• **Other Eyes**—a couple of quotes from various contemporary or historic sources that may open up a slightly different perspective on the central message of the lesson.  
• **Making It Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a 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 apply to you personally.

**WHY THE BIBLE STORY APPROACH? (teacher introduction)**

There is a tendency to neglect God’s Word because the Bible seems so old and the issues of life today don’t seem to automatically connect with the ancient, inspired text. Trying to read through the Bible can leave young people in a fog. But the Bible was never meant to be read. It was meant to be studied, reflected on, and integrated into life. It wasn’t written to be analyzed as much as it was to be obeyed. It takes effort. If you simply want a story to entertain you, then the Bible isn’t for you.

The Bible is not a novel that grips you, but if you get a firm hold on the message of the Bible with a teachable heart and an eye that seeks God, you will find something more than entertaining. You will discover a message just for you. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13, NIV). Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:24, NIV).

The Bible is the tool that will be used by the promised Teacher—the Holy Spirit. We, the earthly teachers, will be effective as we first let the Spirit teach us. Each of these lessons is built around a specific Bible story. You will lead the students **Into the Story** and help them mine truth for their lives **Out of the Story**. The gems of truth are not already mined for you. You and your students will have an opportunity to dig for yourselves.

“In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained” (Education, p. 189).

Welcome to **Cornerstone Connections**.

— The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.

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

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

(Bolded text helps you review the suggested steps at a glance.)

❶ With each lesson in this Teacher’s Guide you will find an Explore section with topics listed that relate to this week’s story. We have provided a variety of resources for exploring the topic you choose—from discussion questions to illustrations, from reader’s theater scripts to learning activities. **Use the resources at www.cornerstoneconnections.net to create a “program” that is relevant to your group.**

❷ Begin the actual “lesson” time with the What Do You Think? activity (and the Did You Know? information) in the student lesson. The activities are designed to get your students to think, respond, and share with one another. The rich discussion that can grow out of this exercise is a great entry point. The key question to ask at the end is “Why did you respond the way you did?”

❸ Your Teacher’s Guide provides an illustration, along with a short “bridge” thought that will help you **lead your students into the Bible passage itself.**

❹ The heart of the lesson experience is to **read the Bible passage, Into the Story,** together and to **discuss it** with the help of your Out of the Story for Teachers questions. Other passages to compare to this one for further mining in the Word are sometimes provided as well.

❺ Then **share the information about context and background** that will make the story become more understandable for you and your students.

❹ You are provided with a short guide to help you **unpack the other sections of the student lesson with your class.** (Your students are also directed to work through one section of their lesson on their own each day by following the instructions in Making It Real.) Encourage them to do this the week before or the week after you discuss the lesson in class, whichever works best for your teaching situation.

❺ Each week’s Teacher’s Guide includes a teaching tip in Rabbi 101 that will be helpful for you to keep for future reference. You are also provided an activity and a summary with which to **draw the lesson together and close.**

❻ In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week’s story. Students who choose to will be able to read the entire series in four years by following the reading plan.

At www.InsightMagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

*Insight* has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.
2011
1st Quarter
1. Adam and Eve
2. The Serpent
3. Cain and Abel
4. Seth and Enoch
5. Noah
6. Tower People
7. Abraham
8. Isaac
9. Lot
10. Rebekah
11. Jacob and Esau
12. Jacob
13. Israel

2nd Quarter
1. Joseph
2. The Brothers
3. Moses
4. Egyptians
5. Fleeing Slaves
6. Unhappy Campers
7. Chosen Nation
8. Aaron
9. The Tabernacle
10. Miriam and Zipporah
11. Twelve Spies
12. Korah
13. The Bronze Serpent

3rd Quarter
1. The Borders Revisited
2. Balaam
3. Questionable Neighbors
4. Law Review
5. Moses’ Death
6. Crossing Jordan
7. Rahab
8. Blessings and Curses
9. Gibeonites
10. Canaan Divided
11. Last Words of Joshua
12. Annual Feasts
13. Early Judges

4th Quarter
1. Samson
2. Samuel
3. Eli
4. Philistines
5. First King
6. Saul’s Death
7. Anointed
8. Fugitive
9. Lunatic
10. Crowned King
11. Incumbent
12. Sinner
13. Absalom

2012
1st Quarter
1. God’s People
2. Solomon
3. Temple Builder
4. Proud Potentate
5. Repentant Author
6. Rehoboam
7. Jeroboam
8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel
9. Elijah
10. Evangelist
11. Coward
12. The Sabbath
13. Jehoshaphat

2nd Quarter
1. Ahab
2. Elisha
3. Prophet
4. Naaman
5. Jonah
6. Hosea
7. Isaiah
8. Jehovah
9. Ahaz
10. Hezekiah
11. Assyria
12. Manasseh
13. Josiah

3rd Quarter
1. Jeremiah
2. Approaching Doom
3. last King
4. Captives
5. Daniel
6. The Dream
7. Three Hebrews
8. Nebuchadnezzar
9. Belshazzar
10. Daniel
11. Daniel 7
12. Daniel 8, 9
13. Daniel 10-12

4th Quarter
1. Haggai/Zerubbabel
2. Zechariah
3. Temple Two
4. Esther
5. Queen
6. Ezra
7. Nehemiah
8. Builders
9. Plotters
10. Reformers
11. Jesus
12. Deliverer
13. Future Glory

2013
1st Quarter
1. Jesus
2. It’s Time
3. Mary
4. Simeon/Anna
5. The Wise Men
6. The Child Jesus
7. The Voice
8. Victory
9. Messiah Found
10. Marriage Feast
11. The Temple
12. Nicodemus
13. John the Baptist

2nd Quarter
1. Samaritan Woman
2. The Nobleman
3. The Lame Man
4. John the Baptist
5. The Anointed One
6. Peter
7. Capernaum
8. The Leper
9. Levi-Matthew
10. The Sabbath
11. The Disciples
12. The Centurion
13. The Demonic

3rd Quarter
1. Woman/Jairus
2. The Seventy
3. The Disciples
4. Misunderstandings
5. Broken Barriers
6. Jesus’ Ministry
7. Who Is Jesus?
8. Lawyer/Ruler
9. The Children
10. Lazarus’ Family
11. Zacchaeus
12. Mary
13. James and John

