The goal of Cornerstone Connections is to lead you to the Bible to see the big story of God and people. This big story continues from the first generation in Eden to your generation today. It’s about the lives of people as the God of the universe interacts with them.

If you are looking for a word from God that is real, Cornerstone Connections captures the message of Scripture and challenges you to make the connections to your real life.

God’s Word is not only real; it is rock-solid. For the first generation to hear God’s voice in the garden as well as the last group standing before Christ at the Second Coming, the Word of God has been and continues to be reliable.

The word from God comes to us in the stories of people who encountered Him and made a decision to either follow Him or walk away.

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in Into the Story in each lesson. Out of the Story will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you also will find:

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White’s input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
- **Other Eyes**—a couple of quotes from various contemporary or historic sources that may open up a slightly different perspective on the central message of the lesson.
- **Making It Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally.

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

—The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.

*A special modern adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
July

7—The Trust Test [p. 5]
Once again Israel is given a chance to fulfill God’s promise and imperative to go in and possess the land He has been waiting 40 years for them to inhabit.

14—Greed: The Bottomless Pit [p. 9]
A prophet in denial argues with a talking donkey, showing just how far from God’s reality earthly greed can take one.

21—Roads to the Soul [p. 13]
The Israelites learn, once again the hard way, that there is no moment when the human heart is safe from temptation.

28—Law and Love Revisited [p. 17]
Moses portrays the love and mercy of their Almighty Protector as he rehearses to the Israelites the history of their deliverance from Egypt and their journey in the wilderness.

August

4—Last Longing Look [p. 21]
Moses’ humanity is evident as he looks over his life; however, his close connection with God is also clear as he willingly gives his life to what God has planned for him.

11—Promises Don’t Die [p. 25]
The nation could have fallen apart at the death of Moses; however, God’s promises are passed to the new leader signifying that God’s Word transcends human leadership.

18—Behind the Walls [p. 29]
An alien woman has more faith than the Israelite nation itself. As a result, she is rewarded in the marvelous way of becoming a grandparent of both King David and the Messiah.

25—First Things First [p. 33]
After Ai is finally defeated, Joshua reminds the people of the blessings that would attend their obedience to God and the curses that would haunt them should they disobey.

September

1—Oops! [p. 37]
Israel is forced to defend a nation whose people it barely knows to honor a dishonest agreement, and still God pauses time to allow His people to conquer their enemies.

8—Real Estate Section [p. 41]
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.

15—Line in the Sand [p. 45]
Joshua leads the people in renewing their covenant with God, drawing a clear line in the sand for them.

22—Famines and Feasts [p. 49]
This week’s lesson focuses on the stewards we are to be of God’s blessings, as well as on the symbols through which God communicates knowledge of His saving grace.

29—Knowing God’s Will [p. 53]
Gideon’s story often leads to discussions about knowing God’s will; however, a better knowledge of God brings a clearer understanding of His purpose for us in this world.
the trust test

flashlight

“Everyone who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief. The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost. The difficulties that seem so formidable, that fill your soul with dread, will vanish as you move forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 437).

keytext

“The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.”

(Deuteronomy 2:7, NIV)
Voting: Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (B) with the following statements and be ready to explain why.

___ God expects us to be 100 percent certain before we step out and choose to obey Him.
___ God expects us to follow Him with blind faith in His leading.
___ God expects us to use reason and facts to make our decisions about His will.

Either/Or
Which do you think is a more effective way to learn: learning from others’ mistakes or from their good example? Choose one and explain your reasons. Think of an example.

___ God expects us to be 100 percent certain before we step out and choose to obey Him.
___ God expects us to follow Him with blind faith in His leading.
___ God expects us to use reason and facts to make our decisions about His will.

Did you know?

Several groups of big people are referred to in the Bible:
Nephilim—existed very early in human history;
Rephaim—occupied the land prior to the Canaanites;
Anakim—lived in the south, near Hebron and were defeated by the Israelites under Joshua;
Emin—a warrior tribe of giants that were defeated by Chedorlaomer and his allies around the time of Abraham (see Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10, 11; 3:11).

How big were the giants the Israelites faced? Moses says, “We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (Numbers 13:33, NIV). Why might Moses have exaggerated? In any case, the enemy was unmistakably large, making the miracle of God’s victory equally large.

INTO THE STORY

“Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the Lord had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir. Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north.’

“Give the people these orders: ‘You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.’”

“The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. So we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab.

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’ (The Emites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites. Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the Lord gave them as their possession.)

“And the Lord said, ‘Now get up and cross the Zered Valley.’ So we crossed the valley. Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them.’”

(Deuteronomy 2:1-14, NIV)
punch lines

“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it . . . but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith” (Hebrews 4:1, 2, NIV).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7, NIV).

“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NASB).

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8, 9, NIV).

“And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Psalm 9:10, NRSV).

“In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them” (Psalm 22:4, NIV).

“What specific commands does God give the children of Israel in the story? Underline them.

What promises does God make to the children in this story?

What words or phrases in this story are key?

Circle the different people or people groups in this story.

Before entering the Promised Land, why do you think God made the Israelites wander and wait 38 years before coming back to this pivotal point?

What do you think is the central lesson taught in this story?

Underline what you think is the most important phrase or verse in this story.

How do you think the Israelites felt when faced with the challenge that their forefathers had failed 40 years before?

“Faith is like muscle which grows stronger and stronger with use, rather than rubber, which weakens when it is stretched.”—J. O. Fraser, 20th-century Scottish missionary in China.

“To become a Christian is not to adopt a different belief system. To become a Christian is to experience a transformation into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Admitting is useless without committing.”—Leonard Sweet, Out of the Question . . . Into the Mystery, p. 23.
### Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section you were challenged to choose the better way to learn. It could be said that both the mistakes others make and their success stories serve us well as examples when making decisions. Hebrews 4:11 urges believers to enter salvation’s rest using the example of disobedience as an action to avoid. Titus encourages believers to “set them an example by doing what is good” (Titus 2:7, NIV). Think of some of the most powerful lessons you have learned in your journey.

### Sunday

Read the story of how Israel was led back through the land of the giants. Pay special attention to Deuteronomy 2:7. With what spirit do you think Israel was to journey through the lands of their enemies? As you read this entire section in Deuteronomy 2 and 3, what theme do you pick up as Israel was challenged again to face such a seemingly impossible task?

What are some challenges you face today that you sense God is asking you to trust Him with?

### Monday

The Key Text this week is Deuteronomy 2:7, which conveys a beautiful reminder of God’s enduring care for Israel during a season when they were to learn what it means to lean fully on God’s guidance. Paraphrase this passage in your own words, not using any of the major terms or phrases that the Bible uses. Try to capture the essence of this verse as if the message were given to you personally.

### Tuesday

The Flashlight passage from Patriarchs and Prophets contains a reality check, an assurance, and a command that will test your ability to trust God completely with your life. Identify the reality check, the assurance, and the command and reflect on the parts that speak to you personally.

Reflect on the heroes of faith in your life. Perhaps they are church members, or historical or biblical characters that have been an inspiration to you. Which faith hero can you hear passionately proclaiming the words of the Flashlight quote with conviction and experience?

### Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines for this week and identify one or two verses that speak to you today. Perhaps there is someone you know who faces a challenge that seems impossible. Or, maybe you have a friend that struggles with faith and turns to their own wisdom when they should trust and obey God, no matter what might happen. Consider praying for that person and possibly encouraging them with one of the Punch Lines passages. It may be that your encouragement this week is just what they need to reach out to God and lean fully on His promises.

