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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

2ND QUARTER 2025



Boundless Freedom

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Youth Sabbath School Bible Study Guide

cornerstone connections

REAL. SOLID. STORIES.

2nd Quarter 2025
Boundless Freedom

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a word about what's ahead...

The goal of *Cornerstone Connections* is to lead you to the Bible to see the big story of God and people. This big story continues from the first generation in Eden to your generation today. It's about the lives of people as the God of the universe interacts with them.

If you are looking for a word from God that is **real**, *Cornerstone Connections* captures the message of Scripture and challenges you to make the connections to your real life.

God's Word is not only real; it is rock-**solid**. For the first generation to hear God's voice in the garden as well as the last group standing before Christ at the Second Coming, the Word of God has been and continues to be reliable.

The word from God comes to us in the **stories** of people who encountered Him and made a decision to either follow Him or walk away.

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in *Into the Story* in each lesson. *Out of the Story* will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you will also find:

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White's input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
- **Further Insight**—one or two quotes that will provide further insight into the central message of the lesson.
- **Connecting to Life**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Study the Bible lesson during the week in preparation for Sabbath School. On Sabbath you will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and elaborate on what you learned with other students in your Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God's Word apply to you personally.

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The General Conference Sabbath School Department

PS: Don't forget to check out the reading plan.



*A special modern adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. To access this book in an e-format, go to www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

2ND QUARTER 2025

April

5—Come and See! [p. 5]

On the strength of one woman's witness, an entire village was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Can one person's story really do that?

12—Seeing Is Believing? [p. 9]

A royal official believed Jesus' words that his son was healed—even before he returned to his son. A lesson in faith that can echo in our hearts still today.

19—Do You Want to Get Well? [p. 13]

Many people prefer bondage to redemption. Is it possible that the lame man by the Pool of Bethesda preferred it as well?

26—Appearance Versus Reality [p. 17]

John the Baptist had the incredible job of announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. Unfortunately, he didn't live long enough to see its ultimate fulfillment.

May

3—A Tumultuous Homecoming [p. 21]

What began for Jesus as a speaking appointment in His childhood synagogue turns into a vicious attempt on His life.

10—I Am a Follower [p. 25]

Peter and the other fishermen left everything behind to follow Jesus. What does commitment to Jesus look like in the twenty-first century?

17—Restored at Church [p. 29]

The demon-possessed man had just enough spiritual power to come to Jesus. That was all he needed. That is all we need to come to Jesus.

24—Willing and Able [p. 33]

A dying leper dares to enter society because he hears that Jesus is coming, and has never turned anyone away. Would Jesus accept him too?

31—Not Love at First Sight [p. 37]

Jesus would rather be in the midst of sinners than in a room filled with "just and noble" people. Actually, He sought them out.

June

7—Front and Center [p. 41]

Criticism didn't bother Jesus; He was used to it. But when the religious leaders missed the point about the Sabbath, offering His people an empty way of life, He couldn't let it go.

14—Jesus Calling [p. 45]

Our call to discipleship is always followed by a call to live in service to humanity. But what does that service look like?

21—Faith-FULL Soldier [p. 49]

A centurion, a servant, and a Savior. The family of God transcends all cultures and creeds.

28—"Used-to-Bes" and "Has-Beens" [p. 53]

Even when the man's best and only response to Jesus spewed hate and hopelessness, Jesus could see the tiny part of his heart that demons did not occupy. And He set him free! He can do the same for us.

Boundless Freedom

SECOND QUARTER 2025



Youth Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide



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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 05 2025

Scripture Story: John 4:1-42.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 19.

come and see!



Photo © Thinkstock 2017

flashlight

“As soon as she had found the Saviour the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised, a whole cityful were brought to hear the Saviour” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195).

keytext

“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.”

(John 4:28-30, NIV)

what do you think?

Which of the following things do you think are necessary to be a witness for Jesus? (Check any that you think apply.)

A person who wants to witness for Jesus should:

- ☐ have read the entire Bible
- ☐ be baptized
- ☐ have finished high school
- ☐ love Jesus
- ☐ be born again
- ☐ be able to lead a Bible study
- ☐ go to church regularly

did you know?

The Samaritans were a group of people living to the north of the land of Judea in Jesus' time. Samaritans believed they were the descendants of the northern tribes of Israel, who had remained in the land after most of their people were taken into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Jews believed the Samaritans were descendants of Gentiles who had settled there after the Babylonian conquest. Whatever their origins, Samaritans worshipped the God of Israel but had many customs and traditions different from the Jews. They were viewed by most Jews as being an inferior class of people, and the Jews of Jesus' time would have nothing to do with Samaritans, just as they would have nothing to do with Gentiles.

INTO THE STORY

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' . . .

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' . . .

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

"Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?' . . .

"Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

"I have no husband,' she replied.

"Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'

"Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'

"Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

"The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.'

"Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you—I am he.' . . .

"Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?' . . .

"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

"They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this

man really is
the Savior of the world.' "

(John 4:7-42, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why was the woman initially surprised at Jesus asking for a drink? What did Jesus reveal about Himself by asking this?

What do you think Jesus meant by "living water"?

Why do you think Jesus referred to her having had five husbands?

What really convinced the woman that Jesus was the Messiah?

Why do you think the Samaritans came out to hear Jesus?

What role did the woman's testimony play in converting the people of her village?

punch lines

"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' " (**Romans 10:12-15, NIV**).

"As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed" (**Mark 5:18-20, NIV**).

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (**1 Peter 3:15, NIV**).

further insight

"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary."—Ellen G. White, *The*

Desire of Ages, p. 195

"Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies?

If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 58

Sabbath

Read John 4:1-42.

Put yourself in the place of the Samaritan woman. How do you think she reacted to Jesus at different points in the story? Why did she excitedly run to the people of her city and exclaim, "Come, see a man"? "This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent" (The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 13). What does the remnant (us) and the Samaritan woman have in common?

Sunday

Read Luke 5:29-32.

Review the *Did You Know?* section of the lesson. In Jesus' day, a Jew who stopped to talk to a Samaritan was really reaching outside his comfort zone, doing something that others wouldn't understand. The same could be said of the fact that Jesus was speaking to a woman—women were meant to keep silent in public discussion, stay at home, and not discuss things with men other than their husbands and immediate family. Why was Jesus so willing to break those kinds of cultural barriers? What does today's Bible reading tell us about how people reacted to the way Jesus related to others? If Jesus were to live on earth today, what groups of people in your society do you think He would talk to and eat with? How would He use these friendships to witness to them?

Monday

Read John 4:28-30.

Notice how the Samaritan woman went straight from her encounter with Jesus to tell others about Him. But she didn't just tell others; she invited them to come see Jesus for themselves. In our world today we don't have the opportunity to invite our friends to come meet Jesus in person. Yet we do want to invite them to have a personal encounter of their own with Him. How do we do that?

- Praying with and for them

- Encouraging them to read the Bible
- Inviting them to worship at church or with our youth group
- Inviting them to help in acts of serving others

Tuesday

Read John 15:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; and Galatians 5:22, 23.

What happens as we experience a personal relationship with Jesus?

Find out, in Jeremiah 20:9, what else happens.

As you get to know Jesus more and more every day, you will find an increased desire to witness about Him now instead of some time in the future. You will also be eager to share Jesus with everyone regardless of what they look like or sound like or what you may think of them initially.

Wednesday

Read John 4; John 9; and Mark 5.

Compare the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 to the stories of the blind man in John 9 and the demon-possessed man in Mark 5. We often think "witnessing" for Jesus is something complicated that requires a lot of training and experience. But being a witness simply means telling what you know from firsthand experience—what you've seen and heard, and what's happened to you. Although we cannot see Jesus face to face, as the woman at the well did, we can come to know Him through reading His Word, prayer, and trusting in Him at every moment. Decide today to have a personal experience with Jesus.

Thursday

Read John 3:16.

Jesus was never afraid to associate with people who didn't fit in. Even when others questioned or criticized Him, He was willing

to talk to anyone. It was through His love, acceptance, and openness that His message was able to be spread to all kinds of people. Read John 3:16 or repeat it from memory. Write down the first six words. Replace the word "world" with three individuals, or groups of people, who are considered "outsiders" in your community, church, or school. How do you relate to those people? How would you relate to them if you followed Jesus' example? Read again the second part of the sentence in John 3:16: "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish" (NASB). What will happen to those who believe? What is our role in helping people believe? How important is witnessing then?

Friday

Read John 4:28, 29.

The woman at the well went back to her village, told people about Jesus, and asked, "Could this be the Messiah?" (NIV). Even though she didn't know everything about her new faith in Jesus, she "witnessed" by telling what had happened to her and asking a question to get people curious. Then they came and learned about Jesus for themselves. Following the example of the woman at the well, what could you tell people about your own experience with Jesus?

What question could you ask that would get people interested in checking out Jesus for themselves?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 19.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 12 2025

Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 20.

seeing is believing?