4th Quarter
1. The King Comes
2. The Pharisees
3. The End of Time
4. Servanthood
5. The Last Supper
6. Gethsemane
7. The Trial
8. Calvary
9. Resurrection
10. Mary Magdalene
11. The Emmaus Road
12. By the Sea
13. Jesus’ Ascension

2014
1st Quarter
1. The Mission
2. The Holy Spirit
3. The Lame Man
4. Ananias/Sapphira
5. God’s People
6. Stephen
7. Paul
8. Peter
9. Paul/Barnabas
10. Gentiles Included
11. Spreading Good News
12. The Thessalonians
13. The Ephesians

2nd Quarter
1. The Corinthians
2. Workers for Christ
3. Romans/Galatians
4. Last Journey
5. Adventures and Trials
6. Philemon
7. Colossians/Philippians
8. Final Arrest
9. Before Nero
10. John the Beloved
11. Patmos
12. The Revelation
13. Church Triumphant

3rd Quarter
1. First believers
2. Seekers
3. Wycliffe
4. Luther
5. Zwingli
6. French Reformation
7. English Reformers
8. French Revolution
9. American Reformers
10. William Miller
11. Prophecy Fulfilled
12. The Sanctuary
13. God’s Law

4th Quarter
1. Renewal
2. Investigative Judgment
3. Origin of Evil
4. Snares
5. Great Deception
6. The Papacy
7. Spiritual Challenge
8. The Bible
9. Last Chance
10. Time of Trouble
11. Deliverance
12. The End
13. The Beginning

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
1. The Message
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 1.

2. Countdown to the Savior
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 2, 3.

3. Servant of the Lord
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 4.

Scripture Story: Matthew 2.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 5.

5. Following Yonder Star
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9.

6. Growing Up
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 10, 11.

7. One of a Kind
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 12, 13.

8. Hard Target
Scripture Story: John 1.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 14.

9. Come See
Scripture Story: John 2:1-11.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 15.

10. Partying with Jesus
Scripture Story: John 2:12-22.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 16.

11. Get Out of My House!
Scripture Story: John 3:1-17.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 17.

12. A Slow Burn
Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.

13. It’s Your Turn
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 19.

1. Unlikely Missionary
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 20.

2. Seeing Is believing?
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 21.

3. Do You Want to Get Well?
Scripture Story: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Matthew 5–7.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 22.

4. Appearance Vs. Reality
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 23.

5. A Tumultuous Homecoming
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 24.

6. I’m a Follower
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 25.

7. The Day the Devil Went to Church

8. Willing and Able
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 27.

9. Not Love at First Sight
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 28.

10. Front and Center
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 29.

11. Jesus Calling
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 30.

12. Faith-FULL Soldier
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 31.

13. Used-to-Be’s and Has-Beens
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 32.
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| **1. Woman With Issue of Blood and Jairus’ Daughter**  
  **Scripture Story:** Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 36. |
| **2. The Seventy**  
  **Scripture Story:** Matthew 10; Mark 6:7-11; Luke 9:1-6.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 37. |
| **3. A Day in the Life of a Disciple**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 38, 39, 40. |
| **4. Misunderstand the Messiah**  
  **Scripture Story:** John 6:22-71; Matthew 15:1, 2; Mark 7:1-23.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 41, 42. |
| **5. Syrophoenician Woman**  
  **Scripture Story:** Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 43. |
| **6. Ministry of Jesus**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 44, 45, 46, 47. |
| **7. Who Is Jesus?**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 49, 50, 51, 52. |
| **8. The Lawyer and the Rich Young Ruler**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 62. |
| **9. The Children**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 55, 56. |
| **10. Lazarus, Mary, and Martha**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 48, 50, 51, 52. |
| **11. Zack**  
  **Scripture Story:** Luke 19:1-10.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 61. |
| **12. James and John**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 48, 60. |

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<th>4th Quarter</th>
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| **1. Jesus and Jerusalem**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 63, 64, 65. |
| **2. Jesus vs. Pharisees**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 66, 67. |
| **3. Jesus and the End of Time**  
  **Scripture Story:** John 12:20-43; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 68, 69. |
| **4. Jesus and Servanthood**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 70, 71. |
| **5. Jesus and the Last Supper**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 72, 73. |
| **6. Gethsemane**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 74. |
| **7. Trial of Jesus**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 75, 76, 77. |
| **8. Calvary**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 78, 79. |
| **9. Resurrection**  
  **Scripture Story:** Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 80, 81. |
| **10. Mary M**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 82. |
| **11. Disciples on the Road to Emmaus**  
  **Scripture Story:** Luke 24:13-33.  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapter 83. |
| **12. John and Peter by the Sea**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 84, 85. |
| **13. Jesus’ Ascension**  
  **Commentary:** The Desire of Ages, chapters 86, 87. |
April

6—Unlikely Missionary [p. 11]
On the strength of one woman’s witness, an entire village was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Can one person’s story really make a difference?

13—Seeing Is Believing? [p. 19]
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.

20—Do You Want to Get Well? [p. 27]
Many people prefer bondage to redemption. Is it possible that the lame man by the pool of Bethesda preferred it as well?

27—Appearance Vs. Reality [p. 35]
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

4—A Tumultuous Homecoming [p. 43]
What began for Jesus as a speaking appointment in His childhood synagogue turned into a vicious attempt on His life.

11—I’m a Follower [p. 51]
Peter and the other fishermen left everything behind to follow Jesus. What does commitment to Jesus look like in the twenty-first century?

June

1—Not Love at First Sight [p. 75]
Jesus would rather be in the midst of sinners than in a room filled with so-called “just and noble” people. Actually, He sought them out.

8—Front and Center [p. 83]
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.

15—Jesus Calling [p. 91]
Our call to discipleship is always followed by a call to live in service to humanity. But how do we do that?

22—Faith-FULL Soldier [p. 99]
A centurion, a servant, and a Savior. The family of God transcends all cultures and creeds.

29—Used-to-Be’s and Has-Beens [p. 107]
Even when the man’s best and only response to Jesus was 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.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Jesus travels through Samaria and has an encounter with an unlikely new disciple—a woman, and one who is not only a Samaritan but most likely an outcast within her own community. Jesus' constant habit of reaching out to the margins of society was never more evident than on the afternoon when He sat down by a well and asked a Samaritan woman to draw water so He could have a drink. But not only did this woman become a believer in Jesus herself, she also became an active missionary within minutes of her first conversation with Jesus. On the strength of her first-hand witness, an entire village of Samaritans came to hear Jesus for themselves, and left convinced they had met the Messiah.

