



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 28 2023

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 3–7.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 57.

turn it around



Photo by Colleen Cahill

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flashlight

“There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 590).

keytext

“So Samuel said to all the Israelites, ‘If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashotheths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.’”

(1 Samuel 7:3, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever done something or made a decision without thinking about the consequences? When we do things that are wrong and our actions do not have immediate consequences, sometimes we think we can get away with them. Below is a list of actions; label them by their consequences, whether they have immediate consequences (IC), delayed consequences (DC), or have no consequences (NC).

- Cheating on a test
- Making fun of the new kid
- Skipping class
- Forgetting to say your grace
- Playing with your cell phone during church
- Eating five candy bars
- Attending a Friday night basketball game
- Telling your friends a lie
- Not studying your Sabbath School lesson

did you know?

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box that God told Moses to build. It was made of wood and covered in gold. On the top of the box sat two gold-covered angels with their wings raised, facing each other. God's glory and presence dwelled between the angels (1 Samuel 4:4). God was very particular about the ark of the covenant. It was housed in the Most Holy Place. No one was to look at it, except the high priest, once a year. When it traveled, it had to be wrapped in a veil, badgers' skin, and a blue cloth to keep it hidden from human eyes.

ken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. . . .

"The LORD's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors. When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, 'The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god.' "

"They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh. . . .

"But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them."

"The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.

"Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD. So Samuel said to all the Israelites, 'If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.' . . .

"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us.'

"So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory."

INTO THE STORY

"And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

"Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. . . .

"So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

"Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. . . . But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken."

(1 Samuel 4:1, 10, 11; 5:2, 4, 6, 7; 6:11, 12, 19; 7:2, 3, 12, 13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the major players in this story?

Underline the key facts of this story.

Draw a rectangle around the verse you think contains the most important point. Why did you choose this verse?

What was significant about the fact that the god Dagon fell on his face before the ark of the Lord?

What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do to return to God?

What gods do you have in your life that you need to put away?

What new thing about God did you learn from this story?

What is the one message from this story that speaks to your life?

How can this message change the way you live for God this week?

punch lines

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:3, 4, NIV).

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isaiah 42:8, NIV).

“ **‘Come now,** let us settle the matter,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’ ” (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

“Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:7, NIV).

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).

further insight

“As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 55.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Galatians 6:7.

The *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson challenged you to look at some actions and think about the consequences. This week's lesson shows the consequences of not following God. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked priests. They performed a lot of evil acts, yet nothing happened to them for a long time. When you get away with unacceptable or ungodly behavior, are you more likely to do it again or to repent? Why do you think that is?

Sunday

Read James 2:13.

Read the *Into the Story* section, which tells of the ark of the covenant being captured, and answer the study questions provided in the *Out of the Story* section. Both the Philistines and Israel upset God and both experienced judgment from Him. What reasons can you give for God's being upset with the Israelites?

What reasons can you give for His being upset with the Philistines?

This story includes a lot of judgment and punishment. But with judgment, God always shows mercy. What elements of this story show the mercy of God?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 7:3.

Read the *Key Text* and memorize it this coming week. Israel did what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God's eyes. Israel learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from

them. God wanted them to turn from idols and give Him their complete attention and worship. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

Tuesday

Read 1 Samuel 7:2.

The quote in the *Flashlight* section lays out the steps Israel took to get back to God. They experienced sorrow for what they did and wanted to make it right. They repented which means they turned from their old ways and walked in a new direction. God calls for us to repent of wrong and experience His salvation. People often try to ignore the guilt they feel after doing wrong. What good can guilt and sorrow over wrong play in our lives?

Wednesday

Read the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section. Which verse stood out to you the most? Why? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this passage?

One of the *Punch Lines* is 2 Corinthians 7:10. In *The Message*, it reads like this: "Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets." Think about a time when you felt godly sorrow. What did you learn from that experience?

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:17.

We all know that bad behaviors and actions can keep us from God. But good activities can also keep us from God. School,

jobs, spending time with friends, and just good old fun all have their place, but sometimes we allow these activities to take priority over God. God does not want to come before just evil activities in our lives; He wants to come before *everything* in our lives. What are some activities that are not necessarily bad but have taken priority over God in your life? What can you do to make sure you have a balance between the good and God?

Friday

Read Proverbs 16:3.

When we turn from doing things our way and begin doing them God's way, God will bless us. He blessed Israel with deliverance from the Philistines. When Israel repented, they were heard by God and were helped by God. Samuel set up a stone memorial so that Israel would remember how God helped them. He called it Ebenezer, which means "a stone of help." Can you find a symbol that will help you remember the commitment you made to God this week? Write a prayer dedicating your life to God. Place your symbol in a prominent place so you will remember your commitment.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 57.

*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.