### Thursday

It is sometimes said, “The devil is in the details,” but so is God. On a piece of paper or in a journal, make a list of the many events in your life when you trusted God and He was faithful. List the big things as well as the small things, or the details. As you consider how God has led you in the past, what new challenges do you want to trust Him with in the future? Imagine that each challenge is like knocking on the door of the giants.

List at the top of a piece of paper the upcoming opportunities you will have to lean fully on God. Beneath, write out a prayer thankfully mentioning a few of the pivotal moments of faith you have already experienced and commit your future to God, no matter where He might lead you. Think of at least three areas of your life in which you want to follow God explicitly and include them in your prayer.

### Friday

Take some time and think about some of the more challenging leaps of faith that you remember people taking in Scripture. It may be that some, like the children of Israel, can better liken their journey to a rollercoaster ride going up and down with success and failure. To what would you liken your journey or your relationship with God? If you could change anything about your relationship with God, what would it be?

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**this week’s reading**

*Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 39.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
flashlight

“Balaam ‘loved the wages of unrighteousness’ (2 Peter 2:15). The sin of covetousness, which God declares to be idolatry, had made him a timeserver, and through this one fault Satan gained entire control of him. It was this that caused his ruin. The tempter is ever presenting worldly gain and honor to entice men from the service of God. He tells them it is their overconscientiousness that keeps them from prosperity. Thus many are induced to venture out of the path of strict integrity. One wrong step makes the next easier, and they become more and more presumptuous” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 439, 440).

keytext

“Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.”

(Numbers 22:31, NKJV)
Desperate for money, a young man held up a store, even though his conscience told him it was wrong. Before long he committed more and more crimes, and the more he committed, the less it bothered him. The more wrong he did, the less wrong it seemed. He finally became completely immune to his guilt over the thievery.

Why did the young man become immune to his guilt?

Do you guiltlessly do things now that you used to think were wrong? If so, what brought about the change? Is there any way to return your conscience to its former state? Would you want to?

INTO THE STORY

“That night God came to Balaam and said, ‘Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you.’ Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him.

“When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam’s foot against it. So he beat her again.

“Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and she said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?’

“Balaam answered the donkey, ‘You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.’

“The donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?’

“No,’ he said. Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. The angel of the Lord asked him, ‘Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her.’

“Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, ‘I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.’ The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.’ So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”

(Numbers 22:20-35, NIV)
“O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness” (Jeremiah 51:13, KJV).

“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!” (Habakkuk 2:9, KJV).

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Revelation 2:14, KJV).

“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core” (Jude 11, KJV).

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5, KJV).

“Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction.” —Erich Fromm, 20th-century U.S. (German-born) psychoanalyst.

“Greed is a fat demon with a small mouth and whatever you feed it is never enough.” —Janwillem van de Wetering, current Dutch author.

“The main source of our wealth is goodness. The affections and the generous qualities that God admires in a world full of greed.” —Alfred A. Montapert, current U.S. author.
Sabbath

Do you see yourself as being more like Balaam, or more like the donkey, when it comes to relating to God?

Ponder your actions. Consider whether or not you do things that you once thought were sinful, but now believe to be harmless. How can we protect ourselves from falling into that trap? Balaam was greedy; he wanted the riches the Moabites offered him, even though he knew that to curse the Israelites was not what God wanted. How can we stay conscious of what’s wrong and what’s right? Answer below.

Tuesday

Read this week’s Punch Lines.

Even though Balaam had fallen short on his love for God, he first told the Moabites he would not curse the Israelites in order to make himself seem full of integrity. He put on a disguise that made him appear righteous, when he really cared only about his own benefit, not what God wanted.

Ponder your own character, and whether you do things for God or just to make yourself appear more righteous. Pray and ask for God’s guidance, and do what God wants you to do because you love Him, not because you’re worried about what others think of you.

Wednesday

Look at the quotes in the Other Eyes section. Which one speaks most to you? What are they saying is wrong with greed? Come up with a few short quotes yourself that express the evil nature of greed. Write them down and share them with someone else.

Thursday

Remember that God is all powerful. When God told Balaam not to curse the Israelites, He meant it. Balaam thought he could hide from God by appearing to be righteous, but God knows the heart; He knows when we are sincere and when we aren’t. God also knew that Balaam desired the wealth the Moabites offered him. He pretended not to want it, but God knew his heart. Ask yourself: Are there ways in which I am putting on masks, pretending to be what I am not?

Friday

Read the Flashlight quote again. In what ways does covetousness work against your soul? What are ways in which you can combat covetousness in your own life? Is it possible to fight it in our own strength?

Consider volunteering with friends to work in a soup kitchen, or work with your church on another project to help the homeless. Active service to help others is one of the best ways we can work with God to combat covetousness in our own hearts.

*Friday’s quote*

“Greed is wrapped in the guise of generosity” — William Jennings Bryan

Insight

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this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 40.

*S by following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 460).

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.’” (Numbers 25:10-12, NIV)
what do you think?

Rank the following items according to their power to cause major destruction to your relationship with God (1 is the most destructive and 5 is the least)

1. Media, movies, and music of a worldly nature
2. The example of key leaders who fall and are exposed as hypocrites
3. Promiscuity and sexual entertainment
4. Apathy and boredom—the absence of good input
5. Rationalizing sin with intellectual arrogance

Explain why you chose the top three you did. Which behaviors or avenues to the human heart not mentioned above would you include in this list? Why?

INTO THE STORY

“While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord’s anger burned against them.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the Lord’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel.’

“Then an Israelite man brought to his family a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear through both of them—through the Israelite and into the woman’s body. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.’

“The name of the Israelite who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family. And the name of the Midianite woman who was put to death was Cozbi daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them, because they treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the affair of Peor and their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of Peor.’”

(Numbers 25:1-18, NIV)

did you know?

A study that surveyed the perceptions of Americans about 10 moral behaviors showed that the following percentages of people believed the following were morally acceptable:

- Gambling 61%
- Cohabitation 60%
- Sexual fantasies 59%
- Having an abortion 45%
- Having a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex other than their spouse 42%
- Pornography 38%
- Profanity 36%
- Drunkenness 35%
- Homosexual sex 30%
- Using nonprescription drugs 17%

(Barna Research Group, Morality Continues to Decay, November 3, 2003)
“You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can’t be a friend of God” (James 4:4, NLT).

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NRSV).

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV).

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9-11, NASB).

“In conclusion, my brothers, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable” (Philippians 4:8, TEV).

“That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.” —C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English novelist and essayist.

“Ever notice that the whisper of temptation can be heard farther than the loudest call to duty?” —Earl Wilson, 20th-century U.S. pitcher in Major League Baseball.
Sabbath

As you rank the items in the What Do You Think? section, explain why you put them in the order you did. Do you sense that the world is becoming numb to how wrong sin is? What are some examples of this from your perspective? Read James 4:8-10 and consider how you might apply this challenge and this promise to your life this week.

Sunday

Read the Into the Story passage and answer the questions in the Out of the Story section. This story is loaded with many sobering events and some inspiring moments. As you work through the study questions ask yourself, “What is God trying to say to me in this passage?” If you had to boil your insights down to 10 words or less, what would you say is the message you want to take away from this story? Which verse or phrase captures your attention the most and why?

Monday

The Key Text this week highlights Phinehas and his zealous attempt to vindicate God’s name and the authority of His will for Israel. Read this passage and think of some other biblical heroes that were passionate and unwilling to let God’s name be shamefully mocked by others. Reflect on your experience over the past month and identify a moment or two when you had the opportunity to stand up for God. In what ways do you want to be like Phinehas in his zeal for God? (Avoid throwing spears, however.)

Tuesday

In the Flashlight section Ellen White captures the essence of what we can do to prevent such a shameful incident from occurring in our lives. Read the passage again.