Photo by Jacqui Janetco

flashlight

"The nobleman wanted to *see* the fulfillment of his prayer before he should believe; but he had to accept the word of Jesus that his request was heard and the blessing granted. This lesson we also have to learn. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. . . . When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200; emphasis in original).

keytext

" 'Unless you people see signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.' The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' 'Go,' Jesus replied, 'your son will live.' The man took Jesus at his word and departed."

(John 4:48-50, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever experienced a trust-building activity such

as a “rope challenge course” or a “trust fall,” or been entrusted to perform a highly responsible job such as babysitting? If so, write what you learned about trust through such activities.

did you know?

On the matter of seeing is believing, a classic study, conducted decades ago, involved testing infants to see whether or not people were born with a fear of falling. Newly crawling infants were placed, one at a time, on a table. A platform of clear Plexiglas formed a bridge to an identical table. Almost all the little ones refused to crawl across the Plexiglas because the transparent bridge gave the impression they could fall.

INTO THE STORY

“After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

“Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

“‘Unless you people see signs and wonders,’ Jesus told him, ‘you will never believe.’

“The royal official said, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’

“‘Go,’ Jesus replied, ‘your son will live.’

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, ‘Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.’

“Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live.’ So he and his whole household believed.

“This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.”

(John 4:43-54, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Upon asking that his child be healed, the royal official took Jesus at His word and left for home, believing that He had healed his son. This was a change from his wanting to “see the fulfillment of his prayer before he should believe” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200; emphasis in original).

Why do you think the official came to Jesus in the first place?

What do you think caused his changed view?

What did the official believe as he returned home?

We're told in Mark 13:22 that false christs and false prophets will arise in the last days showing “signs and wonders,” attempting to deceive the elect. Compare that to what Jesus said to the people in Cana of Galilee about their wanting to see signs and wonders. How can you go against a “seeing is believing” mind-set and take Jesus at His word, as did the royal official?

punch lines

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (**James 4:1-3, NIV**).

“So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe’ ” (**John 20:25, NIV**).

“Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (**John 20:29-31, NIV**).

further insight

“When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire*

of Ages, p. 200

Sabbath

Read John 4:43-54.

In today's reading, the official was desperate to have his son healed and Jesus cared about healing the official's son, but He cared about something more than that too. What important decision did He lead the official to make that led to his son's healing? See verse 50.

Jesus gave the nobleman His word, and we have access to that word every day. All we have to do is believe, as the nobleman did. "In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will" (The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 1).

Sunday

Read Mark 13:21, 22.

In today's reading, we are given one example of what will happen before Jesus returns. Satan uses many deceptions during this time. In this case "seeing" should not be "believing." It is important to be aware of the warnings that Jesus has given us about the end of the world and to trust His Word even when appearances indicate otherwise. Will you make a decision to do that today?

Monday

Read Mark 11:24.

The royal official went from seeing to believing when he took Jesus at His word and believed without seeing that his son had been made well. We're told in *The Desire of Ages* that he did not even hurry home, so strong was his faith that the word of Jesus was sure. Although we cannot present our requests face to face to Jesus as the nobleman did, what can we learn about how to pray from today's reading?

Tuesday

Read Genesis 3:1-7.

God gave Adam and Eve specific instructions not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. But they did it anyway. Read Genesis 3:1-7. What are three reasons that Eve ate from the tree, based on verse 6?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Instead of obeying God's commandment, Eve chose to trust what she saw with her own senses. But God calls us to exercise faith in His Word even when it doesn't look as though we should or can. Will you decide to trust His Word today despite what appearances may suggest?

Wednesday

Read Hebrews 11:1.

Read the *Further Insight* section and Hebrews 11:1. Even though we cannot see the Word of God, if we believe that it will do what it says, we are exercising faith. In this way, our faith is the evidence of the unseen Word of God.

God has made many promises to us in His Word. List two promises that you would like to claim in your prayers this week:

1. _____
2. _____

Thursday

Read John 20:29.

Think of a time someone was offering you a good thing for nothing, no strings attached. Did your doubt radar kick in? Then it turned out to be true, exactly as offered. It is hard to know whom to trust these days, because there are so many people who are dishonest. However, we can always trust God's Word in spite of the fact that we were not eyewitnesses to what is recorded there.

What does Jesus have to say, in today's reading, about people like us who believe without seeing?

Friday

Read John 1:14 and John 3:16.

Having faith in God's Word is foundational to our salvation. Read John 1:14 and John 3:16. When we base our faith on God's Word, who are we actually trusting in? What is the result of believing in that person?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 20.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 19 2025

Scripture Story: John 5.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.

do you want to get well?



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"The sick man was lying on his mat, and occasionally lifting his head to gaze at the pool, when a tender, compassionate face bent over him, and the words, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' arrested his attention. Hope came to his heart. . . .

"Jesus does not ask this sufferer to exercise faith in Him. He simply says, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' But the man's faith takes hold upon that word. Every nerve and muscle thrills with new life, and healthful action comes to his crippled limbs" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202).

keytext

"When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' . . . Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'"

(John 5:6-8, NIV)

what do you think?

List three of the best decisions you have ever made:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

did you know?

John 5:1 conveys the reason that Jesus was in Jerusalem was for “a feast of the Jews.” There were three feasts that required all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem: (1) the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, (2) the Feast of Weeks (also called Pentecost), and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus was attending one of these feasts when He came to Jerusalem and healed the lame man by the pool.

INTO THE STORY

“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’

“‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man

was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

“The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.’

“But he replied, ‘The man who made me well said to me, “Pick up your mat and walk.”’

“So they asked him, ‘Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?’

“The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

“Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.’ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.’ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

“Jesus gave them this answer: ‘Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.’”

(John 5:1-19, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Jesus asked this lame man, "Do you want to get well?"

Why did Jesus not assume this man desired healing?

What does this story teach us about the freedom of human beings to choose?

What does this story teach us about the consequences of our choices?

What does this story teach us about Sabbath observance?

What does this story teach us about caring for the needs of others?

punch lines

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (**Galatians 5:19-21, NIV**).

"Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent" (**Mark 3:4, NIV**).

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience" (**Hebrews 4:9-11, NIV**).

"Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath' " (**Mark 2:27, 28, NIV**).

further insight

"God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all. His laws sanction no unreasonable or selfish restrictions."—Ellen

G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 204

"God's holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 207

Sabbath

Read James 1:5.

Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. . . . Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10). Holy lives lead us to wise choices. Reflect on the wisest choice you ever made. Why did that choice come to mind as your wisest choice? What were the consequences of that decision? What have you learned about the importance of wise choices?

Where does today's reading say you can get help to make wise decisions.

Sunday

Read John 10:10.

One day Jesus was moving through the streets of Jerusalem when He happened upon a man who had been crippled for 38 years. Stopping beside the man, Jesus asks one of the strangest questions in Scripture: "Do you want to get well?" Here was a man who could never run or jump or dance. He was trapped in limp and lifeless packaging, yet Jesus was asking if he wanted to be healed. Maybe this crippled man had lost hope. Maybe, after 38 years, he was beginning to think that he would never be healed, so what was the use in desiring it? Maybe, in spite of the wretched conditions, he had become comfortable with his infirmity and really didn't want the responsibilities that life after healing would bring.

In today's reading, who is the thief? What has he stolen or destroyed in your life? Read the last part of the verse again. What is Jesus longing to do for you? Tell God right now

how much you want that abundant life. If you don't feel the desire to change from some destructive behaviors, tell Him that too. He will give you His Holy Spirit to help you sense your need.

Monday

Read John 5:6-8.

The Key Text tells us that "Jesus saw him lying there." Ellen White fleshes out the scene: "The Saviour saw one case of supreme wretchedness. It was that of a man who had been a helpless cripple for thirty-eight years. His disease was in a great degree the result of his own sin, and was looked upon as a judgment from God. Alone and friendless, feeling that he was shut out from God's mercy, the sufferer had passed long years of misery" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202). Read the key text again in John 5:6-8. Instead of the words "made well" substitute something that you need to do but are struggling with. For example you may have lost your desire to graduate but you know you have to. Your text would read, "Do you want to finish school? Get up and pass that class and get that diploma."

Tuesday

Read Mark 3:4.

What does the response in John 5:10 to the man carrying his bed tell you about those who spoke to him?

Those who spoke to the man were more concerned about the rules that they had imposed on Sabbathkeeping than the well-being of the man. How did Jesus feel about this? Look at His question in Mark 3:4 regarding another Sabbath healing. What can we learn about how to keep the Sabbath from Jesus' example?

Wednesday

Read Luke 4:16-20, 38-39, and Mark 6:2.

Jesus provided other examples of how to keep the Sabbath day during His ministry on earth. According to today's Bible reading, how did Jesus keep the Sabbath? Make a list of ways that you can keep the Sabbath like Jesus.

Thursday

Read John 14:13.

If Jesus approached you today and asked if you would like to be healed, how would you respond? What would you ask to be healed of?

Claim the promise in today's reading as you ask for healing today.

Friday

Read Ephesians 2:1.

