

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 28 2023

turn it around

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 3–7.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 57.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After a surprising defeat by the Philistines, Israel ordered the ark of the covenant to come into battle with them to secure a victory. Israel was living in rebellion against God, but thought if they had the ark, then God would have to do whatever they wanted. God decided to teach Israel a lesson they would not soon forget. The ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines who also thought they had captured God. God decided to show both Israel and the Philistines that He was God, He was holy, and He was not to be trifled with.

Israel for so long had been doing what was right in their own eyes that they forgot God's eyes were the only ones that mattered. Because of God's love for Israel, God punished them so they could be in right relationship with Him. After a series of defeats and plagues, Israel finally learned this lesson and repented of their sin. They made a new commitment to honor and serve God alone.

Several lessons emerge from this story:

- There are consequences to our actions, even though they are not always immediate. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7, NIV).
- God is holy and is to be treated as such. We should worship Him as He tells us to.
- In the midst of judgment, there is always mercy. This is shown when God forgave Israel and then fought for Israel.
- God is a jealous God who requires all of our worship and attention. This is best achieved through a personal and intimate relationship with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand there are consequences for our actions even though they may not be immediate. *(Know)*
- Sense the need for repentance and total commitment to God. *(Feel)*
- Have an opportunity to give up things that can get in the way of their relationship with God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Growing in Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 11: "By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)"

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.*

As you get the students' responses, ask the following questions: Which actions do you think have delayed consequences? What are some of these consequences?

Which actions do you think have no consequences? Explain your reasoning. Some people believe that every action has a consequence. Do you agree or disagree? Explain. What is something you do not do now, but would if there were no consequences?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Burmese pythons are becoming popular pets. Relatively inexpensive, you can buy a hatchling for as little as $20. People, however, do not realize how big they grow. They can grow up to 20 feet. Owners often decide they cannot handle the large snake, so they let them go free in the wild. This is a lot like sin. It starts out small and looks very innocent and manageable; however, we seldom know how big sin can get if left unchecked. Often, sin grows out of control and becomes deadly. We have to let it go!

Looking at pythons from a different angle can teach us another lesson about sin. The python, though treated like a pet, is really a predator. It was reported that a 13-foot Burmese python swallowed a 6-foot alligator in the Florida Everglades. This was a risky venture for a python. Apparently, this was not the first time a python had eaten an alligator. There were at least four other reported cases, so maybe this snake thought he could get away with it. However, the consequences of that action were deadly. The alligator was still alive and split the snake open, literally from the inside out.

That is what sin does to us. It, too, can destroy us from the inside out. We may think we have found something great. We may even get away with it for a little while. Though it may look like there are no consequences to our actions, there are. If we are not careful, and do not repent, sin can destroy us from the inside out.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Israel had been doing things their own way for a very long time. They thought they were above the law and could do whatever they wanted to do. For a while, they did not see any consequences to their actions. This was about to come to an end. God was about to show Israel in a way they would never forget that He is holy and He alone is to be worshiped.

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 major players in this story?
- *Underline* the key facts of this story.
- What might have been a reason the ark of the covenant was captured?
- After the ark of the covenant was captured, it was placed in the temple of Dagon, the Philistine god. Each morning Dagon would be on the ground lying prostrate before the ark. What do you think was the significance of this?
- What does this story teach about God?
- What do you think made the people turn back to God?
- What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do to return to God?
- What reasons can you give for Samuel setting up the stone memorial, Ebenezer?
- What gods do you have in your life that you need to put away?
- What do you think is the most important message of this story?
- How will the message of this story change the way you live for God this week?
- Ebenezer means "stone of help." What would you like God to help you with?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Psalm 78:52-66; Exodus 20:3-6; Galatians 6:7, 8; 1 Peter 4:17; Joel 2:12, 13; Deuteronomy 6:4, 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.

The story of the ark's capture is one of the dark-

est times in Israel's history. God had been warning of pending judgment for a long time, but it had not come. Israel thought they could do whatever they wanted and get away with it. Even the priests thought this. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very wicked. They had not been reprimanded by their father or punished by God, so they had become bold in sin, and the people followed. This is why God refused to fight for Israel. They had to learn that God will not share His glory with idols.

