

LESSON 5



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 29 2023

faith first?

Scripture Story: Exodus 12:34-51; 13-15.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 25.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea captures the human story on a number of different levels. First, it tells the story of salvation. God comes to the rescue of His people and delivers them from bondage.

This is also a story of the human propensity to waffle back and forth between faith and doubt. God's redemption of the Jewish slaves could not have been more dramatic. The Israelites witnessed firsthand the amazing power of God to split the Red Sea to accommodate their safe crossing. God led them by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. That God was in this situation with His people was clear from the beginning. Nevertheless, in spite of God's clear leading, the Israelites quickly slipped into doubting God and criticizing Moses and Aaron. How fickle the human spirit can be!

This story also informs our understanding of worship. The song of deliverance in Exodus 15 ranks as one of the most profound expressions of worship ever written. It really is the song of every human being, for we are all sinners in desperate need of God's grace.

Finally, this story tells the human story of God's undying love for His people. As God displayed patience with His people of old, so He continues to model the same longsuffering spirit toward His church. The story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea informs our understanding of our identity as a church. Today, we are His beloved bride He died to redeem.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the story of salvation, (i.e., God coming to the rescue of ungrateful, undeserving people). (*Know*)
- Sense the spirit of human rebellion and see the challenge that God faces in dealing with the human race. (*Feel*)
- Have an opportunity to decide whether or not to accept God's provision of grace. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 10

"In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment" (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14,

26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8).

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.

Divide the class into five groups and assign one of the five scenarios in *What Do You Think?* to each group. Give them a few minutes to make a case that their scenario presents the greatest challenge to a teenager's faith.

As an alternative, divide the students into pairs and ask them to share with each other the first person who comes to mind when they think about a person of faith. Guide their discussion by prompting them with the following questions:

- Why does this person epitomize faith?
- What experiences did this person have that strengthened their faith?
- What has this person taught you about trusting in God?
- Share one characteristic that person has that you aspire to emulate in your life.

After each partner has talked about their person of faith, they can then discuss the similarities between the people they described. Then ask the pairs to share the highlights of their discussion with the whole Sabbath School class.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The sixteenth-century scholar Erasmus related an incident during a sea voyage that stayed with him the rest of his life. His sailing vessel ran aground in a storm. As violent waves smashed against the ship and it began to break up, even the sailors panicked. The passengers were near hysteria. Most shouted for help to their patron saint, sang hymns, or pleaded loudly in prayer.

Erasmus noted one passenger, however, who acted very differently. "Of all of us," Erasmus wrote, "the one who remained most composed was a young woman who was holding a baby whom she was

nursing. She was the only one who did not shout, weep, or bargain with heaven. She did nothing but pray quietly to herself while clasping the baby tightly on her lap."

This prayer, Erasmus realized, was just a continuation of her regular prayer life. She did not ask for any exceptional favors. She seemed to entrust herself to God.

As the ship began to sink, this young mother was placed on a plank, given a spar to use as an oar, and sent out into the waves. She had to hold her baby with one hand and attempt to row with the other. Few thought she would survive the pounding surf. But her faith and composure stood her in good stead. The woman and her child were the first to reach shore.

(Taken from www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/topics/faith.htm)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Questions for consideration: Do miracles such as that produce faith? Or could it be that faith produces miracles? That is to suggest, when we step out in faith and act on the conviction that God will move a mountain, what often follows is what many would deem a "miracle." But had we never acted on our faith, the miracle would not have occurred.

In the case of the Israelites, would God have parted the Red Sea had Moses never lifted the rod in his hand? Could it be that miracles such as the parting of the Red Sea come about because we trust God enough to take that leap of faith?

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 strikes you most about this story?
- How can you know God's will? God led the Israelites out of Egypt by a cloud and a pillar of fire; consequently, it was easy for them to know the way God was leading. Do you ever wish God would make His will more obvious in your life? Although God does not usually reveal His will through clouds or fire, He is still just as interested in providing you with guidance. How does God make His will known today?

- How would you explain Exodus 14:4 in which God says, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (NIV)? Research the commentaries to see how some scholars have dealt with that sticky text.
- Reflect on Moses’ answer to the grumbling mobs in Exodus 14:13, 14. In light of this statement of faith, it should come as no surprise to find Moses in God’s Hall of Faith, as recorded in Hebrews 11. Compare the story in Exodus 14 with Moses’ legacy recorded in Hebrews 11:23-29. What would it look like today to have the faith of Moses? What risks would that involve for you?
- What are some common “armies of Pharaoh” today that seek to prevent us from following God? How can we tap into God’s power in order to bury these armies that threaten to destroy us?