Ellen White offers this insight into the story of the lame man: "Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. . . . Christ is able and longs to deliver" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203).

Questions to consider:

- What is the state of my spiritual health?
- Am I growing stronger or weaker in the Lord?
- What does Christ "long to deliver" me from?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 26 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 11:1-11; Matthew 14:1-11;
Mark 6:17-28; Luke 7:19-28.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 22.

appearance versus reality



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"As the Messiah's herald, John was 'much more than a prophet.' For while prophets had seen from afar Christ's advent, to John it was given to behold Him, to hear the testimony from heaven to His Messiahship, and to present Him to Israel as the Sent of God. Yet Jesus said, 'He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he' " (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 220).

keytext

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

(Matthew 11:11, NIV)

what do you think?

How would you define success?

- Make a list of some ways you could affirm you are succeeding now. Finish this thought with as many descriptives as you can:
- *I would consider my life to have been successful if I...*
- List the names of three or four people who have had a positive influence on you.
- Next to their names, write their titles, positions, jobs, and/or relationship to you.
- Are the individuals you named people of fame or wealth? Do they meet the criteria of success you listed for yourself? If not, what qualities do they possess that you admire?

did you know?

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died so poor he couldn't even get a proper burial. He was buried in a potter's field. Yet Mozart's music has been considered the most loved and beautiful of all the classical musicians.

While Martin Luther is well known as the "German Hercules" of the Protestant Reformation, Philip Melancthon was the intellectual, "quiet Reformer" and colleague of Luther who wrote the first great Protestant confession of faith: the Augsburg Confession.

John Weidner, a Seventh-day Adventist, helped save the lives of dozens of Jews and others who, rightly, feared persecution and death under the Nazi regime in World War II. He labored in secret, his actions unknown until after the war ended. He was among the "righteous" that the State of Israel—and others around the world—honored for his courage.

INTO THE STORY

"After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

"When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

"Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.'

"As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd

about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'"

"Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

"On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, 'Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.' The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother."

(Matthew 11:1-11; Matthew 14:3-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What was John's role in Jesus' ministry? Read Luke 1:16, 17.

John preached the coming of the Messiah. He even said Jesus was the Messiah! Why do you think while John was in prison that he sent his disciples to Jesus to make sure He was the Messiah?

What circumstances led to John's imprisonment? his beheading?

John was languishing in prison facing death when Jesus said these words: "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist." Based on this statement, do you think Jesus regarded John as successful? Do you think the people around him did? How does this impact how you look at success in your own life?

John was the herald of the Messiah, purposed to point people to the First Advent. We have a similar calling to point others to the Second Advent—Jesus' return to earth. What is your personal responsibility to this assignment?

punch lines

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (**Isaiah 40:3**).

"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes" (**Malachi 4:5, NIV**).

"They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?'. . . John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord"' (**John 1:21-23, NIV**).

"There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe" (**John 1:6, 7, NIV**).

"Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah'" (**John 1:19, 20, NIV**).

"This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you'" (**Matthew 11:10, NIV**).

further insight

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him."—Ellen G. White,

The Desire of Ages, p. 224

"And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 224

Sabbath

Read Mark 6:17-28.

How did you do with defining success and listing people and qualities of success in the *What Do You Think?* section? Jesus paid the highest compliment to John the Baptist that any person could hope to receive. Yet instead of enjoying the privileges of being the King's herald, John was wasting away in a prison cell! He never had a visit from Jesus. He had no promise of help from his powerful cousin. In today's Bible reading, you can learn more about how John ended up in prison and find out what happened to him. Do you think John's faith weakened while he was in prison? How do you think John felt when he received word of Jesus' ministry?

John had the solo role of heralding Jesus' first coming. We are privileged, along with our church family, to herald His second coming. "The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel" (The Second Coming of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 25).

Sunday

Read John 1:6, 7.

Would you say John the Baptist was successful in carrying out the purpose for which God had created him? Why or why not? Does John's ending seem like that of a successful person? Why? Why not?

Monday

Read Matthew 11:11.

Did you notice how Jesus pays John the highest honor when He says: "Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (NIV). But, immediately following that, He said, "Yet

whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (NIV). What do you think Jesus meant by this?

Tuesday

Read John 20:21.

Why did Jesus come to earth? What does He then say to us? What very essential event must take place before we can be effective ambassadors for Jesus as John the Baptist was? See verse 22.

Wednesday

Read Philippians 2:3-8.

John the Baptist had every opportunity to draw attention to himself . . . his work . . . his calling. But he didn't do that. What lesson is there in his words and actions for us? Check out the verses written by Paul from today's reading for a further emphasis about God's ideal for success.

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Even within the Christian community today, there is a growing teaching of the prosperity gospel . . . that if we believe and claim the promises of God, He emerges like some genie from a bottle to fulfill our desire for success, wealth, comfort. But what do we learn from John and from the Messiah whom he heralded? What, if anything, stands in the way of your waiting upon God, listening and responding to God's will and plan for you, rather than expecting Him to come and fulfill your own desires? What guidance can you find in today's reading?

Friday

Read Revelation 11:15.

Take some time to consider how amazing it is that while John has the distinction of heralding in the advent of the promised kingdom of heaven, we stand at the dusk of an old, dying age when soon in every respect the kingdom of heaven will be a reality and earth as we know it will be gone. Jesus will soon come and take us to be with Him. We have the distinction of experiencing the other side of the cross—the mercy, grace, and transformation that come because of the sacrifice of Christ and the building of His temple (church), which cannot be destroyed. If John was a signpost of what was to come, what does that make us? What role do you (and I) have in this second advent of the Messiah?

Read today's reading in a loud and dramatic voice. Can you picture yourself on that great day? Make a list and pray for all those you know who need to experience the mercy, grace, and transformation that comes from giving their lives to Jesus. Ask God to help you to daily show His character in your life.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 22.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 03 2025

Scripture Story: Luke 4:16-30.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 23; 24.

a tumultuous homecoming



keytext

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

(Luke 4:18, 19, NIV)

flashlight

"The Messiah's coming had been first announced in Judea. In the temple at Jerusalem the birth of the forerunner had been foretold to Zacharias as he ministered before the altar. On the hills of Bethlehem the angels had proclaimed the birth of Jesus. To Jerusalem the magi had come in search of Him. In the temple Simeon and Anna had testified to His divinity. . . . The flashing forth of His divinity in the cleansing of the temple, His miracles of healing, and the lessons of divine truth that fell from His lips, all proclaimed that which after the healing at Bethesda He had declared before the Sanhedrin,—His Sonship to the Eternal" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 231).

what do you think?

What would you expect to see today if you'd joined a

thrang to hear a preacher you'd heard about who spoke truth in a new and powerful way, brought about strong reaction from his listeners, and rebuked the religious establishment?

Choose from the list below. Someone who:

- ___ has his own talk show
- ___ blogs
- ___ wears sharp-looking suits
- ___ has a beautiful wife
- ___ podcasts his sermons

What if you found out en route that the preacher was a guy you'd grown up with, who was studious and attentive to duty as a child, but who didn't appear to you to be someone who would grow up to be anything special? Then, upon seeing him, you realize that he doesn't fit what you'd envisioned at all *and* that He *is* someone special!

did you know?

Ellen G. White, in vision, saw Jesus many times. Here is one description she gives:

"As children looked upon His countenance, they saw purity and goodness shining forth from His eyes. In His countenance gentleness, meekness, love, and conscious power were combined. But though every word, every gesture, every expression of His face, betokened His divine supremacy, humility marked His deportment and bearing" (*My Life Today*, p. 300).

INTO THE STORY

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

"All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gra-

rious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked.

"Jesus said to them, 'Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'

" 'Truly, I tell you,' he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.'

"All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way."

(Luke 4:16-30, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

The words Jesus read from the scroll in the synagogue were punctuated by His startling declaration: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Had you been there, what would you have thought upon hearing those words, knowing you were looking at a local boy, now grown?

Why do you think His listeners were amazed "at the gracious words" He spoke?

Why do you think a prophet "is not accepted in his hometown"?

Their amazement quickly turned to fury. Why?

What did Jesus mean when He quoted a proverb, "Physician, heal yourself," in the context in which He used it?

Why was the mob unsuccessful in its attempt to kill Jesus then and there?

punch lines

"When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival. . . . While his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

. . . After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.'

'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' **(Luke 2:42-49, NIV).**

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" **(Matthew 23:37, NIV).**

"Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.' At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come" **(John 7:28-30, NIV).**

further insight

"We have reached the period foretold in these scriptures. The time of the end is come, the visions of the prophets are unsealed, and their solemn warnings point us to our Lord's coming in glory as near at hand."—Ellen G.

White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 235

"Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 239

Sabbath

Read Mark 9:14-29.

What assumptions arise if you hear of some popular preacher making all the news? What trappings surround them? How is fame handled?

When you grow up with someone, you may have a hard time accepting that that person has become a “big shot.” This is why it was probably hard for those in Jesus’ hometown to accept Him as Messiah and even more so as God. But He was. “Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God” (The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4).