The Philistines also learned this lesson after capturing the ark. They put the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon. Dagon was the chief god of the Philistines. The ark was a trophy for them. Placing the ark in Dagon's temple was a symbol of submission to Dagon.

The first morning, however, Dagon was found bowing in submission to the ark. The temple workers promptly propped him back up, but the next morning Dagon was found bowing in submission again. This time his hands and head were cut off. Hands in Hebrew represented power, and the head represented reason. Dagon lay in submission to God, without power or intelligence. God then showed His power by laying a heavy hand on the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:6). He caused a plague of tumors to come on them.

When they finally sent the ark back to Israel, the men of Beth Shemesh did not respect God enough to follow His orders about how to handle the ark. Not even the Philistines dared to remove the covering of the ark, but these men looked into the ark and God struck them dead.

They got the message. They ordered someone to be consecrated to keep the ark. Soon Israel's heart groaned for God. They mourned after God. They were sorry for all they had done, and Samuel encouraged them to repent of their sin. He reminded them they must put God first and put the other gods away. God would share Israel no longer.

Through fasting and prayer, God heard them, healed them, and helped them. When the Philistines heard about this big prayer gathering, they came out to fight Israel again. There will always be obstacles to your faith when you try to get on the right path for God. Samuel continued to pray for the people, and God delivered them from the Philistines.

* * *

SPECIAL NOTE TO TEACHERS: The New International Version says that 70 men were slain, whereas the King James and New King James versions say 50,070. This may confuse students and spark up a discussion about mistakes and contradictions in the Bible. This is a difficult question for even Bible translators and scholars.

The original manuscripts written in Hebrew literally say, "seventy men, fifty thousand men." Some manuscripts do not have 50,000 in them at all. When presented with this information, different translators approached it differently. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* shares some possibilities: "Some have sug-

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **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.*

gested, 'He smote seventy men; fifty out of a thousand,' or 'He slew seventy men out of fifty thousand men.' . . . Most commentators agree that only 70 men of Beth-shemesh were slain." [1]

Ellen White, on translation errors, says, "Some look to us gravely and say, 'Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?' This is all probable. . . .

"God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired Word to finite man. This Word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed [given] to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven." [2]

Translation difficulties may prove discouraging for the students, but assure them God has clearly provided in His Word all they need to make it to heaven.

* * *

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student some clay. Instruct them to make something that young people often put before God. After giving them time to make the sculptures, allow time for the students to share what they have made. Remind students of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Collect all the sculptures and heap them together. Make a cross from the clay. While you are making the cross, remind students that God should always have first place in our lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

RABBI 101

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Why Ask Why?

When students hear the question "Why?" outside of the classroom, they often have to explain why they did something wrong. For example, "Why did you leave the milk out?" or "Why didn't you clean your room?" Some students become defensive as soon as they hear "Why" at the beginning of a sentence. Try disarming students by using more creative ways of asking why. Consider asking:

What is the significance of . . . ?

What reasons can you give for . . . ?

Will you tell me more about . . . ?

This story is a story of revival and repentance. God taught Israel the lesson that He was holy and He alone should be worshiped. He tried telling them. He tried showing them. He tried wooing them. He tried warning them. But Israel would not listen. God allowed the ark and thereby Himself to be captured and taken into the Philistine camp. His absence definitely made Israel's heart grow fonder. Israel soon understood they could not have God on their terms. It would either be God's way or the difficult way. God, through some unfortunate circumstances, was disciplining them, as a father or mother disciplines the child they love.

God will do the same with us. If we do not learn from Israel's mistakes, we will have to learn from our own. God will do all that He can to show His love to us and to help us come into a meaningful and real relationship with Him. When we make mistakes or missteps, when we sin against God, we must repent. We must turn around and walk God's way and He promises to hear, heal, and help.

[1] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 478.
[2] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16.



