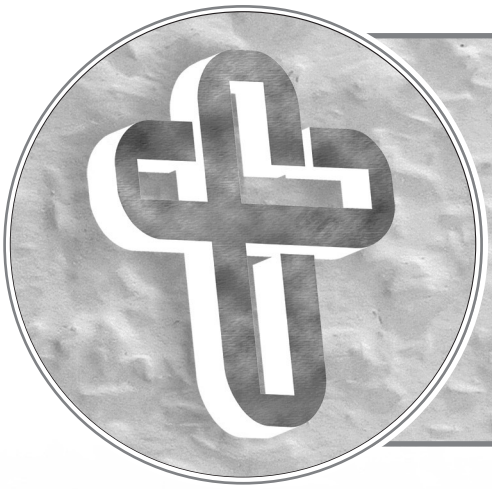


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 04 2026

love is patient

Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 29-32.
Key Text: 1 Corinthians 13:12.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Sexual purity is a tough topic to tackle in this day and age. In order for anyone to wait for marriage, they have to believe in the importance of sexual purity in their own lives. Why would God ask us to deny ourselves physical pleasure until marriage? Why did Paul take such a strong stance against sexual impurity?

The *Key Text* (2 Corinthians 13:12) talks about knowing and being fully known—the best description of intimacy this writer has ever seen. The desire for intimacy is very human. God created us to enjoy a sexual relationship within marriage.

Yet we all share a desire to love and be loved. The world's definition of love is that of a *feeling.* The world says that we feel loving, and when that feeling passes, we should abandon the relationship in search of another feeling. However, the Bible defines love differently in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is an *action.* When we follow God's leading and act in a loving way, those loving feelings come as a result. Part of real love is waiting for the physical demonstration of love until marriage. Love is patient.

So what do the students ultimately want in their lives? And how does the Bible tell us to go about getting it? How is it different from the world's view? We will discuss these topics in our lesson this week.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand why God asks us to wait and commit to sexual purity before marriage. *(Know)*
- Sense the good things that God has waiting for us as a result of our patience. *(Feel)*
- Choose to make a personal decision about sexual purity in their own lives. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Marriage and the Family, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 23

"Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church" (Gen. 2:18-25; Exod. 20:12; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9, 12; Mark 10:11, 12; John 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:7, 10, 11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4).

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.*

Ask the students to discuss in groups of four

how they would advise against premarital sex for the couples in the following situations:

1. A couple have been dating for a year and are about to be separated at different colleges.
2. A couple have just met but are very attracted to each other and want to pursue a romantic relationship together.
3. A couple are thinking about getting married and want to make sure that they are compatible sexually before making the commitment.

After the groups have had a few minutes to discuss their solutions, debrief with the whole class their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Think about great heroes of faith who had to wait for decades until they were ready for God to use them and the Lord could fulfill His promises in their lives. Noah preached about the worldwide flood for 120 years. Abraham waited for decades and was 100 years old when God fulfilled His promise concerning the birth of a promised son. Isaac waited for 40 years until he was married to his wife. Jacob was 80 years old when he got married. Joseph was sold in Egypt as a young boy and served patiently and faithfully his masters for many years, not knowing how God would fulfill His promises. He was 30 years old when God intervened in his life and lifted him out of the prison, placing him into the courts of Pharaoh. Moses was 40 years old when he left Egypt for Midian, and he waited for 40 years until God called Him to deliver the people of Israel out of Egypt. It was during his years in Midian that Moses got married.

Notice what is recorded about marriages in the times of the patriarchs and the necessity of waiting patiently before making the decision that will lead to marriage:

"In early times custom required the bridegroom, before the ratification of a marriage engagement, to pay a sum of money or its equivalent in other property, according to his circumstances, to the father of his wife. This was regarded as a safeguard to the marriage relation. . . . But provision was made to test those who had nothing to pay for a wife. They were permitted to labor for the father whose daughter they loved, the length of time being regulated by the value of the dowry required. When the suitor was faithful in his services, and proved in other respects worthy, he obtained the daughter as his wife; and generally the dowry which the father had received was given her at her marriage. . . .

"When the suitor was required to render service to secure his bride, a hasty marriage was prevented, and there was opportunity to test the depth of his affections, as well as his ability to provide for a family. In our time many evils result from pursuing an opposite course. It is often the case that persons before marriage have little opportunity to become acquainted with each other's habits and disposition, and, so far as everyday life is concerned, they are virtually strangers when they unite their interests at the altar. Many find, too late, that they are not adapted to each other, and lifelong wretchedness is the result of their union" (Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 66).

