



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 05 2019

## the trust test

**Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11.

**Commentary:** *Patriarchs and Prophets (or Beginning of the End)*, chapter 39.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

Israel's long journey in the desert resulted from failing to trust God's word when the way seemed impossible. The 40-year trek in the desert offers a wealth of stories recounting the unmistakable care God gave to His children. The stories of this journey would be an inspiration were it not for the tragic moments when Israel stalled in disbelief. In this lesson we pick up the story where the children of God face the *almost* charted territory of their parents who, unfortunately, were *almost* faithful.

As they passed through the lands of ungodly enemies the children of Israel are tempted to view adversity solely from a human perspective. Forty years prior the children of God failed to believe and obey God's direction and were sent back into the desert to learn the lessons of faith. Would this new generation repeat the disbelief of their parents? This week's story brings us to another pivotal point in Israel's journey.

But Israel's experience is not just a story about an ancient people; it foreshadows our story today. The tipping point when we choose to trust or not trust God's Word is a point every believer faces in life. The test is to believe and trust God's Word in impossible situations. Sometimes all it takes is a reminder of the guiding ways of God to give you enough faith to enter into the uncharted territory of God's will.

When we lack the faith to obey God, He does not shield us from similar tests in the future; in fact, God brings us to places where we must test our trust

in Him again. When we face obstacles, we need to remember that the challenges we face only *appear* to be impossible. But with each faithful step we are fortified to face any challenge because we have personally experienced God's faithfulness.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the core elements of trusting God to do the seemingly impossible. (*Know*)
- Sense the trustworthiness of God and His Word. (*Feel*)
- Choose to seize moments that test their faith as opportunities to grow instead of calamities to avoid. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Perseverance
- Trust
- Learning from failure/mistakes

### 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.

##### **Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of Houdini, the skilled locksmith who often boasted of being able to break out of any jail cell providing he could go in with his everyday clothes and have complete privacy. A small town in England boasted of the new jail cell they built, claiming that no one could escape. The small town invited Houdini to give their jail cell a try, and he accepted the challenge.

They ushered him into the cell in his street clothes and left him alone to try and make his escape. Houdini removed his belt that concealed a flexible rod that he used to try and pick the lock. After hours of trying, the Great Houdini fell against the cell door. The door swung open, and he landed on the cold stone floor. The great escape artist did not realize that the door was unlocked the whole time he was trying to break free.

Sometimes we insist on doing things our way first, only to find a better way was there all along. But compare Houdini with Seo Sang-moon and examine how their approach to obstacles is similar, and how it is different.

Seventy-year-old Seo Sang-moon determined to pass his driver's examination. Located in a rural section of South Korea, he took an oral examination to ascertain whether or not he knew the rules of driving. The old man did not know how to read, which is why he used the trial and error method for getting the right answers. He spent more than a thousand dollars in fees to take the test over and over again. He took the test 272 times before he managed to learn all the wrong answers. To his credit, he persevered. Now Seo Sang-moon needs to pass only the road test—hopefully he will try another method.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

As we face difficulties or uncertainties we might find it hard to trust God and wonder how He is leading us. But those very difficulties and uncertain circumstances are the very things that will help us learn to trust Him. As we read this story we see Israel faced with a faith situation. Read the whole story and examine the passage in the *Into the Story* section and see what you can learn about trusting God's ways when you are uncertain.

### **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.*

- *Underline* the specific commands God gives the children of Israel in this story.
- What promises does God make to the children in this story?
- *Circle* the different people and people groups in this story.
- What is significant about the way God describes the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites as “brothers”?
- Why do you think God made the Israelites wander and wait 38 years before coming back to this pivotal point of decision about the Promised Land again?
- What words or phrases in this story do you think are key to understanding God's guidance and our faithfulness to His Word?
- What do you think is the central lesson taught in this story?
- How do you think the Israelites felt faced with the same challenge the previous generation failed to achieve?
- Read the entire story (Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11). Given that it ends in victory, how would you title the entire story so that it captures the challenge and result of their faithfulness?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Luke 5:1-6; Exodus 4:1-12; Proverbs 3:5.

### **Sharing Context and Background**

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

**Background.** It is critical to remember that the book of Deuteronomy is predominantly a public discourse given by Moses to the children of Israel, and mostly to those who had been born in the desert. The older generation had failed to trust fully in God's power and had not believed at a pivotal moment in their journey. They were rerouted to wander for 38 years and learn to trust and obey God's guiding ways. Now, the current generation camps for two months, and Moses reminds them of where they have been, what God has said, and what He promises to do on behalf of His children. The events leading up to the

conquest of Bashan and the victory itself mark a lesson of faith learned by the children of God.

