PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Israel's long journey in the desert resulted from failing to trust God's word when the way seemed impossible. The 40-year trek in the desert offers a wealth of stories recounting the unmistakable care God gave to His children. The stories of this journey would be an inspiration were it not for the tragic moments when Israel stalled in disbelief. In this lesson we pick up the story where the children of God face the almost charted territory of their parents who, unfortunately, were almost faithful.

As they passed through the lands of ungodly enemies the children of Israel are tempted to view adversity solely from a human perspective. Forty years prior the children of God failed to believe and obey God's direction and were sent back into the desert to learn the lessons of faith. Would this new generation repeat the disbelief of their parents? This week's story brings us to another pivotal point in Israel's journey.

But Israel's experience is not just a story about an ancient people; it foreshadows our story today. The tipping point when we choose to trust or not trust God's Word is a point every believer faces in life. The test is to believe and trust God's Word in impossible situations. Sometimes all it takes is a reminder of the guiding ways of God to give you enough faith to enter into the uncharted territory of God's will.

When we lack the faith to obey God, He does not shield us from similar tests in the future; in fact, God brings us to places where we must test our trust in Him again. When we face obstacles, we need to remember that the challenges we face only appear to be impossible. But with each faithful step we are fortified to face any challenge because we have personally experienced God's faithfulness.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the core elements of trusting God to do the seemingly impossible. (Know)
• Sense the trustworthiness of God and His Word. (Feel)
• Choose to seize moments that test their faith as opportunities to grow instead of calamities to avoid. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Perseverance
• Trust
• Learning from failure/mistakes

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of Houdini, the skilled locksmith and sensational magician who often boasted of being able to break out of any jail cell providing he could go in with his everyday clothes and have complete privacy. A small town in England boasted of the new jail cell they built, claiming that no one could escape. The small town invited Houdini to give their jail cell a try, and he accepted the challenge.

They ushered him into the cell in his street clothes and left him alone to try and make his escape. Houdini removed his belt that concealed a flexible rod that he used to try and pick the lock. After hours of trying, the Great Houdini fell against the cell door. The door swung open, and he landed on the cold stone floor. The great escape artist did not realize that the door was unlocked the whole time he was trying to break free.

Sometimes we insist on doing things our way first, only to find a better way was there all along. But compare Houdini with Seo Sang-moon and examine how their approach to obstacles is similar, and how it is different.

Seventy-year-old Seo Sang-moon determined to pass his driver's examination. Located in a rural section of South Korea, he took an oral examination to ascertain whether or not he knew the rules of driving. The old man did not know how to read, which is why he used the trial and error method for getting the right answers. He spent more than a thousand dollars in fees to take the test over and over again. He took the test 272 times before he managed to learn all the wrong answers. To his credit, he persevered. Now Seo Sang-moon needs to pass only the road test—hopefully he will try another method.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes we can be like Houdini and stubbornly face our challenges with only human solutions. Seo Sang-moon is similar in that he saw the only option was to learn the hard way. As we read this story we see Israel faced with a faith situation. Read the whole story and examine the passage in the Into the Story section and see what you can learn about trusting God’s ways when you are uncertain.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Underline the specific commands God gives the children of Israel in this story.
- What promises does God make to the children in this story?
- Circle the different people and people groups in this story.
- What is significant about the way God describes the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites as “brothers”?
- Why do you think God made the Israelites wander and wait 38 years before coming back to this pivotal point of decision about the Promised Land again?
- What words or phrases in this story do you think are key to understanding God’s guidance and our faithfulness to His Word?
- What do you think is the central lesson taught in this story?
- How do you think the Israelites felt faced with the same challenge the previous generation failed to achieve?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 5:1-6; Exodus 4:1-12; Proverbs 3:5.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Background. It is critical to remember that the book of Deuteronomy is predominantly a public discourse given by Moses to the children of Israel, and mostly to those who had been born in the desert. The older generation had failed to trust fully in God’s power and had not believed at a pivotal moment in their journey. They were rerouted to wander for 38 years and learn to trust and obey God's guiding ways. Now, the current generation camp for two months, and Moses reminds them of where they have been, what God has said, and what He promises to do on behalf of His children. The events leading up to the conquest of Bashan
and the victory itself mark a lesson of faith learned by the children of God.

There are several key angles of this story to discuss with the class. The Out of the Story section sets the tone and the direction of the oncoming events. It might be helpful to have the students read the entire section (Deuteronomy 2: 3:1-11).

1. One angle in this story depicts a gentle, tightrope walk of diplomacy between the children of Israel and the tribes that stood in the way of their getting to the Promised Land. God’s direct command was:
   a. “They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. . . .” In a way, God is saying, “There does not need to be any bloodshed, so don’t make any sudden moves as you move through their land.” This cautious and civil approach is a theme as they journey. They were supposed to “buy food” and “buy water” and ensure the inhabitants that they were not going to inhabit that territory.
   b. God had promised Esau his own land, and even though his descendants chose to live outside of a relationship with God, God honored His word to them. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states: “God deals faithfully even with those outside of the covenant relationship. God had promised certain temporal blessings to the descendants of Esau, and would fulfill His word” (vol. 1, p. 961). Perhaps it would be appropri-

2. Another angle to pursue with the class might be the significant size of the Israelites’ enemies. In Deuteronomy 2:20 and 3:11 there is reference to the Rephaim, or the giants. These giants are compared to the Anakites because of their size, and given the size of the king’s iron bed, they might have stood up to 13 feet tall.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Pair-a-phrase**

Reading Scripture is not always the most engaging of activities for youth because the words and phrases are so familiar. Sometimes it helps to challenge them to rewrite a passage in their own words without using any of the original words (except to, it, the, and, etc.). Compound the value of the exercise by having the students pair up, making individual paraphrases, then making one together. Invite the students to report their paraphrases and make sure you affirm them, noting the insights that they have expressed. As a result, the students truly process the meaning of the passage to arrive at their own take on the verse.

2. Another angle to pursue with the class might be the significant size of the Israelites’ enemies. In Deuteronomy 2:20 and 3:11 there is reference to the Rephaim, or the giants. These giants are compared to the Anakites because of their size, and given the size of the king’s iron bed, they might have stood up to 13 feet tall.

---

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
The ultimate lesson from this story is that the children of Israel obeyed God’s guiding words and found that diplomacy works sometimes, and other times God leads in more aggressive ways. Either way, God’s way yields victory.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

One of the chief lessons of this story is the wisdom of learning from the mistakes of those who have gone before you. Invite an older person to respond to the following interview questions: Would you please share an example of learning from someone’s positive example? Would you please share an example of how you learned from someone’s mistake? If there were one piece of advice you would give a young person about trusting God in uncertain times, what would it be?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The children that were born in the desert had to know about their parents’ failure to trust God as they approached the Promised Land. Perhaps they heard stories or remembered songs that captured the sadness and made them determined to trust God to deliver, protect, and prosper His people. The challenge doesn’t get any easier the older you get. God will always bring us to the land of the giants where our only hope is in Him. Our duty is linked to our destiny—to be victorious by God’s hand, not our own. Remember the words of the (sometimes) wise man who said, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV). Just look at the track record God has in being both faithful and amazing as you face obstacles and adversity. The challenges may seem like giants to us, but God is undefeated.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 39.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

When a pagan king saw the Israelites he was afraid and sent messengers to Balaam to put a supernatural curse on them. Balaam, though, pretended to have great integrity and told them no amount of money would get him to do that. Balaam was once a good man, a prophet of God even, but he had fallen away from the Lord and had given himself up to covetousness and greed. Yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High.

Balaam knew about God’s miraculous work in behalf of Israel, and when the messengers announced their errand (to get him to curse Israel) he well knew that it was his duty to refuse the rewards of Balak and to dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation and urged the messengers to tarry with him that night, declaring that he could give no decided answer until he had asked counsel of the Lord. Deep down, though, he really wanted the money and he tempted God, all the while pretending to be pious. The Lord, of course, saw through Balaam’s deceit. What follows next is a funny and yet at the same time sobering account of how the Lord dealt with the wayward man, a story that includes—among other things—a talking donkey. From this story we learn about how greed and covetousness can blind us to our true selves.

When you teach the lesson you might also point out that animal abuse is a sin. Make sure the students know that animals are innocent but suffer in this world of sin, too. We should make their time on earth as bearable as possible. Help the students realize how wrong it was for Balaam to strike the donkey. When the Angel of the Lord came to kill Balaam, the donkey turned away, thus saving Balaam from death.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know the consequences of pride and turning away from God
- Feel God’s power and know that, with Him, you cannot hide your self-righteousness, because He knows the heart.
- Respond, knowing that if they become immune to sin, they will go down the path of the unrighteous.

III. EXPLORE
- The will of God
- Materialism/worldliness
- Abuse

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
Why did the Moabites desperately desire for Balaam to curse the Israelites?

Why did Balaam refuse to go with the Moabites?

What are some of the main lessons we can learn from the story?

Why did Balaam so mercilessly strike the donkey that he rode?

In what way did the abused donkey save Balaam's life?

What parts of this story stand out to you?

What were some of the reasons that Balaam turned away from God?

Why did God send the Angel of the Lord to slay Balaam as he rode to Moab?

Do you ever want to do the “right” thing for the wrong reason?

Is it better to do the wrong thing for the right reason, or to do the right thing for the wrong reason?

Who was the source of Balaam’s greed and covetousness?

Why did Balaam refuse to curse the Israelites when the servants of Moab asked him to?

Compare ways in which Balaam was covetous with ways that we are sometimes covetous today. What similarities are there? What differences?

How did Balaam appear to hide his true heart from God?

What are some ways in which you try to hide your true self from God?

Sharing Context and Background

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

“Midianites. The Midianites are a people living in the southern portions of the Transjordan region. They are described as the descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-6) and operate as traders and caravaneers in the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37:25-36). Moses joins the Midianite clan of Jethro after fleeing Egypt, but the Midianites do not join the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan. In the Balaam narrative, the Midianite elders are allied with the Moabites and participate in the hiring of the prophet to curse Israel.”—Bible Background Commentary

“Balaam at Deir Allah. In 1967 a Dutch archae-
logical expedition led by H. J. Franken discovered some inscribed pieces of plaster at a site in Jordan known as Deir ‘Allah. The fragments are apparently written in Aramaic and date to about 850 B.C. They mention Balaam son of Beor, the same figure described as a ‘seer’ in Numbers 22–24. Although the text is very fragmentary, with many breaks and uncertain words, it can be established that Balaam was a seer who received a divine message during the night and that his message was not what his neighbors expected to hear. Whether this text refers to the events described in the Bible is questionable, but it does establish a nonbiblical tradition current in the ninth century of a prophet named Balaam. It may be that Balaam’s notoriety was such that he remained an important prophetic figure for centuries and could thus be identified with the earlier Israelite narratives of the conquest.”—Bible Background Commentary

“Prophetic status of Balaam. In Joshua 13:22, Balaam is described as a ‘soothsayer,’ while in Numbers 22:6 he is said to be a man whose blessings and curses are effective. He is from the region of upper Mesopotamia, near Carchemish, and has an international reputation as a true prophet. Throughout the narrative in Numbers 22–24, Balaam continually reminds Balak that he can speak only the words which God gives him to speak (Numbers 22:18, 38; 23:12, 26; 24:13). Although Balaam uses sacrificial rituals to obtain God’s answer, he is not to be considered simply a diviner. Divination, while sometimes used by Mesopotamian prophets, is more often associated with cultic personnel who examine sacrificial animals or natural conditions (flights of birds, etc.). In each case, Balaam seems to have direct communication with God and then speaks God’s word in the form of oracles to Balak. This is the typical form of prophetic address found in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and other Israelite prophets. Spoken oracles are also recorded in over fifty Mari texts (a few centuries earlier

---

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Safe Sharing**

It is important that each student have an opportunity to participate. Even if a student is very uncomfortable speaking out loud, opportunities can be given for thinking and writing things down. Even if the student chooses not to share, he or she will have engaged in the process of thinking and applying.

