

LESSON 6



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 06 2023

unhappy campers

Scripture Story: Exodus 15:22-27; 16-18.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 26.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness connects with our story today in different ways. First, we find a lesson about contentment. God manifested Himself in dramatic ways to the Jews. Parting the Red Sea for their safe crossing, drowning Pharaoh's army, leading them by a cloud during the day and fire at night, supplying them with quail and manna to eat, transforming a rock into an artesian well—these are a few of the miraculous ways that God provided for His chosen nation. Nevertheless, they complained that it wasn't enough. Still today it is easy to grumble in the face of supernatural outpourings of grace from God. When will we learn simplicity? peace? contentment?

This is also a story about trust. Time and time again God showed Himself to be trustworthy. It's hard to comprehend why the Israelites ever doubted God. After all, He always came through for them. *Always!* And yet, in spite of God's faithfulness, doubt so often taints that childlike trust in the Father.

This story also touches on the issue of boredom. If we are not careful we too can become so self-absorbed that even the Creator and Sustainer of all life gets drowned out by our pettiness. We must recognize divine encounters as such and guard against becoming overly enamored with ourselves so that we are no longer amazed by the Almighty.

All in all, this story depicts God's grace for His children. Just as God led His people in the ancient world, He longs to mold and guide His people today. This story challenges all of us—young and old alike—

to trust God and follow His leading.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God is absolutely trustworthy. (*Know*)
- Be sensitized to the supernatural realities in ordinary life. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to fully trust God with their lives. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 20

“The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts” (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Lev. 23:32; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11).

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.

Additional Activities

Circle what you believe to be the top three barriers to trusting God:

Busyness	Suffering	Ignorance
Anger	Wealth	Greed
Technology	Peer pressure	Pride
Atheism		

Now list three more possible barriers to trusting God:

Complete the following statements:

Trusting God . . .

Looks like: _____

Feels like: _____

Sounds like: _____

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

It wasn't that Lance didn't trust in God. He did—so long as God handed out heaps of health and happiness. He also expected God to keep his bank account full with cash.

For a while, Lance was a big believer. He aced his classes without studying ("I just trusted God and He gave me wisdom," he'd say), got a new car for Christmas ("Dad's dot-com company went public"), his acne was under control ("Lucky genes, I guess"), and he dated a girl who was beautiful. (Not overly smart, but very pretty.)

But then some bad breaks cracked Lance's porcelain life. In one year his father's business failed, his girlfriend broke up with him, and he fell asleep while driving and crunched his car into a telephone pole.

Suddenly Lance wondered. *How can I trust God if my life is as miserable as the next guy's?*

In the end, Lance's faith was conditional: he'd play the part of being a Christian so long as his life was going the way he wanted. But when life turned sour, Lance turned away from God.

Unfortunately, lukewarm Christians like Lance are very common. They're hot when things are going well, but when difficulties come (and they always will), they blame God all through the storm.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Lance's flavor of faith is nothing new. It's at least as old as the children of Israel. When God was acting like God—pummeling the bad guys with plagues, splitting the Red Sea, renovating a rock into a water fountain, and so on—then they were game to trust. But when the perks dried up, so did their faith.

Trusting God is the same story today. There will be both miracles and misery. The key question is this: Will you trust God at *all* times?

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 jumps out at you in this story?
- Why do you suppose the Israelites were so fickle in their faith? Do you ever find yourself wavering in your trust of God?

Consider this text: *"In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron"* (Exodus 16:2, NIV). What do you make of the detail that "the whole community" participated in the pity party? What does this teach us about peer pressure? *"The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death' "* (verse 3, NIV). Do you suppose the Israelites were overreacting a bit? Does the comment about dying in Egypt feel melodramatic to you? Explain your answer.

"But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?' " (Exodus 17:3, NIV). How is it possible for the Israelites to complain about their thirst so soon after God took care of their hunger by providing manna? Can you think of other examples from the Bible when people complained to God? (Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, etc.) Identify common threads that weave through all of the stories. (Or, if you have enough students, assign them to three groups to compare the stories for themselves.)

Engage the students in a conversation about what it means to "trust Jesus" today. Explain that "trusting Jesus" simply means believing that Jesus was right about

what He taught. If we trust Him, we then live according to His teachings. To make this idea practical, go through the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) quizzing the young people on what it would mean in practical terms to trust Jesus in the areas of our lives that He talks about. For example, read Matthew 5:27-30, then ask what it means to trust Jesus when it comes to sexual purity; read Matthew 6:25-34 and ask what it means to trust Jesus with our worries; read Matthew 7:1-5 and discuss trusting Jesus in light of our penchant to judge others. In the end, help students to see that “trusting Jesus” means believing and behaving as if we think that Jesus knew what He was talking about. It’s that simple.