There are several key angles of this story to discuss with the class. The *Out of the Story* section sets the tone and the direction of the oncoming events. It might be helpful to have the students read the entire section (Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11).

1. One angle in this story depicts a gentle, tight-rope walk of diplomacy between the children of Israel and the tribes that stood in the way of their getting to the Promised Land. God's direct command was:
  - a. "They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. . . ." In a way, God is saying, "There does not need to be any bloodshed, so don't make any sudden moves as you move through their land." This cautious and civil approach is a theme as they journey. They were supposed to "buy food" and "buy water" and ensure the inhabitants that they were not going to inhabit that territory.
  - b. God had promised Esau his own land, and even though his descendants chose to live outside of a relationship with God, God honored His word to them. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* states: "God deals faithfully even with those outside of the covenant relationship. God had promised certain temporal blessings to the descendants of Esau, and would fulfill His word" (vol. 1, p. 961). Perhaps it would be appropri-

### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Pair-a-phrase

Reading Scripture is not always the most engaging of activities for youth because the words and phrases are so familiar. Sometimes it helps to challenge them to rewrite a passage in their own words without using any of the original words (except *to, it, the, and,* etc.). Compound the value of the exercise by having the students pair up, making individual paraphrases, then making one together. Invite the students to report their paraphrases and make sure you affirm them, noting the insights that they have expressed. As a result, the students truly process the meaning of the passage to arrive at their own take on the verse.

ate to ask of the students, "How does God want us to relate to people who live in total opposition to the Christian faith?"

2. Another angle to pursue with the class might be the significant size of the Israelites' enemies. In Deuteronomy 2:20 and 3:11 there is reference to the Rephaim, or the giants. These giants are compared to the Anakites because of their size, and given the size of the king's iron bed, they might have stood up to 13 feet tall.

## 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.*

The ultimate lesson from this story is that the children of Israel obeyed God’s guiding words and found that God works sometimes diplomacy, and other times through more aggressive ways. Either way, God’s way yields victory.

### III. CLOSING

#### **Activity**

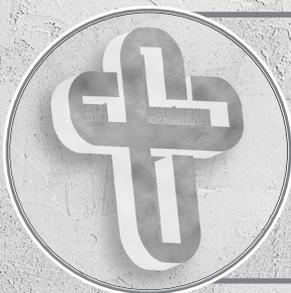
*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

One of the chief lessons of this story is the wisdom of learning from the mistakes of those who have gone before you. Invite an older person to respond to the following interview questions: Would you please share an example of learning from someone’s positive example? Would you please share an example of how you learned from someone’s mistake? If there were one piece of advice you would give a young person about trusting God in uncertain times, what would it be?

#### **Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

The children that were born in the desert had to know about their parents’ failure to trust God as they approached the Promised Land. Perhaps they heard stories or remembered songs that captured the sadness and made them determined to trust God to deliver, protect, and prosper His people. The challenge doesn’t get any easier the older you get. God will always bring us to the land of the giants where our only hope is in Him. Our *duty* is linked to our *destiny*—to be victorious by God’s hand, not our own. Remember the words of Solomon who said, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV). Just look at the track record God has in being both faithful and amazing as you face obstacles and adversity. The challenges may seem like giants to us, but God is undefeated.



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)*, chapter 39.



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## STUDENT LESSON

**Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11.

**Commentary:** *Patriarchs and Prophets, (or Beginning of the End)*, chapter 39.

### the trust test



Photo by Jennifer and Company

### flashlight

“Everyone who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief. The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost. The difficulties that seem so formidable, that fill your soul with dread, will vanish as you move forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 437).

### keytext

“The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.”

**(Deuteronomy 2:7, NIV)**

# what do you think?

**Voting:** Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (B) with the following statements and be ready to explain why.

- \_\_\_ God expects us to be 100 percent certain before we step out and choose to obey Him.
- \_\_\_ God expects us to follow Him with blind faith in His leading.
- \_\_\_ God expects us to use reason and facts to make our decisions about His will.

## Either/Or

Which do you think is a more effective way to learn: learning from others' mistakes or from their good example? Choose one and explain your reasons. Think of an example.

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## did you know?

**S**everal groups of big people are referred to in the Bible:

**Nephilim**—existed very early in human history;

**Rephaim**—occupied the land prior to the Canaanites;

**Anakim**—lived in the south, near Hebron and were defeated by the Israelites under Joshua;

**Emim**—a warrior tribe of giants that were defeated by Chedor-laomer and his allies around the time of Abraham (see Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10, 11; 3:11).

How big were the giants the Israelites faced? Moses says, "We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:33, NIV). Why might the ten spies have said this?

In any case, the enemy was unmistakably large, making the miracle of God's victory equally large.