Shortly after the Israelites were delivered from Pharaoh, the Bible records: “Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. . . . So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’ ” (Exodus 15:22-24, NIV).

Have you ever had a mountaintop experience with God that was followed by a valley of despair? Why do you suppose this often happens? How could the Israelites forget so quickly how God had been so faithful in leading them out of Egypt? Reading about Elijah’s experience on Mount Carmel and afterward in

Scripture and *Prophets and Kings* might be helpful.

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. The method of leading the Jews by way of a cloud and fire struck a familiar chord in the ancient world. It was the common practice among the Persians and the Greeks to use fire and smoke as signals in their marches. According to one well-known papyrus, the commander of an Egyptian army is called “a flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers.” Similarly, the Lord also used fire and clouds to manifest Himself as the leader and general of His army (see Exodus 15:3, 6). (Source: *Barnes’ Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft.)
2. Discuss the following commentary by Ellen G. White: “The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, ‘Go forward.’ We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncer-

Teaching From . . .

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

- **Key Text**

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

- **Flashlight**

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

- **Punch Lines**

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

- **Further Insight**

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

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Updating

One strategy of teaching that can be very effective invites students to put themselves in the action and participate in the drama of the story. One way to use this technique in the story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea is to invite the students to rewrite the song of deliverance (Exodus 15:1-18) using contemporary language. Then have them divide their “song” into parts and present it as a reader’s theater.

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tainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, ‘Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;’ but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290).

- Exodus 14:3 offers this interesting detail in the story: “Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert’” (NIV). Originally Moses intended to go to the Promised Land through the wilderness, but God redirected him toward the south. Hearing this news, Pharaoh knew that they were completely “hemmed in,” since the waters of the Red Sea then extended to the Bitter Lakes. (In ancient times the Red Sea extended much farther north than it does today.) So Pharaoh assumed that Moses would have them trapped against the Red Sea. But God’s vision is much more encompassing than is humans’ vision. When we might not be able to see a way out of dire circumstances, God knows a million ways to deliver us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Break the students up into small groups and have each group create a list entitled “Top Ten Ways to Build Faith.” Encourage each group to brainstorm specific ways that we can build our faith. Have each group then share their list with the entire Sabbath School class. After everyone has heard all the lists, have the entire group take the best suggestions from the different lists to put together a combined top ten list.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of God’s deliverance of Israel highlights the messy realities of faith. It seems everyone’s spiritual journey is composed of mountaintops and valleys. In the case of Israel, no sooner did they experience God’s miraculous escort through the Red Sea than they started complaining about how God had abandoned them. They whined, “We should have stayed in Egypt rather than come to the desert to die.” Because their story often mirrors our own, this lesson offers an ideal opportunity to explore ways that we can keep our faith strong through both the flower gardens and the deserts.

This story also offers a wonderful metaphor of salvation. Just as God intervened for His children of old, He is eager to lead His children today. Deliverance comes at the hand of a gracious God—it is unearned, undeserved, and unmistakably the greatest story of the human race.

Finally, this story provides insights into worship. Just as Moses led God’s people in the song of deliverance after crossing the Red Sea, so our worship is in response to God’s provision for us. We worship our amazing God because, in Christ, He has provided a way of escape from sin and death. What else can we do but sing and shout His praises?



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* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 25.



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STUDENT LESSON

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faith first?



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flashlight

“Moses was greatly troubled that his people should manifest so little faith in God, notwithstanding they had repeatedly witnessed the manifestation of His power in their behalf. How could they charge upon him the dangers and difficulties of their situation, when he had followed the express command of God? True, there was no possibility of deliverance unless God Himself should interpose for their release; but having been brought into this position in obedience to the divine direction, Moses felt no fear of the consequences” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 284).

keytext

“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.’ ”

(Exodus 14:13, 14, NIV)

what do you think?

In your opinion, which of the following scenarios would test your faith the most? Which one would test your faith the least? Explain why.

