



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 12 2022

faith works

Scripture Story: Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-17.

Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles (or Unlikely Leaders)*, chapters 22-24.

Key Text: Ephesians 4:13, 14.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The call to share the good news of God's forgiveness and His gift of salvation is a personal call (Isaiah 6:1-9). Two thousand years ago we received the Great Commission to go into the entire world to preach the gospel to all peoples and to make disciples of the nations. This world is not some untouched corner of the Amazon jungle. This world is our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplace, our friends, our families.

Ellen White's words resonate with as much relevance today as they did years ago: "The Greeks sought after wisdom, yet the message of the cross was to them foolishness because they valued their own wisdom more highly than the wisdom that comes from above" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 240). This begets the question of how we can share the gospel in this increasingly urban world imbued with hubris from an overabundance of information, technology, and medical advancements.

Our youth live in a culture that espouses living and believing whatever you want as long as it is right for you. Truth has become relative. That is why simply teaching our kids to believe in the right things isn't going to be enough to enable them to stand strong and make right choices in today's culture. It is critical that our youth are taught skills that will empower them to be firmly grounded in the Word of God. This will strengthen them spiritually, morally, and emotionally to stand firm against a world in which philosophies of pluralism and relativism impact them in a very real

way. Ellen White emphasizes: "The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 230). Our youth need to be so thoroughly convinced of the truth that they will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences.

In these times of loneliness and despair, we have been given a great and precious gift. It is our God-given responsibility to stay undeterred and keep sharing the message of freedom and an abundant life to a world crying out for hope and belonging.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize some of the barriers to accepting and believing God's message of salvation. (*Know*)
- Experience the urgency to be firmly grounded in their beliefs so that they are prepared to face the inevitable challenges that come with following God's command to spread His message of salvation. (*Feel*)
- Adopt Bible study skills and apply them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of God. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 13

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called

out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness” (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4).

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 and guide them to understand the concept of how beliefs influence our behaviors.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your words with your class:

“God’s Word gives us hope in times of discouragement. It brings comfort in times of affliction. It imparts life in times of despair. Pastor Pyoter Rumackik was imprisoned in a Soviet gulag for his faith. He discovered that even in our darkest times, God provides strength for our daily needs.

“His experience became almost unbearable when prison officials took his Bible away. A few days later, a fellow prisoner handed him a notebook and said, ‘Here, read this poem.’ The pastor glanced up and couldn’t believe his eyes. It was a poem about Christ’s sufferings on Calvary. His spirit soared as he read it. He began flipping the pages and discovered more scripturally based poems and numerous passages of the Bible. They filled the entire notebook. . . .

“Later the Christian pastor discovered . . . that the prisoner who gave him the notebook was a Mongolian shepherd who became fascinated with Christian radio programs. They lifted his spirits and provided inspiration during his solitary nights. He would tape programs and copy portions in notebooks to pass the time. Somehow he managed to smuggle one of his notebooks into the prison. He then felt inspired to give it to Pyoter. For the pastor, this [Mongolian] shepherd seemed like the

ravens that brought food to the prophet Elijah in the wilderness. God found a way to provide for his needs. . . . God’s living Word provides strength for our daily needs in all of the varied circumstances of our lives” (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 15).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Followers of God believe that the Bible is more than just a book. God’s people value the power that the Bible imparts. We believe that the Word of God is not only useful in challenging non-Christians on their worldview, but also for us to challenge ourselves concerning our own views.

If you wanted to read the Bible now, where would be the nearest place you could get one? Your home? Your desk? Or even in your schoolbag? In many countries, it’s easy to get hold of a Bible. However, in many other places, Bibles are hard to come by, and Christians living there either have to travel very far to read the Bible or face persecution if caught with one. In places such as these, people value the Bible and treasure every opportunity they can get to read it.

How important is the Bible for you? If you had to walk for an hour to get to a Bible, would you still go to read it?

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.