Part of the problem emerges when boredom or idleness leaves room for literally anything to creep in. Perhaps one of the best ways to guard our hearts is to engage in activities that deepen our experience with God. Who do you know that seems to fill up their life with rich, meaningful activities and input? Maybe they are avid readers or observers. It might be that they work diligently to serve others, or they might have a powerful prayer life. Who is your role model in this regard? What is one thing you can do this week to strengthen your own devotion to God?

Wednesday

As you read the Punch Lines for this week you will notice some passages that might be very familiar to you as well as some that are new. Number the passages from 1 to 5 according to how familiar you are with them. You may want to list these references in your Bible next to the story in Numbers 25 for future reference.

Which passage speaks to you most at this time in your life? Which passage applies to a friend or family member for whom you want to pray this week? As you pray, consider writing a note or sharing with them some encouraging words this week.

Thursday

While this week’s lesson is a stark reminder of the sinfulness of sin, it is also a reminder of God’s covenant of grace to journey with us to the Promised Land. Ellen White reminds us that “the heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 460). Nothing strengthens our grip on God’s plan for our lives as does deepening our understanding of His love and mercy displayed at Calvary. What are some ways you can remember Calvary throughout the week? Find a few tangible ways to jog your memory throughout the day about the most pivotal moment in history.

Friday

It is hard to imagine an event like the worship of the Baal of Peor ever happening to you. Yet the incident started so subtly that it may have been hard to notice. Reflect on some of the big events of the Bible and consider for a moment how they began. As you determine to remain true to God, know that your faithfulness begins somewhere. Where does it begin with you?

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this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 41.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
**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).

**keytext**

“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 commands.”

(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.

INTO THE STORY

“Hear now, O Israel, 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 fathers, 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 upon your hearts.”

“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commandments I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon 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 upon 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)

did you know?

The Hebrew term for “law” is tôrah; 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 tôrah—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.
“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. I tell you the truth, 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).

“God is consistent, but he is also unpredictable. He is consistent in his nature. You always know where you are with God, but you seldom know what he is going to do next.” —Graham Cook, current British preacher.

“People obey the law for one of two reasons: they either love God or fear punishment. When both of these break down, the result is an environment that breeds violence, poverty, and anarchy.” —Jack Kemp, Christian Reader, vol. 32, no. 3.
Sabbath
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” (Matthew 22:34-40, 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
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? After reading the Into the Story excerpts, write a psalm of praise thanking God for the blessings and benefits of keeping His laws.

Monday
The Key Text reminds us of God’s faithfulness. Reflect on the virtue of faithfulness. Who is your most faithful friend? 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
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
Every day you are bombarded with countless decisions. Some of these decisions could impact your life in significant ways (“Will I experiment with dope?”); 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 by Dr. Phil? 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
Write a modern paraphrase of this closing challenge that Moses put before the Israelites: “This day I call heaven and 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).

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this week’s reading
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FLASHLIGHT

“When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.’”

(DEUTERONOMY 32:45-47, NIV)
Agree or disagree: (1) Moses should have been allowed into the Promised Land; (2) Moses was a success.

How long do you think it would take you to get frustrated with the person in charge of a trip you were on if they kept you wandering around in the desert for 40 years?
- 1 month? ___
- 3 months? ___
- 12 months? ___
- 5 years? ___

(Think how quickly you get frustrated when your dad won’t stop to ask for directions.)


did you know?

Moses has been given credit for being the author of “the Torah” or the first five books of our Bible. While some might dispute this, it is generally understood to be true. At that time, it was probably passed down by oral tradition (the telling of stories) from generation to generation. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls has taught us that oral tradition was very accurate in keeping the key points of the stories. Can you imagine keeping every detail together in a long story like that of the Israelites and their exodus from Egypt? We have a hard enough time remembering one thing that our parents ask us to do!

INTO THE STORY

“Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar.

Then the Lord said to him, ‘This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, “I will give it to your descendants.” I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.’

“And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

“Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses.

“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.”

(Deuteronomy 34:1-12, NIV)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

Have you ever pondered this part of Moses’ story before?

Was God fair in not allowing Moses to enter into the Promised Land because of one mistake?

To whom was God trying to teach a lesson by not letting Moses into the Promised Land?

What's the big deal about hitting a rock rather than talking to it? The results ended up the same, didn't they? (See Deut. 32:48-52.)

Did Moses do anything else in his life that could have earned the same kind of punishment the rock incident did? What reason did God give for choosing the punishment He did? (Read Numbers 20:12.)

Not only was Moses the first person to be raised from the dead, he had another special honor in His relationship with God. What was it? (Read Exodus 33:11 and Numbers 12:8.)

What legacy did Moses leave to the Israelites at His death?

Read Deut. 31:1-8. Moses left a new _______________________.

Read Deut. 31:9-13. Moses left a written ___________________.

Read Deut. 31:30-32:47. Moses left a ___________________ to memorize.

Why was this legacy so important?

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

punch lines

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV).

“He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4, NIV).

“They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess” (Deuteronomy 32:47, NIV).

“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel” (Deuteronomy 34:10-12, NIV).

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.” —Booker T. Washington, 19th-20th-century U.S. educator.

“What is success? I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing; knowing that it is not enough, that you have got to have hard work and a certain sense of purpose.” —Margaret Thatcher, 20th-century British politician; prime minister (1975-1990).
### Sabbath

In the *What Do You Think?* section of this week’s lesson there was a question about whether or not you thought that Moses was a success. The question “What defines success?” is loaded. Actually, it can be answered in different ways for different people. Read Deuteronomy 34:10 and spend some time thinking about what makes someone successful in your mind. How do you want to define success in your life?

### Sunday

Read all of Deuteronomy 31 to 34. Pay specific attention to the texts listed in the *Into the Story* section of this study. What specific things did you learn about Moses? Had you ever before read his blessing on the children of Israel? How did God know the people of Israel would relate to Him? How do you think Moses felt when God told him that Israel would forsake Him? Do you consider Moses a success when he died? Why or why not? (Remember, he did successfully take the people to the Promised Land.)

### Monday

In the *Key Text* this week, why does Moses tell the people to remember the words the Lord has for them? That is also true about what the words of the Bible have for us. Why might memorizing Scripture texts help us in our daily lives? Moses’ life is a great example of what it means to follow the laws and the words of God. Even at the end of his life, when he had been with these people for a lifetime, Moses was admonishing them to be true to the Word of God, for truly that was their salvation. And the Word of God continues to show us the saving grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### Tuesday

Did you realize that this was the first time that Christ was going to raise someone from the dead? Think about what must have been going on in the mind of Satan as God came down to raise Moses from his sleep! He must have thought that he had dominion (rule) over Moses because he had died. However, the *Flashlight* quote tells us that Christ came down and took Moses to heaven with Him. What a blow to what Satan perceived as a victory. It is one of the first times we see, in the Bible, how Christ is more powerful than death!

### Wednesday

Look up “quotes about success” on any internet search engine. What do you find interesting about the results you get?

They rely on different measures of success. To some, it is money, to others fame, to even others it is something more intangible, such as intelligence or peace or satisfaction. Success is one of those things that we all look at a little differently.

Christians have an even different outlook. For us success is measured in relation to the will of God in our lives. We rest our success squarely on Christ’s shoulders and try to become examples to the world of what He is to us. That is the measure of our success.

### Thursday

How do you know if you are a success? Who is it that you compare yourself to in order to measure up? Is your success based on grades or on athletic achievement? There are so many ways we find ourselves not measuring up. Sometimes it is scary. Moses had a great number of people who were looking to see if he was a success or not. It must have sometimes been scary for him, leading God’s people to the land He had promised them.

But Moses was a success because he always came back to full reliance on God.