The adult Jesus was not esteemed by those who knew Him in Nazareth. Many may have felt what the father of the possessed boy felt when he cried “I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24, NASB). How about you? Have you found it difficult to hear God speak through people you may consider “not religious enough”? Why? Why not?

Sunday

Read Luke 4:28-30.

Sometimes the truth hurts. That’s what happened when Jesus spoke truth and many of His listeners went berserk. In their crazed state the mob propelled Him to a cliff with the intent of throwing Him down the side. But their plans went awry as they reached the edge. God calls us to speak the truth, even when it’s not popular. Does He always protect us from the consequences? Explain.

Monday

Read Isaiah 61.

When Jesus read from what is now known as Isaiah 61, those words applied to Him in prophetic fulfillment. Is there a Bible passage you can read knowing the words apply to you, not as prophetic fulfillment, but in certainty? Write it below:

Tuesday

Read John 1:4, 5.

In today’s reading, Jesus is described as a light in the darkness of ignorance. On rare occasions He allowed that light to shine brighter than usual.

The flashing forth of His divinity in the cleansing of the Temple is strikingly described by Ellen G. White on pages 157 and 158 of *The Desire of Ages*, including this statement: “His eye sweeps over the multitude, taking in every individual. . . . A divine light illuminates His countenance. He speaks, and His clear, ringing voice—the same that upon Mount Sinai proclaimed the law that priests and rulers are transgressing—is heard echoing through the arches of the temple: ‘Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.’” How does this display of Jesus reveal His divinity?

Wednesday

Read John 1:1, 14.

The incarnation of the Son of God, at once fully human and fully God, is an abiding mystery. What does the Bible say about this in John 1:1, 14? When did Jesus come into full awareness of His duality? What sorrow do you think He felt to be despised and rejected of men, even those from Nazareth who knew Him longest?

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Temple played a strong role in the training of young Jewish children, including the child Jesus. It was a place where questions and answers pertaining to spiritual matters were freely expressed, the history of ancestors learned, and relationships developed. Is this true for your Sabbath School? If so, what makes it that way? If not, what do you think could be done to make it that way? What encouragement do we have in our reading today to keep learning?

Friday

Read Psalm 34:8.

It was hard for those who grew up with Jesus to accept Him as Messiah or even as a prophet. Someone you know may be skeptical about Jesus and Christianity based on what they have been told about it. You might be able to recall some negative things that have been said about Christians or Christianity, so how would you answer those critics? What support can you find in our reading today? Do you have a personal experience of God’s goodness that you could share with your class on Sabbath?

this week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 23; 24.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 10 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 25.

i am a follower



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

"They were humble and unlearned men, those fishers of Galilee; but Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify them for the position for which He had chosen them. . . . He passed by the wise men of His time, because they were so self-confident that they could not sympathize with suffering humanity, and become colaborers with the Man of Nazareth. . . . The Lord Jesus seeks the co-operation of those who will become unobstructed channels for the communication of His grace. The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 249).

keytext

"Simon Peter . . . fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' . . . Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

(Luke 5:8-11, NIV)

what do you think?

If Jesus asked you to leave everything and follow Him, what would your response be?

- ___ "What exactly do You mean by *everything*, Lord?"
- ___ "I'll leave *some things*. . . . Can I still follow You?"
- ___ "You don't really mean that, do You?"
- ___ "Absolutely! No problem!"

(Write your own response.)

did you know?

The Sea of Galilee has been a famous spot for fishermen since ancient times. Fishing methods used in Jesus' time probably included fishermen catching fish with their bare hands or in wicker baskets, trapping fish, fishing with hook and line, or spearing fish with arrows or harpoons. But fishing with nets was by far the most popular way to fish. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were probably fishing with circular cast nets, which were weighted to allow the net to encircle the fish. This required great skill and also great dedication on the part of the fishermen.

Jesus called Peter and his companions away from fishing to a task that would also require skill and total dedication—fishing for human beings to bring into the kingdom of God.

INTO THE STORY

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

"When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

"Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

"When they had done so, they caught such a

large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

"Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

(Luke 5:1-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Did Simon Peter and the other fishermen already know Jesus before this event? How might that have made a difference in their response to Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus performed the miracle of the great catch of fish *before* He asked the fishermen to follow Him?

What impact did the miracle have on Simon Peter and the other fishermen?

Why was Simon Peter's response to the miracle "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man"? What was he thinking? What would you have been thinking at that point?

Why do you think the fishermen followed Jesus without any questions? What do you think they expected from Jesus at that point?

punch lines

"Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' " **(Matthew 8:21, 22, NIV).**

"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him" **(Matthew 9:9, NIV).**

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' " **(Matthew 16:24, NIV).**

"Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me' " **(Matthew 19:21, NIV).**

further insight

"He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good."—Ellen G.

White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250

"Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship."—Ellen G.

White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 60

"There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250

Sabbath

Read Matthew 16:24.

By His miracles He [Jesus] manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah" (The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4). As you read the story of Jesus calling Peter and the other fishermen by the sea, imagine the scene vividly in your mind. Put yourself in Peter's place and try to imagine what you would be experiencing with your five senses as this scene unfolds. Write down some of your ideas below.

When Jesus told him to let down the nets, Peter might have thought _____.
After the miraculous catch of fish, he might have felt _____.
and thought _____.
When Jesus called Peter to follow Him, I think Peter felt _____.
How did you feel when you read today's Bible reading?

Sunday

Read Romans 12:6, 7.

Read the *Did You Know?* section of the lesson to learn more about fishing on the Sea of Galilee in Jesus' time. Jesus used the image of "fishing for men" because that was what His disciples were familiar with. For them, it would create a picture of gathering up a great number of people out of the world and into God's kingdom. If He'd been talking to farmers, He might have invited them to come and harvest human crops to bring into God's barn (in fact, He used this kind of image in several of His parables). What types of images might Jesus use today in inviting people to bring others into His kingdom? What images might He use if He were calling . . .

- a teacher?
- a bus driver?
- a doctor?
- a teenager?

What talents and abilities has God given you

to help spread the gospel?

Monday

Read Luke 5:8-11.

Jesus helps Simon Peter and the other fishermen catch a miraculous amount of fish. Peter immediately falls to his knees and declares that he is a sinful man and not worthy to be in Jesus' presence. Why do you think this miracle might have given Peter a sense of his own sinfulness? Peter tells Jesus to go away—but Jesus doesn't. Have you ever asked God to go away and leave you alone? How did He respond?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 19:21.

The *Flashlight* section emphasizes the fact that Jesus called ordinary people, uneducated fishermen rather than the intellectuals and leaders of the day. If you read the whole quote in its full context from *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White points out that God values education and it can help us to serve God—but sometimes an uneducated person is better able to follow Jesus because they are more humble and less likely to think they can do things on their own. What other attitudes might stand in a person's way and keep them from following Jesus? In today's reading, Jesus is speaking to a rich young ruler. What attitude might Jesus have seen in this man that led Jesus to say that?

Wednesday

We see many examples in the Bible of Jesus calling people to leave their everyday lives and follow Him. Look at the following verses. For each one, write down what Jesus asked people to do if they were to follow Him:

- Matthew 8:21, 22 _____
- Matthew 9:9 _____
- Matthew 16:24 _____
- Matthew 19:21 _____

Does God still expect the same thing of people today? Do we need to give up our plans for a job, a family, a "normal" life? Whatever He asks, we can be sure that He asks for total commitment.

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Think about things in your life that might be standing in the way of following Jesus. What is one practical thing you can do today to move those things aside and focus more on Jesus? For example, if you feel the time you spend on social media gets in the way of Jesus, you could make a commitment not to engage for certain hours of the day (mornings work really well) and spend that time instead in prayer and Bible study. What encouragement can you find in today's Bible reading?

Friday

Read Matthew 6:31-33.

If Jesus were to come to you today and say, "Leave _____ behind, and follow Me," what do you think He would ask you to leave?

What would your response be? Based on today's reading, what should it be?

Following Jesus may involve leaving behind something or giving up something. But it could also mean dedicating the life you have now completely to God. God can help you to share His love with others through the life you now live.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 25.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 17 2025

Scripture Story: Mark 1:21-28.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 26.

restored at church



Photo © Thinkstock 2017

flashlight

"The mind of this wretched sufferer had been darkened by Satan, but in the Saviour's presence a ray of light had pierced the gloom. He was roused to long for freedom from Satan's control; but the demon resisted the power of Christ. When the man tried to appeal to Jesus for help, the evil spirit put words into his mouth, and he cried out in an agony of fear. The demoniac partially comprehended that he was in the presence of One who could set him free; but when he tried to come within reach of that mighty hand, another's will held him, another's words found utterance through him. The conflict between the power of Satan and his own desire for freedom was terrible" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 255).

keytext

"The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.'"

(Mark 1:27, NIV)

what do you think?

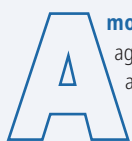
Look up the following passages:

Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26; Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; 1 Samuel 28:3; Isaiah 8:19. All of these texts speak against spiritualism in some form. Why do you think that the warning prohibiting involvement in these things was given over and over?