- Circle the different cities mentioned in this story. What happened at each venue?
- In every place, Paul preached God’s Word blatantly, with passion and courage. However, he achieved varying degrees of success. What can we learn from this?
- The people in Athens were not uneducated. They valued the pursuit of knowledge. They spent “all their time discussing the latest ideas.” Why, then, did they reject the truth that Paul was sharing with them? What did their actions reveal about their beliefs and values?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today’s story:

- **Mark 16:15**—God divinely commissioned everyone who has ever heard or read this command to “preach the gospel” and draw people into following Him. What does it mean to “preach the gospel”?
- **Matthew 7:24-26**—In this story of the wise and foolish builders, Christ uses this analogy of house building to describe two categories of people. On the surface, both houses appear the same but without the right foundation (James 3:13-17) their end can be disastrous. A good foundation is daily obedience (Psalm 111:10), service, Bible study, and prayer. What kind of foundation are you building your “house” on?

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest and most influential cities in Macedonia. Athens was the center for Greek culture, philosophy, and education. According to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Berea was a “small Macedonian city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. The city was of far less commercial importance than Thessalonica” (vol. 6, p. 344). Are there any similarities in the way Paul’s preaching was received and the way God’s Word is received in today’s megacities?

2. The Stoics and the Epicureans. The Sto-

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Be Prepared . . .

Allocate at least one hour each week for lesson preparation. The more you prepare, the better your Sabbath School lesson will go for both you and your students.

This teachers’ guide was prepared to make your job easier, so use it. Make an effort to understand how the lesson develops. How does one activity lead into another? What is the purpose of the various questions? When you analyze and understand the different elements, you can own and adapt the lesson with increased effectiveness.

Where possible, attend training sessions for Sabbath School teachers. When you are trained for a task, you feel more competent, understand how to do it well, and enjoy doing it more.

ics valued logic over emotions and, as a result, they attempted to attain a harmonious life by suppressing their desire for pleasure. In contrast, the Epicureans valued the pursuit of happiness or pleasure as the primary goal in life. What values did Christ impart and how was that reflected in His actions while on earth?

3. “May we know?” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* sheds light on the nuance of

Teaching From the Lesson

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 quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.

this question: “An idiomatic expression, which may here be rendered: ‘Is it possible for us to know?’—a question that may have been courteous, sarcastic, or ironical. The Epicureans and Stoics had no doubts about their own ability to understand all that Paul might say to them but they were obviously eager to hear about his strange teaching” (vol. 6, p. 349). What are your beliefs or notions about God and the Bible? Are they derived from hearsay or diligent and humble self-study?

4. Dionysius, Damaris, and a number of others. Although the majority of people in Athens did not accept and believe Paul’s words, there were a few who believed. As a result, a church was founded. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* proposes that the church in 2 Corinthians 1:1 (“the saints which are all in Achaia”) is the result of the conversion that Dionysius and the others experienced. What can you infer about God’s plans from this?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Gather the class for a role-playing session.

Hand out four or five scenarios to the groups (e.g., being an unpopular, bullied child; someone the class dislikes wanting to join in your game; your close

friends deciding to do something you do not agree with).

Ask each group to create a short role play to enact the scene, keeping in line with the values that Jesus espouses.

Summary

Share the following summary in your own words:

When there are no standards, everybody thinks they are right, and there can be a lot of misunderstanding and arguments. It’s difficult to compare anything unless you have a standard of comparison. The Bible is the standard to evaluate the Christian’s life.

When we compare ourselves with God’s law, with God, and with Christ, we realize that none of us measures up. None of us can meet His standards. We learn what the wise thing to do is, as well as the unwise. The Bible is a standard for living. But in order to live our lives accordingly, we need to know the standards from our personal experience. We need to look to Christ, read the Bible, and search the truth for ourselves and not simply rely on the hearsay of others.

However, no matter how far we fall short, Jesus has already bridged the gap between us and God so that He can accept us according to His standard of righteousness.

Reminder, next week is Global Youth Day. Are you ready?



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 22-24.