The experience of the woman at the well vividly illustrates that we don’t need to be experienced theology graduates or Christians of long standing in order to witness for Jesus. Witnessing is just telling what we’ve seen, heard, and experienced—and inviting people to discover for themselves.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand that anyone can be a witness for Jesus. (Know)
• Feel that their own experience with Jesus is worth sharing with others. (Feel)
• Choose to witness for Jesus by telling people what He has done in their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Service to others
• Prejudice
• Acceptance

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Who can be a missionary? In fact, what does it mean to be a missionary, or to witness for Jesus? Are they the same thing? Can any Christian do them?

Ask students to brainstorm words and phrases that come to their minds when you mention “witnessing” or “missions.” Write words and phrases on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart. When everyone has had a chance to contribute, discuss the words and phrases you’ve written down. Are they positive images—things that young people feel good about? What are their emotions concerning witnessing? Do they think it’s something that they can do, should do, or have to do? Does it excite them, scare them, or leave them cold?

Emphasize that this week’s lesson will focus on the fact that anyone who has had a personal experience with Jesus can be a witness simply by sharing what they know with others.
Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

About 30 years ago, in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., an American teacher developed a simple classroom exercise to illustrate the power of prejudice to her students. She told the children that having blue eyes meant they were more intelligent, and gave greater privileges to the blue-eyed children. Very quickly she observed that the blue-eyed children were bullying and oppressing the brown-eyed children, while those with brown eyes demonstrated fear and low self-esteem—even though she conducted the exercise for only one day! The next day, Ms. Elliot returned to her class and told the children that what she’d told them the previous day was untrue—it was actually brown-eyed children who were more intelligent and would have more privileges. The same experience happened in reverse—now the brown-eyed children began to oppress the others.

The experience opened students’ eyes—both blue and brown!—to the power of prejudice and the divisions we create between people. Just like the Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ day, we tend to divide people up on the basis of race, language, culture, religion, and many other barriers. We decide who’s “in” and who’s “out,” who’s cool and who’s not. Jesus saw past all those barriers. He chooses His followers from every race, culture, and background, and He asks us to look past those barriers, too.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When Jesus sat down beside the well and asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, everything He did was shocking. As a Jew, He wasn’t supposed to speak to a Samaritan. As a man in that culture, He wasn’t supposed to speak to a woman alone. And this particular woman had had five husbands, which probably made her a social outcast in her community. But Jesus always sees past barriers and labels to the person inside.

What kind of labels do we put on others? What labels do we put on ourselves? We may decide that a particular person could never do great work for God just because of who they are or where they come from. We might even decide that about ourselves! But God chooses all kinds of people—just like the woman at the well!

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Break down the experience of the woman at the well into the following steps, writing the headings on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart and asking students to contribute their ideas.

- What did she need? (some ideas might include: hope, acceptance, belonging, forgiveness)
- What did Jesus offer? (“living water,” promise that He was the Messiah, insight into her life)
- How did she respond? (questioned Him at first, ran off to tell others)
- What was the result? (her entire village came to hear Jesus and believed in Him)
- Now ask the students to brainstorm ideas of other Bible stories in which a person had a memorable encounter with Jesus, and do the same for each of those stories. What kinds of needs did people bring to Jesus? (In many cases it was physical healing, but people also came in need of forgiveness and acceptance.) Try to find examples of stories in which the people went on to tell others what Jesus had done for them. (Two examples are given in the Punch Lines section of the student lesson and expanded upon in Wednesday’s student lesson.)
- Ask: “What qualifications did this woman, or any of the other people we’ve discussed, have that made them able to witness?” (personal experience, having met Jesus, been changed by Him). Refer back to the brainstorming discussion at the beginning of the lesson. What kinds of qualifications do we feel like we need in order to be witnesses? Did these people have those qualifications?
- Challenge students to think of ways in which they can use their own personal experience to be witnesses—to share with others what God has done for them.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: see passages from the Punch Lines section of the student lesson.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.
There are two major themes within this story: Jesus’ willingness to reach out to outsiders and the marginalized within society, and the woman’s willingness to immediately become a missionary by sharing her personal experience with others.

These two threads come together when the disciples return and respond to Jesus’ interaction with the woman. (For further reflection on this, read The Desire of Ages chapter for this lesson: “At Jacob’s Well.”) The disciples didn’t see Samaria as a valid field for evangelism because their racial and religious prejudices were too deeply ingrained—they saw Jesus as the Messiah for the Jews alone. If He were to reach out to someone within the Samaritan community, a socially outcast, five-times-married, living-in-sin female was the last person they would have chosen.

Jesus’ vision of witnessing is so much broader than ours! It reaches out to everyone—not just those who are like us, those we are comfortable with—but also to the excluded, the outcast, the marginalized. Challenge students to think about who that might be in their community, church, or school. Jesus’ idea of a good witness is also broader than His disciples’ idea was—He had (and still has) a place in His work for anyone who has had a genuine experience with Him, no matter how others may view that person.

Young people in your group may have experienced prejudice directed at them—maybe because of race or culture or social class, or maybe just because they’re teenagers, and adults don’t like the way they dress, talk, or do things. Remind them that Jesus doesn’t look only for pastors, theology students, and Bible workers to share His love—He uses anyone who knows Him and loves Him to reach out to others.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

The Rest of the Story
The concept of “story” isn’t new. But especially in our attempts to share our personal stories of our relationship with Christ and how that relationship has impacted our lives, this concept can be challenging.

One way to help students share their stories is to ask them to write down five of their life experiences that have impacted them spiritually. Then ask them to try to identify a particular theme that is woven throughout those experiences. For example, “All of these experiences involved my being afraid of something or someone, but Christ replaced my fear with courage,” or “All of these experiences made me feel very inadequate, but God gave me a sense of worth and value.”

It’s from this theme that students can share how Christ has impacted their lives.

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Some preachers and teachers have “soul winning” and “witnessing” boiled down to a formula by which you should be able to tell your personal story of what Christ has done for you in three minutes or less. Real-life conversations aren’t often like that. Witnessing works best when we’re talking to people who know us, people we can be honest with, about what’s really happened in our lives.

