



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 15 2023

**Scripture Story:** Numbers 25.

**Commentary:** *Patriarchs and Prophets (or Beginning of the End)*, chapter 41.

## roads to the soul



Photo by Dan Olson

### flashlight

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

### keytext

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.’ ”

(Numbers 25:10-12, NIV)

# what do you think?

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

- \_\_\_ Media, movies, and music of a worldly nature
- \_\_\_ The example of key leaders who fall and are exposed as hypocrites
- \_\_\_ Impure entertainment
- \_\_\_ Apathy and boredom—the absence of good input
- \_\_\_ Rationalizing sin with intellectual arrogance

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

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## did you know?

**T**he Bible predicts waning moral values just before the coming of Christ. Perilous or dangerous times, the disintegration of the family unit, 'lovers of money,' 'lovers of pleasure,' 'without self-control' are word pictures describing life in the twenty-first century."—Mark Finley, *What the Bible Says About*, p. 39.

If there was ever an age in which young people live in a relaxed moral environment, it is now.

## INTO THE STORY

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.

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

"So Moses said to Israel's judges, 'Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.'

"Then an Israelite man brought into the camp

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

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

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

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them. They treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the Peor incident involving their sister Kozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of that incident.'

(Numbers 25:1-18, NIV)



# OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story through and *underline* the key people mentioned in this story.

Circle the various words that convey emotion in this story and draw a line to the person or 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 this story?

If you had to identify one or two key verses in this story, which would you say captures the central point?

As you read this story, is there . . .

An example to follow?

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A prayer to pray?

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A warning to heed?

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A truth to proclaim?

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An encouraging word to share?

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An action to take or a change to make?

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## punch lines

**“You adulterous people,** don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4, NIV).

**“Do not love** the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NIV).

**“Above all else,** guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV).

**“How can a** young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9-11, NIV).

**“Finally, brothers and sisters,** whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8, NIV).

## further insight

**“So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin. . . . We cannot be too decided in shunning the company of those who exert an influence to draw us away from God.”**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 458.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read James 4:8-10.

As you rank the items in the *What Do You Think?* section, explain why you put them in the order you did. Do you sense that the world is becoming numb to how wrong sin is? What are some examples of this from your perspective? How can you apply today's text in your life?

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## Sunday

Read James 4:4.

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

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## Monday

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

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

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## Tuesday

Read Philippians 4:8.

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

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

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## Wednesday

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

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

## Thursday

Read John 3:16, 17.

While this week's lesson is a stark reminder of the sinfulness of sin, it is also a reminder of God's covenant of grace to journey with us to the Promised Land. Ellen White reminds us that "the heart must be

renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460). Nothing strengthens our grip on God's plan for our lives as does deepening our understanding of His love and mercy displayed at Calvary. What are some ways you can remember Calvary throughout the week? Find a few tangible ways to jog your memory throughout the day about the most pivotal moment in history.

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## Friday

Read Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 4:23.

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

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## this week's reading\*

*Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 41.

\**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#.URlhF1rBO9s](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s). By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.