



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 10 2019

promises don't die

Scripture Story: Joshua 1–5:12.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 44.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week the focus is on promises and on the constancy of God in the lives of His people. We see a nation that might have fallen apart with the death of Moses, but rather encourages Joshua to be bold and courageous and decides to follow him. As well, we see a God who transfers His promises to Moses' successor. His Word is His bond, and He will not forget a promise that He has made.

As you teach this week, remind the students that we have all made promises that we have not kept. Oftentimes the reasons for not keeping promises are very valid; however, it is still a fact that they are promises not kept. This is often a very sore spot for teenagers as they are looking for someone who is solid in their lives. Remind them that we all fall short; however, there is One who has made promises that will always be kept. Show them scriptures that verify this, and show them anecdotal evidence in your life that will truly attest to how good God is at keeping His promises.

We know that fidelity is important for young people. Kenda Creasy Dean, considered a “theologian of youth culture,” delineates in her book *Practicing Passion* these three important aspects of spiritual life—being there, being known, and being moved. “Being there” is incredibly important for young people. This story shows how God is there for us in not only words, but action. It also shows the transcendence of His grace toward us as evidenced by God allowing His promises to continue through generations.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* that God's promises are always kept.
- *Feel* that God has made promises to them that He will keep.
- *Respond* by taking their own promises seriously and working to fulfill their word in others' lives.

III. EXPLORE

- New earth
- Grief
- Leadership

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Where all can see, make a list of the people below. Ask the students to rank them from (1) the person or group most likely to keep their promises to you to (10) the person or group least likely to keep their promises to you.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Father | _____ Teacher |
| _____ Mother | _____ Pastor |
| _____ Sister | _____ Friend |
| _____ Brother | _____ Advertisers |
| _____ Grandparent(s) | _____ God |

Discuss their responses. You could add up all the numbers assigned to each person/group, then divide

by the number of rankings provided by your students, and you will have an overall class ranking. More discussion might be interesting after that is done.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

My parents were great at making promises. And most of the time they kept their word. However, there was one time that I listened to them make a promise to my sister, who was a few years older than I was. They promised that if she came up with one quarter of the money for a bike, they would put in the rest of the money. It sounded like a great plan to me! I needed a new bike, and I knew just the one I wanted. It was down at the local bike shop, and it was called a “Bandito”! It was all white—white frame, white handlebars, white tires even. I couldn’t wait. To make money I did everything that I could, from mowing lawns to cleaning pools to picking fruit. I just wanted that bike so bad.

In the meantime my sister had done some babysitting, and she now had her shiny new 10-speed bike. I couldn’t wait to get mine.

A few weeks later, I had come up with one quarter of the money for my Bandito. I went to my parents, laid the cash on the table and said, “Let’s go.” My parents looked at me kind of funny. They asked me what I was talking about. I told them about the deal they had with my sister and how I just assumed that we would have the same deal. They smiled. Then they laughed, which wasn’t a good sign.

My dad explained to me that they had made the deal with my sister based on her grades, and that my grades were nowhere close to where hers were. Therefore, I would need to come up with at least one half of the money for my bike that, besides, cost twice as much as hers did. Needless to say, I was heartbroken. And I had to work for months to come up with more money. But I did learn something—a promise made to someone else is not necessarily a promise made to me.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The situation in the previous story is repeated often in life. However, in our Scripture passage, especially the first chapter of Joshua, you see that what happened to the person in the story did not happen

to Joshua. God had decided to honor the promise He made to Moses and to the people of Israel. Just because the leader changed, God did not forget what He had promised to the children of Israel. Besides that, God was glorified by the actions of His followers as they found their way into Jericho as spies.

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.

You know this lesson is about promises. And we have a tendency to look at the story from the perspective of God’s chosen people. However, what if we looked at it from the point of view of the people who lived in the Promised Land? Ask these questions and have the students come up with some answers:

1. How would you feel if a foreign nation attacked and occupied your land?
2. How would you feel if this nation claimed that their God was the one who gave them the right to occupy your land?
3. What if you had heard about all the amazing things that had happened to them over the years and you knew that your town was next?
4. What do you think is the best way to deal with these “chosen” people? Would you go to meet them, open wide your doors, go on the defensive?

Have the students role-play different scenarios that might have arisen as occupants of the Israelites’ “Promised Land” tried to figure out how to face them. Ask them to come up with different ideas about how to handle the invaders and their God. Have fun, and see if they come up with anything creative.

Ask them these questions:

1. Would you ever doubt God if He led you by a pillar of smoke and fire? If He was present in your life in a literal way every day, wouldn’t it be easier to know there was a God?
2. What would you do in life if this were the case? If you knew you were following the will of God without a shadow of a doubt, how would you live your life differently? Would you be more bold in the way you went about things?