In this lesson the students might be asked to write down sinful actions in everyday life to which it is easy for one’s conscience to become immune (e.g., cheating on tests, speaking disrespectfully to parents, etc.), and then fold their papers. Read the papers from the front and let students comment from their perspective. Even if a shy student does not say anything, their input has contributed to the overall discussion.

**Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
than Balaam, about 250 miles downstream from Carchemish). Through either lay people or temple personnel, various messages are offered to Zimri-Lim, king of Mari, from various deities. Therefore it is clear that prophetic activity in the ancient Near East during this general time period was not uncommon.”—Bible Background Commentary


III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have the students make a list of three different ways that greed can control us, and three ways to keep greed from overpowering us. Then ask them to share their lists and discuss together ways in which they could apply what has been discussed in their everyday lives.

Conclude with ideas from the summary below, making sure that the lessons you have drawn and discussed from this lesson are clear.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Balaam is about how greed can turn you away from God. It shows us that even though Balaam was once a righteous man, once he started down the wrong path it was easier and easier to continue. And, even though the devil controlled him, he still tried to make it appear as if he did the right thing by not cursing the Israelites—just so he could look righteous. But God knows the heart. There is nothing we can hide and there is nothing we should hide from God. To try would be useless. He sees our every move, but even when we sin He will always forgive us when we allow the Holy Spirit to bring us to genuine repentance.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
The children of Israel camped between the river and the high plain in a lush valley known for its rich, tropical climate shaded by palm trees. There the children of Israel relaxed from their recent victory in Bashan, and as they luxuriated in the fertile valley they made a costly error in judgment. They became familiar with the Midianites, and familiarity gave birth to ease. The result was key leaders of Israel mixing with Midianite women. Of course, the Midianites had plotted to sow the seeds of idolatry in Israel through the lure of these seductresses. As a result, many leaders of Israel got involved with promiscuity, and God acted swiftly, causing a plague to break out among the participants. Shaken into an awareness of their sin, some felt genuine sorrow for their behavior. But the leaders who led them astray were promptly put to death. This lesson captures the shocking, yet typical human behavior: There is no moment when the human heart is safe from temptation.

If there was ever an age in which young people live incubated in a relaxed moral environment, it is now. In this lesson there is a real warning emerging from the story and stated simply by the apostle Paul: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:11, 12, NIV). Ellen White reminds us: “The heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 460). Throughout this dark episode in Israel’s journey we are reminded to “guard well the avenues of the soul” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 460).

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Consider the seductive nature of sin and discover how to guard their hearts. (Know)
• See the similarities between this story and today’s cultural mood and sense the danger. (Feel)
• Decidedly fill the avenues of their soul with the grace of Christ and the activities of His kingdom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Idolatry
• Purity
• Temptation (dealing with)
You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED
Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
**Illustration**
Share this illustration in your own words:

The symptoms of leprosy are likened to the effects of sin on the human soul. Leprosy starts as a subtle annoyance, a headache and occasional dizziness. The headaches might continue over several months without any visible signs on the skin. Small spots appear on the skin, eventually becoming hard nodes that open and fester. But by the time leprosy shows up on the skin the central nervous system has already been breaking down. The areas that are furthest removed from the heart lose sensation first. The tip of the nose, fingers, and toes become numb to pain. Perhaps the most difficult part of leprosy is the inability to feel pain. Serious damage can be inflicted on the appendages because the victim is unaware they are hurting themselves, and by that time it is too late. Some have described how leprosy, in its final stages, turns the hair white and shifts the facial structure, flattening the nose (due to atrophy and loss of circulation). The cheek bones tend to stick out as the lips retreat into tight skin. In the New Testament era, as soon as someone was diagnosed with leprosy, they were excommunicated from society and basically taken off the public record. Although they were still alive they were counted as dead.

It is no wonder that leprosy is often considered the perfect analogy of sin’s effects on people. Think about the many parallels to the way sin sneaks up on people and destroys them from the inside out.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

Much like the infection of leprosy, the horrible seduction the Midianites managed to incite in Israel occurred because the children of God left the avenues of their soul open. Instead of devoting themselves to prayer or recounting the stories of God’s faithfulness to them, they filled up their time with idle living and curious perusal of the Midianite women and their religion. As you read the story remember the way the leprosy of sin has its way if we are not fully connected to God.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them:

- **Underline** the key people mentioned in this story.
- **Circle** the various words that convey emotion in this story and draw a line to the persons feeling it.
- **Place brackets around** the major sections of this story as though they were scenes in a play. How many different themes do you see emerging from the story?
- If you had to identify one or two key verses in this story, which would you say captures the central point best?
- In this story, do you find . . .
  - An example to follow?
  - A prayer to pray?
  - A warning to heed?
  - A truth to proclaim?
  - An encouraging word to share?
  - An action to take or a change to make?

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

This week’s story is shocking in several ways: (1) the way the children of Israel witnessed God’s blessing and victory and so quickly slipped into the most base and offensive behavior; (2) the way God orders judgment; (3) leaders (both good and evil) get tested and exposed for who they really are.

It’s painful to witness the roller-coaster ride the Israelites take in their faithfulness to God. When Joshua and Caleb sent spies out, it was probably from this wooded area of acacia trees not far from Jericho. The first verse of this story informs us that “the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite
women” and subsequently “joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor” (NIV). Baal was the deity of fertility so it is not a surprise that sexual entertainment and worship are connected in this pagan ritual. Apparently it was the “heads” or leaders of Israel that were seduced in this unthinkable act. When they worshipped Baal they “proclaimed themselves to be his followers” thus shunning their loyalty to God (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 914).

God acted swiftly, and the leaders were killed and hung out in the sun for all to see. Why would God react so harshly? It is possible that young people today might recoil at stories that depict God sentencing people to death because of their sin. But those who united with Baal are no different from those who refused to enter the ark or the heathen nations that were dead set against God. They had made their choice, and, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23, NIV). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary claims: “The chiefs of the tribes, if guilty, were to be executed. Their position among the people and their participation in idolatry made them primarily responsible” (vol. 1, p. 914). As a result, the people repented.

In verses 6-8 we see two forms of leadership exposed. While Israel’s leaders were hanging dead before the weeping congregation, Zimri publicly brought Cozbi, a Midianite prostitute, into his tent, mocking the shame of Israel. That this was done “in the sight of Moses” (verse 6) demonstrates how far this man had gone. Such poor leadership was met with the action of another type of leadership. Phineas, the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron, was so offended by this affront to Moses and to God that he raced into the tent with a spear and killed them both. Such a passionate defense of the name of God exposed the integrity of Phineas as a leader, and one who would “succeed his father in the office of high priest” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 914). As a result, God removed the plague because Phineas was “zealous” for God’s sake.

Overall, this story is a window into the sinfulness of sin and the subtle way it creeps into our lives. Only by zealous or deliberate clinging to God’s mercy and grace can we fix our minds on what God wants for us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have the students draw a stick person with five arrows or “avenues” pointing to the head or heart, and five arrows pointing away from the head or heart. Invite the students to identify five positive things they want coming into their minds and write one on each of five arrows pointing toward the figure. Then they can identify five things they would like to remove from their heads and hearts and write them on the five arrows pointing away from the figure.

In this week’s lesson we have discovered that we need to guard the avenues of our heart. Being deliberate about what comes in and goes out is critical. You
may want to have the students share their responses, and perhaps some students have similar goals and could be a source of encouragement to one another.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

The incident in which God’s people, and especially key leaders, completely surrendered their will and loyalty to Baal through the enticement of sexual immorality is sad. But the inspiring leadership of Moses and especially of Phineas can urge us on toward being intentional about what we do with our time, our mind, and the activities we engage in. Clearly, there are some things that are not as awful as worshipping Baal-peor, but are they stepping-stones in that direction? Paul tells the church of Philippi: “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11, NIV).

---

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

_Contextualizing—Not Standing Alone_

As teachers, we can help students negotiate thoughtfully through difficult passages of Scripture more effectively by examining the context of a story. One way to get students to look at the context is to invite them to recount “what has happened to the children of Israel up to this point.” Have them list the good and the bad on the board or a piece of paper and see if similar scenarios occurred in the past. Another layer of context resides in the whole of Scripture. You might ask, “What stories in the Bible are similar to this one? How might the stories be different?” Without telling them what to think, you invite students to place the story among other stories and see the panorama of the interaction between God and people instead of focusing on only one moment that stands alone.

---

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 41.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

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

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

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

II. TARGET

The students will:

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

III. EXPLORE

• Existence of a sovereign God
• Law of God
• Decision-making

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Pass out a card and a pen to each student. Instruct them to write down a law that they would like to see enacted by Congress. It might be a silly law such as “Everyone must sleep in until noon.” Or students can write a serious law such as “All abortions are illegal.” Collect the cards and then read each proposed law. Have the students guess which person submitted which law.

Discuss the merits of the laws submitted. Would the laws truly improve the quality of life or would there be some unintended consequences that would negate
the benefit of the law? What makes a law a “good” law?

**Illustration**

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

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

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

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Laws are a part of life. Not all laws, however, make a lot of sense to us. Some laws seem reasonable only when we get older. For example, maybe when you were a young child you wanted to stick a fork in the electrical outlet. You may have thrown a tizzy because your parents refused you the thrill of the zap.

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

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

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

**Questions for discussion:**

- What timeless principles might be behind the laws that are specific to time, place, and culture? (See Sharing Context and Background for help with the answer to this question.)
- How does someone differentiate between
God’s laws that are no longer binding and timeless laws that are eternal?
- How does knowing the lawgiver help someone keep the law?
- What role does God’s law play in making decisions?
- Is there any difference between God’s law and guiding principles? If so, what?
- Do any of God’s laws obstruct our freedom and happiness? Explain.
- Why do you think Moses was so specific in spelling out the blessings and the curses that correlate with keeping the law? Do the blessings still come as a result of obedience? Do the curses still come as a result of disobedience? Discuss your answers.