Give each student a blank card or postcard and ask them to write a few sentences to a friend who doesn’t know Jesus, telling this person something about what Jesus has done for them. After giving them a little time to write, challenge them to pray about whether they can share that card, or the message on it, with that person this week.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

We draw so many lines to exclude and divide people. Jesus stepped over those lines. He was interested in including people, not excluding them.

One line that people in the church sometimes draw is to say that you can’t work for the Lord unless you’re older, or you’ve had a certain kind of training, or you’ve gotten everything in your life in order and you haven’t made any mistakes for the last 10 years. But that’s not the way Jesus recruited workers for His cause. Anybody who had really gotten to know Him—even the Samaritan woman at the well—was qualified to tell others what Jesus had done for them. It’s still the same today. If you know Jesus, if He’s touched your life in any way, then you have all the qualifications you need to share Him with others. You don’t need to be able to preach or give Bible studies—though those are wonderful gifts if you do have them. All you need is to be able to do what the woman at the well did: tell others, “I met this Man, and here’s what He did for me. Why don’t you come meet Him too?”

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 19.

* A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
As soon as she had found the Savior 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 Savior (The Desire of Ages, p. 195).

“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 Christ?’ 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 exiled to Assyria. Jews believed the Samaritans were descendants of Gentiles who had settled there after the Assyrian 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.

The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you 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 Christ?’ . . .

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)

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 him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him 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 fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’ Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, woman, 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 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 who speak to you 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 Christ?’ . . .

[...]

“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? ‘Not called!’ did you say? ‘Not heard the diagnosis has already been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, 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)
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?

“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 they 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 family 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).

“We should not ask, ‘What is wrong with the world?’ for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, ‘What has happened to the salt and light?’”—John Stott, 20th-century British theologian and clergyman.

“‘Not called!’ did you say? ‘Not heard the call,’ I think you should say. . . . Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help.”

—William Booth, 19th-century British preacher and founder of the Salvation Army.
Sunday

R ead 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 Luke 5:29-32 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 people in your community and your church react if He did this?

Monday

O ur Key Text from this story tells us that 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

Tuesday

R ead the Flashlight section of your lesson. How were Jesus and His disciples different in the way they viewed the Samaritans?

What were the disciples focused on when they went to Samaria?

What did Jesus focus on?

Witnessing is effective when we focus on what’s real, here and now. Instead of imagining the great work you could do for God someday in the future, look at the people He’s brought into your life right now—family, friends, and neighbors. Share His love with the people you know—that’s the key to being a real missionary.

Wednesday

C ompare 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. Fill out the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person What Jesus Did for Them</th>
<th>What They Told Others About Jesus</th>
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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, heard, and what’s happened to you. Being a witness for Jesus simply means sharing what He has done for you.

Thursday

J esus 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 spread to all kinds of people.

Think of three individuals, or groups of people, who are considered “outsiders” in your community, church, or school. How do you relate to these people? How would you relate to them, if you followed Jesus’ example?

Friday

T he woman at the well went back to her village, told people about Jesus, and asked, “Could this be the Messiah?” 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?

Key Text

From this story tells us that 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

Sabbath

R ead the full story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman from John 4:1-42. Put yourself in the woman’s place. How do you think she reacted to Jesus at different points in the story? What do you think was the “turning point” in this conversation for her?

What did Jesus focus on?

Witnessing is effective when we focus on what’s real, here and now. Instead of imagining the great work you could do for God someday in the future, look at the people He’s brought into your life right now—family, friends, and neighbors. Share His love with the people you know—that’s the key to being a real missionary.

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Think of three individuals, or groups of people, who are considered “outsiders” in your community, church, or school. How do you relate to these people? How would you relate to them, if you followed Jesus’ example?

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 the 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.
seeing is believing?

Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 20.
Key Text: John 4:48-50.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This is a lesson about a father’s love for his child and God’s love for His children. Its focus is faith. The royal official who came to Jesus in Cana to beseech His intervention as his son lay dying becomes a lesson in trust for us all. He came believing Jesus must follow him home to heal his son. The nobleman made a favorable answer to that request a test for his accepting Jesus as Messiah, but God’s ways are not man’s ways.

He didn’t realize the Savior had beheld his affliction before he’d left home. He had a measure of faith, enough that he came to Cana to ask for the most wonderful of blessings, that Jesus would restore health to his son. Jesus had a greater gift in mind that involved not only healing the boy but also saving the nobleman and his family while laying the groundwork for His earthly ministry in Capernaum.

Speaking to the nobleman (and to those around him), Jesus said, “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe.” The nobleman grasped the import of those words and leaped in faith to realize that the word of the Lord was sufficient when Jesus said, “You may go. Your son will live.” Indeed, at that very instant, the boy was healed. His words, and that lesson in faith, echo to our hearts today.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Recognize that seeing isn’t believing in that God’s Word is sufficient and His will is to bless us beyond our furthest thoughts. (Know)
- Realize that the words of Jesus to the nobleman and to the residents of Cana are also directed to all people through human history and that they, too, must trust His promises. (Feel)
- Resolve to trust God fully, even without seeing signs and wonders. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Miracles and the miraculous
- Faith
- Promises

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Show a clip of a group of people engaged in a “trust fall” or experiencing a “rope challenge course” as a discussion starter to focus attention on trust-building exercises. Invite your students to discuss any experiences they may have had with such activities. Make a list in front of the class of how such experiences can strengthen faith.

The phrase “seeing is believing” is not necessarily true. Jesus sought to turn that way of thinking to a
higher plane—to trust that His Word alone is sufficient. Show your students several optical illusions you can find online or at your local library to debunk the adage.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In 1978 there was a gas crisis in America leading to high prices and long lines at the pumps. I was still in college. My fiancée, who had recently graduated and begun work in a job that required a car, was involved in an accident one Friday afternoon. Her car was a total loss, although she was unhurt. She met me at an on-campus weekend Marriage Enrichment Seminar and explained what happened. We prayed that God would provide.

As introductions during the seminar took place, it was obvious we were troubled. My soon-to-be wife shared the traumatic story of the accident, how it had suddenly left her adrift without a way to work, without a car needed for work, and with no money to replace the car. One couple, well established in their medical professions, looked at each other and hatched a plan.

