



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 22 2007

Scripture Story: Leviticus 23; 27:30-33; Haggai 1:2-11.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 50, 51, 52.

famines and feasts



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 oil, and the first-born 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)

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).

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. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the Lord. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he 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 for the Lord's house to be built.'"

"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 the 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 his 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 oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on 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 “tithe” 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 your house and your father’s house 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 man rob God?** Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ ‘In tithes and offerings’” (Malachi 3:8, NIV).

“**And he is not served** by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men 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).

other eyes

“**The world asks, ‘What does a man own?’; Christ asks, ‘How does he use it?’**”—Andrew Murray, 19th-20th-century South African minister.

“**God entrusts us with money as a test; for like a toy to the child, it is training for handling things of more value**”—Fred Smith, *Leadership*, vol. 4, no. 1.

“**He who bestows his goods upon the poor shall have as much again and ten times more.**”—John Bun-

yan, 17th-century English preacher and author.

Sabbath

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 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* into a modern paraphrase.

Tuesday

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, hear the music, and see the dancing.

Thursday

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

After reading chapter 51, "God's Care for the Poor," in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, consider the poem "I Am Still Hungry."

I was hungry and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release.

I was naked and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was lonely and you left me alone to pray for me.

You seem so close to God; but I am still very hungry, and lonely, and cold.

—Anonymous.

Now 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!

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 50, 51, 52.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.