

YOU ARE THERE

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

WANDERINGS: SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTION NOTES

As mentioned elsewhere, these notes are *not* the “answer key.” They are suggestions for where the discussion questions in this book can go, but feel free to go in entirely different directions. (In fact, feel free to introduce other questions.) The notes below are deliberately brief, so as to provide suggestions and pointers, but not “official” answers. In some cases, there are follow-up questions that you might add to the discussion.

1. CALEB

- Possibles: Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:25-31), Moses & plagues (Exodus 7 – 11), David & Goliath (1 Samuel 17).
 - Possibles: become a Christian and go to heaven; stand up to a bully; stand up for the right choice when no one else will.
- These are harder for students to come up with. Possibles: be a good person, avoid bad habits, convince someone he or she is wrong without using Godly gentleness and meekness.
 - Helps with avoiding sin, correcting sin (yours or others'), sometimes with physical illness/injury, etc.
Doesn't help with winning games, acing tests, financial riches, etc.
- The only way to make atonement (to cover up our sin, to remove it from between us and God) is to take advantage of Christ's sacrifice.
 - Our offerings today are primarily of ourselves (our time, our effort, our faith); material/physical offerings are secondary (2 Corinthians 8:3-5). We must give ourselves freely to God (not reluctantly) for our offerings to be “sweet.”

2. A CHILD OF A CHILD OF ISRAEL

- There's a wide variety of possible answers. Some parents would respond well, others wouldn't. The most mature would be disappointed, but would work to make sure their children were ready to obey God.
 - This is the more important question — how would the students respond to adversity and disappointment?
- God expects us to obey exactly (not approximately). He doesn't accept “they made me angry” as an excuse.
 - God doesn't let a few sins slide, even if you're as good as Moses. If we sin, we must deal with that sin. Even if we repent and are forgiven, there are sometimes consequences that we can't avoid.
 - A fiery serpent's bite kills, just as sin kills. Looking at the bronze serpent saves the Israelites from physical death, just as appealing to Christ saves you from eternal death (John 3:14-16, 1 Peter 3:21).
- Sin offerings are for sins you unintentionally commit; guilt offerings are for sins you commit intentionally. Both require forgiveness.
 - Various answers. Make sure they realize that forgiveness is a much easier process today (no dead cattle required), but it still requires a sincere heart and repentance.

3. BALAAM

- The temptation is to do it, since you don't know for sure that it's wrong. But if you're not sure, you should study to find out what God thinks about it. In the meantime, it's usually better to be safe than sorry. (Safe: not doing it / sorry: for doing something that's wrong.)
- Good idea: for repeated needs, including forgiveness, health & healing, daily bread, and so forth. Not good: when God has already answered, or for something inappropriate (such as material riches) Balaam gets an answer the first time: No. He already knows that God doesn't want what he's asking when he asks again. God doesn't answer our requests directly like He answers Balaam, but we should try to realize when God has answered us, and to not keep asking.
- Matthew 19:19, 22:39, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8
 - Possible answers include: making sure my neighbor knows as much about God as I do; showing God's love to them; making their spiritual safety more important than my physical comfort.

4. MOSES' LAST WORDS

- There's no telling what answers you'll get, but try to make sure the answers include the types of things that Moses gave — encouragement, warning, love, advice, wisdom, etc.
- Again, there's no telling (and no “right” answer). This is leading into the second half.
 - A summing up, with (hopefully), more good elements than bad. Looking back with positive emotions (fondness, pride, love), and looking forward to the next life with eager anticipation (like Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:8).

- Active forgiveness for stealing, hateful attitude and words, bullying, lying, etc. Also, helping those who need help, even though their sins caused their problems; helping people to become better, even though they've sinned against you; etc.
 - Factors may include whether you are the only one injured, whether a law was broken, whether there were physical damages or loss ...

5. RAHAB

- Pressure, guilt (guilt trips), shunning, disbelief (that you've really changed), and so forth.
 - Support, a shoulder to lean on, someone to discuss things with, help finding God's true will, and so forth.
- This is one of the eternal questions, so you're unlikely to reach a unanimous resolution in class. Make sure both possibilities (sin/not sin) are fairly considered, and be careful about insisting on an absolute answer yourself. Note that other actions which would normally be sins are not (e.g., David — not a Levite — eating the bread of the presence in 1 Samuel 21:6, watering your animals on the Sabbath in Luke 13:15).
 - There isn't one definite answer here, but rather strategies that you can try (but which won't always work). Thinking ahead of future consequences and praying to God for wisdom are two good strategies; so is learning from experience. Finding ways to answer unfortunate questions (“Where are the spies?”) which aren't lies or misdirections but which don't betray someone is also good if you can do it.
- This is a question that you must answer for yourself. You contribute what you decide is right for you, but give *yourself* (commit yourself) first (2 Corinthians 8:5). Tithing is certainly a legitimate approach, but just as certainly it's not *required*; just make sure that you're giving freely and not begrudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:7). If you make it a rote decision, without really thinking about what you're doing, its value is lessened in God's sight.
 - It makes it easy to decide, but it's not necessarily the best decision. Some might have more to give; some not be able to afford 10%.