They had a like-new 1975 Mercury Grand Marquis Brougham, a huge car with a monstrous appetite for gasoline. It had been advertised for sale for months with no takers because it went 8 miles per gallon of gas. They donated the car to our church (thereby gaining a tax benefit for their charitable contribution) and the church transferred the title to my fiancée. By the end of the weekend God provided a way! The donors said it would be fine to exchange the car for a more economical model if we could not afford the gas. We couldn’t and we did. God saw our need before we knew it ourselves, had an answer to prayer parked in a driveway, and moved upon the hearts of two dear people to give away a perfectly fine car.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The phrase “seeing is believing” remains meaningful today because its message rings true to many people. If you can’t trust your own eyes, what can you trust? The paradox for Christians is that faith ultimately relies on the unseen (see Hebrews 11:1). God desires to bless us more than we can imagine and longs for our faith to be strong so we can easily ask, believe, and claim His promises. Miracles abound.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- One of the deepest pains is the anguish felt by a parent seeing their child suffering unto death. A measure of comfort comes when the utterly helpless turn to the utmost Helper as did the nobleman father. If you have a child, help your students to understand that feeling. If you don’t have a child, ask a parent to explain it to your students. Does it help to know that God the Father gave His Son so we may have everlasting life?

- The royal official dad changed from an attitude of “seeing is believing” to “believing in faith” that Jesus had healed his son. He realized the words of Jesus pertaining to signs and wonders were an indictment of his faith. He acted on his newfound faith by heading home with peace and joy that Jesus heard, healed, and had begun to help his entire family enter His gates with thanksgiving.

- Help your students understand the meaning of a “prophet has no honor in his own country,” perhaps by sharing examples of people you went to school with who were involved in boisterous activities back then but who matured to become upstanding citizens with responsible jobs.

- False christs, false prophets, signs and wonders . . . what is a young Christian to do so as not to be deceived? Lead your students to an awareness that the time to prepare is now. The time to commune with the Holy Spirit is today and every day. Fortified with knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures, the example of Jesus, the pen of Ellen White, and perhaps a future last-days God-led prophet, they can stand in faith that God is with them, an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Hebrews 11:1; Matthew 6:30-34; 8:25-27; 16:5-10.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

The Bible passage that is the focus of this week’s...
The lesson begins in John 4:43 with the phrase “After the two days,” meaning the day after the events recorded in verses 5-39. The journey of verses 3-5 is now resumed. In verse 45 the phrase “They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast” is probably a reference to the incidents of John 2:13-23, whereby the cleansing of the Temple led to reports that Jesus had declared Himself the Messiah.

The meeting between the royal official and Jesus took place in Cana, which is approximately 16 miles (25 km) from Capernaum where the sick boy was located. The request by the boy’s father is the first recorded request for healing made of Jesus (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 943).

Jesus knew the father had, in his own mind, made conditions concerning his belief in Jesus as the Messiah. “Unless his petition should be granted, he would not receive Him as the Messiah. While the officer waited in an agony of suspense, Jesus said, ‘Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.’ . . .

“Like a flash of light, the Saviour’s words to the nobleman laid bare his heart. He saw that his motives in seeking Jesus were selfish. His vacillating faith appeared to him in its true character. In deep distress he realized that his doubt might cost the life of his son. He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the thoughts, and to whom all things were possible. . . .

“Go thy way,’ He said; ‘thy son liveth.’ The nobleman left the Savior’s presence with a peace and joy he had never known before. Not only did he believe that his son would be restored, but with strong confidence he trusted in Christ as the Redeemer” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 197-199).

The royal official’s faith was emboldened by his experience with Jesus. He did not rush home, a four- or five-hour trip, to see what had happened to his son. His assurance in Jesus was such that his servants met him the following morning, some distance from home,

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Using and Explaining Adages

An adage is a statement of generally accepted truth that is substantiated through its long use and by experience. “Seeing is believing” is one example. The Bible has many phrases that have also become adages that were once common knowledge in American society. They are less well known today because of society’s secular turn and the many Bible translations now available eliminating the consistency of King James English. When using an adage, explain its original context and how it is used or not used in society today. This week’s lesson included “A prophet has no honor in his own country” and “Unless you . . . see . . . signs and wonders you will never believe.”

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
to report the boy had turned for the better about the seventh hour (i.e., 1:00 p.m.), the same hour that Jesus had told the father his son would live (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 944).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

If not used as an opening activity, show your students several optical illusions you’ve found online or at your local library. These illusions will clearly demonstrate that you can’t necessarily trust your own eyes. Quote Pontius Pilate’s “What is truth?” Lead your students to answers such as God’s Word, Jesus, etc.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

People rarely deal in absolutes anymore. Red lights used to mean Stop. Now they mean Stop, but it is OK to turn right sometimes. A copy machine used to make copies. Now they are multifunctional devices that copy, fax, print, scan, staple, sort, hole-punch, and provide Internet access. Some absolutes (that were part of this week’s lesson) remain. They include that God’s Word is sure, God desires to bless us beyond our furthest thoughts, we can turn to God as an ever-present help in time of need, and the Bible contains lessons for today’s world through the stories recorded there.

To ask, believe, and claim God’s promises seems so simple. It is—when we have the faith of little children.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 20.

* A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“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).

Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 20.
Have you ever experienced a trust-building activity such as a "rope challenge course," 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.

Missouri is known as the “Show Me” state, meaning that Missourians tend to want to see before believing. Call to mind a time in your life when you needed to see something before you’d believe it. Was that because:

a. I’m from Missouri?
b. I’ve been to Missouri?
c. I know someone from Missouri?
d. It was hard for me to trust without seeing?

What do you think?

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.

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 Feast, 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 miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, ‘you will never believe.’

“The royal official said, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ Jesus replied, ‘You may go. 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, ‘The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.’

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

“This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.”

(John 4:43-54, NIV)
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).

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

What do you think caused his changed view?

What does it mean that a “prophet has no honor in his own country”?

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?

