



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 02 2023

Scripture Story: Joshua 10:40-43; 11; 14-22.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 48.

real estate section



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"[Caleb] did not ask for himself a land already conquered, but the place which above all others the spies had thought it impossible to subdue. . . .

. . . To each was given according to his faith. The unbelieving had seen their fears fulfilled. Notwithstanding God's promise, they had declared that it was impossible to inherit Canaan, and they did not possess it. But those who trusted in God, looking not so much to the difficulties to be encountered as to the strength of their Almighty Helper, entered the goodly land" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512, 513).

keytext

"So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' "

(Joshua 14:9, NIV)

what do you think?

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

- ___ 1. It's better to try and fail than to have never tried at all.
- ___ 2. The most well-intentioned effort will ultimately fail without God's blessing.
- ___ 3. Even the flattest pancake has two sides.
- ___ 4. General unity is more important than absolute agreement.
- ___ 5. You can't be too careful.
- ___ 6. If we attend church and don't do anything too sinful, our salvation is secure.
- ___ 7. There's no sin God can't forgive.
- ___ 8. We should be patient and considerate even with those who attack us.

For the items you agreed with, tell how that principle can be applied to life.

did you know?

Christians in the Middle
Ages designated churches as places of sanctuary for those accused of crimes. An accused criminal could throw himself at the mercy of a church and would have 40 days to either stand trial under local authorities, or confess and go into exile, leaving the country.

While King James I officially abolished churches as asylums in 1623, persecuted people have turned to churches as sanctuary throughout the ages.

How we relate to others reflects our relationship with Jesus. Matthew 25:40 says, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

INTO THE STORY

"Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb . . . said to him, ' . . . I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. . . . So on that day Moses swore to me, "The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'

" . . . So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day.' . . .

"Then Joshua blessed Caleb . . . and gave him Hebron as his inheritance."

"Then the LORD said to Joshua: 'Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, . . . so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of that city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them. If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled.'"

"So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land. . . .

"[They] built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard . . . [about it], the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them."

"They said to them: ' . . . How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the LORD and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?' "

"[They replied,] ' . . . We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, "What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD.' . . .

“That is why we said, “Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.” On the contrary, it is to be a witness . . . that we will worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, “You have no share in the LORD.” ’ ’ ”

“When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community . . . heard . . . [this], they were pleased. . . .

“Then [they] . . . reported to the Israelites. . . . And they talked no more about going to war. . . .

“And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the LORD is God.”

(Joshua 14:6-13; 20:1-6; 22:9-12, 15, 16, 24-27, 30, 32-34, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why was it important that Caleb approached his old friend Joshua with a group of other tribesmembers to ask for Hebron? Why might Joshua, from prior experience, have been particularly concerned about public perception and opinion?

Why were the Israelites so concerned that the Reubenites and Gadites' actions could bring judgment on all of Israel (read the entire incident in Joshua 22:10-20)?

Why would God appoint cities of refuge rather than just ban private vengeance altogether? In what direction was God slowly moving His people?

What spiritual parallels can we draw between the sanctuary that cities of refuge offered and that of the refuge we find in Christ as sinners?

punch lines

“**The LORD is my rock**, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—from violent people you save me” (2 Samuel 22:2, 3, NIV).

“**God is our refuge** and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, NIV).

“**Whoever dwells** in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1, NIV).

“**How wonderful, how beautiful**, when brothers and sisters get along! It's like costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, flowing down Aaron's beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes. It's like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion. Yes, that's where God commands the blessing, ordains eternal life” (Psalm 133:1-3, *The Message*).

“**Let us draw near** to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:22-24, NIV).

further insight

“**By our unity, by esteeming others better than ourselves, we are to bear to the world a living testimony of the power of the truth.**”—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 105.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read **Joshua 22:10-34**.

This week's *What Do You Think?* has us ponder some advice, much of which you've probably heard before and which is hard to remember when emotions are high. How helpful are such principles in the "heat of the moment"? What kept the Israelites from going to war with one another over a big misunderstanding—and how important is levelheaded leadership?

Sunday

Read **John 7:24**.

Read this week's *Out of the Story*. Each question touches on some aspect of relationship and responsibility. What do this week's stories teach us about our relationship with God? About how we should treat others? About the importance of not rushing to judgment? About standing up for what we believe in?

Monday

Read **Matthew 6:25-34**.

This week's *Key Text* is a record of a promise kept. God made an incredibly generous offer to the Israelites: if they'd live for Him, He'd make their life worth living.

Jesus makes some incredible promises to us as well. How do these promises compare to what God offered the Israelites? How can you relate to these promises in today's topsy-turvy world? How would your life and attitude be different if you truly took these words seriously?

Tuesday

Read **Numbers 14:41-45**.

Self-fulfilling prophecies. Read this week's *Flashlight* quote. Better yet, look up the complete reference in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

ets. The Israelites at Kadesh Barnea thought the Canaanites were far too strong for them, and trembled at entering the Promised Land despite what they'd seen of God's power. When they tried to redeem themselves by entering Canaan on their own, they met with disaster and death, and most people thought, *Sure enough—they were right—we're doomed*.

In much of life, attitude is everything. The Israelites' self-defeating attitude led to defeat. Joshua's courageous faithfulness brought God-powered success. What is God encouraging you to do? What giants are in your way? How can you avoid trying to succeed on your own? How can you focus on what God will do through you, and not just the obstacles in your way?

Wednesday

Read **Luke 7:36-47**.

Read this week's *Punch Lines* section. If there's one thing God loves to do, it's transform wretchedness to righteousness, hopelessness to happiness, despair to delight. God loves to take the most messed-up situation and recreate it into something beautiful. He offers a fresh start to anyone who asks, no matter how desperate things may seem on the surface.

What does the story of the woman anointing Jesus' feet tell us about how eager God is to redeem us, no matter how far we've fallen or how much we've messed up? How can it help us respond to people and things in our lives that tell us we're beyond repair?

Thursday

Read **Hebrews 10:22-24**.

The story of the Reubenites and Gadites misunderstood altar has important lessons for churches today. The tribes of Reuben and

Gad just wanted to honor God; the other 10 tribes were afraid of disaster due to God being dishonored. What parallels do you see to modern church politics? How have churches you've known about handled similar controversies? What can we learn from how Phinehas and friends handled the situation?

Friday

Read **Matthew 24:9-14**.

It's easy to say "I'll follow God no matter what." It's another story when going forward with God may mean losing your friendships and security. Jesus made some promises to His followers that are 180 degrees from the promises the Israelites heard: "You will be persecuted. You will be betrayed." From today's reading note particularly verse 13—"But he who stands firm to the end will be saved." How can we keep our faith and keep standing for God even when it brings us suffering? Is God asking too much of us? Can we ask too much of God? Christians throughout history have been willing to give their lives for Jesus. How do you think they felt God's presence and power even as they were persecuted?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 48.

**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.