6. STONE CARRIER

- You'll probably get the whole range of reactions: sad, proud, wanted to learn more, didn't really know what it was about, didn't see the big deal, and so forth. Be sure to discuss the reason for a memorial, and how its builders want you to respond.
 - The twelve stones represent the twelve tribes that God has led to the Promised Land (the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and others). They mark where God parted the Jordan River so that the could enter. They remind you of God's promise, what He has done to keep that promise, and what He has given you.
 - The Lord's Supper: the bread and juice should remind us of Jesus' body and blood sacrificed for us.
 - Set up memorial (a reminder of God's power in leading Israel). Circumcise men (a reminder that they are a special people, dedicated to God). Eat the Passover (among other things, to remind them of the blessings of obedience and the punishment of disobedience).
 - We become clean through baptism (a symbolic washing). We should work to get rid of bad habits, develop good habits, and focus ourselves on following God. What bad habits do you need to get rid of? What good habits should you develop?
- Crossing the Jordan River gets the Israelites into the Promised Land. Today, death gets the Christian into the promised eternal home.
- Unclean = anything that includes sin, or leads to sin. Possibilities include: books, magazines, movies and songs that lead to sinful thoughts. Drugs that harm your body (including alcohol and tobacco). Possibly also sinful habits.

7. PRIEST AT JERICHO

- Possible points include: obeying Me is more important than what you specifically do (if God had commanded it, they could have conquered Jericho by standing on their heads or by juggling balls); it's not your power, but Mine, that will conquer Canaan; you have no need to fear anyone as long as I am with you.
 - All of the points listed here apply to us. (And they apply to baptism which in itself is just getting wet — but God commands it. This is a good point to make in a class with non-Christians.)
- She doesn't give up; waits patiently; convinces her family that this is their best hope; stays put (rather than fleeing), even when the walls are collapsing (and all the other people are dying).

b. Death is something many fear. But Christians can look forward to death, as well, since it marks the end of a hard life on earth and a new life with God. We (like Rahab) have made a deal (a covenant) with someone (God) whom we can trust to do what He says. Some of the oldest Christians who can no longer offer much service here on earth are waiting as patiently as Rahab waited for God to fulfill a promise He made 2000 years ago.

3. a. Our war isn't a physical war. We oppose evil practices, but try to recruit evildoers to God. We stand against evil, but try to show everyone that God's way is better for them. And sometimes evil must be punished or locked away to keep it from harming and influencing others (that's one key reason for our government). The Israelites' physical war was definitely hard, but in many ways our warfare is harder. It's easier to say, "there's the bad guy; kill him" than it is to say, "there's the bad guy; what can we do to help him find God?"
 b. Israelite soldiers must stay clean (consecrated) because they represent God; they're God's agents. So are we. It's hard for us to stay clean in the world, but if we don't stay clean, we can't have any good influence on those around us. How likely is your friend to listen to you about God when your life is filled with bad language, mean habits, greed, and so forth?

8. CARMI

1. a. Possibles: can't do it without God; must do it God's way; must obey God; God takes disobedience seriously; etc.
 b. All of the above (might refer to Mark 8:36)
2. a. Any professional teacher can tell you that saying something makes it much more likely to be remembered than if you just hear it. Shouting makes it even easier to remember. And saying (or shouting) your commitment makes it harder to deny, later.
 b. Both of these can help, but they aren't the only ways to help you stay faithful to God. Anything you can do (even a silly memory device) that reminds you of God's promises is helpful.
3. We sometimes are punished as a result of our sins (grounding for violating house rules; prison for violating the law), but we can also suffer directly from sin (for example, injury from a drunk driving accident). Note that others can suffer from your sin, just as Achan's family suffered because of his sin. Much more importantly, God punishes us eternally for our sins if they aren't forgiven.

9. GIBEONITES

1. a. Gibeonites trick God's people, while Rahab is honest with them (but both lie). Rahab's tactic results in an honored place among the Israelites; Gibeonites end up servants. Both recognize God's power and decide to do something about it.
 b. Not many possible answers here, but it could be that if they go to Joshua and sincerely say, "we believe and accept your God. We want to turn from our sins and worship Him, too," that God would spare them. (As an example of just this, see Nineveh, in Jonah 3.) Bottom line — turning to God wholeheartedly and sincerely is exactly what He wants. (Also see Jeremiah 18:1-10.)
 c. Today, people try to hedge their acceptance of God. We must be careful to accept God on *His* terms, not designing our acceptance based on what is most comfortable to us.
2. a. By consulting God rather than making a decision on their own.
 b. This is an obvious question, but take time to make sure they've considered that prayer to God and study of God's word (both before a question comes up, and when it comes up) are real useful.
3. This has a wide range of possible answers, including: spending time with friends/teammates/co-workers and trying to influence their bad habits while not being influenced by them. Going to teach people who badly need God. Being accepted by any group who expects you to sin to be part of their group. (Actually, these might all be the same basic situation, but considering the various permutations is still useful preparation for facing it in real life.)