Sharing Context and Background

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

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

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

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

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

In his parting address to Israel, Moses reiterated the importance of obedience to God’s laws. The apostle Paul said: “The law . . . does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. . . . The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:17, 24, NIV).

Here’s the bottom line: It is important to keep

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
God’s laws. In essence, Moses told the children of Israel that their eternal destiny was in their own hands. God’s hands are tied by the choice we make. We can choose life by accepting Christ’s fulfillment of the law and living in the transforming power of His grace. Or we can choose death by disobeying the laws of God; consequently, we are not led “to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24, NIV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

God gave us laws, not to wreck our lives, but rather to provide guidelines regarding the best way to live. By choosing God’s way we are choosing life. For an activity that highlights this point, have the students read Deuteronomy 30:15-18 and then write a short children’s story based on this text. The story should underscore the importance of wise choices. When the students have the story written (and illustrated if there’s an artist in the group), arrange for them to go and share their story with younger kids in another Sabbath School class.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

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

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

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


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

*A* special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
This lesson focuses on the last few recorded moments of Moses’ life. We see him speak to the children of Israel and give them instructions. We read that he blesses them with his words. We also see that he admonishes them to remain true to the faithful God they serve. As well, he is shown by God the upcoming events in which the children of Israel will fall away from the God who has brought them out of Egypt, and again he admonishes Israel to remain faithful. In the end we see God showing His undying love for Moses by resurrecting him from the grave in order to be with God in heaven.

It is a great story to teach from in that we see Moses’ humanity as he looks over his life. We also see his close connection with God, and how he willingly gives his life to what God has planned for him. We see him accept the consequences of his actions by not entering the Promised Land, and we understand the utter frustration Satan must have felt at losing this great friend of God from this earth as he was taken to heaven.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that Moses, while having ups and downs, stayed true to his God.
- Feel that they are encouraged to live the same sort of life Moses did.
- Have the opportunity to respond in a positive way in their relationship with God.

III. EXPLORE
- Success
- Confession/repentance
- Death and resurrection

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, ask the following:
- Did you know this was the first time God had raised someone from the dead?
- What else had God done to get someone to heaven (Enoch)?
- Do you think that if Moses had done God’s will in regard to getting water from the rock, he would have made it into the Promised Land? Would that have changed history? Why or why not?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
There was once a young man who was invited to a party by his best friend. His best friend asked if he would bring some pistachio ice cream with him to the party. The young man agreed that he would. About a
week later, the best friend asked him again to bring the pistachio ice cream; again the young man agreed to provide it. On his way to the party he was distracted, his car had some problems, his girlfriend was not cooperating with him, traffic was bad so he was late, and more than anything, with all the stress he forgot what type of ice cream his best friend wanted.

As he pulled into the supermarket, he had a hard time finding a parking space. He finally found one—now he was that much later—and he went to the ice-cream aisle. He couldn’t believe his eyes; there must have been 100 different types of ice cream! He couldn’t remember the type of ice cream his friend wanted, even if his life depended on it. So he decided to play it safe; he got vanilla.

Upon arriving at his friend’s house, he knocked on the door and was let in. He went to his friend and provided him with the vanilla ice cream. His friend had a puzzled look on his face. “I’m sure glad you came, and I’m even glad you did some of what I asked, but how come you didn’t follow my instructions completely?” he said. “Pistachio is what I asked for, not vanilla. In fact, I’m horribly allergic to vanilla!”

Needless to say, the young man felt horrible. The stress must have gotten to him, and he wasn’t able to fulfill the request. Luckily, his best friend decided he didn’t want ice cream after all, and they were able to salvage the party and the friendship. In fact, everyone there loved the vanilla ice cream and called the party a huge success!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
What does the preceding story have to do with this lesson? Moses did not do everything God had asked. He made some mistakes. However, together, Moses and God were able to still deliver the people of Israel to the Promised Land. Their partnership is considered a success, so much so that God brought Moses to heaven to live with Him. This just may speak to what kind of friends God and Moses were. This relationship can be considered a wonderful success.

Out of the Story for Teachers
After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Who are the main actors in this story?
- Why is Moses so intent on the people listening to his words?
- What does he mean when he says that his words are not “idle”?
- Why is it so important to understand Moses’ words?
- Was God gracious in this story even though He did not allow Moses into the Promised Land?
- How do you think Moses felt when God revealed the upcoming events in Israel’s future? How do you think you would have reacted knowing these people you had worked so hard with would abandon everything you had stood for in order to worship other gods?
- What did you think of the song Moses sang?
- What did you think about the blessing Moses bestowed on the children of Israel?

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

1. Success:
Most people of faith think of Moses’ life as a successful one. There was one incident that created a problem for him, but the rest of his life seemed to be according to the will of God—from his time in the basket to his time on Pisgah.

We know what success looks like for a prophet, but what does it look like in your life? Take some time to ask these questions:

a. Who in your life do you consider a success? How do you try to emulate them?

b. What is it that you want out of life? When will you feel you have arrived?

c. What is most important to you? Are you living according to a great vision, like Moses, or are you just getting by day by day?
2. Confession/repentance:
   Why is Moses considered a success? Perhaps for the same reason that David is considered a success. While both men clearly made mistakes and bad calls in their lives, they were both willing to be honest with God and confess their mistakes, as well as repent of their sins and move away from them. How do we react to our sins and mistakes?
   We have a tendency to wallow in the guilt we feel from our mistakes. However, the lives of these two men are pretty clear in showing us that we can move away from our sins and become successful in our spiritual lives, which leads to success in the other areas of our lives.

3. Death/resurrection:
   This story is a great example of what it means to be a friend of God. Moses maintained that friendship with God to the point that God did not want to be without His friend. He therefore resurrected Moses and brought him to heaven in order to be with Him. What a wonderful testament to friendship and to God’s love for us. Do you think God would miss you that much?

III. CLOSING

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

Teaching From . . .

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Students grow when you present characters that they can identify with. What are the marks of humanity in the characters that are universal? What are the character traits that young people can hang their hat on and say “I’m just like that”? We need to present each biblical character in their full robe of humanity; that is to say, what makes them like us! Rather than give a whitewashed example, study the text to see how these passionate people sometimes led incredibly messy lives. Never be afraid to show them as they were. God was not afraid of them, and it will give the young people an understanding that God can use even the messiest of us.

Have the students take a pen and paper and write a list of things that they believe would make them a success in life. They don’t need to show it to anyone; it is just for themselves. Then have them fold up the paper and put it in their Bibles. It is a thing to be referenced, changed, and to remind them of what they see as successful. Remind them that there are many things they can be in life, but being a friend of God is the most important.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Helen Keller said: “Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.” Perhaps Moses would have resonated with those words. He lived his life to the fullest by following what it was that God wanted for him. As well, he made it his utmost priority that he become a friend of the Creator. In doing so, he showed a race of people how to honor God by their lives. More than that, he left a legacy of obedience that we can look to and which will help us understand what it means to be blessed by God in everything we do. Moses showed us that success is not about what we do, but about who we know. As well, Moses’ life has taught us that God cares for His people and is willing to communicate to those who are willing to seek Him out. He does not end relationships when we sin, but allows us to confess and repent of what we have done, and He helps move us in a different direction.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 43.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week the focus is on promises and on the constancy of God in the lives of His people. We see a nation that might have fallen apart with the death of Moses, but rather encourages Joshua to be bold and courageous and decides to follow him. As well, we see a God who transfers His promises to Moses’ successor. His Word is His bond, and He will not forget a promise that He has made.

As you teach this week, remind the students that we have all made promises that we have not kept. Oftentimes the reasons for not keeping promises are very valid; however, it is still a fact that they are promises not kept. This is often a very sore spot for teenagers as they are looking for someone who is solid in their lives. Remind them that we all fall short; however, there is One who has made promises that will always be kept. Show them scriptures that verify this, and show them anecdotal evidence in your life that will truly attest to how good God is at keeping His promises.

We know that fidelity is important for young people. Kenda Creasy Dean, considered a “theologian of youth culture,” delineates in her book Practicing Passion these three important aspects of spiritual life—being there, being known, and being moved. “Being there” is incredibly important for young people. This story shows how God is there for us in not only words, but action. It also shows the transcendence of His grace toward us as evidenced by God allowing His promises to continue through generations.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know that God’s promises are always kept.
- Feel that God has made promises to them that He will keep.
- Respond by taking their own promises seriously and working to fulfill their word in others’ lives.

III. EXPLORE

- New earth
- Grief
- Leadership

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Say the following in your own words: You have made a list of people who make promises to you and noted how they may have or may not have followed through on those promises. Are your answers a little depressing?

Where all can see, make a list of the people below. Ask the students to rank them from (1) the person or group most likely to keep their promises to you to (12)
Therefore, I would need to come up with at least one half of the money for my bike that, besides, cost twice as much as hers did. Needless to say, I was heartbroken. And I had to work for months to come up with more money. But I did learn something—a promise made to someone else is not necessarily a promise made to me.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The situation in the previous story is repeated often in life. However, in our Scripture passage, especially the first chapter of Joshua, you see that what happened to the person in the story did not happen to Joshua. God had decided to honor the promise He made to Moses and to the people of Israel. Just because the leader changed, God did not forget what He had promised to the children of Israel. Besides that, God was glorified by the actions of His followers as they found their way into Jericho as spies.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

You know this lesson is about promises. And we have a tendency to look at the story from the perspective of God's chosen people. However, what if we looked at it from the point of view of the people who lived in the Promised Land? Ask these questions and have the students come up with some answers:

1. How would you feel if a foreign nation attacked and occupied your land?
2. How would you feel if this nation claimed that their God was the one who gave them the right to occupy your land?
3. What if you had heard about all the amazing things that had happened to them over the years and you knew that your town was next?
4. What do you think is the best way to deal with these “chosen” people? Would you go to meet them, open wide your doors, go on the defensive?

Have the students role-play different scenarios that might have arisen as occupants of the Israelites’ “Promised Land” tried to figure out how to face them. Ask them to come up with different ideas about how to
handle the invaders and their God. Have fun, and see if they come up with anything creative.

Ask them these questions:
1. Would you ever doubt God if He led you by a pillar of smoke and fire? If He was present in your life in a literal way every day, wouldn’t it be easier to know there was a God?
2. What would you do in life if this were the case? If you knew you were following the will of God without a shadow of a doubt, how would you live your life differently? Would you be more bold in the way you went about things?

