



POWERFUL LESSONS FROM LESS FAMILIAR OLD TESTAMENT STORIES

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LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Teaching Principles

We need to teach our students principles. Often students walk away from class remembering a story but not understanding the gospel principle connected to it. Elder Richard G. Scott said, “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

President Marion G. Romney taught, “The scriptures have been written to preserve principles for our benefit” (“Records of Great Worth,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 4).

Five Terms to Know

See *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (2001), pages 13–15; 32–38. *Note:* The handbook should be read again and again.

- *Readiness.* Students are ready and willing to learn.
- *Participation.* Students willingly and actively participate.
- *Application.* Students accept and live the principles taught.
- *Searching.* Students look for or mark answers in the scripture verses.
- *Analysis.* Students discuss scripture verses or make comparisons between then and now.

Examples of Searching Activities

- Look for the number of different plagues mentioned in the chapter headings of Exodus 7–12.
- Look for something that is meaningful to you.
- Mark three things the Lord promised Abraham.
- Look for which of the following three statements (written on the board) is true.

Examples of Analysis Activities

- Why do you think it took ten plagues for pharaoh to relent? How is that similar to what happens today?
- Why did you choose that phrase as the most meaningful?
- Which promise would you want most?

- How would life be different if all three statements were true?
- *Note:* There are many other types of analyze activities besides asking questions. For example, you can have students perform skits or make movies showcasing principles from “then” that show up in life “now.”

Examples of Application Activities

- Write down your response to these questions: “What have you felt . . .?”
- Who could share an experience with this?
- I testify to you that . . .
- Take a minute to ponder on what the Lord might say to you about . . .
- *Note:* Application can often take place after using media, such as CES videos or music.

LESSON IDEAS FOR TEACHING LESS FAMILIAR OLD TESTAMENT STORIES

Principle: Don’t Complain. Numbers 11:1

Rearrange with a student to vocally complain just as you are getting ready to teach Numbers 11. Ask the student to come up in front of the class. Ask: What should be the consequences for complaining? Have students read this verse and look for what happened to those who complained. Ask: What does this tell us about how the Lord feels about complaining?

Principle: Even Great People Can Fall into Satan’s Traps. Judges 8:24–27

After teaching students about the wonderful things Gideon did (see Judges 6–8), ask a student to come up to the front of the class and sit on a mousetrap. (It is very unlikely that sitting on a mousetrap would harm a student; nevertheless, you should not actually let the student sit on it.)

Have students read Judges 8:24–27 and look for the snare that caught Gideon. Ask: How could someone as righteous as Gideon fall into idolatry? In what ways could something similar happen today? (Example: A young man and a young woman who really like each other might fall into the snare of steady dating.)

Principle: Don’t Do Something Foolish for a Cute Member of the Opposite Sex. Judges 16:4–21

Have a student come up and read Judges 16:4–21 aloud. Stop the student frequently to make sure that the class understands what is going on. For example: “Wait a minute! Samson tells Delilah that if he is bound with seven green withes he’ll lose his strength

and the next morning he's tied up with seven green withes. Now if you were Samson what would you think?"

Help students recognize that Samson was clearly doing something stupid because of the entreaties of a fair member of the opposite sex. Have students write the above principle in the margins of their scriptures.

Ask: What are some ways people do stupid things for the opposite sex today? (Students can think of hypothetical examples or examples from others. Take caution not to embarrass any students or create a situation in which students are tempted to gossip.) Ask students to think quietly to themselves and then share their ideas with a partner. Ask who would like to volunteer for their partner to share. Let some students share their example with the rest of the class.

Principle: Disobedience Is Serious. 1 Samuel 15:1–23

Play Simon Says with the class. Ask: What's the object of this game? (To do *exactly* what Simon says.) Have students look for what the Lord told Saul to do in 1 Samuel 15:3. Then have them look in verse 9 for what Saul did. Ask: What would happen to Saul if this were a game of Simon Says? Have students look in verses 22–23 for how Saul was "out." Ask students to write down their feelings about the importance of being obedient to God's commandments.

Note: You could also have students look for what Saul originally said to Samuel and his excuse for keeping the live animals (see vv. 13–15). Compare this with what Saul said was his real reason for not killing all the oxen (see v. 24).

Principle: Breaking the Law of Chastity Can Lead to Hate. 2 Samuel 13:1–15

Note: This is a story that some people may find objectionable. Use caution when sharing it, particularly as some students may have been involved in incestuous relationships.

Ask: Why do you think people break the law of chastity? (Get several responses.) Often young people act in an immoral way because they do not want the other person to leave them. Ask your class whether they believe that immorality leads to love.