### Friday

The story of Moses is full of adventure, right up until the end of his life. He faced many trials and tribulations with wonderful results because of his faith and relationship with God. Think about being at the end of your life and looking back on what you have done, and how you have fostered your relationship with God; what would you say about it?

Write a paragraph as if you were about to die and you were looking back on your spiritual walk with God. What was it like? How do you want others to remember it?

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**this week’s reading**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 43.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* Series each year.*
promises don’t die

flashlight

“While they were filled with grief at their great loss [of Moses], the people knew that they were not left alone. The pillar of cloud rested over the tabernacle by day, and the pillar of fire by night, an assurance that God would still be their guide and helper if they would walk in the way of His commandments” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 481).

keytext

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:7, NIV)
Below is a list of people who routinely make promises to you in your life. Beside their names, indicate whether or not they have: broken a promise (BP), kept a promise (KP), or forgot a promise (FP).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Boyfriend/girlfriend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>Advertisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spend some time remembering the circumstances in which each of these broke, kept, or forgot their promise to you. List them on a sheet of paper in the order they appear above. Then ask yourself the following: Who promised the most? Who delivered on their promise?

“After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

‘Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.’

“Then they answered Joshua, ‘Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses,
“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (Joshua 21:45, NIV).

“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs” (Romans 15:8, NIV).

“Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses” (1 Kings 8:56, NIV).

“Then they believed his promises and sang his praise” (Psalm 106:12, NIV).

“From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23, NIV).

“It is not the oath that makes us believe the man, but the man the oath.”—Aeschylus, 5th-century B.C. Greek playwright.

“He is poor indeed that can promise nothing.”—Thomas Fuller, 17th-century English churchman and historian.

“God never made a promise that was too good to be true.”—Dwight L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

OUT OF THE STORY

What is something that stands out to you in this passage about promises?

Why did God agree to honor the promises that He made to Moses as well as to Joshua?

Why do you think the two and a half tribes stayed behind?

Why is it important to note that God honors His promises?

In the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 (also a part of this week’s Scripture portion), how did the people of the Promised Land feel about the Israelites coming to their land?

Circle a promise in this passage that you can adapt to your own life right now.

Underline any part that is confusing to you right now. Pray for God to reveal to you His character of love as He gives you a better understanding of that passage.
Sabbath
Do the What Do You Think? exercise if you have not done so before. Look at your responses. Did you identify anyone who consistently made promises to you and broke them? Perhaps you noted many more broken promises than there were promises that were kept. This seems to be human nature. We are constantly seeing promises broken, and breaking them ourselves. Sometimes circumstances prohibit us from doing what we have said we would. However, read Joshua 1:3-5, and see how God was willing to keep His word to the people of Israel and even more specifically, to carry out His promises to Moses through Joshua.

Sunday
Read the story of Rahab (Joshua 2). Look at it in the context of the promises that were made by the Israelites, by Rahab, and by God. Notice that all the promises were kept from and to each party involved. In the end, God was glorified through each promise. Now read about the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3). When the ark of the covenant (which literally means “promise!”) is taken into the water, the Jordan at flood level pauses to allow the Israelites to pass unharmed into the Promised Land. What a wonderful reminder of the parting of the Red Sea, which none of these Israelites (except for Joshua) had experienced.

Monday
When you read Into the Story you will see that God is consistently telling His people that He will honor the promises made to Moses. Joshua understands this and in turn keeps the promises that Moses made to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manassah.

We also tend to keep promises the more promises are kept to us. It is a matter of character to do what we say we will do. It is better to promise less in order to be able to keep the ones we do make. How does it glorify God when we keep the promises we make?

Tuesday
Read the Flashlight section. Do you think that it would be comforting or scary to have tangible evidence that God is always with you? The pillar of smoke and the pillar of fire were a testament to the promises that God made to His people that He would always be with them.

Note that at the end of the Flashlight paragraph it says that God would be with them if they kept His commandments. Even though they have a tough time keeping those things that He asked of them, we see God’s grace throughout the Old Testament as He does His best to stay in a covenant of love with His people.

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines. Is there a particular verse to which you are drawn? Do you see any significance to the order in which they have been placed? What can we say about God’s promises through the history of salvation?

Write on an index card the verse that speaks most to you. Keep the card under your pillow to read before you go to bed at night and when you wake up each morning. Let it remind you of the constancy of God and His promises.

Thursday
Think of a time when you have made a promise to someone and have not been able to keep it. Ask yourself the following questions:
• Did I mean to break my promise?
• When I made it, did I honestly think I could keep it?
• Does it happen often that I cannot keep my promises?

Friday
Are promises important to you? They are obviously important to God. They are so important that He is willing to transfer His promises from people group to people group, and to entire nations. Those are big promises! Are there any promises that you have made that are a big deal in your life? Any promises that you are very determined to fulfill?

Think about those promises and what you have to do to fulfill them, and work toward that end. At the same time, spend some time in prayer that you might be a Christian of your word and honor God with the promises that you make to Him and to others.

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this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 44.
the reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much in their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493).

“God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The

Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 45.

key text

“The city [Jericho] shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.”

(Joshua 6:17, NASB)
Rahab's profession as a prostitute is a bit of a shock, especially when she is honored with being mentioned in Jesus' genealogy. Are there some people today who, because of their professions or previous actions, are thought unworthy of being lights for God?

List some of these professions on a piece of paper and then number them from worst to not so bad. Also, check out Ruth, who may have been shunned for her nationality (Ruth 1:22; 4:13); Tamar, who dressed up as a prostitute in order to have an heir to carry on the family name (Genesis 38:24); and Esther, who hid her identity and married a Gentile king (Esther 2:10).

what do you think?

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INTO THE STORY

“Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim.”

“So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: ‘Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.’ . . .

“She said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.’ (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)

“Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, ‘I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will save us from death.’

“Our lives for your lives!’ the men assured her. ‘If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.’

“So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. . . .

“The men said to her, ‘This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house.’

“Agreed,’ she replied. ‘Let it be as you say.’”

(Joshua 2:1, 3-6, 8-18, 21, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

How would you describe Rahab: wise or foolish? smart or stupid? loyal or a traitor? Explain your answers.

What would you have done if you had been Rahab? What would you have done if you were the spies?

How do you react to the story of Rahab: puzzled, grossed out, encouraged?

List the “out of the ordinary” events that occurred in this story:

How did God honor Rahab for what she did that day? (See Matthew 1:5.)

Why was she honored? (See Hebrews 11:31.)

How are we saved from our “doomed neighborhood”? (See Romans 5:1, 2.)

Notice that by our faith in Christ we are justified and therefore saved. God has hung a “scarlet cord” out of the “window” of heaven. By Jesus’ life, He showed us a window of opportunity, and by His death, He hung the scarlet cord of His blood on the cross, so that we can be rescued from our doomed “neighborhood.”

punch lines

“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace” (Hebrews 11:31, NASB).

“In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?” (James 2:25, NASB).

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NASB).

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1, 2, NASB).

“Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified” (Gal. 2:16, NASB).

other eyes

“All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century U.S. poet.

“Christ came to save all through His own person.”—Irenaeus, 1st-century bishop of Lyons, in his Against Heresies.

“It is because of faith that we exchange the present for the future.”—Fidelis of Sigmaringen, 15th-century lawyer and philosophy teacher.
Sabbath

Take a look at Rahab’s plea for mercy in Joshua 2:9-13. Rahab’s plea about honoring God and then pleading for her salvation is similar to the prayer of Daniel, when he is pleading for the lives of his people. In fact, this was the way all the Israelites prayed when in need of help. Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9; notice how he starts the prayer: by honoring God. List the similarities and differences between Daniel’s plea and Rahab’s (Joshua 2:9-13).