Share with them that even though we don’t have a visual context in which to see God in our lives, we can look at where we have been and see where God worked. Give them examples and ask them to share

where God has worked in their lives.

Sharing Context and Background

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

There are many amazing facts about this story, and the story leading up to the crossing of the River Jordan. First of all, there is some discussion as to how many people actually left Egypt and went to the Promised Land. Some argue that there were millions, while others argue that there were just a few thousand. While this doesn't change the context of the story, it does make for interesting thought. How much more powerful would God have to be if there were just a few thousand Israelites as opposed to a few million? Or would it have been harder to handle a few million people? How do a few million people travel together? These are interesting questions.

If you ever go to Israel and have a chance to see the ancient ruins of Jericho, you will be amazed. The first thing that hits you is what a great place it is in the middle of desert. There are date palm trees and other fruit trees growing. It truly is an oasis in the desert. No wonder people lived there. When you go to the ruins you see that the city was not as big as you might have imagined it. It is really very small by modern standards. However, this does not diminish the miracles that were worked by God in this instance. In ancient times the city was considered impregnable and was a huge obstacle for the children of Israel.

As well, there are some major themes that can be picked up throughout this passage of Scripture:

1. **Be bold and courageous.** As Joshua assumed leadership of Israel, he was encouraged to be "strong and courageous" (1:18). Perhaps that is a good lesson for those of us who live our lives trying to follow God's will.
2. **Promises are for keeping.** God doesn't promise what He cannot deliver. Regardless of the object of the promise (see Joshua 1:3), God fulfills what He set out to do for His people.

Promises we make and keep honor God. In dealing with Rahab (chapter 2) the spies honored God by protecting her family for her. We, in the same way, honor God by being people of our word and following through on what we say we will do.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words:

Bring the students together and spend a bit of time talking about promises that we make to God. Remind them that those promises are important as well in building our relationship with Him. Have each one write on a small piece of paper something that they want to promise God. Have them fold these papers into their Bibles as a constant reminder that our promises matter to God.

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.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Peer Voices

Students learn by listening to many different voices. It would be great if, while you prepare this lesson, you could get a few students who are in your leadership team and have them go through the material with you. They will feel included, take ownership, and perhaps teach better than you ever could have. Students love to hear their peers tell of their experience and often learn from each other much more than they learn from us.

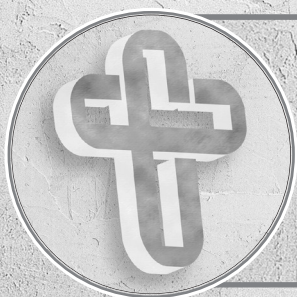
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Summary

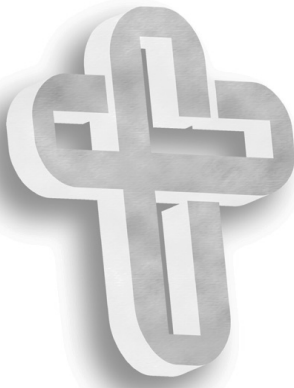
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The concept of “being there” is vital to a young person’s experience with God. This story allows them to understand that God not only loves them, but is willing to be in continual relationship with them regardless of what they do. When we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. As you can see in Joshua, chapter 2, we are ambassadors of God’s promises when we keep the promises that we make in His name. It is important that we show to others the fidelity God shows to us.

In this lesson we see a people willing to follow a leader who leans upon the words of God, a leader who takes the legacy of his predecessor and is willing to follow in his footsteps. This is an important example for us, the leaders, depending on the words of God, leading those who will come after us. Our legacy will be those young people who grow a passion for Jesus Christ and who carry on where we leave off in showing others the fidelity that Christ shows us.



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 44.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Joshua 1–5:12.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets, (or Beginning of the End),* chapter 44.

promises don't die



Photo by Coleen Cahill

flashlight

"While they were filled with grief at their great loss [of Moses], the people knew that they were not left alone. The pillar of cloud rested over the tabernacle by day, and the pillar of fire by night, an assurance that God would still be their guide and helper if they would walk in the way of His commandments" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481).

keytext

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."

(Joshua 1:7, NIV)

what do you think?

Below is a list of people who routinely make promises to you in your life. Beside their names, indicate whether or not they have: broken a promise (BP), kept a promise (KP), or forgot a promise (FP).

<input type="checkbox"/> Father	<input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend/girlfriend
<input type="checkbox"/> Mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastor
<input type="checkbox"/> Sister	<input type="checkbox"/> Friend
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother	<input type="checkbox"/> Government
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisers
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	

Spend some time remembering the circumstances in which each of these broke, kept, or forgot their promise to you. List them on a sheet of paper in the order they appear above. Then ask yourself the following: Who promised the most? Who delivered on their promise?

did you know?