Sharing Context and Background

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

In Exodus 16:25-28 Moses tells the Israelites that they would not find manna on Sabbath. They could gather a double portion on Friday and it would “not stink or get maggots in it” (verse 24, NIV). Notice that Sabbath observance was part of the Jewish culture before God even gave them the Ten Commandments.

Still today, God calls His chosen people to remember the Sabbath. Just as it was an issue of trust for the Israelites of old, it remains an issue of trust for God’s true followers today. How so? Jon Paulien suggests three reasons:*

1. The Sabbath is the ideal response to what Jesus has done for us.

The Sabbath reminds us to rest from our endless struggle to be good enough, to stop sinning, to earn our



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

The Emotional Tie

One of the goals of effective teaching seeks to invite the learners to experience the emotion of the story. For life-transforming learning to take place, teachers should try to do more than simply disseminate information. For the lesson to be memorable, students should feel the story in the gut.

Reflect on all the raw emotions showcased in this story of the Jews in the wilderness and try to engage the students in such a way as to help them feel these emotions. For example, you might set up the Sabbath School class as a courtroom. Assign one person as the defense attorney (representing Moses and/or God) and another person representing a class action lawsuit filed by the people of God. Let the students prepare their cases and then argue about the fairness or unfairness of the wilderness experience that the Israelites had to endure. The more heated the courtroom gets, the better! After all, it’s the emotion that will tie the message in their minds permanently.

way to heaven. And in our frenzy to be good enough, God whispers a gift of the Sabbath as a reminder to rest. The work is finished in Christ on the cross. Revel in the joy of just being with Him. Rest.

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also

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.

rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:9-11).

2. The Sabbath is an ideal test of loyalty to God.

Even non-Christians believe you should not steal or kill or lie. Most everyone observes nine of the Ten Commandments. But only a few keep *all* the commandments—including the fourth commandment. Why is the command to “remember the Sabbath day” so important? It is important because it is a symbol of trusting God. It’s not logical. To rest on the Sabbath simply because God says so is an absurd notion to those who do not trust God. But because God is a personal friend in whom we can fully trust, we obey. And that’s all the logic His true followers need.

3. The Sabbath is the ideal symbol of following Jesus all the way.

Jesus kept the Sabbath. Thus He set an example for His followers.

One devout Christian woman who has impacted hundreds for the cause of Christ lives by a simple motto: “Yes, Lord!”

Such is the motto of God’s remnant. The prayer of those who fully trust in Christ will be: “If Jesus kept the Sabbath and He calls me to do the same, then, ‘Yes, Lord!’ ”

*Adapted from: Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1994), pp. 126-129.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Bring a stack of magazines and have students analyze the advertisements in them. Point out that some of

the brightest brains in the world devote themselves to selling us on the message that “we will be happy when we have a faster car and slower vacations, when we sport thinner waists and bigger biceps, when we have a more tanned face and whiter teeth.” Advertisers have convinced us that we need to spend money to alter every part of our body.

Invite the students to look at the ads again but this time to see them through a “lens of God-trust.” In other words, if we fully trust God for all of our needs (as the Israelites failed to do in the wilderness), we need not buy into a commercial that claims we cannot be happy without the latest, greatest product on the market. How does trusting God change our perspective on what we need?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This lesson offers an ideal opportunity to invite students to fully trust God for all their needs. The grace God displays toward the Israelites in caring for all their needs is the same grace God longs to shower upon His children today. One of the ways in which we enter into this trusting rhythm of life is by observing the Sabbath. The result of truly trusting God is always peace and contentment.

Many people today struggle with a spirit of unrest and boredom. They buy into the bunkum that they will be happy when they get a new car or a prettier girlfriend or a better job. It is the mature follower of Christ who discovers the joy in fully trusting God. Through a life of simplicity and radical trust in Jesus, we can experience an adventure of faith that really is out of this world. Had the Israelites fully trusted God in the wilderness, they could have chilled out in the assumption of knowing their God would care for them. Perhaps then they would have enjoyed the incredible miracles God blessed them with instead of complaining that God was jerking them around.



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 26.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Exodus 15:22-27; 16-18.

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unhappy campers



Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

“The Lord permitted difficulties to surround them, and their supply of food to be cut short, that their hearts might turn to Him who had hitherto been their Deliverer. If in their want they would call upon Him, He would still grant them manifest tokens of His love and care. He had promised that if they would obey His commandments, no disease should come upon them, and it was sinful unbelief on their part to anticipate that they or their children might die of hunger” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 292).

keytext

“If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.”