Sunday

Read the story of Esther (in the book of Esther). Here was another woman who had faith in God. She had no idea what would happen when she went to the king when he had not called her. But she trusted God to take care of it all! Because of her faith, thousands of people were spared, and in Israel today, they still celebrate “Purim,” a day that was turned from sorrowful to joyful; all because Esther and her people had faith.

Monday

In the Flashlight section of this week’s lesson, Ellen White brings an issue to our attention. The Israelite nation as a whole had gone through times when they trusted more in themselves than in God. In fact, their lack of faith in God and their trust in themselves set them back a whole forty years, which they spent wandering around in a dry desert! Some land of milk and honey! The fertile land of Canaan could have been theirs, except for their inability to have faith in God. Read the story of their misfortune in Numbers 14, take heed, and don’t fall into the same pit!

Tuesday

In Monday’s lesson Israel’s lack of trust was mentioned. It’s interesting to note that Rahab was saved by her faith in God; quite the opposite from Caleb and Joshua’s generation, who wandered around in the wilderness until they all died. Read the Punch Lines for this week and notice the ones dealing with faith. What is the punch line?

Wednesday

This week’s lesson is indeed a fascinating one; a bit puzzling, too. Make a list of all the things that are sort of out of the ordinary. Then read the story for yourself! You can find it in Joshua chapter 2 and chapter 6. Look up “Rahab” in Ellen White’s writings and see what else you come up with!

Thursday

Read Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 45, “The Fall of Jericho.” In this chapter are described the trials and victories that the Israelites had because of their faith. When they didn’t follow God, and instead followed their own plans, they failed miserably, and lives were lost. But when they trusted in God and had faith in His power as Rahab did, they were victorious! Faith is so crucial in life. You can’t survive without it!

Friday

This week we have been talking a lot about trust, faith, and our salvation by grace through faith. It is God’s grace, and the faith in that grace, that saves us (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Read Romans 5 and see how God saves even the most sinful of sinners if they just believe in Him. Like Rahab, we have the evidence of what God can do if we trust Him, and like her, we ought to give Him a chance. See what He did in her life?

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
"Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 503).

—Joshua 8:32, 33, NIV
When was the last time that you sang your national anthem or repeated a national pledge of allegiance? Did you do it individually or did you do it with a group of other people? Finish the following statement by choosing from the list below: The reason why I sing my nation’s national anthem and repeat its pledge is to:

- Prove that I know it, so my parents and teachers will not hassle me.
- Practice for the day when I join the military.
- Show my patriotism and my allegiance to laws and values of my nation.
- Show my government’s leadership that I am willing to do anything they want me to do.

Does God have an anthem or pledge that He’d like us to recite? Briefly write what you think should be included in God’s pledge:

____________________________
____________________________
____________________________

Joshua assembled the people of God in front of two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim. They each had a very unique layout and terrain. The name Ebal means rocky, and this description is accurate. Gerizim, unlike Ebal, is lush and beautiful. Both had a significant role to play on the day that Joshua called the people to the mountains. Ebal represented the curses that would follow Israel if they forsook God, and Gerizim demonstrated the blessings that would attend God’s people if they remained faithful.

All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites.

Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel.

“Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law.

There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.”

(Joshua 8:30-35, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

What huge battle took place prior to the assembly at Ebal and Gerizim? (Joshua 8:1-29)

What was especially significant about this battle?

Underline the verses of the passage printed here that show how much Joshua cared about God’s laws.

What role is Moses playing in this ceremony? What is his unique contribution?

Circle all the people assembled on the mountain.

Why do you think God wanted all the children to be a part of this ceremony?

Does God still tell His people what blessings and curses will follow them depending on their choices? If so, how? Can you locate verses in the Bible that substantiate your answer?

Draw a rectangle around the sentence or sentences that are the core of this narrative.

punch lines

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV).

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24, NIV).

“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14, NIV).

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).

“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Revelation 3:21, NIV).

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine . . .” (Exodus 19:5, NIV).

other eyes

“Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it is hurtful.”—Benjamin Franklin, 18th-century U.S. statesman, scientist, philosopher, printer, writer, and inventor.

“If Christians want us to believe in a Redeemer, let them act redeemed.”—Voltaire, 18th-century French philosopher and writer.
Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? exercise you were asked to write what you thought might be included in a pledge given by God to us, or an anthem that He would want us to sing. Read Joshua 8:32. Why was Joshua so keen on getting all the words of the law written down?

We are told that Joshua called this holy assembly immediately after Israel conquered Ai. Why didn’t Joshua let the people relax a bit before enshrining the law in stone? How important are God’s commands in your life? Why not write a pledge of obedience to God right now?

Sunday

Read the story at the heart of this week’s lesson (Joshua 8:30-35). The Israelites were divided into two groups, each standing on one side of the ark and the priests who carried it. Why was the ark placed in the center, between the two groups of Israelites? The ark held God’s law, the Ten Commandments.

What place do the Ten Commandments occupy in your life? When was the last time you read them?

Monday

Look at this week’s Key Text. It tells us that Joshua copied the law of Moses on tablets of stone as the people watched. Can you imagine how long this might have taken? We do not know all of the logistics surrounding Joshua’s writing of the law, but Deuteronomy 27:1-8 tells us a little. Below, write what Joshua had to do to obey Moses’ directive.

What do you think would have happened if Joshua had decided to cut corners, to create the monument as cheaply and quickly as possible? What should be our attitude when we do things for God?

Tuesday

Read this week’s Flashlight section to shine a light on Satan and his schemes. Ellen White is careful to note that God is clear about His commands because Satan thrives when we either do not know what God expects of us and/or fail to obey God. Punishment is not God’s objective in giving us commands. God is really out to save our lives.

God spoke through Moses and Joshua to warn His people about curses that would follow sin, and blessings that would come as a result of obedience. Read Deuteronomy 28. List four blessings and four curses God promised His people.

Blessings for Obedience

Curses for Disobedience

Wednesday

Check out this week’s Punch Lines. Focus on Galatians 5:24: “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (NIV). In your own words, write what you think it means to “crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires”:

Read the other Punch Lines texts. What role does Jesus play in our struggle to obey God, to crucify the flesh? What role does God play? Finally, what can you do to cooperate with God’s plan to save you?

Thursday

Living among the Israelites who crossed the Jordan were aliens, people who joined them on their journey to the Promised Land. Notice that they were not excused from the big gathering in front of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. The blessings and curses applied to them also.

How do you share your faith with friends who do not know God? Do you hide it or let it shine?

Friday

Worship. Everyone does it, whether they attend a church or not, listen to a preacher or not, pay tithe or not, eat the right foods or not, etc. It happens in ballparks, during elections, in bars and clubs, in the movies, in small towns and big cities—everywhere. Everyone worships someone or something. God wants it, and so does Satan.

Have you ever stopped to think of the reason why you worship God? Reflect on these questions today: Why do I worship God? Is it because I’m scared of Him? Is it because I like the stuff He gives me? Is it because I love Him? And if I love Him, does He know it?

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 46.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
flashlight

“It was no light humiliation to those citizens of a ‘royal city,’ ‘all the men whereof were mighty,’ to be made hewers of wood and drawers of water throughout their generations. But they had adopted the garb of poverty for the purpose of deception, and it was fastened upon them as a badge of perpetual servitude. Thus through all their generations their servile condition would testify to God’s hatred of falsehood” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 507).
How can you tell when someone is lying to you? Which of the following are indicators that someone is lying?

- Leaning forward
- Licking the lips
- Touching the nose
- Averting the gaze
- Handling objects

According to researchers at the Smell and Taste Treatment Research Foundation in Chicago, Illinois, all of the above behaviors are physical indicators that someone is being deceptive.