10. MAHLAH

1. a. It's important that they stay separate from the nations (especially the idolatry and sin of other nations; Joshua 23:1-13) and to keep the lineage from Abraham to Jesus clear.
 b. It is each family's inheritance from God. God gave it; it is each tribe's responsibility to keep and preserve that gift.
2. • Genesis 12:2, 13:16, 15:5, 22:17. A great nation (many people). Deuteronomy 1:10, 10:22
 • Genesis 12:7, 13:14-15, 17:8. Canaan. Joshua 11:16-23
 • Genesis 12:3, 22:18. All will be blessed. Acts 3:25-26, Galatians 3:8-9
 • Genesis 15:13-16. 400 yrs. of slavery, then freedom. Exodus 12:40-41
 • Genesis 15:18. From the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River. 2 Samuel 8:3, 1 Kings 4:21-24 (river of Egypt is on the map; it isn't the Nile River, but a boundary between Egypt and Canaan)

3. Our "land" is the eternal home that God has promised to us through the death of His Son. Just as God gave the Israelites Canaan, He has given us a home in heaven. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

11. ELKANAH

1. a. They aren't travelling any more; they have their own homes; they have to work for their food; clothes (etc.) have normal wear.
 b. Worship and obedience to God is still the same. Still have to follow the law (although it might have different applications — for example, having something to eat on the Sabbath takes more than collecting double on Friday; you have to think ahead), and while they no longer have the constant visual reminder of the pillars of fire and cloud, they must remember that God is always right there ready to help and protect them (just as we should consider God today.)
2. a. Simeon has no exclusive territory, but is among tribe of Judah; Levites have no land of their own but have access to cities in the other tribes' areas, and are scattered throughout the whole nation.
 b. Cause: They murdered all the men of a city for a crime committed by the prince of that city. Effects: Jacob's promise that they would be "dispersed" and "scattered" is coming to pass. While there can be practical reasons to have them scattered around rather than all living in an exclusive territory (e.g., their spiritual and civil/legal leadership), God has more than simply practical matters in mind when determining the unique arrangement for the Levites.
3. a. Today our priests are Christians; if you're a Christian, you're a priest. Priests in the time of Israel helped others understand and obey the law; that's what we should be doing today. (We don't help with sacrifices, because our one sacrifice has already been offered.)
 b. We must stay pure in thought and action; physical impurity (touching dead bodies and so forth) isn't important like it is under Moses' Law. Similarly, anyone (even a prostitute) can become clean and pure through Christ, but we must make sure that we keep our children separate and pure from the world, just as must stay separate and pure. (That doesn't mean removing ourselves from the world, but it does mean keeping the world from staining our souls.)

12. PHINEHAS

1. a. You can be physically distant and people can start forgetting you. But worse than that, you can be spiritually distant, wandering away from Christ and His family and no longer worshipping God and working with your spiritual family.
 b. Keep ties strong by paying attention to them: make sure that you spend time worshipping and working together, even when you're busy with the rest of life. And if you're physically distant, make sure you stay in touch with those you love who are far from you.
 c. Possibilities include: regular worship and work with other Christians; prayers that we offer together; service that we give each other
 d. Possibilities include: the Lord's Supper (Communion); taking the bread and fruit of the vine that reminds us of Christ's sacrifice), baptism, which symbolically buries and resurrects us just like Christ; the inspired scriptures that remind Christians of their life with Christ
2. a. The army was a rush to judgment, but sending older men ahead, to talk about it first, was wise. Topics for further discussion: making judgments based on appearances and good ways to approach someone that you think is doing something wrong.
 b. They should have let the western tribes know what they were doing ahead of time. It would also have helped if they had considered how their actions would look to someone else.
3. a. Sin
 b. Various answers. Make sure they realize that you've got to *recognize* your sin, *admit* it, and *deal* with it. If you don't try to cleanse yourself when you sin, you're much more likely to sin again soon.

13. JOSHUA

1. Pay attention to what you're doing, and keep in mind the reward that God offers to everyone who stays faithful. Use your spiritual family to help each other stay strong.
2. As a parent, lead. As a child, follow. As either, be a good example, and help the rest of your family when they need correction or support. Be there; don't stay away from your family.
3. a-b. Various possibilities, including: Cheat (yes, that breaks your word). Renegotiate it (no, doesn't break your word). Find an excuse/blame someone else (yes). Postpone (yes).
 c. Various possibilities, including: You can commit time to serving God, then waste the time doing something else. You can promise to stop sinning in a certain way, then continue the sin. You can become a Christian, then turn away from God. You can commit yourself to a spouse, then break that commitment.