Read Leviticus 19:31. Why does God say, "I am the LORD your God"?

- ___ He can supply all our needs.
- ___ He knows the suffering of a life controlled by demons.
- ___ Because He is a good God, He alone must have control of our minds.
- ___ All of the above.

did you know?



Among the most successful

agencies of the great deceiver are the delusive teachings and lying wonders of spiritualism. Disguised as an angel of light, he spreads his nets where least suspected. If men would but study the Book of God with earnest prayer that they might understand it, they would not be left in darkness to receive false doctrines" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 524).

INTO THE STORY

"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!'

"'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

"The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."

(Mark 1:21-28, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read Mark 1:21-28; answer the following questions:

1:21 What was the main thing that Jesus was trying to teach His disciples?

1:22 Why were people so amazed at Jesus' teaching?

1:23 How do you picture this man possessed by an impure spirit?

1:24 What strikes you about the demoniac's reaction to Jesus?

Read again Mark 1:25. Compare that to some other times Jesus spoke with authority over something. What was he rebuking in Mark 4:39? Luke 7:14, 15? What does this tell you about the power of Jesus' word?

1:26 What do you learn about this spirit?

1:27 What surprised the people?

1:28 Was the news that spread about Jesus good news or bad news? Explain.

punch lines

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:31, NIV).

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:13-18, NIV).

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, NIV).

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8, 9, NIV).

further insight

"When once the restraints of God's word and His Spirit are rejected, no man knows to what depths of degradation he may sink."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 258

"The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,—the power of the word."—Ellen G. White,

The Desire of Ages, p. 258

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 6:13-18.

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. . . . [Satan] led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity. . . . This world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation" (The Great Controversy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 8).

Sunday

Read Mark 1:27.

Read the *Key Text* noting the emphasis in the story on the "authority" of Jesus. Jewish teachers often cited well-respected rabbis in order to give credibility to their teaching. In Jesus' case He did not need to quote some hotshot rabbi. He was and is God. Therefore, His authority eclipses that of any rabbis before Him. Understanding this essential claim of Jesus sheds light on this story and helps us understand why the Pharisees were so exercised about this issue of Jesus' authority.

In what ways do you acknowledge Jesus' authority in your life?

Monday

Read John 14:11-13.

Reflect on the following: Do we have access to the same power that Jesus manifested with the demoniac? If so, why are so many prayers seemingly not answered? Is there anything we can do to lay claim to that supernatural power? If so, what?

Tuesday

Read John 8:31, 32.

Read this week's *Flashlight*. Note how Ellen White points out that it was "in the Saviour's presence" that the darkness was penetrated with light. How can we practice being in God's presence? How will that help us resist temptation? Reflect on how we too can be victorious over sin by living in the presence of Jesus. How does someone live in the presence of Jesus?

Wednesday

Read Romans 8:37-39.

Compile the *Punch Lines* into one verse by taking the main point of each passage and crafting it into one sentence.

Thursday

Read Philippians 4:8.

How does the devil try to gain access to my heart? What is the best strategy to resist his advances?

Friday

Read Psalm 139:23, 24.

Ellen White offers this insight into the story of the demoniac: "Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258).

Do you have a similar plea to God as made in today's Bible reading? Pray and believe that you will receive what you ask.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 26.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 24 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-28.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 27.

willing and able



keytext

"Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed."

(Mark 1:41, 42, NIV)

flashlight

"In some instances of healing, Jesus did not at once grant the blessing sought. But in the case of leprosy, no sooner was the appeal made than it was granted. When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 266).

what do you think?

Rank the following choices in order of what you think God

wants the most, and be ready to explain your answer.

- ___ To serve others with a humble heart
- ___ To become a wise and proficient people
- ___ To have a clear sense of purpose about your career
- ___ To live in harmony with His commands
- ___ To receive with certainty the gift of salvation
- ___ To be generous with your time and talents

Explain your choice for what you think is most important to God. What is the relationship between your choice and the others on the list?

did you know?

The word “compassion” comes from the Greek word *splanknizomai* (say that three times fast). It is actually a medical word for the intestines or the deep insides of our being. In fact, the word can actually be translated “to feel something so deeply that your guts twist and cry out!” Kind of gross, but it captures how Christ felt for people sentenced to death by sin. It’s not just feeling bad for others; it is being moved to do something about it.

him and he was cleansed.

“Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ‘See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.’ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.”

INTO THE STORY

“When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’”

“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, ‘See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’”

“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’

“Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left

“While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’

“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ And immediately the leprosy left him.

“Then Jesus ordered him, ‘Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.’

“Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

(Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Compare the three perspectives of the same event and note how the stories are different and how they are similar.

What words and phrases do Mark and Luke use that Matthew leaves out?

What words or phrases does Luke use that Mark and Matthew leave out?

What words or phrases does Mark alone use?

How is the disease of leprosy like sin?

The leper makes an interesting appeal by saying: "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Is there any question from the leper's perspective as to whether Jesus is able to heal him or not? What is the primary issue? Why do you think someone with leprosy would think this way? (Read John 9:1-3; 5:13, 14; Mark 2:3-5; Isaiah 59:1, 2.)

Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What is the message God has in it for you today?

Explain the advice of Jesus to immediately "show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded." Why do you think Jesus asked the leper to do this?

What other story in the Bible does this event remind you of?

punch lines

"And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day" (**John 6:39, 40, NLT**).

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (**1 John 1:8, 9, NASB**).

"God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change" (**2 Peter 3:9, The Message**).

"Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (**Matthew 20:34, NASB**).

"Look at it this way. If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go after the one? And if he finds it, doesn't he make far more over it than over the ninety-nine who stay put? Your Father in heaven feels the same way. He doesn't want to lose even one of these simple believers" (**Matthew 18:12-14, The Message**).

further insight

"Leprosy and palsy were not so terrible as bigotry and unbelief."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 271

"God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. . . . He waits to make us free."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249

Sabbath

Read Mark 1:40 and Matthew 18:12-14.

Read and respond to the ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. The list provided for you does not include anything bad or immoral, but the exercise of thinking about what God wants most is important to this week's lesson on the healing of the leper. The request of the man with leprosy is not a question but an appeal: "If you are willing, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40, NIV). Compare his request with what Jesus said in today's reading from Matthew. The Savior is clear about His mission and about God's will, but the leper wonders—not as to whether Jesus can heal him, but whether Christ is willing. Why? How does this uncertainty affect our relationship to Christ today?

The faith exercised by the leper is the kind of faith in God still needed today. "This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10).

Sunday

Read Matthew 20:32.

Read the *Into the Story* portion and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. This week's lesson gives you three perspectives of the same event (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). As you read, you will notice slightly different details given by each writer. What insights did you gain as you paid attention to these details? How is the leper's encounter with Jesus like every believer's experience with sin and salvation? How does this story portray how we should come to Christ? How does this story portray how Christ responds to people who come to Him in need? What do you think is the most

important verse in this story? Why?

Monday

Read Mark 1:41, 42.

The *Key Text* this week tells us that "Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Luke's Gospel says the man was "full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12) while Christ is "full of compassion." Take some time today and imagine this event as you memorize the words Christ spoke and how He touched the diseased man.

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 7:25.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and reflect on the prayers you pray for help, healing, strength, and forgiveness. This truth screams out what God desires more than anything else: to save you. As you examine this powerful message about God's response to our prayer for "deliverance from sin," think of someone you know who desperately needs to hear how God's answer to the prayer of forgiveness is always an immediate "Yes." Perhaps you could write them a letter and tell them about how the joy of salvation is one prayer away. Include the words of truth and comfort from today's Bible reading.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson speak of God's desire and eagerness to save us. Think about how these verses are portrayed vividly in the story of the leper. As you read through these verses carefully, think about how you would organize these verses if you were giving a Bible study to someone else. Which verse would you put first, second, third, and why?

Thursday

Read Hebrews 4:16.

While leprosy is not as prominent a problem today as it was in Jesus' day, the meaning of the story applies perfectly in any age. Have you ever felt as if you couldn't pray, or because you made such a mistake you found it hard to ask God for forgiveness? Sin causes us to want to hide from God or hesitate to get help, but God does not want us to hesitate. He wants us to "come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most" (Hebrews 4:16, NLT). So today—right now—pray to God with confidence in His mercy for the gift of salvation. The leper left and told everyone about what Jesus had done for him. Share with someone your thanksgiving to Jesus for being willing and able to deliver you.

Friday

Read Psalm 37:4.

Think of a time your life turned dramatically, for good or for bad. Reflect on how quickly life can change course as it did that day for the man who was healed of leprosy. What is your deepest desire? What does God want to do with our desires that are in keeping with His will for our lives? Pray today, telling God that desire, and in faith, thank Him for granting it.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 27.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 31 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 9:9-17; Mark 2:14-22; Luke 5:27-39.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 28.

not love at first sight



Photo by Jennifer and Company

flashlight

"His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 278).

keytext

"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'"

(Matthew 9:10, 11, NIV)

what do you think?