**did you know?**

Did you know that God is a military strategist? As the five Amorite kings fled from Joshua and the Israelite army, God gave Joshua some “air support.” Read about it in Joshua 10:11. God bombarded the Canaanite armies with large hailstones and He kept it up on the “long day” when time stood still.

“This entire passage provides a striking illustration of the interplay between the human and divine factors in achieving victory. Verses 7-11 alternate between Joshua (and Israel) and the Lord. They all played important parts in the conflict. The soldiers had to fight but God gave the victory.” —Bible Knowledge Commentary

**what do you think?**

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**INTO THE STORY**

“Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)—they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.

“However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended.”

“The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

“Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroh and Kiriath Jearim. But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel.

“The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, but all the leaders answered, ‘We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.’ They continued, ‘Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community.’ So the leaders’ promise to them was kept.”

“The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: ‘Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.’

“So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.’

“After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way...
to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.”

(Joshua 9:1-4, 14-21; 10:6-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who is seeking to deceive whom in this story? Why?

______________________________

Place a check mark by the points in the story where Israel should have consulted with God. Place an x where they did consult with God.

Underline the deceptive words spoken by the Gibeonites.

Which parts of this story grab your attention?

______________________________

Who are the main characters making important decisions for Israel?

______________________________

Why did the Israelites decide to honor a treaty that was signed through deceptive means?

______________________________

In the last paragraph, place an up arrow at the places where Joshua or Israel are doing something. Place a down arrow where God is doing something.

Notice the participation on both sides in winning the victory.

punch lines

“Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment” (Proverbs 12:19, NIV).

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, NIV).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43, 44, NIV).

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false” (Psalm 24:3, 4, NIV).

other eyes

“Give up what appears to be doubtful for what is certain. Truth brings peace of mind, and deception doubt.”—Muhammad Ali, current U.S. boxer and activist.

“The greatest honor of a man is in doing good to his fellow men, not in destroying them.”—Thomas Jefferson, third president of the U.S. (1801-1809), author of the Declaration of Independence.
The Sabbath Exercise

The What Do You Think? exercise focused on the physical cues people give off when attempting to mislead or tell an untruth. Obviously, Joshua and the Israelite princes missed the cues that the Gibeonites were exhibiting.

In Joshua 9:19 the Israelites got very upset with their leaders for making a treaty with a deceptive nation. Share a time in your life when you did something good for someone who had done you wrong.

Has someone ever extended kindness to you after you had done wrong?

The Sunday Reading

Read the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson. Ellen White’s comments on Israel’s decision to honor its treaty with the Gibeonites is worth a closer look: “The Gibeonites had pledged themselves to renounce idolatry, and accept the worship of Jehovah; and the preservation of their lives was not a violation of God’s command to destroy the idolatrous Canaanites” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 506).

It’s obvious that the Gibeonites converted to serving God out of fear for their lives (read Joshua 9:3-6). Does God desire forced worship, worship from folks who are scared of Him or His people?

The Monday Reading

The Key Text this week states clearly that Israel’s leaders failed to consult God before entering into their treaty with the Gibeonites. Israel honored its word, but a fearful punishment was pronounced on the Gibeonites. Read Joshua 9:21 to find out the punishment.

The Israelite failure to seek God’s guidance started a chain reaction throughout the region. Read Joshua 10:1-4 to see what the king of Jerusalem decided to do following the humiliation of the Gibeonites.

What was the response of Joshua and the Israelites?

The Tuesday Reading

Ellen White shines her Flashlight on the punishment meted out to the Gibeonites because of their deception. They came to Israel dressed like poor slaves. Because of their sin, they would remain poor servants forever. What a high price to pay for deception!

Do you think this was a fair punishment? Prepare an answer to share with the class.

In spite of the punishment for deception, how did God honor the relationship between the Israelites and the Gibeonites? Read the last three paragraphs of Into the Story.

The Wednesday Reading

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false” (Psalm 24:3, 4, NIV). That’s the final selection in the list of Punch Lines for this week.

Notice the psalmist David is focused on coming before God with pure hands and a clean heart. What do you think is meant by “clean hands”? What do you think it means to have “a pure heart”?

The Thursday Reading

Read Joshua 10 today. It is perhaps one of the most violent chapters in the Bible. God had given His people a clear directive to destroy all the heathen nations of Canaan. But God also gave us the sixth commandment, which states: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13, NIV). Is God contradicting Himself?

We do not now, and may never, understand the reason for everything God chooses to do or not to do in regard to sin and evil on this earth. We are, however, assured that “the Spirit of God inspired Joshua’s prayer, that evidence might again be given of the power of Israel’s God. . . . Joshua had received the promise that God would surely overthrow these enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid. The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 509).

The Friday Reading

This week’s study challenges us to be people of truth, honesty, and integrity; to honor the oaths we make even when others are less than honest with us. But, on a deeper level, this week’s lesson asks a far more challenging question: What are some of the consequences of failing to seek God’s guidance in every area of life?

Reflect on this question as you thank God for His grace, His willingness to still work with us though we sometimes forget about Him.

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this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 47.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
"[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).

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"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)
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 unanimity.
___ 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.

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 sanctuaries throughout the ages. This tradition took a tragic turn during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Eight thousand Tutsi Rwandans sought sanctuary at the Adventist complex in Mugonero, but nearly all were hacked to death on Sabbath morning, April 16. When people start to “look out for number one” and forget that how we relate to others reflects our relationship with Jesus (Matthew 25:40), tragedy is inevitable.

“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 he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the elders of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them. If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the one accused, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. He is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he 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.” . . . That is
“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 men 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).

“He who 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, Message).

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly 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).

“In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.” —Anne Baxter, 20th-century Academy Award-winning U.S. actress.

Sabbath
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. Read Joshua 22:10-34. 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 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
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. Read Matthew 6:25-34. 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
Self-fulfilling prophecies. Read this week’s Flashlight quote. Better yet, look up the complete reference in Patriarchs and Prophets. 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 (Numbers 14:41-45), 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 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.

Read the story of the woman anointing Jesus’ feet in Luke 7:36-47. What does this story 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
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’s 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
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.” Read Matthew 24:9-14, particularly noting 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? Think of Christians throughout history who have been willing to give even their lives for Jesus. Do you think they felt God’s presence and power even as they were persecuted?

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
flashlight

“The aged leader urged the people to consider . . . and to decide if they really desired to live as did the degraded idolatrous nations around them. If it seemed evil to them to serve Jehovah, the source of power, the fountain of blessing, let them that day choose whom they would serve. . . . The gods of the Amorites had not been able to protect their worshipers. Because of their abominable and debasing sins, that wicked nation had been destroyed, and the good land which they once possessed had been given to God’s people. What folly for Israel to choose the deities for whose worship the Amorites had been destroyed! ‘As for me and my house,’ said Joshua, ‘we will serve Jehovah.’ . . . His appeals called forth the unhesitating response, ‘God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods’” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 523, 524).

keytext

“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

(Joshua 24:15, NIV)
Consider the following multiple-choice questions. Which answers do you agree with?
Courage is:
a. The willingness to put everything on the line for what you believe.
b. An attitude that isn’t blocked by obstacles and pushes forward with faith.
c. The ability to focus on what’s truly important.

What tempted the Israelites to turn from God in Joshua’s time?
a. The Canaanite’s exotic religions.
b. Following God was just too complicated.
c. They got too comfortable in their new land.
d. They started thinking they could handle things themselves.

Joshua gathered the Israelites at Shechem, one of the cities of refuge, for his final message to them. Shechem was where Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, and Joshua 24:32 (NIV) tells us that Joseph’s bones, brought from Egypt, were buried at Shechem “in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver.” Meeting in Shechem reminded the Israelites that they had come full circle—from settling in Egypt, to enslavement by jealous rulers, to providential escape, to finally settling again in the land God had promised half a millennium before. Joseph’s life story was the Israelites’ 500-year history in miniature—from favored son to enslavement to exalted authority. Joshua reminded them that if they were as faithful to God as Joseph had been, things would only get better.

in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.