“Faith expects from God what is beyond expectation.” —Andrew Murray, 19th-century author and minister.
Sabbath
The nobleman initially needed to see in order to believe. Developing trust is akin to developing faith. A wonder of God’s grace is that as our faith grows, we marvel at the greater blessings He desires to give us and how God may be glorified by our response to His grace. “Yet the nobleman had a degree of faith; for he had come to ask what seemed to him the most precious of all blessings. Jesus had a greater gift to bestow. He desired, not only to heal the child, but to make the officer and his household sharers in the blessings of salvation, and to kindle a light in Capernaum, which was so soon to be the field of His own labors. But the nobleman must realize his need before he would desire the grace of Christ” (The Desire of Ages, p. 198).

Sunday
In your mind’s eye, place yourself in the crowd as you strain to see and hear the Man from Nazareth. Suddenly, you feel yourself being pushed aside as a weary, forlorn-looking man jostles you aside. You’re struck by his fine clothing, his well-groomed beard, and his frantic eyes—a desperate mix of hope and fear. You listen to his plea, something about his son, who is so ill he is near death. You realize the man is touching upon your own want to see a sign that this is indeed the promised Messiah. But you see Jesus, the now grown boy from Nazareth. Could it be?

A sign. Yes, a sign would convince you. Just now you hear Him speak: “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe.” Ah, yes. Now you’ll see… but instead you hear the stately stranger say, “Sir, come down before my child dies,” his voice piercing your soul. Jesus places His hands upon his shoulders, looks deep into his eyes, and softly whispers, “You may go. Your son will live.” You’re drained as you watch the man head off.

Fast-forward to now. You’ve been warned to be alert to signs and wonders that are not of God.

Yet you think you’d marvel if you saw such things. Why is it that we look for “signs”? What will it take not to be deceived?

Monday
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. When was the last time your faith was that strong? Why is feeling our need so important to faith? In what ways do you feel your need of God’s grace?

Tuesday
The Flashlight passage contains the truth that pastor and author Glenn Coon came to call the ABCs of Prayer in a long-running ministry based in Ooltewah, Tennessee. To ask, believe, and claim God’s promises was the heart of his message. This simple, yet effective, teaching has brought thousands to Jesus, renewed the faith of many believers, and given peace and courage to those seeking healing. (His books on this topic are available through the Adventist Book Center.) For what or whom in your life would you like to ask, believe, and claim God’s blessings?

Wednesday
Have you ever thought how wonderful it would be literally to walk with Jesus as He led His disciples on a journey that shook the world? Surely you would have seen, and believed, right? But here you are living in the twenty-first century. Jesus spoke of you when He said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” When in your life have you felt as if you were really walking side by side with Jesus?

Thursday
Think of a time when 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. How did you feel then? What did you do or tell the offerer?

Friday
Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). How strong is your faith today?


this week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 20.

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do you want to get well?

Scripture Story: John 5.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 21.
Key Text: John 5:6, 8.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of the lame man is a compelling reminder of the power of God to heal us of our ailments. It should not be assumed, however, that every handicapped sinner wants to be healed. This explains the bizarre question that Jesus asked the paralytic: “Do you want to get well?” (John 5:6, NIV).

Couldn’t Jesus have assumed the man wanted healing? After all, he was at the pool reputed to be a place of healing. Still, Jesus asked.

It’s a fair question. It’s the same question that we must ask ourselves if we are serious about overcoming the habits that sabotage the soul. Truth be told, often what poisons spiritual life is a daily diet of destructive choices. Given that these are our decisions, we may not really want to be healed.

Many people prefer bondage to redemption. As a pastor, I have seen a steady parade of people march through my office seeking freedom from some sin. The confession rings familiar: “Help!” comes the cry. “I want freedom from”—and you can fill in the blank—alcohol, anger, drug abuse, masturbation, food, soap operas, romance novels, gossip, shopping, or whatever avenue of escape you prefer.

At first, I thought I could cure everybody’s problems. That’s because I failed to start with Jesus’ question. I erroneously assumed that anybody seeking help from a pastor really wanted to be healed. More and more, however, I am discovering the rich discernment that Jesus displayed in His question of the paralytic.

The curious thing about us is that often the very behavioral patterns that tend to destroy us are the ones we are most reticent to change. We say on an intellectual or spiritual level, “Yes, my pride is ruining my life. My anger is destroying my relationships. Gluttony is sabotaging my self-esteem.” Yet we can’t seem to change—nor do we really want to.

This lesson provides an opportunity to challenge students to honestly confront the question of whether or not they really want freedom from spiritual disabilities. But more important, the story offers hope for healing!

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about the power of God to heal. (Know)
- Discover our role in spiritual healing. (Feel)
- Assess the cost of sin versus healing and freedom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Freedom/healing from sin
- Consequences
- Sabbath
- Outreach and service
- Sin/evil/devil

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

After reading each statement below, have the students position themselves somewhere on a continuum in the room by standing on the far right (meaning “I emphatically agree”) or on the far left (meaning “I emphatically disagree”) or somewhere in between that reflects their opinion.

• Most people don’t want to change bad habits.
• People should always have to suffer the consequences of bad choices.
• Some decisions carry more serious consequences than others.
• If people depend on God, they can always be healed from addictive choices.
• Addictions are a disease, not a choice.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Start with some interesting questions:

• Why do they sterilize needles for lethal injections?
• What was the best thing before sliced bread?
• Why is it that the first piece of luggage out at baggage claim never belongs to anyone?
• Is there another word for synonym?
• Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?
• If the cops arrest a mime, do they tell him he has the right to remain silent?
• Why do you press harder on a remote control when you know the battery is dead?
• If a cow laughs, does milk come through its nose?

In today’s lesson Jesus asks a lame man, “Do you want to get well?” Strange question, huh? Why wouldn’t he want healing? Truth be told, sometimes we don’t want to be released from our infirmities.

Consider the story that Kurt shared one morning at church:

“Last week I was driving north on Pike Street in downtown Seattle when I passed a homeless man sleeping in an alley. He didn’t have a blanket and it was below freezing even though the night was still young. I couldn’t shake that image in my mind.”

Kurt paused to collect his emotion. “I worried he might freeze to death, so I did a U-turn and went back to the alley. I introduced myself and learned that his name was Ray. I told him to come home and live with me until he could get back on his feet again, or at least until the weather got warmer.”

Kurt went on to tell how Ray enjoyed a hot shower, a big meal, a warm bed, a key to the house with an invitation to stay however long he wanted.