In 2001 a huge money scandal involving a corporation was

revealed. Many employees stole hundreds of millions of dollars while their victims lost all their money, their pensions, and sometimes even their homes.

How would you react if one of those employees who was guilty of destroying people's lives came to your church? Below are several options. List them from 1 being most likely, and 5 being the least likely, in how you would react if this were to happen. Remember to answer truthfully.

- You would ignore the whole situation since what they did didn't affect you.
- You would feel angry and keep your distance in fear that you might say something regrettable.
- You would feel angry and say something without concern for their feelings.
- You would show them a kind face, but keep your distance.
- You would accept them and try to be a good witness to them. After all, they are in church, so they must want to change.

did you know?

In Jesus' time, tax collectors were

hated by the Jews. But what was even worse was a Jew who became a tax collector. They were seen as traitors, and no

one would accept them. Which

is why, when Jesus accepted the tax collectors, so many of the Jews were unhappy. Even

to this day tax collectors are shown in a bad light. Their job is to collect unpaid taxes from people as well as corporations.

In many fictitious stories, they are portrayed as evil people, but in real life many people see them in the same light. After all, who really likes the IRS or its agents?

INTO THE STORY

"After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

"Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, 'Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'"

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'

"Then they said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John fast often and

make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?'"

"And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.'

"Then He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, "The old is better."'"

(Luke 5:27-39)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the Pharisees were so angry about Jesus accepting a tax collector?

Why were tax collectors hated so much?

Do you think Levi felt unworthy when Jesus said, "Follow Me"? Explain.

Do you think Jesus worried about what others might think of Him befriending such unpopular folks as tax collectors? Why or why not?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old"?

What do you think Jesus saw when He first met Levi?

punch lines

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" (**Colossians 1:21-23, ESV**).

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" (**Psalms 139:16, ESV**).

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart' " (**1 Samuel 16:7, ESV**).

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (**Romans 15:7, ESV**).

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (**John 6:37, ESV**).

further insight

"When God's people are truly converted, when they realize the obligation resting on them to labor for those within their reach, when they leave no means untried to rescue sinners from the power of the enemy, the reproach will be removed from our churches."—Ellen

G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 11

Sabbath

Read John 6:37.

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation" (Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 14). Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37, ESV). Jesus sought out sinners and accepted them. He sought out people whom most of society hated. Instead of seeking to be at the home of a well-known or well-respected Jewish leader, He desired to be the guest of a sinner, someone deemed an outcast in society, so that He might give that person the hope of salvation.

Write down three ways in which we can follow Jesus' example in accepting others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sunday

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Have you ever felt unworthy of something? Have you ever done something to dishonor someone and, in return, been given mercy and forgiveness? Did you feel ashamed and filled with guilt? That may be how Levi felt. When Jesus accepted him, he must have felt unworthy when looking back on his life. Yet he probably also felt a great sense of joy in realizing that Jesus was willing to look past his many faults and accept him as a disciple. Use your Bible reading for today as an example and read through your Bible and try to find as many texts as you can about forgiveness and acceptance. Write down the

three that you think are most important in your notebook or daily journal.

Monday

Read James 5:20.

Many of us seek to be with people of good reputation. But Jesus didn't. Often we pass by people who we think could be either bad influences or who seem to have bad pasts. But Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." He then says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Luke 5:31, 32, NIV). While we should choose our friends carefully, if we neglect to seek out people who "need a doctor," how then will we be able to witness and spread Christ's love and hope? Throughout this next week, make an extra effort to follow Jesus' example and try to be a light to those who have seen only darkness. What is God's encouragement to us in today's Bible reading?

Tuesday

Read John 10:11.

In order to do God's will, we must surrender and die to self. Jesus' whole life was a sacrifice. To surrender to God, we must also be humbled. There may be people who we feel are "unworthy" of our attention. To remove these judgments and thoughts from our minds, we can pray and ask God for humbleness as well as the will to surrender completely to Him. Read through this story again and then read through *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 28. What does Jesus say about Himself in today's Bible reading? Are we expected to "lay down" our lives for others? What would that look like?

Wednesday

Read James 4:11, 12.

Rather than look on the outside of people, we must look into them and try to see their hearts and their inner beauty. Many times we pass judgment on people because of their outward appearance. But how can we truly know their hearts just by the outside?

We all have flaws, but because of Jesus we can be saved despite the fact that we all sin. Read through some of the gospel this week in your daily devotions, and try to find more examples in the Bible of how Jesus accepted others whom many would see as sinful and unworthy.

Thursday

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

In this day and age image is a very important part of our society. Image is talked about everywhere; whether you read about it in a magazine or see it on television, the media seems to want us to be more concerned about how our noses look or what new skin products work rather than refashioning our characters. What warning do we have in 1 Samuel 16:7 about focusing primarily or only on appearance? Pray today and ask God to help you look beyond other's faults or physical beauty and see their needs.

Friday

Read John 6:37.

In this life there will be many traps set for us. There will be many devices used against us to blur our judgment. But if we hold fast to Jesus, we will be able to overcome anything the enemy sends our way. Jesus wants us to share His love with anyone and everyone who will listen. We have been given a gift, not so that we can take it in vain, but so that we can show it to the world so they can be a part of God's kingdom. It doesn't matter where you've come from—you can claim the promise of eternal life in Jesus. Reflect on the words in today's Bible reading.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 28.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 07 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 29.

front and center



Photo © Jupiterimages Corporation

flashlight

"In the healing of the withered hand, Jesus condemned the custom of the Jews, and left the fourth commandment standing as God had given it. 'It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days,' He declared. By sweeping away the senseless restrictions of the Jews, Christ honored the Sabbath, while those who complained of Him were dishonoring God's holy day" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 287).

keytext

"Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent."

(Mark 3:3, 4, NIV)

what do you think?

When I get angry, I react . . .

Slowly and thoughtfully Immediately out of impulse

1 2 3 4 5 6

Where are you on the spectrum? What are the positives and negatives of this kind of response?

What makes me angry?

- ___ Individuals lying to protect their interests.
- ___ Underprivileged being neglected.
- ___ Children being mistreated.
- ___ People you trust betraying your confidence.
- ___ Callous people making jokes at the expense of others.

did you know?

The strict rules that Jewish leaders made for Sabbath observance were intended to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, but failed

to reveal the greater purpose of the day of rest. For example, did you know that if a wall collapsed on someone it was lawful to clear only enough debris to see if the individual were alive or dead? If alive, you were allowed to help the person—if dead, you had to leave them until sundown.

INTO THE STORY

“Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’

“He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’

“Then he said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.”

“Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with

a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, ‘Stand up in front of everyone.’

“Then Jesus asked them, ‘Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they remained silent.

“He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.”

“On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, ‘Get up and stand in front of everyone.’ So he got up and stood there.

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’

“He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

(Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Compare the three perspectives of the same event and note how the stories are different and how they are similar.

What words and phrases do Mark and Luke use that Matthew leaves out?

What words or phrases does Luke use that Mark and Matthew leave out?

What words or phrases does Mark alone use?

What criteria does Jesus use for Sabbathkeeping? How does Jesus' question "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" change the way you look at Sabbath?

Consider Jesus' question: "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!" What is the central point of this exchange?

How would you describe the reaction of the Jewish leaders to what Christ does in the synagogue?

What would you say is the primary purpose of the Sabbath according to this story?

punch lines

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (**Exodus 20:8-11, NASB**).

"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil" (**Isaiah 56:2, ESV**).

"Then Jesus said to them, 'The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!' " (**Mark 2:27, 28, NLT**).

"Keep my Sabbaths as holy rest days, signposts between me and you, signaling that I am God, *your* God" (**Ezekiel 20:20, The Message**).

further insight

"The object of God's work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire*

of Ages, p. 285

Sabbath

Read Luke 13:10-17 and Mark 3:1-6.

The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath" (The Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 20). Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What makes people angry reveals what is important to them. Think about the kinds of things that you feel strongly enough about to get angry. In Luke 13:10-17, a similar story is told about a woman who was healed in a similar way, yet it is the synagogue leader who gets "indignant." Compare what makes Jesus upset in Mark 3:1-6 with what makes Jewish leaders angry in Luke 13:10-17, and see if you can identify what is most important to Jesus, and what is most important to the Jewish leaders. Think about what is most important to you—the kinds of things you choose to get angry about.

Sunday

Read Mark 2:27, 28.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. This week's lesson gives you three perspectives of the same event (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Mark is the writer, but he is writing Peter's words, which is why the stories have a lot of emotion. Luke's perspective offers a lot of details that convey information. Matthew seems to have a special message for Jewish people when he tells the story. Which perspective do you identify with most? Why? If you were to write your own perspective, what would be your emphasis? What do you think is the central issue in this story?

Monday

Read Mark 3:3, 4.