“The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you . . . So be very careful to love the Lord your God . . .

“Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you.”

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

(Joshua 23; 24:14, 15, NIV)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

**True or false:** God would rather you be a hypocritical Christian than an overt atheist.

God always gives people a choice as to how they’ll respond. Why do people find following God so difficult?

Is it easier or harder to follow God now than it was in Joshua’s time—in today’s big business, media-saturated, technologically advanced world with a longer Bible to read and Christianity pretty well-respected in society? Was it easier or harder in Joshua’s day, with living memories of amazing miracles, a specific covenant of blessing and curses to follow, and a clearer contrast between pagan depravity and true devotion?

As you look over your life, has God been faithful to you? Have you been faithful to God? How might the two be related?

Joshua urged the Israelites to be careful of intermingling with the Canaanites. Jesus charged Christians to spread out and make disciples of all nations. What’s different about Jesus’ mission for us? What of Joshua’s advice should we take to heart?

Underline the three phrases, promises, or commands that speak the most urgently to you from the Into the Story passage.

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**punch lines**

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NIV).

“Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways, for the Lord detests a perverse man but takes the upright into his confidence. The Lord’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble” (Proverbs 3:31-34, NIV).

“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26, NIV).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:35-37).

“Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing yet had been done.”—C. S. Lewis, 19th-century British scholar and novelist.

“Faith, as Paul saw it, was a living, flaming thing leading to surrender and obedience to the commandments of Christ.” —A. W. Tozer, 20th-century American author and preacher.
Sabbath
This week’s What Do You Think? explores the meaning of courage. Joshua equates courage with moral strength of character. Read Joshua 23:6-8. How does living a Christ-centered life require courage? What modern idols does the world face today, and how can Christians courageously take a stand against them?

Sunday
Read this week’s Into the Story and Out of the Story. The questions explore issues of our relationship with God, God’s faithfulness to us, and our relationship and witness to others.

People often get tripped up by two different and equally false ideas about God—that God will excuse their sin without their repentance, and that we can somehow achieve salvation through our own efforts. God calls us to rely completely on Him. Ellen White wrote: “While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God's perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin, and receive strength to obey God's law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Savior, if they would be accepted of God” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 524).

That’s grace. Why do you think some people have such a hard time accepting grace, whether it means letting go of sin or their own misguided efforts to be “good enough”?

Monday
Read this week’s Key Text, Joshua 24:15. If you grew up attending church, you’ve probably heard it any number of times—a call to serve God wholeheartedly. The text reminds us as well that God always gives us a choice. Joshua painted a word picture of the Israelites’ experience so that everyone would have a clear understanding of the situation, without excuse, but the choice remained.

When the Israelites vowed to follow God, Joshua charged them to get rid of their idols. What changes could you, your family, and church make to follow God more fully?

Tuesday
This week’s Flashlight quote tells about the Amorites coming under judgment for their sins of selfishness and their possessions, their “blessings,” being given to others. Read Proverbs 13:22, Proverbs 28:8, and Ecclesiastes 2:26.

What do these verses tell us about our priorities in life? How can we avoid the Canaanites’ fate?

Wednesday
The world has a way of getting us down—either through tempting us with quick fixes and shortcuts to happiness, or by shouting that God can’t be trusted and we might as well give up. This week’s Punch Lines remind us that we can trust God to help us handle all life’s obstacles. Read them and consider the following questions:

How can we balance our rejection of what the world stands for with showing grace and acceptance to those still caught in its web?

How has God led in your life and in your family’s history? Has He been faithful? What does it mean for God to be faithful?

Why do people envy the wicked? Despite what some prominent preachers say, Christianity offers no guarantee of prosperity in this earthly life. Do God’s blessings make up for any lack of prosperity? In what ways can prosperity be a curse?

Thursday
Old habits die hard. It’s human nature to do our own thing in our own way and invent alternatives to following God. Despite all they’d seen of God’s love and power, people in Joshua’s time were still worshiping other gods on the side.

Joshua created a new landmark in Shechem to remind people of their commitment to God. What landmarks of faith can you look back on and/or create to remind you of God’s power and promises? Write a song, draw a picture, or build something that will, like the stone Joshua placed at Shechem, remind you of how God has led in your life.

Friday
Joshua left behind a legacy of faithfulness and commitment that inspired people to follow God for themselves. Who do you look up to as a truly inspiring “godly person”? What sets them apart and makes their example so inspiring? How have they impacted you and your choices?

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel. To those who prove themselves faithful stewards He will commit greater trusts. Saith the Lord, ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ 1 Samuel 2:30” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 529).

“Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first-born of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always.”

(Deuteronomy 14:22, 23, NIV)
Assuming you had a bottomless bank account, make a list of what you would buy.

Read the following statements. Circle the ones you agree with and cross out the ones with which you disagree.

- It is a sin to have more money than you need when others are starving.
- Wealth is a gift from God.
- People have a right to do whatever they want with their money.
- Everything we have belongs to God.
- Not paying a faithful tithe is a sin against God.
- Money is the root of all evil.

There are two distinct tithes that are spoken of in Scripture. The first tithe was to be used exclusively to support the work of the priests and Levites. In Numbers 18:21, 26, God offers this instruction regarding the first tithe: “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. . . . Speak to the Levites and say to them: ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the Lord’s offering’” (NIV).

The second tithe was to be consumed at the tabernacle as a holy feast before the Lord. This is the tithe that is referred to in texts such as Deuteronomy 14:28 and 26:12-15.

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the Lord. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.”

“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘These people say, “The time has not yet come for the Lord’s house to be built.”’

“Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’

“Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.’

“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,’ says the Lord. ‘You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands.’”

(Leviticus 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Using a Bible commentary or a Bible software program, research the word “tithe” in Scripture. How often is it used? In what context?

How would you summarize what the Bible teaches on the topic of tithing?

Next, do the same study using the word “offerings.” How often is it used? In what context?

How would you summarize what the Bible teaches on the topic of offerings?

Read about the plight of God’s people in Haggai 1:2-11, the last portion of this week’s Into the Story. Underline any descriptions that you think reflect the spiritual bankruptcy that is prevalent in our day.

Read Deuteronomy 15 and Isaiah 58. Write a letter from God addressed to the poor. Next, brainstorm ways you can share God’s heart for the poor.

Research the following feasts of Israel. How might you celebrate the spirit of each feast today?

The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 23:6-8)

Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:14-16)

The Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:13-16; Leviticus 23:34; and the Feast of Ingathering—see Exodus 23:16; 34:22)

punch lines

“Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and your father’s house would minister before me forever.’ But now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained’” (1 Samuel 2:30, NIV).

“I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:9, 10, NIV).


“And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25, NIV).

“But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48, NIV).

“God entrusts us with money as a test; for like a toy to the child, it is training for handling things of more value” —Fred Smith, Leadership, vol. 4, no. 1.


“He who bestows his goods upon the poor shall have as much again and ten times more.”—John Bunyan, 17th-century English preacher and author.
Sabbath

Complete the What Do You Think? section. Reflect on the things you would buy if you had unlimited money. What does your list say about your deepest values?

Find a friend and discuss the statements in the agree/disagree section. Do you and your friend share the same opinions? If so, why? If not, why not?

What do you think is the greatest barrier to being faithful in returning tithes and offerings? How might God help you to overcome this barrier?

Sunday

Read the passage from Haggai in Into the Story and answer the following questions:

What phrase does God repeat? What does this tell you about the importance of the message? Can you relate to the description that God gives when He says, “You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it”?