The irony of the story is that the man stayed for only two days and then he disappeared. He left a note scribbled on a paper sack. It read: “Thanks, but I prefer to live on the streets.” How could this be? Ray scored the jackpot where all his needs were cared for! At last, he was redeemed from the streets of crime and hate.

But who said he wanted to be redeemed? Ray preferred the life of a homeless drunk.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Share the following in your own words:

Before we criticize Ray, let’s admit that many people prefer squalor over freedom. In some arenas of life we’d rather be homeless than to accept the provision that Jesus makes available to us.

Jesus taught us how to live the optimum life, that is, the life of the kingdom—“on earth as it is in heaven.” And yet, how many of us disregard His teaching? Given this human propensity for sin over freedom, Jesus asks the paralytic: “Do you want to get well?” After all, not everyone truly wants to be healed.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Review this story from the perspective of different people. For each of the following characters in the story, consider the questions “What am I thinking? Feeling? Believing about God?”

• The paralytic
• Jesus
• The great number of disabled people lying by the pool
• The Jews
• What principles of Sabbathkeeping emerge from this story?
• What does this passage teach us about outreach and service?
• How would you respond to the critics who
claimed that the paralytic’s disability was the direct result of his sin? Look carefully at the way Jesus interacts with this man and think about what Jesus would say about the notion of sin causing physical ailments.

Note the two reasons that the Pharisees were so upset with Jesus—(1) breaking the Sabbath and (2) claiming to be God’s Son. Which sin do you think was more offensive to the Jews? Why?

Notice in the story how the Pharisees were more concerned about their rules than they were about the well-being of a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. Clearly the church leaders valued rules above relationships. Does this kind of thing still happen in the church today? If so, how? What might we do to follow God’s ultimate rule (love God and love others as we do ourselves) rather than man’s petty rules?

In the Old Testament three signs are mentioned to identify the Messiah. In John 5 all three of these signs are fulfilled. Compare the following passages to the verses in John.

**Sign 1:** All power and authority are given to Him as the Son of man—compare John 5:27 with Daniel 7:13, 14.

**Sign 2:** The lame and sick find healing—compare John 5:20, 26 with Isaiah 35:5, 6; Deuteronomy 32:39.

**Sign 3:** The dead are raised to life—compare John 5:21, 28 with 1 Samuel 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7.

**Sharing and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

1. **Sabbath Laws.** The Jews said to the paralytic: “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat” (John 5:10). There is no such law in the Old Testament forbidding someone to carry a mat. It was the Pharisees’ interpretation of God’s command to “remember the Sabbath as holy” (Exodus 20:8-11) that led them to this conclusion. They were more concerned about their rules than they were about the well-being of a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years.

2. **Other Eyes**
   *Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

3. **Flashlight**
   *Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.*

4. **Punch Lines**
   *Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.*

   Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8) that they are citing here. This was one of hundreds of rules they added to the Old Testament laws.

2. Eternal Life. John 5:24 offers this wonderful promise: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” Accepting Jesus as Savior brings the assurance of a new life in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

3. Reference to Moses. In John 5:45 Jesus said to the Jews: “Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.” The Pharisees were well versed in the writings of Moses and prided themselves on following all the teachings of this great patriarch. Now for Jesus to suggest that Moses would accuse them—even though they followed all his laws to the letter—was an infuriating attack against them. Moses wrote of Jesus (see Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:9; 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15) and yet they missed the significance of the Messiah when He came.

4. Sabbath Miracles. The SDA Bible Commentary (vol. 5, p. 949) points out that this is the first of seven miracles that Jesus performed on the Sabbath. “Now for the first time Jesus openly challenged the rabbinical Sabbath regulations (see on Mark 1:22; 2:23-28; 7:6-13). That He did so when the city was filled with visitors for the feast, and that He dramatized His rejection of such traditions by performing a miracle and publicizing it by having the man carry his bed, demonstrate the importance He attached to the question.”

5. Bethesda. The name Bethesda seems to come from the Aramaic, *beth chesda’*, or “house of mercy.”

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Make a list of common teenage struggles from which teens may not really want healing. Break the class into groups and assign one struggle per group. Have the group brainstorm a game plan as to how someone could experience the healing power of God in that area. Have each group then present their suggestions to the entire class.

**Summary**

Share the following story in your own words:

Candie grew up a teenage prostitute in Tacoma, Washington. Her life consisted of turning tricks to score the next drug fix. But then she met Jesus. An evangelist extended to her the invitation of Jesus: “Do you want to get well?” The preacher said, “God’s amazing grace can heal any brokenness.”

Candie couldn’t believe it. She feared that she had sinned beyond the boundaries of God’s grace. But she accepted God’s grace anyhow. Just as Jesus healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, He healed Candie. Now, 20 years later, Candie works as a social worker in Seattle, helping teenage prostitutes find freedom in Christ.

Only God can change a prostitute into a promise-keeper. Only Christ can reconstruct the composition of a human heart. Only He can stoop into the shadows and salvage the brokenness of a spiritual casualty like Candie.

Lest you think Candie’s story is any different than yours or mine, I remind you that we are all sinners. It is only by God’s miracle of mercy that we can find forgiveness and freedom from our sins. All we have to do is acknowledge His grace. Accept His gift. And arise to walk with God.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
do you want to get well?

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, pp. 202, 203).

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?**

What choices listed below do you think carry the most negative consequences? Rank the list from the most (1) to the least (10) consequential decision.

- Whether or not to go to college.
- Whether or not to drink a beer at a party.
- Whether or not to accept Jesus as your personal Savior.
- Whether or not to cheat at school.
- Whether or not to forgive a friend who betrayed you.
- Whether or not to check out a pornographic Web site.
- Whether or not to remain a virgin until marriage.
- Whether or not to attend church.
- Whether or not to break the speed limit.
- Whether or not to use caffeinated drinks.

**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. Since ancient times, scholars have argued about which feast Jesus was attending 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 a feast of the Jews. 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 Jews 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 Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.’ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder 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: ‘I tell you the truth, 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)
Why do you think Jesus asked this lame man, “Do you want to get well?”
What 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 sinful nature 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).

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (Psalm 68:5, NIV).

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall 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).

“Most of us spend the first six days of each week sowing wild oats, then we go to church . . . and pray for a crop failure.”—Fred Allen, U.S. comedian (1894-1956).