Once obtained, the rewards of self-control are more precious than what we could dream. The rewards of trusting in God, and using self-control in working patiently and diligently as His providence leads, will not delay to yield fruit. See the words of the wise: "He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!" (Proverbs 28:19, NKJV).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When we give God a chance to work in our lives and exercise self-control, He will help us experience true fulfillment and lasting joy in our relationships. Sexual purity has immense value to God because His way gives us a happier life. God will refine your character and reward your faithfulness when you determine to choose self-control rather than instant gratification in your relationships. He created you to enjoy life, and He has the best gifts in store for you, as long as you wait for His timing.

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.*

- How serious did Paul think sexual purity was?
- List the definitions of love found in 1 Corinthians 13. The first descriptor of love is that it is patient. What does this mean to you?
- By looking at these two passages, how is God's

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Fostering Independent Thinking

Independent thinkers do not simply accept what the teacher is saying; they question and grapple with the information, seeing if it makes sense to them. This is an important step before the student can make use of what he or she has learned. A tip for fostering independent thinking in your class is to ask broader, higher questions, not simple recapping or directing recall questions. Nor will simple "yes" or "no" answers accomplish this goal. This type of questioning helps the students think about the information independently and draw their own conclusions. Thus, their spiritual experience becomes their own.

ideal for our relationships infinitely better than the romantic relationships portrayed by Hollywood?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: John 4:1-42; 8:1-11; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.

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 Greek city of Corinth is about 49 miles west of Athens. It was a city known for both its wealth and immorality.

It is important to remember that the Corinthian church was a relatively new congregation, and Paul was doing his best to watch over them and keep them going in the right direction. He was more than a little upset when he started hearing stories of sexual impurity within the congregation. This was not acceptable. Paul, however, had something to say on the matter. God expected them to keep each other accountable.

Paul told them to stop associating with anyone claiming to be a believer who would flagrantly live a lifestyle outside of God's direction. Basically, they were told to stop being chummy with the offenders. Paul knew that "birds of a feather flock together," and that if the offenders were left to do as they pleased without any censure, they would end up losing their salvation. It was better to give them a little tough love than to lose them for all eternity.

Paul (in 1 Corinthians 13) describes what true love is. Paul showed that real love is something much different than a fleeting feeling, but an approach to individuals and to life. Love is a consistent way of life. Love is patient, kind, selfless, and pure. And, as we see in the first passage, love does not turn a blind eye to something that is wrong. Love points it out so that the person can benefit. Only God's love through us can show us how to do that effectively!

Teaching From . . .

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

Ask students if they are familiar with the "marshmallow experiment" done at Stanford University. The scope of the studies done in the 1960s and 1970s was to see the effect of self-control on success. So the studies measured how young children responded to delayed gratification.

Each of the children was given one marshmallow or cookie or pretzel (a small reward) and promised that if he/she waited patiently for a few minutes before eating the marshmallow, the reward would be doubled and they would have two marshmallows/cookies/pretzels. During the experiment the adult who had given the instructions left the room, and the children were left to decide on their own.

Years later several follow-up studies were conducted on the same group of individuals who participated as children in the original study. The results showed that those children who were able to exercise self-control when presented with the promise of delayed gratification grew up to be successful adults who achieved better academic results, adopted healthier lifestyles, and enjoyed better quality of life than their peers who failed the test on delayed gratification in their childhood.

The Word of God abounds in teaching on the importance of self-control.

Take a look at the fruit of the Spirit: Do you know them from memory? "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23, NKJV).

Notice that self-control is one of the fruit of the Spirit that every follower of Jesus needs to acquire and display in their character. If little children in the "marshmallow experiment" were able to resist the temptations of instant gratification and chose delayed gratification instead, how much more should young people choose to exercise the Holy Spirit's gift of self-control by God's grace.

When you are pressured or enticed to compromise your sexual purity, pray and claim the promises of God's Word. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 God promises that "no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (NKJV).

That's what Joseph did. He trusted God and ran away from temptation. Though he was threatened and thrown into jail, God remembered him and rewarded his faithfulness in His time.

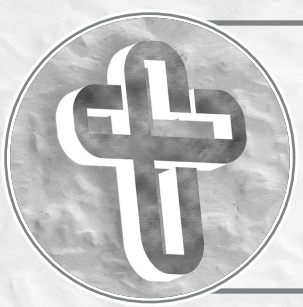
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God asks us to keep ourselves pure, but this is not simply an exercise in self-control or denial. God wants us to have the intimacy that we all crave, but He also wants it to last.

Love in our modern society is often defined as sexual or emotional. Emotions are unpredictable, and sex without commitment is often an empty and guilty experience. Love as defined in the Bible is an action. Love is shown by how we react in difficult situations, or how we patiently wait.

Within marriage sex is a beautiful communication of love. But outside of marriage we are set up for disappointment, embarrassment, and heartbreak. If we follow God's plan and wait for the right time to enjoy this special intimacy, we can experience all the good things God has waiting for us. True, lasting love chooses to wait until the time is right.



