Examples include that both were patient, didn't rush to judgment, and were willing to look at issues from somebody else's viewpoint.)

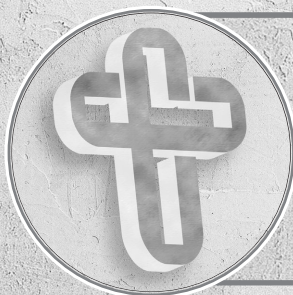
If anyone deserved to rest on his laurels, it was Caleb. Tell your students to consider, as they go on, what new fields in their lives God may have for them to obtain.

Summary

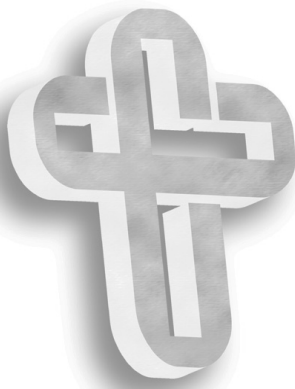
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

An 85-year-old man's patience rewarded. Protection from punishment and rest in Christ. A disaster averted thanks to openhearted patience and the Holy Spirit's guidance. These interlocking themes present a picture of the gospel—not just in theory, but road-tested, demonstrating how it shapes our attitudes and relationships.

A realistic view of the Christian life recognizes that it is neither just floating along on a breeze nor a constant struggle for God's acceptance. Life brings challenges, but the love of God brings both assurance and empowerment. We must rise to life's challenges and meet them with a desire to bring God glory.



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 48.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Joshua 10:40-43; 11; 14-22.

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Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"[Caleb] did not ask for himself a land already conquered, but the place which above all others the spies had thought it impossible to subdue. . . .

". . . To each was given according to his faith. The unbelieving had seen their fears fulfilled. Notwithstanding God's promise, they had declared that it was impossible to inherit Canaan, and they did not possess it. But those who trusted in God, looking not so much to the difficulties to be encountered as to the strength of their Almighty Helper, entered the goodly land" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512, 513).

keytext

"So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' "

(Joshua 14:9, NIV)

what do you think?

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

- 1. It's better to try and fail than to have never tried at all.
- 2. The most well-intentioned effort will ultimately fail without God's blessing.
- 3. Even the flattest pancake has two sides.
- 4. General unity is more important than absolute agreement.
- 5. You can't be too careful.
- 6. If we attend church and don't do anything too sinful, our salvation is secure.
- 7. There's no sin God can't forgive.
- 8. We should be patient and considerate even with those who attack us.

For the items you agreed with, tell how that principle can be applied to life.

did you know?

Christians in the Middle Ages designated churches as places of sanctuary for those accused of crimes. An accused criminal could throw himself at the mercy of a church and would have 40 days to either stand trial under local authorities, or confess and go into exile, leaving the country.

While King James I officially abolished churches as asylums in 1623, persecuted people have turned to churches as sanctuary throughout the ages.

How we relate to others reflects our relationship with Jesus. Matthew 25:40 says, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

"Then Joshua blessed Caleb . . . and gave him Hebron as his inheritance."

"Then the LORD said to Joshua: 'Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, . . . so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of that city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them. If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled.'"

"So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land. . . .

"[They] built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard . . . [about it], the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them."

"They said to them: ' . . . How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the LORD and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?' "

"[They replied,] ' . . . We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, "What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD." . . .

INTO THE STORY

"Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb . . . said to him, ' . . . I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. . . . So on that day Moses swore to me, "The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'

" . . . So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day.' . . .

punch lines

“That is why we said, “Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.” On the contrary, it is to be a witness . . . that we will worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, “You have no share in the LORD.” ’ ”

“When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community . . . heard . . . [this], they were pleased. . . .

“Then [they] . . . reported to the Israelites. . . . And they talked no more about going to war. . . .

“And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the LORD is God.”

(Joshua 14:6-13; 20:1-6; 22:9-12, 15, 16, 24-27, 30, 32-34, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why was it important that Caleb approached his old friend Joshua with a group of other tribesmembers to ask for Hebron? Why might Joshua, from prior experience, have been particularly concerned about public perception and opinion?