(Exodus 15:26, NIV)

what do you think?

Fill in the following blanks; compare your answers with those of a friend and explain why you gave the answers you did.

In my opinion . . .
the most trustworthy leader in history was _____
the most trustworthy profession is _____
the most trustworthy person I know is _____

Write a working definition of trust. Trust is

did you know?

The word “manna” comes from the word *manhu*, meaning “What is it?” Bible scholars speculate that the name “manna” may have come from the question. It is described as “thin flakes like frost” (Exodus 16:14, NIV). Each person was to take an omer, or roughly two liters or two quarts.

In the Mediterranean region there is a species of tamarisk that exudes a liquid that forms tiny white grains. People boil it down and use it like honey. It melts in the sun, but it can be stored for a considerable amount of time in a cool, dry place. It is similar to the description we have of manna; however, the Bible makes it clear that the manna was not a natural phenomenon but a special provision from God.

INTO THE STORY

“In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.’”

“That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was.

“Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: “Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.”’”

“The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’

“Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?’

“But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’

“Then Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’

“The LORD answered Moses, . . . ‘I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

“Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. . . . Select capable men from all the people . . . and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.’ . . . Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.”

(Exodus 16:2-4, 13-16; 17:1-6; 18:17, 18, 21, 24, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Underline places in the story that suggest a spirit of discontentment among the Israelites.

How do you suppose God felt about the Israelites during all of this drama? What picture of God is revealed in this story?

The text records that the Israelites “tested the Lord” (Exodus 17:7, NIV). Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Compare this passage to Malachi 3:10 when God tells the Israelites, “Test me” (NIV).

The Israelites got very irritable when they were hungry and thirsty. When are you most susceptible to a grumbling spirit? Grade Moses on how he handled the situation as a leader. Do you think he could have done a better job dealing with it? If so, how? What leadership principle did Moses learn from his father-in-law?

What’s the one big idea that emerges from this story?

punch lines

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51, NIV).

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9, 10, NIV).

“But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” (1 Timothy 6:8, NIV).

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12, NIV).

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV).

further insight

“The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. . . . They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success. They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work that God’s providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain.”

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 83.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

In the *What Do You Think?* section of this lesson you are asked to think about the idea of trust. Consider some of the following definitions for trust from *The American Heritage Dictionary*

- Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing.
- Custody; care.
- Something committed into the care of another; charge.
- One in which confidence is placed.
- Reliance on something in the future; hope.
- Reliance on the intention and ability of a purchaser to pay in the future; credit.

How do the nuances of each definition relate to the story of the Israelites in the wilderness? When God called upon them to trust Him, which definition do you think He had in mind? Why? From today's reading list seven practical ways that you can trust in the Lord with all your heart.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Sunday

Read Exodus 15–18.

What part of the story do you relate to the most? Why? Imagine yourself as one of the Israelites who went through this ordeal in the wilderness. In recounting the story for your friends, what would you tell them that God wanted to teach His children through this experience?

Monday

Read Exodus 15:26.

Commit the *Key Text* to memory. Reflect on a time in your past when this text would

have been particularly relevant to you. Write the text on a card and place it in a prominent place so that in the future you can apply it. Think about these questions:

- What does it mean to "listen carefully to the voice of the Lord" if you cannot actually hear Him speak?
- What kinds of "diseases" might God protect me from if I "pay attention to his commands"?
- In what way does God long to heal you?

Tuesday

Read Luke 11:9, 10.

Ellen White offers this commentary on the story of the Israelites in the wilderness: "The Lord permitted difficulties to surround them, and their supply of food to be cut short, that their hearts might turn to Him." Now apply this insight to your life. What is the hardest difficulty you have faced in your life? Did the experience draw you closer to God or away from Him? What spiritual lessons might you learn in hardship that you won't be able to learn any other way?

Wednesday

Write a modern paraphrase of the texts in the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson. Personalize each one so that it reads as a personal note from God to you.

_____ (Hebrews 3:12).

_____ (John 6:48–51).

_____ (Luke 11:9, 10).

_____ (1 Timothy 6:8).

_____ (Philippians 4:19).

Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18.

It's easy to be like the children of Israel and cave in to a grumbling spirit. Today, try to speak only words that are positive and energizing. Before going to bed, reflect on how the day was different (assuming that it was).

Friday

Read 1 Timothy 6:8; Philippians 4:19.

What does this lesson teach you about contentment? Do you think that trusting God is the antidote for discontentment? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 26.

**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.