Share with them that even though we don’t have a visual context in which to see God in our lives, we can look at where we have been and see where God worked. Give them examples and ask them to share where God has worked in their lives.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

There are many amazing facts about this story, and the story leading up to the crossing of the River Jordan. First of all, there is some discussion as to how many people actually left Egypt and went to the Promised Land. Some argue that there were millions, while others argue that there were just a few thousand. While this doesn’t change the context of the story, it does make for interesting thought. How much more powerful would God have to be if there were just a few thousand Israelites as opposed to a few million? Or would it have been harder to handle a few million people? How do a few million people travel together? These are interesting questions.

If you ever go to Israel and have a chance to see the ancient ruins of Jericho, you will be amazed. The first thing that hits you is what a great place it is in the middle of desert. There are date palm trees and other fruit trees growing. It truly is an oasis in the desert. No wonder people lived there. When you go to the ruins you see that the city was not as big as you might have imagined it. It is really very small by modern standards. However, this does not diminish the miracles that were worked by God in this instance. In ancient times the city was considered impregnable and was a huge obstacle for the children of Israel.

As well, there are some major themes that can be picked up throughout this passage of Scripture:

1. **Be bold and courageous.** As Joshua assumed leadership of Israel, he was encouraged to be "strong and courageous" (1:18). Perhaps that is a good lesson for those of us who live our lives trying to follow God’s will.

2. **Promises are for keeping.** God doesn’t promise what He cannot deliver. Regardless of the object of the promise (see Joshua 1:3), God fulfills what He set out to do for His people. Promises we make and keep honor God. In dealing with Rahab (chapter 2) the spies honored God by protecting her family for her. We, in the same way, honor God by being people of our word and following through on what we say we will do.

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Bring the students together and spend a bit of time talking about promises that we make to God. Remind them that those promises are important as well in building our relationship with Him. Have each one write on a small piece of paper something that they want to promise God. Have them fold these papers into their Bibles as a constant reminder that our promises matter to God.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Students learn by listening to many different voices. It would be great if, while you prepare this lesson, you could get a few students who are in your leadership team and have them go through the material with you. They will feel included, take ownership, and perhaps teach better than you ever could have. Students love to hear their peers tell of their experience and often learn from each other much more than they learn from us.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The concept of “being there” is vital to a young person’s experience with God. This story allows them to understand that God not only loves them, but is willing to be in continual relationship with them regardless of what they do. When we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. As you can see in Joshua, chapter 2, we are ambassadors of God’s promises when we keep the promises that we make in His name. It is important that we show to others the fidelity God shows to us.

In this lesson we see a people willing to follow a leader who leans upon the words of God, a leader who takes the legacy of his predecessor and is willing to follow in his footsteps. This is an important example for us, the leaders, depending on the words of God, leading those who will come after us. Our legacy will be those young people who grow a passion for Jesus Christ and who carry on where we leave off in showing others the fidelity that Christ shows us.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 44.

* A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

It was the dawning of a new day for Rahab, once a Canaanite prostitute, and now a part of the great Israelite nation. But what would God have in store for her as an alien in a land conquered by foreigners? We don’t know how long she lived in the Israelite camp before she married Salmon and started a family. But what we do know is that God had something very special in mind for this very special woman. “Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king” (Matthew 1: 5, 6, NASB).

This woman, who had more faith than the Israelite nation itself, who believed in a God not her own, was rewarded in a marvelous way. Although she did not live to see the day that David was crowned king, this woman was honored through history with being in the ancestry of King David and of the Messiah.

Behind the walls of that evil city was a woman with faith, with a belief in the power of God. It saved her. And that same belief will save us. Maybe we as Adventists should search in the unexpected places for people who are ready to hear the truth. People like Rahab.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discover the power of faith and what it does in people’s lives as shown in the life of Rahab. (Know)
- Sense that there is more than just thinking there is a God; one must have faith that He can do the impossible once one puts their life in His hands. (Feel)
- Have the opportunity to put their trust wholly in God, then watch Him work! (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Grace
- Conviction
- Trustworthiness/betrayal

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Many years ago there was a Frenchman. This Frenchman had a high-strung talent, a very unique talent. He was a tightrope walker, but not just any ordinary tightrope walker; this man did tricks on the tightrope. Blindfolded, he could push a wheelbarrow across a tightrope and not miss a step. An American promoter heard about him, was impressed and wrote...
the Frenchman a letter saying that if he would come to America, he would pay him a large sum of money to walk on a tightrope over Niagara Falls. The Frenchman had never been to America, nor had he seen the falls, but he agreed to the deal quite gladly.

The promoter didn’t really believe the man could do it, but he set up the equipment and finally the day came for the big event. Crowds had gathered, and drums rolled as the man, “tightly” blindfolded, began walking across the rope that stretched across the falls, from the American side to the Canadian side!

He finished the walk with ease and then asked the promoter if he now believed that he could do it. The American said that of course he believed; he had just seen him do it. But the Frenchman was not satisfied. He asked again if the man really believed. Again the man said that he did. “Good,” the Frenchman answered, “then get into the wheelbarrow.”

How many times do we say that we believe God, yet are reluctant to get into the wheelbarrow? Still, He works such great things in the lives of those who do put their trust in Him.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

When God honors people, He honors them well. While to outside eyes it might seem that Rahab is a woman of doubtful character, God knew her character and the strength of her faith. Think of what faith has done and still does in people’s lives. What does it take to have faith like that? What does the word “faith” mean? How does it affect your life? How does it affect those around you?

Out of the Story for Teachers

*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- Why do you think that the Israelite spies came to Rahab’s house?
- Was it just faith that saved Rahab? Or more?
- Is there another case in the Bible of a Canaanite woman becoming a part of the Israelite nation? Was hers also a case of faith? How did God honor her?
- Have you seen someone risk their reputation for their faith? Their life?
- What does the story tell you about the character of Rahab? Of God?

There are a lot of things in this story that are unusual; it should be easy for the students to point them out. As they make their observations, discuss a little deeper the implications and outcomes of the situation. Use this as an opportunity to take the discussion into these areas:

1. Notice that the spies went directly to Rahab’s house; there was no dillydallying in looking for a respectable place to stay. The men must have known that to stay in another man’s house would arouse suspicion and create a dangerous situation, whereas two strangers staying in a prostitute’s house wouldn’t be all that unusual. It was safer to stay with her than anywhere else.

2. A big question has arisen from this particular story: Is it OK to lie in a life-and-death situation? Rahab lied to save the men’s lives, but in the Bible lying about anything is a sin. Are there times when you can compromise? Or is it just black and white? (Don’t discuss this in depth—it can go into a big discussion—but do bring it to the group’s attention.)

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. In Joshua 2:15 the verse says that Rahab’s house was on a city wall. This is important to remember in the course of events that follow. When the walls fell at the end of the seven days, whose house should have crumbled along with the rest? Rahab’s! But apparently it didn’t. God spared Rahab and her family, and they lived as a part of the Israelite nation after that.

   Strangely enough, when the city of Jericho was excavated some years back, they found that the walls had fallen out instead of in. When a wall falls under the strain of being hit with a battering ram it falls in, but these walls fell out—an impossible event unless there was a divine hand behind it all.

2. While prostitution was definitely looked down upon by Israelites, and while women who slept with men not their husbands were put to death, the paid prostitute was not punished. But marrying a prostitute was a different matter. There are
two instances in the Bible that stand out the most: that of Hosea's wife, a prostitute, and that of Rahab, who married Salmon. Read the story of Hosea and his wife in Hosea, chapter 1, and discuss why it was taboo to marry a prostitute.

3. While the passage in Into the Word is about Rahab's initial meeting with the spies, this week's Scripture story and the commentary from Patriarchs and Prophets are about the complete fall of Jericho, including the sin of Achan (Joshua 7). The following passage from the Bible Background Commentary gives some interesting information regarding the total destruction that God commanded for Jericho.


“The ‘ban’ is sometimes chosen as the English word to represent the concept of total destruction that is commanded here in verse 2 and elaborated on in verses 5-6. Just as there were some types of sacrifices that belonged entirely to the Lord while others were shared by priest and offerer, so some plunder was set aside as belonging solely to the Lord. Just as the whole burnt offering was entirely consumed on the altar, so the ban mandated total destruction. Since the warfare was commanded by Yahweh and represented His judgment on the Canaanites, the Israelites were on a divine mission with Yahweh as their commander. Since it was His war, not theirs, and He was the victor, the spoil belonged to Him. Although the divine warrior motif occurs throughout the ancient Near East, the herem concept is more limited—the only other occurrence of the term is in the Moabite Mesha inscription, but the idea of total destruction is also in the Hittite material. Some sites, such as Gezer, feature a distinct burn layer in association with the Late Bronze period. Under siege conditions sanitation is at its worst and disease is often rampant. The practice of burning everything after the defeat of a city thus also had an element of health connected to it. The best analogy for us to understand herem is to think in terms of radiation. A nuclear explosion would destroy many things and irradiate much more. The abhorrence and caution with which we would respond to that which has been irradiated is similar to what is expected of the Israelites regarding things under the ban. If radiation were personified, one could understand that once something was given over to it, it was irredeemable. It was this condition that Achan exposed himself to by taking things under the ban.”


III. CLOSING

Activity

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

There are times when you can't “judge a book by its cover,” or tell what kind of character someone has by their reputation, their occupation, or their looks.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Have the students write down the kinds of people they want to reach out to this week. Perhaps the homeless man on the street, or the angry kid at school.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Rahab’s story is both powerful and touching. It gives hope to the people who have messed up the most, and it shows others that maybe there is more to a person than meets the eye. When God reached out to Rahab, He reached out to the many other people who are in her situation today, or worse. He reached out to those who look down on “those kinds of people,” hoping to give us the message that He loves everyone, and that no matter who someone is or what they do, they are His child.

Rahab’s story challenges us to have faith: “If a prostitute had faith like that, so can I!” Her faith saved so many lives; maybe your faith will lead you to save lives. With faith in God you can do the impossible, and reach out to the impossibilities.

*Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 45.*

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
I. SYNOPSIS
What we do after our successes is as much a test of our character as how we respond to our failures. Indeed, success may be even more devastating in that it tends to give one a false sense of security. Such was the dilemma that faced the Israelites as they stood on a plain facing Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.

They had been summoned there by Joshua immediately following their (God’s) conquest of Ai. If we are to be quite candid, not many of us would have been ready for a worship service following the defeat of a puny enemy who got the best of us before. We would probably be plundering their riches, dancing all over their carcasses, and enjoying a massive celebration. But this was not how Joshua chose to spend the first few moments of his triumph. No, the partying would wait, the celebrations would be placed on hold.

Instead, Joshua 8:30-35 recounts the awesome spectacle of an entire nation—men, women, children, aliens—gathered before two mountains to honor their God, and to get their marching orders before fully possessing the Promised Land. Joshua never forgot the dying words of Moses to him (Deuteronomy 27:1-7). Joshua was to remind the people of the blessings that would attend their obedience to God, and the curses that would haunt them should they disobey. Joshua did not fail Moses. He read all the words of the law to them, and did not miss one.