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 57.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 28 2023

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 3–7.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 57.

turn it around

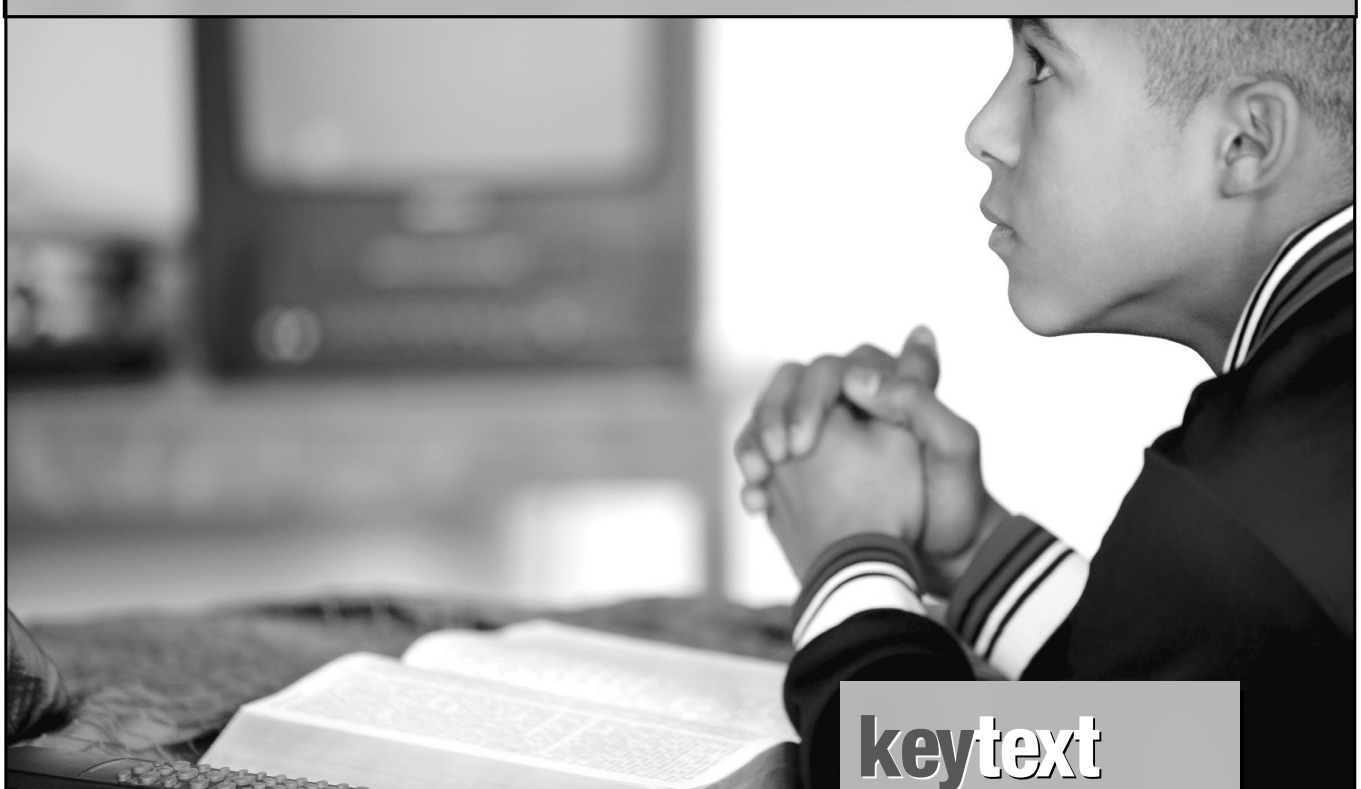


Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"So Samuel said to all the Israelites, 'If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

(1 Samuel 7:3, NIV)

flashlight

"There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 590).

what do you think?

Have you ever done something or made a decision without thinking about the consequences? When we do things that are wrong and our actions do not have immediate consequences, sometimes we think we can get away with them. Below is a list of actions; label them by their consequences, whether they have immediate consequences (IC), delayed consequences (DC), or have no consequences (NC).

___ Cheating on a test
___ Making fun of the new kid
___ Skipping class
___ Forgetting to say your grace
___ Playing with your cell phone during church
___ Eating five candy bars
___ Attending a Friday night basketball game
___ Telling your friends a lie
___ Not studying your Sabbath School lesson

did you know?