The *Key Text* to memorize this week comes from Mark 3:3, 4. As you imprint this story on your mind, how does it relate to the way you approach the Sabbath? What are the most important reasons you have for keeping the Sabbath? Whom do you know that models Sabbathkeeping the way Jesus kept it? What are some of the activities they focus on and what do they avoid?

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 56:1, 2.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and consider what it would be like to honor God by just doing good on the Sabbath. Throughout the storied life of Christ, the religious leaders are preoccupied with "what not to do," which distracts them from experiencing God's power in their life. While some focused on *what not to do*, Jesus remained fixated on what should be done. How does changing your emphasis from what not to do to what you should do change your perspective on the types of activities you might engage in? How can the counsel in today's reading help us focus on what we should be doing?

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson are reminders of how central the Sabbath is to the Christian experience. As you read these verses, which passage speaks to you personally today? What new insights about the Sabbath do you see as you read these passages? Number the verses listed in the *Punch Lines* section according to the order you would read them in a Bible study to someone who is learning about the Sabbath for the first time. Which verse would you start with?

Which passage would close your study? Why did you arrange them in that order?

Thursday

Read Jeremiah 29:11-13.

This week's lesson is not solely about the Sabbath; it is about the importance of people, misguided thinking, and human nature. But the Sabbath was intended to keep us connected to God and to His children in such a way that we would never forget who we are and where we are going. Jesus taught that the Sabbath is about "doing good" and "saving lives." What kinds of things could you do this Sabbath that would expand the beauty of the Sabbath in your experience? Consider how you might involve a family member or a close friend in your endeavors this week.

Friday

Read Isaiah 66:22, 23.

Reflect on the Sabbaths that have been most meaningful for you. What kinds of activities and experiences come to your mind as you think about those special Sabbaths? In today's reading, we are reminded that Sabbath will be part of our lives throughout eternity, as it was before sin entered the world (Genesis 2:1-3). Imagine what Sabbath will be like in heaven and consider how that could begin on earth with you today.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 29.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 14 2025

Scripture Story: Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-31; Matthew 5-7.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 30; 31.

Jesus calling



Photo © Thinkstock 2017

flashlight

"In training His disciples, Jesus chose to withdraw from the confusion of the city to the quiet of the fields and hills, as more in harmony with the lessons of self-abnegation He desired to teach them. And during His ministry He loved to gather the people about Him under the blue heavens, on some grassy hillside, or on the beach beside the lake. Here, surrounded by the works of His own creation, He could turn the thoughts of His hearers from the artificial to the natural. In the growth and development of nature were revealed the principles of His kingdom" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 291).

keytext

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."

(Luke 6:12, 13, NIV)

what do you think?

If you were going to launch a new mission initiative, calling people into God's kingdom, what kind of advertisement would you create to get people interested? Create a commercial campaign by supplying the information below.

Campaign slogan (short catchy phrase):

Music: _____

Budget (How much money are you prepared to spend on your campaign?):

did you know?

Many people believe that all of Jesus' disciples were with Him from the very beginning of His public ministry, but that's not true. Five were, but most were not (John 1:40-49). The other seven were chosen about midway through the three and a half years that Jesus ministered publicly on earth. As Luke notes in Luke 6, Jesus already had a great following by the time the complete "posse" of disciples was chosen.

Jesus demonstrated the power of His ministry by healing the sick, casting out demons, and reaching out to the poor and forgotten. This led people to follow Him. From these people He selected some of His disciples, and then He shared the foundation principles of His kingdom with the 12 and all who wanted to hear about His new kingdom.

INTO THE STORY

"He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

"Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

"Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you."

(Luke 6:17-31, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

These verses are some of the most quoted from the Sermon on the Mount. But there's much more to Jesus' message. Read the rest of Luke 6 to get the full message.

What parts of Jesus' sermon are new to you? *Place an X* by parts of the sermon that you have never read or heard about before.

Why do you think Jesus took time to share these principles with His followers?

What is the core message of the Beatitudes—the Blesseds? What do these statements tell us about the kind of society in which Jesus ministered?

Underline portions of Jesus' statements that most people would consider "radical."

What would the world be like if all people lived by the principles of the kingdom of heaven as outlined by Jesus?

Can we live up to the principles shared in the Sermon on the Mount without Jesus?

punch lines

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" **(Matthew 6:1, NIV).**

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" **(Deuteronomy 10:12, NIV).**

"Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life" **(Proverbs 22:4, NIV).**

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" **(Galatians 6:9, 10, NIV).**

further insight

"He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 297

"God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service. . . . Through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image."—Ellen G.

White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 294

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 4:10 and Romans 12:6-8.

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. . . . When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love" (Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 17).

Sunday

Read Luke 6:37, 38, and Matthew 6:25-27.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage using the *Out of the Story* prompts. What are some of the other topics that Jesus addressed in His sermon? For instance, what did Jesus say about judging others (Luke 6:37)?

What important principle about giving did Jesus share with the crowd (Luke 6:38)?

What did Jesus say about worrying (Matthew 6:25-27)?

That's a whole lot to pack into one sermon. Why did Jesus feel that He had to speak on so many different issues?

Monday

Read Luke 6:12, 13.

There's a powerful nugget hidden in Sabbath's *Key Text*. Read the text again and see if you can find it.

What did Jesus do before He chose the men who would become His disciples?

Jesus spent an entire night in prayer to be sure that He was selecting the right people for the task of sharing the good news of salvation with a dying world. Jesus knew when He chose the 12 disciples that He would be crucified and that they would carry on the work in His absence.

Explain in your own words how you think the disciples did after Jesus died. Did Jesus choose the right people to build His new movement?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 19:1, 2.

This week's *Flashlight* quote highlighted the role that nature played in the ministry of Jesus. What do you think the psalmist David meant when he wrote the two verses in the reading for today?

What do you love about nature? Take a few moments to write a few sentences explaining what nature says to you about God.

Wednesday

Read Galatians 6:9, 10.

Let this week's *Punch Lines* really sink in. Zero in on Galatians 6:9, 10. One of the central messages in Jesus' sermon was the call to change the way in which humans treat each other. The apostle Paul tells us that by doing so, we will reap a great harvest one day when Jesus comes. But think about this for a moment. Are there benefits to be gained right here and now on earth by treating people with love and care, and by doing good to all people?

Share some tangible benefits we can receive now by doing good.

Thursday

When Jesus chose His disciples, He knew their gifts, talents, and weaknesses. Read again about each of the disciples listed below. What were some of their weaknesses, blind spots, areas in which they needed to make changes?

Peter (John 18:10; 25-27): _____
James and John (Mark 3:17): _____
Thomas (John 20:25-27): _____
Judas (John 12: 5, 6): _____

If Jesus was willing to entrust the message of salvation to guys like these, why wouldn't He do the same with you? You will make a great disciple of Jesus if you give your life totally to Him.

Friday

Read Matthew 5:1, 2.

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them" (Matthew 5:1, 2, NIV). That's how Matthew describes the beginning of Jesus' sermon on the mountainside.

Jesus' life on earth was always intertwined with the lives of others. He always saw the needs of people. Do you tend to "see" people and their needs, or are you more concerned with your own needs?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 30; 31.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 21 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 12:22-28;
Luke 7:1-17.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 32; 33.

faith-full soldier



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"The Jewish elders who recommended the centurion to Christ had shown how far they were from possessing the spirit of the gospel. They did not recognize that our great need is our only claim on God's mercy. In their self-righteousness they commended the centurion because of the favor he had shown to 'our nation.' But the centurion said of himself, 'I am not worthy.' His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 316).

keytext

"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, 'Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.' "

(Matthew 8:10, NIV)

what do you think?

Think for a moment about the power entrusted to the

president of the United States by the Constitution. Below is a list of statements about the president's power. Write T or F next to each statement depending on whether you think the president has that power or not.

The president can:

1. Declare war on any other nation without getting the approval of the U.S. Congress.
2. Designate certain parts of the country as national park reserves.
3. Go anywhere in America they wish and at any time, including your home.
4. Veto bills that they do not agree with, and that veto can never be overturned.
5. Choose to disregard a law if they do not agree with it.

did you know?

Did you know that outstanding Roman soldiers called "centurions" were given this title because they commanded a century—a legion of 100 soldiers or so? Centurions would be the equivalent of today's captains or lieutenants. They often fought alongside their soldiers, leading them from the front into battle.

According to a StudyLight.org Bible encyclopedia, centurions were responsible for drilling their men; inspecting their arms, food, clothing; and commanding them in battle. The Romans believed that if they had strong, brave centurions, their military would be almost invincible, and for hundreds of years they were.

INTO THE STORY

"When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' So Jesus went with them.

"He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: 'Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.

That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I

myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, "Go," and he goes; and that one, "Come," and he comes. I say to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.'

"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.' Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well."

"Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'

"But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.'

"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'"

(Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 12:22-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Today's *Into the Story* passage presents two different stories from Jesus' ministry travels. What differences or parallels do you see in each?

What did the Jewish leaders say to Jesus during the centurion episode? What was their attitude?

Look at the second story in the *Into the Story* section. What is the attitude of the Jewish leaders in this story? What accusation are they making about Jesus here?

