



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
SEPTEMBER 16 2023

famines and feasts

Scripture Story: Leviticus 23; 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 50–52.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson is based on three short chapters in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Each chapter offers students a helpful perspective on the overall theme of stewardship.

The first chapter in this lesson, “Tithes and Offerings,” highlights the importance of giving to the work of God. With our gifts to God we acknowledge that we are managers of God’s resources. As Ellen White points out, “The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525). In teaching on this topic, the emphasis should be on giving as a response to what God has given to us in His Son; moreover, all of our resources belong to Him, anyway.

The second chapter, “God’s Care for the Poor,” offers a compelling picture of compassion. Here we see the Father’s heart: “[God] intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.

“Christ has said that we shall have the poor always with us, and He unites His interest with that of His suffering people. The heart of our Redeemer sympathizes with the poorest and lowliest of His earthly children” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 535).

The final chapter, “The Annual Feasts,” offers sym-

bols through which we can grasp and teach concepts such as sin, grace, and salvation. As Samuele Bacchocchi points out, “Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals that God has communicated His saving knowledge not only through abstract reasoning, but also through symbolic representations. The reason is that the human mind grasps symbolic representations more readily than it does abstract reasoning.”¹

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the value of being a responsible steward of God’s resources. (*Know*)
- Sense the calling of God to share their resources with the poor. (*Feel*)
- Give in response to what God has given us. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Stewardship, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 21

“We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. . . . (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; Rom. 15:26, 27; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:7.)”

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

cornerstoneconnections

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson and ask them to take a side as you read the agree/disagree questions. Facilitate a discussion after each question, asking each side to share the reasons for the stand they took.

An alternative activity is to give each student an envelope containing 12 slips of paper. Each slip should have one of the following phrases written on it: be supportive of world missions; spend quality time with family; make a substantial amount of money; be more concerned about the poor and homeless than personal savings; be faithful in paying tithe; move up the corporate ladder; excel in community involvement; be concerned about the environment; be kind to strangers; read the Bible daily; witness to nonbelievers; travel and see the world.

Tell the students these phrases complete the statement: “A successful Christian should . . .” They must read all 12 slips, then arrange the possible answers in the order they feel is most important. Discuss the results.

Illustration

Share the following excerpt written by David Green, editor-at-large of U.S. News & World Report:

“Men and women today are haunted by a sense that in the midst of plenty, our lives seem barren. We are hungry for a greater nourishment of the soul. In the England of today, a businessman turned philosopher, Charles Handy, has won a widespread following with his writing. Capitalism, he argues, delivers the means but not the point of life. Now that we are satisfying our outer needs, we must pay more attention to those within—for beauty, spiritual growth, and human connection. ‘In Africa,’ Handy writes, ‘they say there are two hungers. . . . The lesser hunger is for the things that sustain life, the goods and services, and the money to pay for them, which we all need. The greater hunger is for an answer to the question “why?,” for some understanding of what life is for.

“ ‘In A.D. 1000, people could never truly satisfy their lesser hunger, but history suggests they were pretty good at fulfilling their greater one. Their lives were richer for it, and so were those that followed. A millennium later, our situation seems just the reverse. Is this really where we want to be? Or can we learn something from those poor folks, after all?’ ”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How we spend our money shows where our hearts are. When you look at pictures of places around the world where people are starving or living in tents, it should make you stop and think about what is really important. Do you really need a new bike? Is it really necessary that you have the latest and greatest thing being advertised? Ellen White says there is “a striking illustration . . . in the days of the prophet Haggai” of the results of selfishly withholding from God (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 527). Our lesser needs are met but at the expense of our greater needs. God warns His people, “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it” (Haggai 1:5, 6, NIV).

Ask the students to make a list of our “lesser needs” and our “greater needs.”

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section together, use the following questions to generate discussion.

Review the primary passages in the Bible (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-28; Deuteronomy 12:6-17; 14:22-28; 26:1, 12; 2 Chronicles 31:5-12; Malachi 3:8-10, etc.) that teach about tithing. Next, give a church tithe envelope to each student and explain the difference between money designated “church budget,” “conference,” and “tithe.” Many young people think that if they donate to tithe it helps support the ministry of the local church. Although some of the tithe in the Seventh-day Adventist system is returned to the local church in the way of paying the pastor’s salary, tithe does not support the local ministries of the church and church school. All of these expenses are taken from donations marked “church budget.”

Help the young people understand how tithes are used in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Make a game of it and give the students 100 pennies. Ask them to divide the coins up according to how one dollar of tithe is invested in the Adventist Church. Although the percentages may vary, of the 100 percent of the tithes that local churches send to their conference, approximately 76 percent of the tithe remains at the local conference to cover employee

salaries and other conference programs; 9 percent is invested in paying benefits for retired workers; 9 percent is sent to the union and division offices; and 6 percent is appropriated by the General Conference to worldwide organizations. For further details, refer to a tithe envelope in your church.