Summarize the first thirteen verses of 2 Samuel 13 (you may want to avoid mentioning the relationship between Amnon and Tamar). Stress the fact that Amnon was very much "in love" with Tamar. Have students look for what happened in verses 14–15 when Tamar refused to lie with Amnon. Ask: How did Amnon feel toward Tamar after being immoral with her? Share the following quote from President Ezra Taft Benson:

"Do not be misled by Satan's lies. There is no lasting happiness in immorality. There is no joy to be found in breaking the law of chastity. Just the opposite is true. There may be momentary pleasure. For a time it may seem like everything is wonderful. But quickly the relationship will

sour. Guilt and shame set in. We become fearful that our sins will be discovered. We must sneak and hide, lie and cheat. Love begins to die. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, and even hate begin to grow. All of these are the natural results of sin and transgression" ("The Law of Chastity," *New Era*, Jan. 1988, 5–6).

Testify to your students that breaking the law of chastity will not lead to the love they desire.

Principle: Get Rid of Evil Influences. 2 Chronicles 15:1–9

Have three students come up to the front of the class to perform a readers' theater version of these verses. One student is Asa, one Azariah, and another is the narrator. Ask the class to listen for principles as they hear these verses.

Discuss verse 8. What did Asa "put away"? What does the verse say it took for Asa to do this? What are "abominable idols" that we should put away today? Would it take courage for you to do this? You might share an experience in which you have thrown out some entertainment you felt was objectionable.

Principle: Don't Marry outside the Covenant. Ezra 9:1–3

Have the group read Ezra 9:1–3 and look for what upset Ezra so much that he plucked the hair off his beard. Ask: Why do you think Ezra was so mad about this? How do you think the prophet today feels when people are married outside of the covenant?

Testify of the importance of marriage inside the covenant. Invite students to write down their feelings about temple marriage.

Principle: Attributes to Develop for Marriage. Proverbs 31:10–31

Make paper cutouts of boys and girls. Give the paper boys to the young women and the paper girls to the young men. On the cutouts, have students write a list of attributes of the spouse they hope to have some day. Encourage them to emphasize characteristics other than physical.

Have students look in Proverbs 31:10–31 for characteristics of the ideal woman. (You may need to explain individual verses and translate them into character traits that students can identify with.) Ask: How could these traits apply to men? Have students write additional verses to Proverbs 31 describing a virtuous man. Have some students share their ideas with the class.

Principle: The Wicked Persecute the Righteous; Do What Is Right Anyway. Jeremiah 20:2–9

Ask students: Have any of you ever been teased or put down for doing something that was good? (Let one or two share.) Jeremiah was also persecuted for doing what was correct. Look in verses 2, 8 for the good Jeremiah did and the immediate consequences. (Let students share what they find.) Ask: Without looking at your scriptures, how do you think Jeremiah felt? Have students follow along as you read verses 7–9 and mark some of the feelings Jeremiah had. Ask: Why didn't Jeremiah back down? Do we have God's word in our heart like a burning fire? Give the students a

minute to ponder how this story could apply in their lives. Testify that when we do what is right, we are in good company.

Principle: Follow the Word of Wisdom; Don't Give in to Peer Pressure. Daniel 1:8–17

Have some pulse (foods made of seeds, grains, beans, and so on) and juice for the students to eat and drink as they come into class. After the devotional ask students what they would have chosen if they had a choice between pulse and juice or a donut and soda.

Have students read Daniel 1:8–13 and look for Daniel's situation. Ask: How is this situation similar to eating pulse versus a donut? How is it different? What type of pressure was Daniel under to drink wine? Have you experienced similar pressure? How did you respond?

Have students mark the result of the ten-day competition in verses 14–17. Ask: What could this tell us about what we choose to put into our bodies?

LESS FAMILIAR OLD TESTAMENT STORIES (YOU CREATE YOUR OWN IDEAS)

There are many principles found in each of the following stories. I have listed just one principle per story; you may find many more. As you study these stories, consider how you will teach them in a way that the students will be able to clearly identify, apply, and remember the principle.

Abraham 1:11. Principle: Do what is right; let the consequence follow.

1 Samuel 8:1–22. Principle: Don't try to emulate the world.

1 Samuel 16:14–23. Principle: Good music can help us spiritually.

1 Samuel 23:16. Principle: Have friends who strengthen you spiritually.

1 Samuel 30:3–8. Principle: Encourage yourself in the Lord.

2 Samuel 24:17–25. Principle: Don't give only that which costs nothing.

1 Kings 12. Principle: Follow the counsel of trusted elders.

2 Kings 18:1–7. Principle: Destroy evil influences (compare with *2 Kings 12:1–3*).

Nehemiah 6. Principle: If I pray and work in faith, then I can conquer Satan.

Esther 4:11–14. Principle: Be prepared for what the Lord needs you to do.

Proverbs 7:6–27. Principle: Avoid temptation.

HELPING STUDENTS REMEMBER PRINCIPLES

Remember that as we search the scriptures we should look for principles. Part of our goal as teachers is to help students discover and apply principles from the scriptures we study. The following recommendations are intended to help you help your students remember the principles they have learned.

1. At the end of the day, ask students to summarize the principles they learned.
2. Have students write principles in their scriptures.
3. Give students time to look over the principles they've written in their scriptures.
4. Shake students' hands as they leave class, and ask them to tell you a principle they learned that day.