Pay close attention to spots in the stories where there is a turn in the action. Place an X at each spot.

What does Jesus say in each story? Look for the power and authority in His words. Does He seem shy or timid? Is He overly concerned about what the Jewish elites would think of Him?

What lessons can we learn about what people make up the family of God?

punch lines

"What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!' " (**Zechariah 4:7, NIV**).

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (**Hebrews 11:6, NIV**).

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you" (**1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV**).

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (**Galatians 6:2, NIV**).

"I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me" (**John 14:30, NIV**).

"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time" (**Luke 4:13, NIV**).

further insight

"He who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*,

p. 321

"Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. . . . The Spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim His blessing."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 54

Sabbath

Read John 17:1-5.

How did you do in the *What Do You Think?* activity? Some of those statements were very tricky, and you may have needed to consult your civics textbooks to be sure.

The Constitution is the document that defines the president's authority and what they are supposed to abide by. Who or what was the source of Jesus' authority while on earth (John 17:1-5)?

How did the centurion know that Jesus had the authority simply to speak and heal his servant? After all, he was not a follower of Jesus. Explain your answer.

"The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. . . . The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures" (The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 12).

Sunday

Read John 15:12.

After reading the *Into the Story* Bible passage, complete the *Out of the Story* questions.

Notice that both the centurion's servant and the demon-possessed man were brought to Jesus by other people. Write about a time you took a friend to Jesus. Maybe you did it by praying for them, or maybe you invited them to church. Share what led you to do this.

As the family of God we are called to reach out to all people. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12, NIV).

Monday

Read Mark 12:32-34.

Read this week's *Key Text* again. Wouldn't you love for Jesus to give you a compliment like the one He gave the centurion? Jesus was known to give awesome compliments. What did He say to the religious teacher in today's reading?

Why was Jesus so "impressed" by the centurion's display of faith?

The centurion was not a Jew. In fact, he was part of the Roman force that occupied the Jews. Can you think of a time you saw a non-Christian show great faith in God? How did that person's show of faith impact you? How did it strengthen your faith?

Tuesday

Read James 2:1-7.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation and then read Luke 7:1-5.

What special favor had the centurion done for the Jews?

The Jewish leaders felt that this made the centurion worthy of Jesus' help and support. Do we sometimes feel the same way about rich and powerful people who have done great things? What does the apostle James say about how we should treat all people, whether rich or poor, deserving of our help or not (see James 2:1-7)?

As the family of God, we are called to reach out to all people in need of God's care. Our need draws God to us—nothing else.

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. Who is the speaker in Zechariah 4:7?

What often-quoted verse precedes Zechariah 4:7? What point do you think God was making to Zechariah, Zerubbabel, and Judah?

These two verses remind us that God is truly the "author" and "finisher" of our faith, and everything else in our lives.

Thursday

Read Matthew 12:24.

When Jesus freed the demon-possessed man and restored his sight and speech, the people were astonished, but the Pharisees were not impressed.

Have you ever faced criticism for doing something good?

Should such criticism stop you from using your gifts and talents to do good?

Friday

Read Matthew 10:1.

Jesus was empowered to do great works on earth, but did you know that He also gave this power to His disciples and to us today. Consider what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 10:1. If God gave this power to you, what would you do with it?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 32; 33.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 28 2025

Scripture Story: Luke 8:26-39.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 34; 35.

"used-to-bes" and "has-beens"



Photo by Terill Thomas

flashlight

"With authority He bade the unclean spirits come out of them. His words penetrated the darkened minds of the unfortunate men. They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him; but when their lips were opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 337).

keytext

"The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return home and tell how much God has done for you.' So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him."

(Luke 8:38, 39, NIV)

what do you think?

Indicate where you are on the continuum below.

The personal stories that others tell about Christ that inspire me the most tend to be:

Dramatic Conversions Lifelong Learning
1 2 3 4 5 6

Why do think that some believers who have grown up in Christ feel as if their experience is not as amazing because it is not as dramatic? Explain what is powerful about both types of experiences.

did you know?

The broader region where

this event took place is called Decapolis (Ten Cities). These cities are: Damascus, Dion, Gadara, Gerasa, Hippos, Canatha, Pella, Philadelphia, Raphana, and Scythopolis. Some towns you might remember, such as Damascus, the place where Saul (before he became Paul) was going to arrest a rapidly growing Christian movement. It is likely that this “has-been” or “used-to-be” demoniac spread the word about Christ so effectively that the believers in that part of Galilee grew like wildfire. It just goes to show how one person’s story can change everything.

INTO THE STORY

“They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!’ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

“Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’

“‘Legion,’ he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

“A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

“When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

“The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return home and tell how much God has done for you.’ So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.”

(Luke 8:26-39, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this story, *underline* the key words or phrases that you think shape the meaning of this event.

Read the context of this event (the events that lead up to this story) and describe the attitudes and experiences of Christ and the disciples as they face another frightening moment.

Circle some of the key words and phrases that describe the demonic before and after meeting Christ. What do these details say about the nature of Christ's kingdom and the nature of Satan's world?

Based on what you observe in this story, how do demons respond to the presence of Jesus? How do you think the disciples and other witnesses of events such as this relate to Jesus' power?

How do you explain the reaction of the villagers to this event? How do you compare their reaction to Jesus with other stories where people received Jesus with adoration? What does this say about their previous knowledge of Christ?

Why do you think the man healed of the demons so desperately wanted to stay with Jesus and get in the boat with Him? How does Jesus respond, and why do you think Jesus urged Him to share what He had witnessed?

punch lines

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" **(1 John 1:1-4, ESV).**

"He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen" **(Deuteronomy 10:21, NASB).**

"Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me. For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke. If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer" **(Psalm 66:16-19, NLT).**

" 'Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?' And they went out to see for themselves" **(John 4:29, 30, The Message).**

"They don't belong to the world, just as I don't belong to the world. Make them ready for your service through your truth; your teaching is truth. I have sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world" **(John 17:16-18, NCV).**

further insight

"'Lord, save us: we perish.' Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 335

"It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 339

Sabbath

Read 1 John 1:1-4.

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. So often we think because we were not once demon-possessed or drug addicts that what God has done in our lives is not real, or as real as what He did in others who have had dramatic conversions. Think of heroes of faith in Scripture who were born into it, as well as those who had dramatic circumstances surround their conversion. In today's reading, what is required for you to have a testimony about what God has done for you? Also, contemplate this thought: "Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit . . . we are given the power to live a holy life" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10).

Sunday

Read Matthew 28:18.

Read the *Into the Story* portion and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. This week's lesson portrays the power of Christ over the demons. Some may seem unreachable, but Christ has shown how no one is so far gone that He cannot save them. What part did you connect with, and what was God's message to you in this story? What is God's message to you in this text?

Monday

Read Luke 8:38, 39.

The *Key Text* this week comes from Luke 8:38, 39. "The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return home and tell how much God has done for you.' So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him" (NIV). What stories from the Bible or history portray one person sharing their testimony and having a great impact? If you could share your journey with Christ with three people this week, whom would you share it with? Why?

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 15:11.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and think about what it means for those people who seem to be beyond help. Note especially how Ellen White says: "His words penetrated the darkened minds of the unfortunate men. They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him; but when their lips were opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 337). Even when people spew out hatred, it is possible that there is still a part of their hearts untouched by evil that Christ sees and hears, and can restore. Whom do you know that seems so far away from God that they don't have any apparent desire to know the Lord? Begin praying for that small part hidden in the depths of their heart to grow and respond to God. What comfort can you draw from today's reading?

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson refer to the power of personal testimonies. Read them carefully and choose three passages that speak to you personally. Think of the various ways a person can tell their story to someone else. Perhaps it is in a song, in a letter they write, or in doing acts of kindness that prompt an onlooker's curiosity. Everyone who has experienced the mercy of Christ has a story. Whose story in the Bible do you resonate with the most? Why?

Thursday

Read Psalm 71:17, 18.

Demon possession is a real and undeniable problem around the world. In some parts of the world it manifests itself differently, but is still very real. The victory over such a problem depicts everyone's victory over sin by the grace and mercy of Christ. Again, everyone who becomes a believer, whether it is in a dramatic moment or over the course of a lifetime, has a rich, powerful story of faith to share with some-

one else. Everyone's story matters, and everyone's story is necessary. What is your story? One way to begin writing out your testimony is to consider three parts: (1) my life before I met Christ (or before I truly understood what He has done for me); (2) an event or experience that was a pivotal point in my decision to follow Christ; and (3) what my life is like as a result. Write out your testimony and stick it in your Bible so you have it to refer to, but also as a reminder of your journey with Christ. Make today's reading your personal prayer.

Friday

Read 1 John 1:1-3.

Reflect on moments in your life when you had the opportunity to share who Christ is to you. How did you respond? What might you do differently given the opportunity today. It is common that those who pray fervently for an opportunity to share their story with someone else are the ones who consistently share with others. How do you identify with today's reading?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 34; 35.

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