As Ellen White notes, God intended for His people to get explicit direction on His expectations that they might avoid the snares of Satan in their new home.

This story demonstrates in stark relief the love of God for His people. Not only is He willing to deliver from physical peril; He is equally willing to save His people from spiritual ruin. God always gives us the knowledge and power to overcome. It is up to us, as it was the Israelites, to listen and obey.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that God keeps each and every promise that He makes to His people.
- Experience the joy of returning love to God through faithfulness to His covenant. (Feel)
- Be encouraged to make positive choices to serve God in every facet of their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- War
- Sin/evil/devil
- Worship
You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING
I. GETTING STARTED
Activity
*Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Booker T. Washington describes meeting an ex-slave from Virginia in his book *Up From Slavery*: “I found that this man had made a contract with his master, two or three years previous to the Emancipation Proclamation, to the effect that the slave was to be permitted to buy himself, by paying so much per year for his body; and while he was paying for himself, he was to be permitted to labor where and for whom he pleased.

“Finding that he could secure better wages in Ohio, he went there. When freedom came, he was still in debt to his master some three hundred dollars. Notwithstanding that the Emancipation Proclamation freed him from any obligation to his master, this black man walked the greater portion of the distance back to where his old master lived in Virginia, and placed the last dollar, with interest, in his hands.

“In talking to me about this, the man told me that he knew that he did not have to pay his debt, but that he had given his word to his master, and his word he had never broken. He felt that he could not enjoy his freedom till he had fulfilled his promise.”

If one would honor a promise made under the duress of slavery, how much more should we honor our promises to God?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Blessings are what we tend to wish one another in the normal course of life. We wish others well when they are sick, when they are down, when they’ve achieved a great honor, etc. No one ever goes around raining down curses on people. Some try it, but usually they incur the wrath of society and soon become outcasts.

In Joshua 8 God bucks the human trend to desire blessings and hate curses. He is clear about His expectations of all who claim His name, enjoy His blessings, and bask in His love. He is equally clear about the curses we face for disobedience. Quite often, the curses that bedevil those who disobey are simply the consequences of their own choices. God wishes us to live with no regret.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What specific things did God do to help Israel win their battle with Ai? Ask the students if they think it’s fair for God to help one side and not the other.
- Why did God encourage Israel to utterly destroy Ai, except for its plunder and livestock (Joshua 8:1, 2, 8)? (See the note in last week’s Sharing and Context on Joshua 6:21-24.)
- There were no doubt women and children among those killed at Ai. What do we say to those who point to this episode as proof that the Christian God is not a God of love? In Joshua 8:18 the Lord tells Joshua to “Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city” (NIV). Why did God ask Joshua to do this? What lesson might God have been trying to convey to Joshua? What did this act say to the Israelites about Joshua as leader? In this narrative we must remember that the shadow of Moses still loomed large over the nation of Israel.
- Joshua is careful to follow all of Moses’ directions concerning the covenant renewal ceremony. Why is he so concerned that every detail be right? How did this show respect for God and for his mentor, Moses? What does this say to us about how we should respect those who have served God faithfully in the past?
- How do you think the Israelites felt as they stood listening to Joshua? Could the children and youth in the Israelite congregation appreciate this ceremony? After all, it lacked all the things that seemed to appeal to young people today. Would youth today enjoy such a ceremony? Explain.

Use the following teachable passage to deepen the understanding of what Joshua read in the Israelites’ hearing: Deuteronomy 27 and 28. Ahead of time, select specific passages from these chapters to be read responsively or in rounds by the students.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Superpower Blues. When Israel finally reached the Promised Land of Canaan, they were a bud-
ding superpower. Everyone feared them, and this sense of invincibility went to their heads. Joshua 7:1-5 should be a lesson to all who forget God and tolerate sin. They went up to Ai with a token force and they were routed and chased all the way back home. Verse 1 tells us why they failed: “But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel” (NIV).

2. Only One Way. The Mosaic law, which God gave Moses to guide the day-to-day lives of the Jewish nation, was never meant to be a works-oriented means to salvation. The sacrificial services were meant to show that only the spilled blood of an innocent victim could pay the price for sin. The sanctuary service pointed to the day when Christ would come and lay down His life for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Sometimes we have a tendency to think that if we obey everything God says that ought to be enough to get us to the kingdom. Not! We will always need Jesus, for only His righteousness pays the price.

3. The Big Ten. Some erroneously claim that it was the Ten Commandments that were abolished at the death of Jesus, along with the sacrificial system. Such a view begs the question: Are we now free to have false gods, murder, steal, commit adultery, dishonor our parents, etc? The answer, of course, is no. Here’s the truth from God’s Word: “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. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19, NIV).

4. Amen Corner. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary notes that the spot where Israel assembled for the renewal of the covenant was the same place where Abraham erected his first altar in the Land of Promise. “Here the people now congregated, six of the tribes on one side and six on the other—the six on Mt. Gerizim to respond with an Amen after each blessing was read and the six on Mt. Ebal as each curse was read” (vol. 2, p. 215).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student an index card and a pencil. Ask

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
the students to choose one blessing from Deuteronomy 28 or 29 that they would like to experience in their lives this week. Ask them to write one sentence detailing what they plan to do to fulfill the conditions to receive this blessing from God.

Offer a prayer of dedication to God, asking Him to send His power and grace to each student in their attempts to obey His commands this week.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

Ask a guest to come and share with the class an episode from their life when they made a promise and kept it, or made a serious promise and broke it. You may also have such a story to share.

Often students will respond much more positively to a guest who comes to share a personal testimony that embodies the lesson for the day, perhaps someone who is not from the youth ministry of the church or in their general orbit. This person might also share their testimony in lieu of the provided illustration.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 46.

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

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

God loves us. The creation shouts it, in spite of how sin has ravished it. Our own bodies tout it, in spite of what we do to them. God loves humanity. How much? Enough to send Jesus to die for us. After all that God has done for us, is our obedience too high a price to pay for His grace?

The question of our response to God’s goodness is at the heart of Joshua 8. Joshua 7 taught us that disobedience has consequences, but so does obeying God. There is no obedience that doesn’t flow from a heart of love. It was love that drove Joshua and the Israelites to assemble for this solemn covenant renewal ceremony. They had journeyed long, endured much. This was not the time to forsake the God who only hours earlier had handed them a decisive victory over Ai.

No, this was the time to declare one’s willingness to live for God, to live by His rules as a demonstration of the love they felt for Him. With great joy God must have watched this scene. He knew even then that some would forget this day, would fall back into old habits and old ways. But God still took joy in the effort of His very human subjects to please Him.

We too may be weak, we may fall, our promises may not be worth the paper they’re written on, but because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can obey God.
**PREPARING TO TEACH**

**I. SYNOPSIS**

It is often said that experience is the best teacher. The episode found in Joshua 9 and 10 seems to fly in the face of this statement. Whether experience is or is not the best teacher is a debate for another day.

It was perhaps a few days earlier that Israel was forced to fight Ai a second time. Why a second time? Because Joshua and the other leaders of the nation failed to consult God before commencing battle with Ai (Joshua 7:1-4). This error led to the deaths of several Israelites and a humiliating defeat. With this backdrop, they renewed their covenant to God, promising to seek His wisdom and guidance before making any big decisions. They had promised to obey God.

Fast-forward a bit and we see them make the same mistake they made at Ai. The clever inhabitants of Gibeon, whose spies perhaps overheard the pledges the Israelites were making to God at Ebal and Gerizim to destroy all inhabitants of Canaan, came up with a perfect ruse. Dressed as paupers they approached Israel in search of help—and a treaty. Joshua sniffed the deception, but once again he failed to consult God. The Bible says they “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord” (Joshua 9:14, KJV).

Israel signed the deceptive treaty, and the fallout was immediate. King Adoni-Zedek, then king of Jerusalem, confederated with five Amorite kings and plotted to move against the people of God. Why? He was incensed at the unconditional surrender of Gibeon without so much as a fight. Israel would have had to face these kings anyway, but certainly this was not God’s chosen way. When the kings moved against Gibeon to destroy it, Israel was forced to defend a nation whose people it barely knew, to honor a dishon-est agreement.

Following this debacle Israel obeys God and utterly destroys Adoni-Zedek and the five Amorite kings. In the signature event of this passage, God pauses time to allow His people to conquer their ene-mies (Joshua 10:12, 13). What a God! God had every right to let them perish at the hands of their enemies, but He does not respond like you or I would. He promised His people a place to call home, and He deliv-ered—again.

**II. TARGET**

The students will:

- **Know** that seeking God’s guidance in life is essential equipment for surviving earth.
- **Feel** the joy from knowing that God will move earth and heaven to come to their rescue.
- Be asked to choose to faithfully follow God until He takes us to heavenly Canaan. (*Respond*)

**III. EXPLORE**

- Dependability
- Honesty
- Responsibility

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadout ministries.com.

Scripture Story: Joshua 9; 10.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 47.
TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
As an armored truck passed by the Los Angeles bus stop where he was sitting alone last Monday night, Ascension Franco Gonzales saw a clear plastic bag tumble onto the street. The vehicle kept going. The guards inside it were totally unaware that part of their load had fallen out.

Mr. Gonzales went over and saw bundles of $20 bills. The 22-year-old man actually feared for his life—afraid that someone would see him with the clear bag and kill him for its contents! So he began walking with it and looking through trash cans for something opaque enough to cover it.

With the money concealed in a sack, he took a taxi home. He told eight of his friends what had happened, and they tried to help him decide what to do. Gonzales, after all, is not a wealthy man. He makes $1,300 a month washing dishes—and sends $800 of that amount to his family in Mexico. He is an undocumented immigrant in the United States. His money has been used by his family to do such things as pay for an indoor toilet and for a cousin’s funeral.

In the meanwhile, the armored truck company had discovered that some money was missing— a total of $203,000, all in cash. Police began a fruitless search. The possibility of an inside job at the company was being discussed. And nobody had any clues that would have reasonably led to Mr. Gonzales.

“Are you going to keep it?” asked his friends. “Or are you going to return it?” Gonzales wrestled with the question. On Tuesday morning, a TV news show broadcast a story about the missing money. This is the part of the report that Gonzales remembers most vividly: “The announcer asked whether there was anyone in Los Angeles who was honest enough to hand in so much money.”

Around 11:00 a.m. that day, he called the police. Officers came quickly and counted the cash. It was all still there. “I am surprised and pleased,” said a detective.—from www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon 3/astounding_honesty.htm.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
One thing is certain in an age of deception: those who remain dependable, honest, and trustworthy will be sought after. Now more than ever God is calling His people to be people of honesty and integrity. It must have been quite an example to the Gibeonites as they watched the Israelites come to their rescue in honor of a treaty, which they conceived in a lie.

