



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 19 2022

## hope against hope

**Scripture Story:** Acts 18:18-28; 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

**Commentary:** *The Acts of the Apostles (or Unlikely Leaders)*, chapters 25, 26.

**Key Text:** 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

Paul had a complicated mission. He was sent to teach the Gentiles about Jesus and His sacrifice, people who did not know God at all. He had a responsibility to show them the character of Jesus in a way that they would understand. He had to give “milk” to the baby Christians and more solid sustenance to the more mature believers. He had to balance encouragement with reprimands for bad behavior. He had to meet the needs of people from every walk of life. It certainly was not an easy calling!

One of the basic doctrines that Paul felt was important to teach was that of Jesus’ second coming. He wanted to encourage the new believers with the knowledge that Jesus would come again, the dead would be raised, and all those who accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on their behalf would live forever with Him.

When we have heard the good news repeatedly, the effect seems to wear off. Many of us do not fully appreciate what this really means in our lives. Many of us have been raised since infants knowing that Jesus will come again, but we fail to see what life would be like without that hope. In fact, we seem to take it for granted.

When we can see what God is really giving us, it gives us a new realization of our responsibility toward others in their spiritual walks. Service becomes central to our lives, and we realize that how we represent God matters immensely in the lives of unbelievers or baby Christians.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand why the good news really is so good. (*Know*)
- Sense a responsibility toward others in their spiritual walk. (*Feel*)
- Choose to see the service opportunities as well as the difference that our hope in Jesus gives us. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

##### The Second Coming of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, No. 25

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Savior’s coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ’s coming is near. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-20; 19:11-21).

# 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.

Ask the students to imagine that there is no hope after they die. Let them imagine that Jesus is not coming again and that once we die there is nothing else.

What would they do differently in their lives if this were the case? Would they feel a responsibility toward others? How would they feel about helping others? How would they feel about their relationships, knowing that nothing would last longer than life on this earth?

Now, let them imagine that they are being told “the good news” that Jesus is coming, and that there is hope for living eternally? How would they feel now?

### Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

“Helen Keller grew up in a world shut in by blindness and deafness. She became an almost uncontrollable ‘wild child’ of intense passions.

“One day while Helen was playing with a new doll her patient tutor, Anne Sullivan, placed the toy in Helen’s lap and signed the letters d-o-l-l in her palm repeatedly. But Helen didn’t understand. As the tutor tried to help her connect this thing in her lap with the signs on her palm the girl became agitated. She slammed the doll on the floor, breaking it to pieces.

“Later Miss Sullivan took the unruly girl down the path to the well house. Someone was pumping water. Placing Helen’s hand under the cool flow, the tutor spelled out w-a-t-e-r on her other palm. Suddenly it clicked in the girl’s mind. Later Helen recalled, ‘The mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!’

“The soul of this wild child, shut away in her own darkened world, was set free by the discovery of the living word. God’s living Word, the Bible, illuminates the darkness of our minds and sets us free as well. You can experience the exhilarating freedom that the living Word brings” (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 10).

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Paul had some difficult students to teach as well. He had people from all walks of life, from every religious background, all looking to him to learn about this Jewish Messiah who came for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It wasn’t easy, but just like the young teacher he had to find a way to reach these people where they were. There were specific things that Paul felt were important for these baby Christians to understand.

### 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 is the reason for Paul’s letter?
- What things does Paul encourage the Thessalonians to do in their spiritual growth?
- Why do you think Paul’s explanation of what will happen at the Second Coming was so important to these people?
- How would it have affected their lives on a personal level to have this information? How would they see things differently?
- How might this knowledge change how they feel? How would it encourage them?
- If you had no hope of a resurrection in Jesus, how would it change your outlook on life?

### Extra Questions for Teachers

- What practical advice did Paul have for the Thessalonians?
- What positive reinforcement did Paul give them?
- In what ways can we see Paul being gentle with them?
- What encouragement did he give?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 13.

### Sharing Context and Background

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

Thessalonica was a principle city in Macedonia as well as a primary port. It was founded in 316 B.C., during the reign of Alexander the Great. It became



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### A Safe Environment

Teens will feel more comfortable sharing what they think if they know that what they say won't be immediately reported back to their parents or used as a humorous anecdote later on. Everyone needs to feel secure that they won't be made fun of or reprimanded for their honest opinions.

RABBI 101

a very important city under the Roman rule as well. The Christian church there was the second church founded in Europe, and Paul wrote this letter from Athens in A.D. 51 or 52. Acts 18 tells us a little bit surrounding the time that 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written.

Paul had great success in winning converts to Christianity, but he also faced great opposition. He had to leave the new Thessalonian church before it had become firmly established because of the opposition. He was worried for the new converts, though, afraid that they would be persecuted. Paul sent Timothy to them to encourage them and to report back to Him on how they were doing. When Timothy reported back that the new converts were standing firm in their faith, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, his letter to them.

Paul was writing to this new church to encour-

age them to live holy lives. He wrote 2 Thessalonians not long after 1 Thessalonians as a "PS" of sorts, explaining what they had misunderstood. Mainly, they thought that Jesus would return in their lifetimes, and they were afraid that those who died before the event would not inherit eternal life. So in 1 Thessalonians, Paul addressed this issue.

In the Thessalonians' zeal for the gospel, and to demonstrate their belief that Jesus' coming was in the very near future, some of the members of the church stopped working their professions. They would have been a burden to those who were still working and an object of ridicule for unbelievers. This situation needed to be dealt with. So Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, insisting that they needed to continue working their regular jobs and not wait idly for Jesus to return. Paul outlined some of the things that had to take place before Jesus would return, namely the coming of the antichrist.

These letters to the Thessalonians give us a good view into what the early Christians were taught regarding some important doctrines, such as the resurrection. Many people worry that we have moved away from the original teachings of Christianity, but by reading Paul's letters to the early churches, we are able to see exactly what Paul taught.

cornerstoneconnections

## Teaching From the Lesson

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

- **Key Text**

*Invite students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.*

- **Flashlight**

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

- **Punch Lines**

*Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.*

- **Further Insight**

*Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

### III. CLOSING

#### **Activity**

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

Ask the students to each think of a time or situation that makes them long for Jesus to come. Perhaps it is when they see horrible things happening on the news on TV. Or maybe they long for Jesus to come when someone close to them dies or is in pain. Discuss these situations as well as what kinds of feelings they have surrounding them. Read the *Key Text* and say the following: “This verse tells us to encourage each other with these words. How do these words encourage you?”

#### **Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Paul was teaching some new Christians some very important lessons about living a Christian life, and about our hope of Jesus coming again. Everyone is at a different level in their relationship with Jesus. Being a beginner doesn't make a person less important or less loved, but it does give us a special responsibility to encourage and support that person. Sometimes we have the urge to judge someone by their actions or attitudes, but if we remember that they might be at a different level of understanding or at a different place in their relationship with God, we can be more patient and deal with them differently.

In all of our lives, it is comforting to remember that Jesus IS coming, and that the pain and sadness of this world will NOT last. Stick with it! Things are going to get better!

**Today is Global Youth Day!**



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 *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 25, 26.