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box that God told Moses to build. It was made of wood and covered in gold. On the top of the box sat two gold-covered angels with their wings raised, facing each other. God's glory and presence dwelled between the angels (1 Samuel 4:4). God was very particular about the ark of the covenant. It was housed in the Most Holy Place. No one was to look at it, except the high priest, once a year. When it traveled, it had to be wrapped in a veil, badgers' skin, and a blue cloth to keep it hidden from human eyes.

INTO THE STORY

"And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

"Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. . . .

"So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

"Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. . . . But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. . . .

"The LORD's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors. When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, 'The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god.' "

"They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh. . . .

"But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them."

"The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.

"Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD. So Samuel said to all the Israelites, 'If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.' . . .

"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us.'

"So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory."

(1 Samuel 4:1, 10, 11; 5:2, 4, 6, 7; 6:11, 12, 19; 7:2, 3, 12, 13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the major players in this story?

_____
_____
_____

Underline the key facts of this story.

Draw a rectangle around the verse you think contains the most important point. Why did you choose this verse?

_____
_____
_____

What was significant about the fact that the god Dagon fell on his face before the ark of the Lord?

_____
_____
_____

What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do to return to God?

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What gods do you have in your life that you need to put away?

_____
_____
_____

What new thing about God did you learn from this story?

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_____
_____

What is the one message from this story that speaks to your life?

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_____

How can this message change the way you live for God this week?

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punch lines

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" **(2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).**

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below" **(Exodus 20:3, 4, NIV).**

"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols" **(Isaiah 42:8, NIV).**

" 'Come now, let us settle the matter,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool' " **(Isaiah 1:18, NIV).**

"Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" **(Isaiah 55:7, NIV).**

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" **(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).**

further insight

"As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 55.

Sabbath

Read Galatians 6:7.

The *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson challenged you to look at some actions and think about the consequences. This week's lesson shows the consequences of not following God. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked priests. They performed a lot of evil acts, yet nothing happened to them for a long time. When you get away with unacceptable or ungodly behavior, are you more likely to do it again or to repent? Why do you think that is?

Sunday

Read James 2:13.

Read the *Into the Story* section, which tells of the ark of the covenant being captured, and answer the study questions provided in the *Out of the Story* section. Both the Philistines and Israel upset God and both experienced judgment from Him. What reasons can you give for God's being upset with the Israelites?

What reasons can you give for His being upset with the Philistines?

This story includes a lot of judgment and punishment. But with judgment, God always shows mercy. What elements of this story show the mercy of God?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 7:3.

Read the *Key Text* and memorize it this coming week. Israel did what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God's eyes. Israel learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from them. God wanted them to turn from idols and give Him their complete attention and worship. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

Tuesday

Read 1 Samuel 7:2.

The quote in the *Flashlight* section lays out the steps Israel took to get back to God. They experienced sorrow for what they did and wanted to make it right. They repented which means they turned from their old ways and walked in a new direction. God calls for us to repent of wrong and experience His salvation. People often try to ignore the guilt they feel after doing wrong. What good can guilt and sorrow over wrong play in our lives?

Wednesday

Read the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section. Which verse stood out to you the most? Why? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this passage?

One of the *Punch Lines* is 2 Corinthians 7:10. In *The Message*, it reads like this: "Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets." Think about a time when you felt godly sorrow. What did you learn from that experience?

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:17.

We all know that bad behaviors and actions can keep us from God. But good activities can also keep us from God. School, jobs, spending time with friends, and just good old fun all have their place, but sometimes we allow these activities to take priority over God. God does not want to come before just evil activities in our lives; He wants to come before *everything* in our lives. What are some activities that are not necessarily bad but have taken priority over God in your life? What can you do to make sure you have a balance between the good and God?

Friday

Read Proverbs 16:3.

When we turn from doing things our way and begin doing them God's way, God will bless us. He blessed Israel with deliverance from the Philistines. When Israel repented, they were heard by God and were helped by God. Samuel set up a stone memorial so that Israel would remember how God helped them. He called it Ebenezer, which means "a stone of help." Can you find a symbol that will help you remember the commitment you made to God this week? Write a prayer dedicating your life to God. Place your symbol in a prominent place so you will remember your commitment.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 57.

**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. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.