Ellen White illumines the importance of the decision Israel made to honor the treaty. She writes: “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. Hence the Hebrews had not by their oath pledged themselves to commit sin. And though the oath had been secured by deception, it was not to be disregarded. The obligation to which one’s word is pledged—if it does not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred. No consideration of gain, of revenge, or of self-interest can in any way affect the inviolability of an oath or pledge” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 506).

Out of the Story for Teachers
After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. Joshua 9:15 states that it was Joshua who entered into the faulty treaty with the Gibeonites. Did God punish Joshua? If not, why not? How was the battle fought against six kings and their armies a form of corporate punishment of Israel?
2. The Gibeonites chose the disguise of poor beggars to try to deceive the Israelites, and it worked. What was their punishment? Make the point that the punishments we bring on ourselves as a result of our choices are directly proportional to the seriousness of the wrong we have done.
3. Explore the topic of grace with your students. Where in this narrative, specifically Joshua 9, do we see God’s grace? At what points in the story
do we see grace displayed by Israel? How are we to respond to those who do us wrong?

4. Israel's treaty with Gibeon had a serious spiritual component. The Gibeonites had to give up whatever worship they previously engaged in and follow the dictates of Israel's God. How do you think this worked in practice? Did the Gibeonites engage in the same ceremonies and sacrifices?

5. Do you think there was ever a time when the worship of Israel's God became personal and real to them? Was there ever a time when they became converted?

6. The Gibeonites were relegated to serving as woodcutters and water carriers, furnishing the Jewish temple. How was this punishment a blessing in disguise?

7. In the subsequent battle against Adoni-Zedek and the Amorites, God figures prominently in the mix. At what points in the battle does God give Joshua specific verbal guidance? How was Joshua so sure that it was God who was guiding him and not some other voice?

8. Joshua and the Israelites utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all the Amorites. What is the difference between this "sacred violence" and that which is performed by Christian and Islamic extremists who claim to be doing God's bidding?

Use the following as more teachable passages:
Deuteronomy 4:29; Proverbs 28:26; Matthew 17:20; Psalm 2:1, 2.

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

1. Huge Specimens. In the Bible the Amorites are described as a powerful people of great stature. In Deuteronomy 3:11 we have a hint as to their towering height: "Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide" (NIV). Og, the last of the Amorite kings, was no small man, and this can only hint at what the Amorites may have looked like to the Israelites.

In spite of their awesome physical gifts, however, the Israelites utterly destroyed them, with God’s help and support.

2. Gibeon Excavated. According to Bibleplaces.com the ancient city of Gibeon has been found. "Excavated by James Pritchard 1956-62, Gibeon has significant remains especially from the days of the Israelites. Impressive among these finds are 63 wine cellars from the 8th-7th c. B.C. These cellars were bottle-shaped and about 6 feet deep and 6 feet in diameter at the bottom. It is estimated that 19,000 gallons of wine could have been stored in 9 gallon jugs in these cellars" (Source: www.bibleplaces.com/gibeon.htm).

Historical records show that Gibeon was an important city, so important that at the time of Israel's entry its unconditional surrender drew the ire of Adoni-Zedek, then king of Jerusalem.

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

• Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Democracy in Gibeon? The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes: “The Gibeonite form of government must have been more or less democratic, for the Gibeonites spoke of their elders and all their people as sending them (verse 11). Had their government at this time been headed by a king, his heart might have been too proud to bow to the conquering Israelites. In that event the Gibeonites might have joined with the other Canaanite kings in resisting Israel” (vol. 2, p. 218).

What is for sure is this: “Their determination not to resist showed a degree of faith in the strength of Israel’s God. They were willing to enter into a league, which included their pledge to renounce idolatry and to accept the worship of Jehovah” (vol. 2, p. 218).

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Bring to class a photo of the most honest, trustworthy, and dependable person you know. Share with the students two reasons why you trust this person. Then give the students two minutes to come up with the person they trust the most. Ask class members to share their choices and the reasons why they trust that person.

#### Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God’s plan for His people was that they enter Canaan, clear the land of its heathen inhabitants, serve Him faithfully, and be positive examples of godliness to surrounding nations. But God’s people often get sidetracked. The conquest of Canaan was never fully accomplished, even down to the time of Solomon, because the Israelites often depended on their own evaluation of situations on the ground, instead of listening to a clear word from God.

In Joshua 9 and 10 we see the roots of their later penchant for forgetting God. The treaty with Gibeon was a humbling experience, but all was not lost. In their acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of the Gibeonites they demonstrated a deep respect for the God by whom they had sworn their allegiance. God went on to lead them valiantly into and out of a great battle. He rained hailstones from heaven to support their ground attack. He even stopped the sun for a day.

The God who showed up that day is the same God we serve today, and we owe everything we are to Him.

---

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

To make this region come alive to your students, consider bringing in a map of what was ancient Canaan land. Sources such as Bible places.com and other sites will be helpful here.

There’s a good chance that your students have never examined the topography of a biblical area. They might enjoy seeing where the Jordan River is, Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, etc. To go even further, share information on who occupies the region today, and whether or not excavations have ever been done there. For instance, as mentioned previously, the site of ancient Gibeon has been located definitively.

---

*Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 47.*

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
I. SYNOPSIS

Joshua is a book of high drama—and careful recordkeeping. It’s a bit like reading the Sunday paper from cover to cover—sections A and B crackle right along, starting out with a city-toppling, sun-stopping bang, but by the time you reach section E you had better really be interested in real estate.

So what use is an ancient geography lesson? As a follow-up to the forestalled promises of Moses’ books, plenty. For the book’s original readers, the message is clear: Stay faithful to God, and He’ll be faithful to what He’s promised you. And in the settling down of the Israelites in their long-awaited land, there are lessons to learn about relationships, trust, God’s grace, faith in action, and brotherly love.

The story begins with the Israelites on the move, routing one city-state after another in a God-directed sweep. Then a charming and soul-stirring flashback: old (and we do mean old, but hold on) Caleb saying to Joshua, “Mind if I take another go at that spot we scouted out together a generation ago? I’m just as sharp as I was as a young buck, and with God’s help I’m still ready to roll.”

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

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

The story of the Gadites’ and Reubenites’ altar is a cautionary tale of snap judgments within a community, yet with a happy ending (and, alas, the last such happy ending the Bible will offer for a while).

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

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

II. TARGET

The students will:

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

- Grace
- Abiding in Christ
- Christian interdependence

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

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

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

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A new pastor greeted his small-town, mostly older congregation. The church members eyed him warily, this young buck (though he was really middle-aged) trying to fill some very big shoes. He decided to break the first-day tension with a joke—about another new pastor.

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

If you’ve never seen controversy in a church over something that seemed innocent and innocuous—moving a pulpit across the stage, replacing old orange carpet, or putting song lyrics on a screen—you probably haven’t been attending very long. People fight innovation for all sorts of reasons, but the biggest reason is fear—fear that something spiritual will be lost in the transition.

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

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

An old cartoon shows a dog having finally “caught” the family car after a few thousand chases down the driveway. The caption? “Now what?” You won the trophy. You’ve got the guy or girl. You reached the Promised Land. It’s where movies end—and real life begins. Unlike a Disney movie, happily ever after requires more than just good wishes and singing fishes. And it’s not always pretty.

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

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

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

The cities of refuge provide us with an illuminating illustration of salvation. We’re all guilty of murder—the murder of Jesus Christ, Son of God. And yet there is a city of refuge—the very same Person, our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus. If we try to defend ourselves, we’ll
end up victims of the devil’s vengeance, but if we throw ourselves at Jesus’ mercy, our protection and salvation are assured.

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

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

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

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

When thousands died in the desert, Caleb survived to enter the Promised Land. The essential difference? A positive attitude. After the people rebelled at Kadesh-Barnea, God considered striking them all down and just sticking with Moses’ descendants. When Moses interceded for the Israelites, God declared, “Not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who dis-obeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their fore-fathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (Numbers 14:22-24, NIV).

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

The cities of refuge remind us of the importance of abiding in Christ. The idea has led many to legalism, but the reality is that we’re invited to enter into Christ’s rest—a refuge from works-oriented religion, of thinking we must handle life on our own. Ellen White wrote: “There is need of constant watchfulness, and of earnest, loving devotion; but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. . . . God will accept every one that comes to Him, trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour. Love springs up in the heart. . . . Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure” (Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 353, 354).

Ellen White describes the life in Christ as a life of transforming rest. “The conscience will find rest in

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Christ. He is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ As we believe Him, we are changed into His likeness. His image is engraved on the heart. His love is reflected to the world in our words and deeds. Thus is revealed to the world the power that truth has to sanctify the receiver. Under the bright, glorious beams of Christ’s righteousness, the human soul is made pure and holy” (Southern Watchman, July 9, 1903, par. 2).

The controversy over the unexpected altar brought back memories of the apostasy at Baal-Peor, when Israelites were led into sexual immorality and death, and of Achan’s theft, when one man’s sin brought disaster to all of Israel. The Israelites were “once burnt, twice shy,” and eager to defend the community from backsliding and idolatry. Fortunately Phinehas and the elders demonstrated what business and family expert Stephen Covey calls one of the “seven habits of highly effective people”—“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Because they didn’t rush to judgment, not only was tragedy averted, but a beautiful harmony among people and a tribute to God was revealed.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

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

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

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

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

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

I. SYNOPSIS

Talk about an elder statesman—according to biblical evidence, when Israel conquered Canaan Joshua was the oldest Israelite around. And what a life he’d lived! He had probably baked in the hot Egyptian sun slaving on Pharaoh’s projects; watched in awe as the 10 plagues brought a nation to its knees; celebrated salvation on the seashore; fought Amalekites in the desert; accompanied Moses partway up Mount Sinai; spied on the Promised Land; and four decades later led the Israelites to victory after victory in Canaan. When Joshua talked, people listened. In his farewell message Joshua reminded his people how God had led them, then cut to the chase: Serve God and prosper, or ignore Him and . . . disaster.

Joshua led the people in renewing their covenant with God, yet drew a clear line in the sand for them. Commitment is serious stuff, he insisted. God is a jealous God. He’ll settle for nothing less than all we have in us—our thoughts, our actions, our motives, our minds. He’s responsible for everything good that’s happened to us, and now He wants us to return the favor.

It was a high calling, but never forget that even this was rooted in grace. As God reminded the Israelites, “I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you. . . . You did not do it with your own sword and bow. So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant” (Joshua 24:12, 13, NIV).

In this lesson your students will explore such issues as:

- The dual deceptions of assuming God will overlook sin, and the idea that people can somehow be “good enough” to be saved.
- The importance of serving God out of love rather than “what’s in it for me” of fear of judgment.
- The surety that God will do as He’s promised.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God is faithful when we follow Him.
- Feel the call to serve God wholeheartedly, knowing that God is always eager to accept them no matter what.
- Respond by considering the choice Joshua offered.