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 29-32.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

APRIL042026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 29-32.

love is patient



Photo by The Crystal Lenz

keytext

"For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

(1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV)

flashlight

"For he knew that when the soul fails to make this surrender, then sin is not forsaken, the appetites and passions still strive for the mastery, and temptations confuse the conscience. The surrender must be complete. Every weak, doubting, struggling soul who yields fully to the Lord is placed in direct touch with agencies that enable him to overcome. Heaven is near to him, and he has the support and help of angels of mercy in every time of trial and need" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 299).

what do you think?

What statement best describes your position on premarital sex?

1. It's not that big of a deal. What goes on between consenting adults should be left up to them.
2. I want to follow God's plan and wait until I'm married before I share a sexual relationship with anyone.

did you know?

God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. . . . No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ,* p. 46.



INTO THE STORY

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

"What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked person from among you.'"

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

"Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

(1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Corinthians 13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

How do you think we should balance being supportive and loving with standing for our principles?

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What difference should there be in our expectations for believers versus nonbelievers?

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In 1 Corinthians 13 do you think love is a feeling or an action? Why?

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How do you think 1 Corinthians 13 relates to marriage?

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By looking at these two passages, what is the biblical perspective on love and marriage?

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By looking at these passages, how would you define love?

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punch lines

"Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" **(Genesis 24:67, NIV).**

"So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her" **(Genesis 29:20, NIV).**

"With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose" **(Proverbs 7:21, 22, NIV).**

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" **(Psalm 51:10, NIV).**

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" **(2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).**

further insight

"A religion that seeks only to gratify the eye, the ear, and the taste, or that sanctions self-indulgence, is not the religion of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 317

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Do you think that waiting until you get married to have sex is an unattainable ideal in our modern society? God is clear in the Bible about what He expects. Second Corinthians 12:9 says that God's grace is sufficient for us, and that His power is perfected in our weakness. Why not make a vow right now that in your next weak moment you will turn to God for the strength you need?

Sunday

Read Proverbs 7:21, 22.

In the two passages in *Into the Story* the first passage warns us not to associate with people who are doing immoral things. We should be able to witness to others, but for those who call themselves Christians, there should be a certain standard to live up to. The second passage talks about love and how love is the most important aspect of our lives. How can we balance those two teachings? Look up the word "love" in a Bible concordance and look at several random verses. Is it unloving to hold a fellow Christian up to Christ's standard? Is there a way to lovingly stand for the right thing?

Monday

Read 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The *Key Text* talks about how we don't know fully now, but later on we will. Now we see things foggily, but later on we'll understand it all. This can be related to how we might feel right now. We want to know the person we love fully, and be fully known by them. We want a connection! Look at the following statements and decide if you agree or disagree with them:

1. T F—TV presents realistic relationships.
2. T F—TV presents a distorted version of relationships, and God's way is the way that gives us the best chance at a lasting, happy relationship.
3. T F—If I do things God's way, no one will want to date me and I'll be alone.
4. T F—I trust God that if I do things His way, He'll give me the intimacy I crave.

Tuesday

Read Psalm 51:10.

Having the strength to wait is not easy. In fact, it might even seem impossible. This doesn't make you a bad person. This makes you human. Of course you want that connection; it's just a matter of the timing. So how do you wait? God can give you the strength, but only if you are really serious about it. You have to be willing to hand it over to Him complete with your doubts, wishes, longings, and weakness.

Today, write a personal letter to God telling Him about the kind of relationship you want to have in the future. Then meditate on Scripture and pray to God to lead you according to His plan.

Wednesday

Read Genesis 29:20.

In the Bible we can see the most amazing love stories. Jacob was willing to work for seven years before marrying Rachel. He felt that kind of passion. Isaac was 40 years old when he met and married Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah were in love at first sight. These stories show us that if we are willing to wait on God's timing and do things God's way, we'll have all the excitement and passion that we long for.

Write down five famous couples from the Bible, and next to each couple write down the first thing you think about them. Did they follow God's way or do it the world's way? How have they been remembered?

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 13.

First Corinthians 13 talks about the definition of love. All too often, we think of love as an emotion. While we might feel loving feelings from time to time, real love is an action. Do you feel ready for a test and then study for it? Or do you study for a test and then feel ready? Love, the real lasting kind, is an action. When you act loving, when you say kind things, when you put the other person first and practice self-control until the time is right, you will feel those loving feelings.

List 10 ways that you can appropriately show your love for someone special, and beside each write how those loving gestures can make the relationship grow. (Use the note pages in the back of your study guide.)

Friday

Read Genesis 24:67.

What kind of love and relationship do you dream of? What kind of person do you think would make a good partner in life? What do you think you need to do to become the best partner someone may wish to have in order to experience lasting love and happiness in the future?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 29-32.

**Unlikely Leaders* is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles,* 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.