Why were the Israelites so concerned that the Reubenites and Gadites' actions could bring judgment on all of Israel (read the entire incident in Joshua 22:10-20)?

Why would God appoint cities of refuge rather than just ban private vengeance altogether? In what direction was God slowly moving His people?

What spiritual parallels can we draw between the sanctuary that cities of refuge offered and that of the refuge we find in Christ as sinners?

“**The LORD is my rock**, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—from violent people you save me” (2 Samuel 22:2, 3, NIV).

“**God is our refuge** and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, NIV).

“**Whoever dwells** in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1, NIV).

“**How wonderful, how beautiful**, when brothers and sisters get along! It's like costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, flowing down Aaron's beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes. It's like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion. Yes, that's where God commands the blessing, ordains eternal life” (Psalm 133:1-3, *The Message*).

“**Let us draw near** to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:22-24, NIV).

further insight

“**By our unity, by esteeming others better than ourselves, we are to bear to the world a living testimony of the power of the truth.**”—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 105.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read **Joshua 22:10-34**.

This week's *What Do You Think?* has us ponder some advice, much of which you've probably heard before and which is hard to remember when emotions are high. How helpful are such principles in the "heat of the moment"? What kept the Israelites from going to war with one another over a big misunderstanding—and how important is levelheaded leadership?

Sunday

Read **John 7:24**.

Read this week's *Out of the Story*. Each question touches on some aspect of relationship and responsibility. What do this week's stories teach us about our relationship with God? About how we should treat others? About the importance of not rushing to judgment? About standing up for what we believe in?

Monday

Read **Matthew 6:25-34**.

This week's *Key Text* is a record of a promise kept. God made an incredibly generous offer to the Israelites: if they'd live for Him, He'd make their life worth living.

Jesus makes some incredible promises to us as well. How do these promises compare to what God offered the Israelites? How can you relate to these promises in today's topsy-turvy world? How would your life and attitude be different if you truly took these words seriously?

Tuesday

Read **Numbers 14:41-45**.

Self-fulfilling prophecies. Read this week's *Flashlight* quote. Better yet, look up the complete reference in *Patriarchs and Proph-*

ets. The Israelites at Kadesh Barnea thought the Canaanites were far too strong for them, and trembled at entering the Promised Land despite what they'd seen of God's power. When they tried to redeem themselves by entering Canaan on their own, they met with disaster and death, and most people thought, *Sure enough—they were right—we're doomed*.

In much of life, attitude is everything. The Israelites' self-defeating attitude led to defeat. Joshua's courageous faithfulness brought God-powered success. What is God encouraging you to do? What giants are in your way? How can you avoid trying to succeed on your own? How can you focus on what God will do through you, and not just the obstacles in your way?

Wednesday

Read **Luke 7:36-47**.

Read this week's *Punch Lines* section. If there's one thing God loves to do, it's transform wretchedness to righteousness, hopelessness to happiness, despair to delight. God loves to take the most messed-up situation and recreate it into something beautiful. He offers a fresh start to anyone who asks, no matter how desperate things may seem on the surface.

What does the story of the woman anointing Jesus' feet tell us about how eager God is to redeem us, no matter how far we've fallen or how much we've messed up? How can it help us respond to people and things in our lives that tell us we're beyond repair?

Thursday

Read **Hebrews 10:22-24**.

The story of the Reubenites and Gadites misunderstood altar has important lessons for churches today. The tribes of Reuben and

Gad just wanted to honor God; the other 10 tribes were afraid of disaster due to God being dishonored. What parallels do you see to modern church politics? How have churches you've known about handled similar controversies? What can we learn from how Phinehas and friends handled the situation?

Friday

Read **Matthew 24:9-14**.

It's easy to say "I'll follow God no matter what." It's another story when going forward with God may mean losing your friendships and security. Jesus made some promises to His followers that are 180 degrees from the promises the Israelites heard: "You will be persecuted. You will be betrayed." From today's reading note particularly verse 13—"But he who stands firm to the end will be saved." How can we keep our faith and keep standing for God even when it brings us suffering? Is God asking too much of us? Can we ask too much of God? Christians throughout history have been willing to give their lives for Jesus. How do you think they felt God's presence and power even as they were persecuted?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 48.

**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#URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.