## INTO THE STORY

"Then we turned back and set out toward the wilderness along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir.

"Then the LORD said to me, 'You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north. Give the people these orders: "You are about to pass through the territory of your relatives the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink."'

"The LORD your God

has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.

"So we went on past our relatives the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab.

"Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.'

"(The Emites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites. Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the LORD gave them as their possession.)

"And the LORD said, 'Now get up and cross the Zered Valley.' So we crossed the valley. Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them."

(Deuteronomy 2:1-14, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

What specific commands does God give the children of Israel in the story? *Underline* them.

What promises does God make to the children in this story?

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What words or phrases in this story are key?

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*Circle* the different people or people groups in this story.

Before entering the Promised Land, why do you think God made the Israelites wander and wait 38 years before coming back to this pivotal point?

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What do you think is the central lesson taught in this story?

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*Underline* what you think is the most important phrase or verse in this story.

How do you think the Israelites felt when faced with the challenge that their forefathers had failed 40 years before?

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## punch lines

**“Therefore, since the promise** of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. . . . But the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed” (**Hebrews 4:1, 2, NIV**).

**“Some trust in chariots** and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God” (**Psalm 20:7, NIV**).

**“I can do all this** through him who gives me strength” (**Philippians 4:13, NIV**).

**“Though you have not** seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (**1 Peter 1:8, 9, NIV**).

**“And those who know** your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you” (**Psalm 9:10, NRSV**).

**“In you our ancestors** put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them” (**Psalm 22:4, NIV**).

## further insight

**“Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good.”**—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 253.

**“In order to strengthen faith, we must often bring it in contact with the word.”**—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 254.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Hebrews 4:11 and Titus 2:7.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you were challenged to choose the better way to learn. It could be said that both the mistakes others make and their success stories serve us well as examples when making decisions. Hebrews 4:11 urges believers to enter salvation's rest using the example of disobedience as an action to avoid. Titus encourages believers to "set them an example by doing what is good" (Titus 2:7, NIV). What is one of the most powerful lessons you have learned in your spiritual journey?

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## Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 2 and 3.

Read the story of how Israel was led back through the land of the giants. Pay special attention to Deuteronomy 2:7. With what spirit do you think Israel was to journey through the lands of their enemies? As you read this entire section in Deuteronomy 2 and 3, what theme do you pick up as Israel was challenged again to face such a seemingly impossible task?

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What are some challenges you face today that you sense God is asking you to trust Him with?

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## Monday

Read Deuteronomy 2:7.

The *Key Text* this week is Deuteronomy 2:7, which conveys a beautiful reminder of God's enduring care for Israel during a season when they were to learn what it means to lean fully on God's guidance. Paraphrase this passage in your own words, not using any of the major terms or phrases that the Bible uses. Try to capture the essence of this verse as if the

message were given to you personally.

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## Tuesday

Read Psalm 20:7.

The *Flashlight* passage from *Patriarchs and Prophets* contains a reality check, an assurance, and a command that will test your ability to trust God completely with your life. Identify the reality check, the assurance, and the command and reflect on the parts that speak to you personally.

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Reflect on the heroes of faith in your life. Perhaps they are church members, or historical or biblical characters that have been an inspiration to you. Which faith hero can you hear passionately proclaiming the words of the *Flashlight* quote with conviction and experience?

## Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and identify one or two verses that speak to you today. Perhaps there is someone you know who faces a challenge that seems impossible. Or, maybe you have a friend that struggles with faith and turns to their own wisdom when they should trust and obey God, no matter what might happen. Consider praying for that person and possibly encouraging them with one of the *Punch Lines* passages. It may be that your encouragement this week is just what they need to reach out to God and lean fully on His promises.

## Thursday

Read Philippians 4:13.

It is sometimes said, "The devil is in the details," but so is God. On a piece of paper or in a journal, make a list of the many events in your life when you trusted God and He was faithful. List the big things as well as the small things, or the details. As you consider how God has led you in the past, what new challenges do you want to trust Him with in

the future? Imagine that each challenge is like knocking on the door of the giants.

List at the top of a piece of paper the upcoming opportunities you will have to lean fully on God. Beneath, write out a prayer thankfully mentioning a few of the pivotal moments of faith you have already experienced and commit your future to God, no matter where He might lead you. Think of at least three areas of your life in which you want to follow God explicitly and include them in your prayer.

## Friday

Read Psalm 22:4.

Take some time and think about some of the more challenging leaps of faith that you remember people taking in Scripture. It may be that some, like the children of Israel, can better liken their journey to a roller-coaster ride going up and down with success and failure. To what would you liken your journey or your relationship with God? If you could change anything about your relationship with God, what would it be?

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## this week's reading\*

*Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 39.

\**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](http://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.