Did you know that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh did not cross over into the Promised Land? Yet they strongly encouraged Joshua to be a man of God and told him that the rest of the Israelites would follow him.

Did you know that there was another miraculous water crossing besides the one on the way out of Egypt? While it perhaps pales in comparison with the crossing of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan seems to be no less spectacular as the Israelites enter the Promised Land. Read Joshua chapter 3 for a description.

INTO THE STORY

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.’

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this book of the law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.’

“So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ‘Go through the camp and tell the people, “Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.” ’

“But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ‘Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you after he said, “The LORD your God will give you rest by giving you this land.” Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise.’

“Then they answered Joshua, ‘Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against

your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!”

(Joshua 1, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is something that stands out to you in this passage about promises?

Why did God agree to honor the promises that He made to Moses as well as to Joshua?

Why do you think the two and a half tribes stayed behind?

Why is it important to note that God honors His promises?

In the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 (also a part of this week’s Scripture portion), how did the people of the Promised Land feel about the Israelites coming to their land?

Circle a promise in this passage that you can adapt to your own life right now.

Underline any part that is confusing to you right now. Pray for God to reveal to you His character of love as He gives you a better understanding of that passage.

punch lines

“Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (Joshua 21:45, NIV).

“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed” (Romans 15:8, NIV).

“Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses” (1 Kings 8:56, NIV).

“Then they believed his promises and sang his praise” (Psalm 106:12, NIV).

“From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23, NIV).

“And this is what he promised us—eternal life” (1 John 2:25, NIV).

further insight

“Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 48.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Joshua 1:3-5.

Do the *What Do You Think?* exercise if you have not done so before. Look at your responses. Did you identify anyone who consistently made promises to you and broke them? Perhaps you noted many more broken promises than there were promises that were kept. This seems to be human nature. We are constantly seeing promises broken, and breaking them ourselves. Sometimes circumstances prohibit us from doing what we have said we would. God was willing to keep His word to the people of Israel and even more specifically, to carry out His promises to Moses through Joshua.

Sunday

Read the story of Rahab (Joshua 2). Look at it in the context of the promises that were made by the Israelites, by Rahab, and by God. Notice that all the promises were kept from and to each party involved. In the end, God was glorified through each promise.

Now read about the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3). When the ark of the covenant (which literally means "promise") is taken into the water, the Jordan at flood level pauses to allow the Israelites to pass unharmed into the Promised Land. What a wonderful reminder of the parting of the Red Sea, which none of these Israelites (except for Joshua) had experienced.

Monday

Read Joshua 21:45.

When you read *Into the Story* you will see that God is consistently telling His people that He will honor the promises made to Moses. Joshua understands this and in turn keeps the promises that Moses made to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manassah.

It is a matter of character to do what we say we will do. It is better to promise less in order to be able to keep the ones we do make. How does it glorify God when we keep the promises we make?

Tuesday

Read Romans 15:8.

Read the *Flashlight* section. Do you think that it would be comforting or scary to have tangible evidence that God is always with you? The pillar of smoke and the pillar of fire were a testament to the promises that God made to His people that He would always be with them.

Note that at the end of the *Flashlight* paragraph it says that God would be with them if they kept His commandments. Even though they have a tough time keeping those things that He asked of them, we see God's grace throughout the Old Testament as He does His best to stay in a covenant of love with His people. How have you seen His grace throughout your life?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines*. Is there a particular verse to which you are drawn? Do you see any significance to the order in which they have been placed? What can we say about God's promises through the history of salvation?

Write on an index card the verse that speaks most to you. Keep the card under your pillow to read before you go to bed at night and when you wake up each morning. Let it remind you of the constancy of God and His promises.

Thursday

Read James 5:12.

Think of a time when you have made a promise to someone and have not been able to keep it. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I mean to break my promise?
- When I made it, did I honestly think I could keep it?
- Does it happen often that I cannot keep my promises?

- How seriously do I take promise-making?

List the last five things you have promised people. Attach a date to them so that you know if you are taking a long time to fulfill the promises or not. Then see how quickly you can get each of the promises fulfilled. Can you do it all today? Wouldn't it feel good to have them "checked off"? Ask God to empower and motivate you by His grace.

Friday

Read 1 John 2:25.

Are promises important to you? They are obviously important to God. They are so important that He is willing to transfer His promises from people group to people group, and to entire nations. Those are big promises! Are there any promises that you have made that are a big deal in your life? Any promises that you are very determined to fulfill?

Think about those promises and what you have to do to fulfill them, and work toward that end. At the same time, spend some time in prayer that you might be a Christian of your word and honor God with the promises that you make to Him and to others.

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 44.

**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.