Although tithing is the main focus of this lesson, there are several other directions you may opt to go. For example, you might focus on the festivals by dividing your class into three groups. Have them study the following feasts and then report to the rest of the class what the feast was about and why the Israelites celebrated it. Group 1: The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 23:6-8); Group 2: Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:14-16); Group 3: The Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:13-16; Leviticus 23:34); and the Feast of Ingathering (see Exodus 23:16; 34:22).

Another direction you could take this lesson is to focus on gambling. Find a story of a recovering gambling addict and share it with the class. Allow plenty of time for students to reflect and respond to the story.

A final area you may wish to emphasize in this lesson is that of giving. Involve the students in an interactive exercise that highlights the joy we receive from giving.

Sharing Context and Background

As you lead the students through this lesson, you may find it helpful to share some of the following insights:

1. There are more than 2,300 references to money and possessions in the Bible. By contrast, there are 500 references in the Bible to prayer. Almost one fourth of everything Jesus taught in His sermon on the mount had something to do with money and possessions. Out of 38 parables that Jesus gave in the Gospels, 16 deal with how we handle our money. Jesus said more about money and possessions than about heaven and hell combined. One out of every 10 verses (288 verses!) in the Gospels deals with money or possessions. Without question, the way we manage all with which He entrusts us is a big deal to God.

Have the students reenact some of the stories that Jesus told about money. Some stories you may wish to use include: the parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:13-21; the story of the rich young ruler, Mark 10:17-31; the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30; etc. Allow time for discussion following the dramas.

2. Michael Morrison explains: "The Old Testament shows us that the most common theme for the annual festivals is the Exodus. That was the defining event in the nation's history, the time when the Israelites became one nation under God. But if an ancient Israelite looked at all the annual festivals, as well as the rules about washings, offerings and various other rituals, it would be difficult to see a unified theme."²

Ask the students to identify the Exodus theme

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

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



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Teaching With Questions

Questions comprise a key component of effective teaching. You should plan key questions to provide the skeleton of the lesson. Spontaneous questions can be good, but the overall direction of the discussion should be deliberate. Here are some tips³ for crafting helpful questions:

- Phrase the questions clearly and specifically.
- Avoid vague and ambiguous questions.
- Adapt questions to the level of the students' abilities.
- Ask questions logically and sequentially.
- Ask questions at various levels.
- Follow up on students' responses.

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in the following feasts: the Passover, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

3. Today, it appears that many young people are being drawn into gambling. We are talking about teens.

Questions to facilitate discussion:

- Why do you think money was one of the top topics Jesus' spoke about?
- Can you think of reasons why many of the Israelites' festivals reminded of the Exodus?
- What reasons can you think of that would cause teens to gamble?
- What does the Bible teach about gambling?
- Write your own proverbs that speak to the foolishness of gambling; then share your proverbs with the rest of the class. How better could a young person use or spend their money?

III. CLOSING

Activity

For a closing activity, divide the students into small groups and ask each group to create a commercial to advertise the primary point (as they see it) of the study. Have each group share their commercial with the larger group. Naturally, the groups will have different emphases from the study.

Summary

As mentioned above, this lesson can be taken in a number of different directions. Whether you emphasize stewardship, the feasts, tithing, caring for the poor, giving, or gambling, the overarching theme of this lesson brings us back to a question of lordship. The most important point in this study is to challenge students to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives.

This lordship then governs the way we spend money. For example, if God is Lord of the wallet then our finances will be used in ways to honor our Lord. This includes paying a faithful tithe, helping the poor, carefully guarding against frivolous abuses such as gambling, and so on.

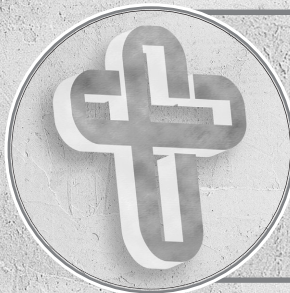
In a similar vein, the festivals were established so that the people of God would be reminded regularly of God's lordship in their lives. These feasts were practiced so that God's chosen people would be reminded of God's faithfulness in the past. Remembering God's provision in the past sparks faith to continue to submit to His lordship in the future.

Whatever aspects of the lesson you choose to emphasize, remember the comprehensive theme of lordship. If Christ is Lord (and He is), then He must be Lord of everything.

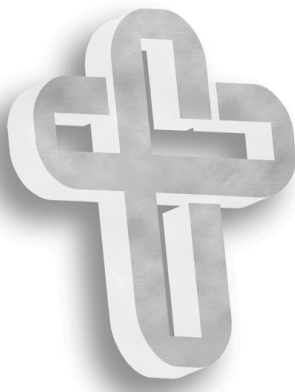
¹ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1996), p. 19.

² As quoted at <https://archive.gci.org/articles/what-the-festivals-picture/>.

³ As quoted at honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/effquest.htm.



Remind the students about the reading plan, which 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*), chapters 50–52.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Leviticus 23; 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11.

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famines and feasts



Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

“God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel. To those who prove themselves faithful stewards He will commit greater trusts. Saith the Lord, ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ 1 Samuel 2:30” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 529).

keytext

“Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.”

(Deuteronomy 14:22, 23, NIV)

what do you think?

Assuming you had a bottomless bank account, make a list of what you would buy.