1. The financial officer of your Christian school has informed you that you need to pay your bill in order to stay in school. You believe that God wants you to receive a Christian education, but you have no idea how to get the money to pay for it.
2. You struggle with a destructive addiction. Your friend says that if you "have more faith" God will deliver you from the habit.
3. You are convicted about the importance of having an hour of quiet time with God each day, but you are also behind in your schoolwork.
4. You are the victim of a malicious rumor at school. When you get a chance to get even, you wrestle with the tension of taking the matter into your own hands or trusting God to bring justice to the situation.
5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend is pressuring you to violate God's law. If you stay true to God, you might lose your friend.

did you know?

After God buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Israelites sang the song of deliverance (Exodus 15:1-18). Many scholars attribute this magnificent piece of poetry to Moses. For many generations to come, God's people would sing this song. It is also associated with the final triumph of the church in the book of Revelation (e.g., compare Exodus 15:3 with Revelation 19:11). Some suggest that this is the oldest recorded song in the world.

INTO THE STORY

"When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, 'What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!' So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him."

"As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, "Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians"? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'

"Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.'"

"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

"The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea."

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.' Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea."

"But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant."

(Exodus 14:5, 6, 10-14, 21-23, 26, 27, 29-31, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

If you were preparing to teach this story to first graders, what key spiritual lessons would you emphasize?

Find a map of the ancient world and trace the path of the Israelites out of Egypt into the desert.

What one word would you choose to describe the attitude of the following characters in the story?

Pharaoh: _____

Moses: _____

The Israelites: _____

God: _____

Circle any words or phrases in the text that capture the emotions in the story.

From God's perspective, what is the primary lesson that you believe He was trying to teach His people through this experience?

"Israel had to learn from repeated experience that God was able to provide for them. God has preserved these examples in the Bible so that we can learn to trust him the first time. By focusing on God's faithfulness in the past we can face crises with confidence rather than with fear and complaining." —*Life Application Bible*, notes on Exodus 14:10, 11.

punch lines

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10, NIV).

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7, NIV).

"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (Revelation 2:10, NIV).

"Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:28, 29, NIV).

further insight

"We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith.

". . . Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. . . . Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 61, 62.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Exodus 14:13.

Identify a “Red Sea” in your life. In what way is your faith being challenged by this obstacle? How is God asking you to step out in faith? Who might act as Moses for you and bring you the assurance of God’s leading? Think about your “Red Sea,” then memorize today’s text: “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13, NIV).

Sunday

Read Exodus 14:5.

Read the section *Into the Story* and answer the questions that follow in *Out of the Story*. With whom do you identify most in the story? Why?

Monday

Read the *Punch Lines*, then search your Bible (with the help of a concordance or commentary) and write down two more texts that illuminate each of the following topics that emerge from this story of the Israelites leaving Egypt:

Faith: _____

Worship: _____

Salvation: _____

Our identity as a church: _____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 32:7.

Put yourself in the place of one of the Israelites walking through the Red Sea on dry land. Imagine the experience through a

variety of senses. What did it smell like? What did it feel like? What did it look like? What did it sound like? If possible, share your first-person narrative as a children’s story in Sabbath School or church.

Wednesday

Read the song of deliverance in Exodus 15. Think of an experience in which God has delivered you. Write your own song of deliverance, then read it to God as an act of worship.

Thursday

Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Shortly after the incredible miracle at the Red Sea, the Israelites forgot about God’s intervention for them, and they started grumbling against Moses and Aaron.

In a small group of friends, discuss the following questions: Have you struggled with a spirit of complaint? Share a story about a time when you experienced God’s power. Did you find that in time the excitement of that miracle started to wear off? Why is it so easy to forget about God’s miraculous care and slide back into old familiar habits of sin? Can you think of other examples in the Bible in which people forgot about God’s leading in the past? How can we keep from faltering in our faith?

Discuss this statement by Ellen White: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* [1915], p. 196). In

the Hawaiian culture there is a similar saying: “*E moakaka ke ala o keia mua aku i ka wa i hala.*” For fun, commit it to memory. And remember what it means: “The path to the future is made clear through our knowledge and understanding of the past.”

Friday

Read Revelation 2:10.

Keep a journal for the next six months. Carefully document times when you sense God’s leading. In the future, when you find your faith is getting weak, read that journal and remind yourself of how God has been faithful in the past. This practice will bolster your confidence to march ahead in God’s power—even when it feels as if you’re walking into an ocean.

If you take that first step, keeping in mind how God has been trustworthy in the past, you will learn to radically trust God. Moreover, you will see God work miracles you never dreamed possible. But—you’ve got to take that first step. So think of an area in which God is inviting you to take a leap of faith—then jump!

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 25.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.