Ever feel as if you’re running faster and eating more and working harder and yet you are plagued by exhaustion and fatigue? Do you party harder but feel empty on the inside? What does the experience of God’s people in the days of Haggai tell you about living a purposeful, fulfilling life today?

Monday

Rewrite the Punch Lines into a modern paraphrase.

Tuesday

Interview someone who has faithfully paid tithes and offerings for many years. Ask the giver if they’ve felt that it was a worthwhile investment. See if the person has ever had any regrets about giving. Is there a better way to experience the faithfulness of God than through giving? How does giving benefit the giver? Who benefits more, the one who gives or the one who receives?

Wednesday

Read the following songs that Ellen White quotes in describing the Israelites as they made their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast: Song of Solomon 2:11-13; Psalm 48:1, 2; 121:1, 2; 122:1-6; 125:1, 2. Imagine the scene of joyful people celebrating on their way to the annual festival. Try to smell the scents, hear the music, and see the dancing.

Thursday

Reflect on the following thought from Patriarchs and Prophets, page 529: “The plan of Moses to raise means for the building of the tabernacle was highly successful. No urging was necessary. Nor did he employ any of the devices to which churches in our day so often resort. He made no grand feast. He did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement; neither did he institute lotteries, nor anything of this profane order, to obtain means to erect the tabernacle for God. The Lord directed Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring their offerings. He was to accept gifts from everyone that gave willingly, from his heart. And the offerings came in so great abundance that Moses bade the people cease bringing, for they had supplied more than could be used.”

Have you ever seen gimmicky fund-raising done in the church? Why do you suppose Ellen White discouraged this approach when financing God’s work? Does God want funds that come from a begrudging heart? Why or why not?

Friday

After reading chapter 51, “God’s Care for the Poor,” in Patriarchs and Prophets, consider the poem “I Am Still Hungry.”

I was hungry and you formed a humanity club and discussed my hunger. I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release. I was naked and you debated the morality of my appearance. I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health. I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God. I was lonely and you left me alone to pray for me. You seem so close to God; but I am still very hungry, and lonely, and cold. —Anonymous.

Now pray about what God is asking you to do to care for the marginalized of our world. Perhaps you can send a note of encouragement to a friend who is struggling. Maybe you can visit someone in the hospital. Or you can call a church member who has recently had a death in the family. Whatever God’s asking you to do, do it!

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 50, 51, 52.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“Like Israel, Christians too often yield to the influence of the world and conform to its principles and customs, in order to secure the friendship of the ungodly; but in the end it will be found that these professed friends are the most dangerous of foes. The Bible plainly teaches that there can be no harmony between the people of God and the world” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 559).
what do you think?

Rank the following in order ("1" being the most difficult and "10" being the least difficult) when it comes to knowing God's will with regard to:

- Whom to marry?
- What career to pursue?
- What to do this weekend?
- Where to work this summer?
- Whom to ask out for a date?
- Whom to hang out with at school?
- Whether or not to experiment with drugs?
- What book to read for pleasure?
- What to say on www.myspace.com?
- Whether or not to trust in Jesus?
- Whether or not to get involved in a local church?

Questions to consider:

• What's the most difficult decision I have ever made?
• What made it so difficult?

INTO THE STORY

“Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.”

“The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.’”

“The Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’

“But Lord,’ Gideon asked, ‘how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’

“The Lord answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.’

“Gideon replied, ‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.’

“The Lord said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place.’

“When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, ‘Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.’”

(Judges 6:1, 2, 11, 12, 14-17; 7:7, 22-24, NIV)

did you know?

In the ancient world, names were very significant. Often the person’s name captured the uniqueness of that individual. This was the case with Gideon, whose name means “he that bruises” or “great warrior.” Gideon’s name speaks to his mighty conquest of the Midianites.

There are other examples in Scripture where we find great significance in a name. For instance, “Peter” means “the rock.” The name “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent of Joshua, which means “Jehovah shall save his people.” Knowing about the significance of names enlightens our understanding of Colossians 3:17 where we’re called to do everything in the “name of the Lord Jesus.” In other words, since the name conveys the deepest essence of the person, we’re called to do everything in the same spirit or character of Christ.
OUT OF THE STORY

What details of the story of Gideon might you remember that are not included in the selected verses above?

What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most?

In your opinion, what is the most important lesson of the story of Gideon?

If you were to capture this story in a five-word title, what would it be?

What does this story teach us about knowing the will of God?

What does this story teach us about knowing one’s purpose in life?

What does this story teach us about the mission of God’s remnant people?

other eyes

“The will of God is not a mysterious set of sealed orders we search for and receive if we happen to hit on the right formula. Rather, the will of God is a relationship with Him in which He discloses His purpose, power and plan for our lives.”—Lloyd Ogilvie, retired pastor and chaplain to the U.S. senate.

“The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less.”

Sabbath
Finding God’s will is a hot topic among teenagers. After all, many young people are facing important decisions and genuinely want to know and follow God’s will. But is Gideon’s method of testing God with a fleece the best way to discover God’s will? Google the phrase “How to know God’s will” and compile a strategy for understanding God’s will in your life.

Sunday
Read excerpts from the story of Gideon in the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson and work through the study questions listed in Out of the Story. Next, read the entire story in Judges 6–8 and list all the positive character qualities that you see in Gideon.

Monday
Review the Key Text for this lesson. How might you explain the fickleness of the Israelites in their relationship to God? What role does the spiritual leader play in safeguarding God’s people from backsliding? What are the idols that we are tempted to worship today? Have you ever failed to “remember the Lord” even when God has rescued you “from the hands of all [your] enemies”?

Also reflect on the phrase “They also failed to show kindness to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) for all the good things he had done for them.” Do you ever fail to show gratitude toward people who have done good things for you? How can you be more intentional about expressing thankfulness to the people who have had a spiritual impact in your life?

Tuesday
The quote in the Flashlight section applies the mistakes that the Israelites made to our lives today. Pray about how the world influences you. Ask a mature Christian about strategies to keep from conforming to the principles and customs of the world. Identify ways in which the world sneaks into us (e.g., billboards, television, friends, etc.). Do you have any “ungodly” friends that are influencing you away from Christ? Memorize the statement, “The Bible plainly teaches that there can be no harmony between the people of God and the world” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 559).

Wednesday
Marinate your mind in the Punch Lines for this week. Contained in these verses you will find profound principles for enjoying life with God. Read the texts over and over until you have them deeply entrenched in your mind. Now use this biblical foundation to create a game plan for leveraging your life for God. For you see, these texts unveil God’s plan in guiding you toward His will. Identify these principles. Then experiment today in applying them to your life.

Thursday
The story of Gideon illustrates that God would prefer a few sold-out soldiers than a mighty army of spiritual pansies. Which group do you think you would be in? What does selling out to God look like in your life? Gideon reminds us that doing great things for God does not require extraordinary abilities; rather, God seeks people with availability. If you make yourself fully available for God to use as He wills, watch out! God may use ordinary you as a modern day Gideon and accomplish extraordinary things.

Friday
Reflect on this commentary by Ellen White: “The leader whom God chose to overthrow the Midianites occupied no prominent position in Israel. He was not a ruler, a priest, or a Levite. He thought himself the least in his father’s house. But God saw in him a man of courage and integrity. He was distrustful of himself and willing to follow the guidance of the Lord. God does not always choose for His work men of the greatest talents, but He selects those whom He can best use” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 553).

If you were completely “willing to follow the guidance of the Lord,” where do you suppose He might take you? What is God’s grandest dream for your life? What is keeping you from fulfilling that dream?

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Insight
At www.InsightMagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 53.

* By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.