Read the following statements. *Circle* the ones you agree with and *cross out* the ones with which you disagree.

- It is a sin to have more money than you need when others are starving.
- Wealth is a gift from God.
- People have a right to do whatever they want with their money.
- Everything we have belongs to God.
- Not paying a faithful tithe is a sin against God.
- Money is the root of all evil.

did you know?

There are two distinct tithes that are spoken of in Scripture. The first tithe was to be used exclusively to support the work of the priests and Levites. In Numbers 18:21-26, God offers this instruction regarding the first tithe: "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. . . ."

"... 'Speak to the Levites and say to them: "When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering" ' " (NIV).

The second tithe was to be consumed at the tabernacle as a holy feast before the Lord. This is the tithe that is referred to in texts such as Deuteronomy 14:28 and 26:12-15.

INTO THE STORY

"**A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. Whoever would redeem any of their tithe must add a fifth of the value to it. Every tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the LORD. No one may pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If anyone does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.**"

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'These people say, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house." ' "

"Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 'Is it a time for you yourselves to

be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?'

"Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,' says the LORD. 'You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.' "

(Leviticus 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Using a Bible commentary or a Bible software program, research the word “tithes” in Scripture. How often is it used? In what context?

How would you summarize what the Bible teaches on the topic of tithing?

Next, do the same study using the word “offerings.” How often is it used? In what context?

How would you summarize what the Bible teaches on the topic of offerings?

Read about the plight of God’s people in Haggai 1:2-11, the last portion of this week’s *Into the Story*. Underline any descriptions that you think reflect the spiritual bankruptcy that is prevalent in our day.

Read Deuteronomy 15 and Isaiah 58. Write a letter from God addressed to the poor. Next, brainstorm ways you can share God’s heart for the poor.

Research the following feasts of Israel. How might you celebrate the spirit of each feast today?

The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 23:6-8)

Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:14-16)

The Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:13-16; Leviticus 23:34; and the Feast of Ingathering—see Exodus 23:16; 34:22)

punch lines

“**Therefore the LORD**, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.’ But now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained’ ” (1 Samuel 2:30, NIV).

“**I have no need of a bull** from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:9, 10, NIV).

“**Will a mere mortal rob God?** Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8, NIV).

“**And he is not served** by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25, NIV).

“**But the one who** does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48, NIV).

further insight

“**The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures.**”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

“**Yet He [God] intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.**”

—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 535.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Malachi 3:8-10.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section. Reflect on the things you would buy if you had unlimited money. What does your list say about your deepest values?

Find a friend and discuss the statements in the agree/disagree section. Do you and your friend share the same opinions? If so, why? If not, why not?

What do you think is the greatest barrier to being faithful in returning tithes and offerings? How might God help you to overcome this barrier?

Sunday

Read Colossians 3:17.

Read the passage from Haggai in *Into the Story* and answer the following questions:

What phrase does God repeat? What does this tell you about the importance of the message? Can you relate to the description that God gives when He says, "You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it"?

Ever feel as if you're running faster and eating more and working harder and yet you are plagued by exhaustion and fatigue? Do you party harder but feel empty on the inside? What does the experience of God's people in the days of Haggai tell you about living a purposeful, fulfilling life today?

Monday

Rewrite the *Punch Lines* in your own words.

Tuesday

Read Luke 6:28.

Interview someone who has faithfully paid tithes and offerings for many years. Ask the giver if they've felt that it was a worthwhile

investment. See if the person has ever had any regrets about giving. Is there a better way to experience the faithfulness of God than through giving? How does giving benefit the giver? Who benefits more, the one who gives or the one who receives?

Wednesday

Read the following songs that Ellen White quotes in describing the Israelites as they made their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast: Song of Solomon 2:11-13; Psalm 48:1, 2; 121:1, 2; 122:1-6; 125:1, 2. Imagine the scene of joyful people celebrating on their way to the annual festival. Try to smell the scents and hear the music.

Thursday

Read Acts 20:35.

Reflect on the following thought from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 529: "The plan of Moses to raise means for the building of the tabernacle was highly successful. No urging was necessary. Nor did he employ any of the devices to which churches in our day so often resort. He made no grand feast. He did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement; neither did he institute lotteries, nor anything of this profane order, to obtain means to erect the tabernacle for God. The Lord directed Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring their offerings. He was to accept gifts from everyone that gave willingly, from his heart. And the offerings came in so great abundance that Moses bade the people cease bringing, for they had supplied more than could be used."

Have you ever seen gimmicky fund-raising done in the church? Why do you suppose Ellen White discouraged this approach when financing God's work? Does God want funds that come from a begrudging heart? Why or why not?

Friday

Read Romans 8:28.

Read chapter 51, "God's Care for the Poor," in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and summarize in a few words or sentences the key ideas that represent the highlights of the chapter for you.

How can you apply these principles in your life today?

Pray about what God is asking you to do to care for the marginalized of our world. Perhaps you can send a note of encouragement to a friend who is struggling. Maybe you can visit someone in the hospital. Or you can call a church member who has recently had a death in the family. Whatever God's asking you to do, do it!

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 50-52.

**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#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.