III. EXPLORE

- Forgiveness from God
- Decision-making
- Priorities

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
Discuss the meaning of “courage” as Joshua used it. Ask your students to give examples of some of the most courageous actions they’ve ever done or seen. If you have a large group, have them vote via applause based on how courageous they think the following actions are:

- Passing the ball to another player when you could make it five in a row for yourself.
- Turning down a better-paying job . . . in a casino.
- Praying for the person you thought was a friend who’s now acting as if you don’t exist.
- Doing what your dad asked without complaining even though it seems outrageously unfair—and your sister gets off scot-free.
- Asking the weird girl to help out on the yearbook when she seems to have nothing in common with the circle of friends you’ve already picked for staff.
- Telling your bitter relative who’s hurt your family for decades that God loves her—and so do you.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

It was the perfect scam.

Casinos run by American Indian tribes wanted influential people to lobby on their behalf. Enter Jack Abramoff, the man with all the right connections. When legislators tried to shut them down, Abramoff was there, happy to help them stay in business—for the right price, of course. When a casino wanted the government to shut down a competing casino, Abramoff was there too, lending a hand. In fact, he was sometimes even helping out the competing casino at the exact same time. That way, no matter which side won, he was making money, and lots of it.

In 1999 the State of Alabama considered starting its own lottery. For the Choctaw tribe in neighboring Mississippi, that meant competition for their casinos, so they called on Abramoff. Abramoff called his old friend Ralph Reed, who had become famous as the first director of the political group Christian Coalition. Abramoff paid Reed $1.3 million to encourage Alabaman Christians to oppose the state lottery.

With radio ads starring Focus on the Family founder James Dobson, church bulletin inserts, phone banks spreading the word, and pastors rallying their congregations, Alabaman Christians felt involved in a great moral cause. What they didn’t know was that the money they were using to oppose the spread of gambling came from a casino.

The sad saga reminds us that, as Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24, NIV). Abramoff has pleaded guilty to conspiracy, fraud, and tax evasion, and the careers of his friends have been forever tarnished.

Like the story of Achan, Joshua’s farewell message reminds us that we can’t serve both God and the world—we must make a choice. While God’s grace is always available, we’ll live with the consequences and hamper God’s blessings if we try to live a double life, with one foot in God’s camp and another in the world’s.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

“Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, and the walls came a-tumblin’ down.” Impressive stuff—but no less impressive than his legacy of a nation that gave its heart to God for two generations. Joshua laid it on the line: There are no two ways about it— are you going to follow God or do your own thing?

“Make your choice,” Joshua said. “You can follow the useless gods your ancestors worshipped, who did nothing for them, or you can follow God. I’m following God, and my family is too,” Joshua said. “How about you?”

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

In the oxymoron hall of fame, “forced love” ranks right up there with “pretty ugly” and “government organization.” By its very nature, love can’t be compelled. When Joshua echoed Moses’ call to follow God (see Deuteronomy 30), he wanted the Israelites to serve God willingly, as a natural response to God’s love for them.

Following God requires dedication and commitment. How did God recommend the Israelites maintain their focus on Him? Have a student read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. Explain that even today people who strictly follow Judaism keep a small parchment, inscribed with the words from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21, attached to each of their doorposts. The
scroll and the container it comes in is known as a mezuzah. Ask your students for their ideas about how we can apply this principle to our spiritual lives today.

Ask your students to give one-word reactions to the word “law.” Why does the law so often have such a negative connotation? How has the devil distorted people’s ideas of following God wholeheartedly? Have a student read Luke 18:18-23. How would a typical modern person relate to that story?

The Israelites loved God’s law. Divide your students into groups, each reading a different section of the lengthy Psalm 119. Have each group find reasons why Psalm 119’s author rejoiced in the law, and share their answers with the larger group. (Unless your group is particularly large, you probably won’t want to cover the entire psalm.) Answers might include that the law gives life, brings freedom, strengthens the spirit, keeps people from being selfish, etc.

Even so, people today have many distorted views of God’s laws. If possible, share your own testimony or have a guest tell how their view of God’s law changed as the Holy Spirit led them, and how God has blessed since they came to better understand Him. Challenge your students to live with a heavenly focus, as Jesus charged in the story of the rich young ruler.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

Worshipping Canaanite gods such as Baal or Asherah was a tricky, iffy business, but it definitely kept you busy. Problem was, the gods were just so hard to figure out. Sure the gods were powerful and amazing, but they were more finicky than a house cat and needed plenty of convincing. Canaanites believed their gods needed to be reminded regularly to take good care of them, to keep sending rain and sunshine in healthy amounts, to make their babies healthy, to keep their crops from being wiped out by a turn of the weather. Fertility was everything to the Canaanites, so their religious rituals always reminded the gods where food and babies came from.

You could never be sure what pleased the pagan gods, but God laid it out clearly for the Israelites. The Creator God didn’t need to be coaxed out of His celestial cave to help His people. Here at last was a God you could **trust**, could take at His word. God took the guesswork out of godhood by covenanting with people: *You do this, and I’ll take care of you. I’ll watch out for you—in fact, I’ll lavish you with blessings you’ll have to see to believe.* It was a religion based not on rituals, but on relationship.

The apostle John contrasted it this way: “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7, NIV).

---

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

If we just live life looking for something "big" to happen, we’ll miss out. Life is made up of a lot of little seemingly small choices. Ellen White wrote: "We little know the bearing of our acts upon the experience of others. What we do or say may seem to us of little moment, when, could our eyes be opened, we should see that upon it depended the most important results for good or for evil" (Ministry of Healing, p. 483).

Challenge your students with the fact that living for God won’t begin at some distant date—it begins today. Challenge them to look for opportunities to make a difference in everything they do. As Carl Wilkins, a Seventh-day Adventist who saved lives during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, tells audiences today, each day every one of us has a chance to make a difference. “We have the opportunity. We have the ability. Even in small things, like picking up a piece of trash in the parking lot. . . . Do you do it? And you struggle back and forth in your mind. But if we don’t do the small things, we won’t do the large ones. . . . That’s when the most horrible things in the world happen. When good people do nothing.”

Make a difference.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Joshua called his people to choose—or lose out. There was still much territory left to conquer, and complacency would only lead to calamity. The people would either move forward in faith, or drift into disaster.

Today a world awaits us that knows too little of God’s love, and needs us to demonstrate it. People wander lost without a clear understanding of God’s mercy, patience, forgiveness, and eagerness to transform us. Jesus offers new life to all who call on Him. Jesus calls us to live in joyful expectation of His soon return, and Matthew 25:34-36 tells us some of how we should spend our time as Christians in a broken world. It’s a no-compromise life of courage in the face of adversity, care and compassion for those shattered by sin, commitment to Christ’s principles of love and faithfulness, and creative expressions of God’s character.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 49.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson is based on three short chapters in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Each chapter offers students a helpful perspective on the overall theme of stewardship.

The first chapter in this lesson, “Tithes and Offerings,” highlights the importance of giving to the work of God. With our gifts to God we acknowledge that we are managers of God’s resources. As Ellen White points out, “The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525). In teaching on this topic, the emphasis should be on giving as a response to what God has given to us in His Son; moreover, all of our resources belong to Him, anyway.

The second chapter, “God’s Care for the Poor,” offers a compelling picture of compassion. Here we see the Father’s heart: “[God] intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.

“Christ has said that we shall have the poor always with us, and He unites His interest with that of His suffering people. The heart of our Redeemer sympathizes with the poorest and lowliest of His earthly children” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 535).

The final chapter, “The Annual Feasts,” offers symbols through which we can grasp and teach concepts such as sin, grace, and salvation. As Samuele Bacchiocchi points out, “Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals that God has communicated His saving knowledge not only through abstract reasoning, but also through symbolic representations. The reason is that the human mind grasps symbolic representations more readily than it does abstract reasoning.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the value of being a responsible steward of God’s resources. *(Know)*
- Sense the calling of God to share their resources with the poor. *(Feel)*
- Give in response to what God has given us. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Stewardship
- Festivals (biblical)
- Gambling
- Giving

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson and ask them to take a side as you

Scripture Story: Leviticus 23; 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 50, 51, 52.
David Green touches on what Ellen White calls “a striking illustration . . . in the days of the prophet Haggai” of the results of selfishly withholding from God. Our lesser needs are met but at the expense of our greater needs. God warns His people, “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” (Haggai 1:5, 6, NIV).

Ask the students how the observations by David Green intersect with the observations by God. Then have them make a list of our “lesser needs” and our “greater needs.”

Out of the Story for Teachers
After you read the Into the Story section together, use the following questions to generate discussion.

Review the primary passages in the Bible (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-28; Deuteronomy 12:6-17; 14:22-28; 26:1, 12; 2 Chronicles 31:5-12; Malachi 3:8-10, etc.) that teach about tithing. Next, give a church tithe envelope to each student and explain the difference between money designated “church budget,” “conference,” and “tithe.” Many young people think that if they donate to tithe it helps support the ministry of the local church. Although some of the tithe in the Seventh-day Adventist system is returned to the local church in the way of paying the pastor’s salary, tithe does not support the local ministries of the church and church school. All of these expenses are taken from donations marked “church budget.”

Help the young people understand how tithes are used in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Make a game of it and give the students 100 pennies. Ask them to divide the coins up according to how one dollar of tithe is invested in the Adventist Church. Although the percentages may vary, of the 100 percent of the tithes that local churches send to their conference, approximately 76 percent of the tithe remains at the local conference to cover employee salaries and other conference programs; 9 percent is invested in paying benefits for retired workers; 9 percent is sent to the union and division offices; and 6 percent is appropriated by the General Conference to worldwide organizations. For further details, refer to a tithe envelope in your church.

Although tithing is the main focus of this lesson,
there are several other directions you may opt to go. For example, you might focus on the festivals by dividing your class into three groups. Have them study the following feasts and then report to the rest of the class what the feast was about and why the Israelites celebrated it. Group 1: The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 23:6-8); Group 2: Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:14-16); Group 3: 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).

Another direction you could take this lesson is to focus on gambling. Find a story of a recovering gambling addict and share it with the class. Allow plenty of time for students to reflect and respond to the story.

A final area you may wish to emphasize in this lesson is that of giving. Involve the students in an interactive exercise that highlights the joy we receive from giving.

Sharing Context and Background

As you lead the students through this lesson, you may find it helpful to share some of the following insights:

1. There are more than 2,300 references to money and possessions in the Bible. By contrast, there are 500 references in the Bible to prayer. Almost one fourth of everything Jesus taught in His sermon on the mount had something to do with money and possessions. Out of 38 parables that Jesus gave in the Gospels, 16 deal with how we handle our money. Jesus said more about money and possessions than about heaven and hell combined. One out of every 10 verses (288 verses!) in the Gospels deals with money or possessions. Without question, the way we manage all with which He entrusts us is a big deal to God.

Have the students reenact some of the stories that Jesus told about money. Some stories you may wish to use include: the parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:13-21; the story of the rich young ruler, Mark 10:17-31; the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30; etc. Allow time for discussion following the dramas.

2. Michael Morrison explains: “The Old Testament shows us that the most common theme for the annual festivals is the Exodus. That was the defining event in the nation’s history, the time when the Israelites became one nation under God. But if an ancient Israelite looked at all the annual festivals, as well as the rules about washings, offerings and various other rituals, it would be difficult to see a unified theme.”

Ask the students to identify the Exodus theme in the following feasts: the Passover, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

3. Foxnews.com reports:
Research by the International Centre for Youth Gambling concludes that gambling’s “popularity is on the rise amongst both children and adolescents . . . in both legal and illegal forms.” The Centre says that “an alarmingly high per-
percentage of children and adolescents worldwide have been found to engage in gambling activities.” About 80 percent of high school students admit they gambled for money in the past year. Several studies estimate 4 to 8 percent of adolescents have a “serious” gambling problem.5

Questions to facilitate discussion:
- Why do you think many teenagers have an addiction to gambling?
- How would you explain the increase in popularity of online gambling?
- What is the best way to help a friend who is addicted to gambling?
- What does the Bible teach about gambling?
- Write your own proverbs that speak to the foolishness of gambling; then share your proverbs with the rest of the class.

III. CLOSING

Activity
For a closing activity, divide the students into small groups and ask each group to create a commercial to advertise the primary point (as they see it) of the study. Have each group share their commercial with the larger group. Naturally, the groups will have different emphases from the study.

Summary
As mentioned above, this lesson can be taken in a number of different directions. Whether you emphasize stewardship, the feasts, tithing, caring for the poor, giving, or gambling, the overarching theme of this lesson brings us back to a question of lordship. The most important point in this study is to challenge students to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives. This lordship then governs the way we spend money. For example, if God is Lord of the wallet then our finances will be used in ways to honor our Lord. This includes paying a faithful tithe, helping the poor, carefully guarding against frivolous abuses such as gambling, and so on.

In a similar vein, the festivals were established so that the people of God would be reminded regularly of God’s lordship in their lives. These feasts were practiced so that God’s chosen people would be reminded of God’s faithfulness in the past. Remembering God’s provision in the past sparks faith to continue to submit to His lordship in the future. Whatever aspects of the lesson you choose to emphasize, remember the comprehensive theme of lordship. If Christ is Lord (and He is), then He must be Lord of everything.

4 As quoted at www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,135613,00.html.
5 As quoted at honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/effquest.htm.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 50, 51, 52.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson is primarily about Gideon, but it has volumes to teach us about numerous topics. The dangers of compromising with the world, worshipping idols, following the calling of God, character, leadership, selling out to God, knowing the will of God—these are but a few of the directions this story can take us. For the purposes of this lesson, the emphasis will be on three things: (1) the will of God; (2) knowing your purpose; and (3) the remnant and its mission.

While some Christians cite Gideon's method of setting out a fleece (Judges 6:36-40) as the best way to discern God's will, it's important to note that this is the only occasion in Scripture when God revealed His will through a fleece. The fleece was not God's first choice in methods. After all, the Lord had already told Gideon what to do (Judges 6:11-16) and even gave him a confirming sign (Judges 6:17-22). Still, Gideon displayed less than perfect faith and demanded more evidence. So is there a better way than the fleece method to know God's will? Max Lucado answers: "Yes, God has clearly and objectively told us what He wants throughout the Bible. For example, the Ten Commandments give straightforward instructions to guide our behavior in numerous areas of life."

Another nuance of Gideon's story centers on God's calling in life. In Ellen White's treatment of the story, it is clear that God called Gideon to do a special work for His people. Still today, God calls young people to a purpose-filled life.

Finally, just as God delivered His people from the Midianites, so too will He deliver His people at the end of time. Satan, and his agents in this world, will not have the last word. Praise God that He has, throughout the ages, preserved a remnant people.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Discern the will of God. (Know)
- See that God has a purpose for their life. (Feel)
- Follow God's promptings. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- The will of God
- Purpose (knowing yours)
- The remnant and its mission

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Divide the students into groups and refer them to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. Have them identify other areas of life where young people struggle to know God's will. Give each group two minutes to brainstorm as long a list as possible. The answers must reflect their own experience in wondering about God's will but cannot duplicate the questions listed in What Do You Think?

An alternative activity is to ask church members to...
answer (in one sentence) the question: “How do you know God’s will?” Put their answers on one side of a bulletin board and then their picture labeled with their name and profession on the other side of the board. Have the students try to match the answer with the person that gave it. Next, take each answer individually and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of it.

**Illustration**

To introduce the lesson, read the following story. Introduce it by saying something like, “When it comes to knowing God’s will, Pastor Karl Haffner tells this story”:

“What are we going to do?” I moaned to my wife, Cherié. “Maybe we should move.”

“But do you want to raise our kids in Mickey Mouse’s backyard?” Cherié asked.

Late into the night we anguished. Clearly, there was no easy answer. We had to decide—continue to pastor in Washington State or move across the country to Florida. The more we prayed about it, the clearer it became . . . that God was not going to spell out His will in my alphabet soup (but don’t think that I didn’t ask Him to). This decision was like seeing through a jug of milk.

While in the valley of decision, the pastors on our church staff threw a “you-better-not-move” party. Part of the festivities included an exercise in which I was instructed to draw an M&M from a jumbo-sized bag. “This is a fleece deal,” one pastor explained. “If the candy you select is red, then it’s God’s will for you to stay. If it’s any other color, you are to move to Florida.”

“OK,” I played along.

I used scissors to cut into the new bag of M&Ms—careful not to peak inside. With eyes closed I reached into the bag and pulled out an M&M. It was as red as the sox in Boston. So I tried again. Another red M&M. A fluke? I tried again. Red. And again. Red. Red. Red. Dumping the bag into a bowl I found nothing but red M&Ms with the exception of one lonely green candy at the bottom of the bag. (The green M&M was to “prove” that the process was not fixed.)

While I’m still not sure how they rigged it, I never took their shenanigans as “a sign.” I was quite convinced that a real fleece would not contain so many unhealthy carbs.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

Questions to transition into the lesson:

Have you ever asked God to give you a sign like that to make His will known? Is Karl’s M&M story any different than Gideon’s fleece? Is that the best way to discern God’s direction for your life?

Often people ask, “How do I know God’s will?” Perhaps a better question is this: “How do I know God?” For God is not trying to hide His will from you. He has a purpose for your life, and He longs to make it known to you as you live daily in His presence.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read Into the Story with your students, dig deeper into the text by exploring the following questions.

Ellen White offers a broader context for the story of Gideon by citing Judges 1:28: “When Israel became strong, they pressed the Canaanites into forced labor but never drove them out completely” (NIV). She explains: “It only remained for them, trusting in the assurance of divine aid, to complete the work of dispossessing the inhabitants of the land. But this they failed to do. By entering into league with the Canaanites they directly transgressed the command of God, and thus failed to fulfill the condition on which He had promised to place them in possession of Canaan” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 543).

Often people puzzle over God’s will. Could it be, however, that we make this subject far more complicated than it needs to be? Gideon never would have needed to put out a fleece had God’s people not “directly transgressed the command of God.” Discuss this principle: When it comes to knowing God’s will, don’t let what you don’t know keep you from doing what you do know.

In what ways might compromising what we know to be God’s command weaken our ability to know God’s will in areas where His will may not be so clear? For example, you may not know what college God wants you to attend, but you can be certain that if you attend college God does want you to live with integrity and not cheat to get a good grade. For most of us, the challenge is not in knowing the small part of God’s will that is unknown; rather, the challenge is to live up to what is clearly revealed in the Bible.

Other questions to discuss:

- What is the connection between knowing God’s will and following one’s calling? Does following God’s will guarantee a purpose-driven life? Explain your answer.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed,
“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39, NIV). What does Jesus’ example teach us when seeking God’s will?

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. How does the story of Gideon illustrate the principle of this passage?

Sharing Context and Background

For this lesson it might be helpful to offer students:

1. A historical perspective

Judges 6:1, 2 says: “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” (NIV).

In your own words, share this brief history of the Midianites:

The Bible tells us that Midian was a son of Abraham and his concubine Keturah (have a volunteer read Genesis 25:1-6). His descendants, the Midianites, settled in the territory east of the Jordan River and also in the area east of the Dead Sea (later occupied by Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites), and southward through the desert wilderness of the Arabah (have students find the territory on a map of ancient Israel). Midian was also where Moses spent 40 years between the time that he fled Egypt and his return to deliver the Jewish slaves. During that time, Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian. The Bible implies that God’s appearance in the burning bush at Horeb occurred in Midian (have a volunteer read Exodus 3:1). In later years the Midianites were often oppressive and hostile to the Israelites, at least partly as God’s punishment for their idolatry. At the time of Gideon, the Midianites were raiding Israel with the use of swift camels. Thus, the deliverance from the Midianites was a great miracle celebrated by God’s people. Today, the former territory of Midian is found through small portions of western Saudi Arabia, southern Jordan, southern Israel and the Sinai (have students find this area on a modern map).

2. A personal perspective

Share your own story of God calling you. Describe doors that God opened and closed. Did you use any kind of fleece or sign from God? How did you know it was God’s will? This can be a story of a major decision (e.g., getting married, choosing a major, joining the church, etc.) or it can be a more mundane experience of sensing God’s call (e.g., helping a homeless man, volunteering to teach the lesson, initiating a conversation that seemed to be a divine encounter, etc.).

3. A spiritual perspective

The chapter in Patriarchs and Prophets ends with these sobering words: “Satan works through the ungodly, under cover of a pre-
tended friendship, to allure God's people into sin, that he may separate them from Him; and when their defense is removed, then he will lead his agents to turn against them and seek to accomplish their destruction" (p. 559). Who are "the Midianites" of today? What influences in our culture allure God's people into sin? What can we learn from this chapter of compromise in the history of the Israelites?

III. CLOSING

Activity

For a closing activity, have students affirm God's calling in one another's lives. For instance, they may start with a girl of whom it may be said, "Courtney, we think you have an uncanny ability to tell friends the hard truth in a loving way. You can kick someone in the seat, and the person feels hugged. Perhaps God is calling you to be a counselor or a principal at school." Have the students offer suggestions for everyone in the class.

Summary

The story of Gideon offers an ideal context in which to talk about knowing and following God's will. Just as God called Gideon and had a purpose for his life, so God has called every young person today. Moreover, this lesson illustrates the disastrous results of getting too enamored with the world. Just as God called the Jews of old to be uncompromising in their stand against the heathen nations, God is looking for a remnant of people today who will dare to stand against Satan's stronghold in this world.

Don't be afraid to challenge the young people with this lesson. They want to be pressed to do great things for God. They should be reminded that God has called them to soar like eagles, not grovel like pigs. They need someone to call sin by its right name and give clear warning to the consequences of compromise. Just as the angel reminded Gideon, do not fear; God is with you!


Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 53.

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