“There’s something comfortable about reducing Christianity to a list of do’s and don’ts. . . . You don’t have to think subtly or make hard choices. You don’t have to relate personally to a demanding and loving Lord.”—Robert C. Roberts in The Reformed Journal (Feb. 1987); quoted in Christianity Today, vol. 31, no. 9.
**Sabbath**

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?

Reflect on the dumbest choice you ever made. Why did that choice come to mind as your dumbest choice? What were the consequences of that decision? What have you learned in the fallout of that choice?

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**Sunday**

One day Jesus was moving through the streets of Jerusalem when He happened upon a man who had been crippled for 38 years. Having the reputation as a healer, Jesus’ presence electrified the crowd. They wondered how Jesus would heal the guy. Would He just say the word? Would He reach down and touch him? They sensed they were dancing on the edge of a miracle.

True to form, Jesus surprised them. He knelt beside the invalid and asked the strangest question in Scripture: “Do you want to get well?”

What kind of no-brainer insult is that? Here was a man who could never run or jump or dance. He was trapped in limp and lifeless packaging, and Jesus had the audacity to ask if he might be interested in a healing.

Of course he wanted to be healed, right?

Maybe not.

Maybe this crippled man had a system in which his infirmities served him well. Maybe friends pampered him because of his paralysis. Perhaps they brought him food and did his laundry. Maybe he enjoyed the freedom of not being shackled by the demands of carving out a career, finding a spouse, and raising children. Maybe this man secretly nursed his infirmity. After all, lounging by a pool all day isn’t that harsh of an existence.

Can you think of any infirmities in your life about which Jesus is asking you whether you really want to get rid of? Why do you think people might choose bondage over freedom?

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**Monday**

The Key Text tells us that “Jesus saw him lying there. . . .” Ellen White fleshes out the scene: “The Savior 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).

**Tuesday**

Read this week’s Flashlight. What does Ellen White mean when she says, “Jesus does not ask this sufferer to exercise faith in Him. He simply says, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk’? Is not the act of rising up an act of faith? Explain.

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**Wednesday**

Write a contemporary translation of one of the Punch Lines.

How does your version translate into real life today?

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**Thursday**

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?

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**Friday**

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. He will impart life to the soul that is ‘dead in trespasses.’ Eph. 2:1. He will set free the captive that is held by weakness and misfortune and the chains of sin” (*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?

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**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 the 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.


**PREPARING TO TEACH**

**I. SYNOPSIS**

Israel had been waiting for their promised Messiah for a very long time. They knew that before He would come, God would send Elijah to prepare the way for Him. Even to this day, every Jew looks for the prophet Elijah. At the Seder (Passover meal), a place is set for Elijah—to show that they are waiting expectantly for Messiah (Malachi 4:5, 6). They know God will send His prophet ahead of Messiah to prepare their hearts to receive Him. It is no wonder, then, that the priests and Levites traveled outside of the Temple area into the country to find John the Baptist, and ask him, “Are you Elijah?” and “Are you the Messiah?”

John stood at the dawn of a new day, announcing the rise of the kingdom of heaven. Yet even as the day began to dawn, John was eclipsed by its Light. Though John sounded the wake-up call on that new day—turning the eyes of his people and the world upon the event, the kingdom, and the King—he never personally witnessed how that day would shape up. He played his God-appointed role well. No doubt, he was encouraged by the message his disciples brought back from Jesus. It most likely brightened his prison cell and affirmed his mission, giving him courage to face his death.

Focus the students on the contrast between God’s ideal of a life fulfilled versus the world’s view of fulfillment and success. John’s death didn’t silence the message nor stall the coming kingdom. He had the distinct privilege of heralding in the beginning of its full realization.

**II. TARGET**

The student will:
- Learn the story of the “King’s herald,” John the Baptist. (Know)
- Examine the role an assistant, or forerunner, can play in launching the kingdom. (Feel)
- Understand success from God’s eternal perspective. (Respond)

**III. EXPLORE**

- Selfless living
- Success
- World’s view of success

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

**TEACHING**

**I. GETTING STARTED**

**Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section, and have a group discussion to point out the elements of success defined there. Encourage them to react to the rest of the section using these questions for group discussion.

1. What would make you feel successful?
2. What percentage of success do you define as having money, or the things money can buy? Do you believe God looks at success that way?
3. Is there a success that lasts longer than a new
Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Describe briefly what the Bible texts say about John the Baptist: who he was, what he did, and how he viewed himself within God’s plan.
- This story is chiefly about . . . (choose three and explain):
  1. Obeying God’s call
  2. The role of a supporter
  3. Calling people to repentance
  4. The qualities of success
  5. How to witness to Pharisees
  6. The cost of standing for truth
- On one level, John the Baptist could have been seen as a colossal failure: he didn’t prevent Herod from continuing in a life of sin; instead, it was John who paid the ultimate price. Have you ever been in a situation in which you expected one result and got something totally opposite?
- And what about Herodias’ daughter, identified elsewhere as Salome? Her behavior wasn’t the kind a young lady should engage in; she certainly should not have asked Herod for John’s murder! How can you stand against temptation and influence to do wrong?
- Which verses do you believe convey the key lessons of this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Isaiah 40:1-5; Malachi 4:1-5; John 1:6-28.

Sharing and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. “Repent and Be Baptized!”
   John’s call for immersion wasn’t new to his hearers; they were familiar with ritual bathing before entering the Temple in Jerusalem, and for other purposes. Women, for example, were expected to bathe ritually once a month.
   But this was different. In that the ritualistic baths were meant to prepare people for worship, the immersion (or baptism) that John preached was to symbolize an internal change—repent means to “turn away” from a previous lifestyle. It was to presage the approach of Jesus’ followers as the gospel spread:
   car might? What are some of the elements of that success?
4. Of the 11 original disciples of Jesus who were alive after the Resurrection, all, except possibly one, met horrible deaths as martyrs. Were their lives successes? Why?
5. What kind of success are you going to aim for in life?

Illustration

Annie Rebekah Smith lived only 37 years; she was a young teacher, poet, and editor who was instrumental in helping James White edit what is today the Adventist Review. Her contribution during the pioneering days of the church was said to be of immense value.

But Annie was a sensitive person. When another Adventist pioneer, John Nevins Andrews, courted Annie but chose to marry someone else, the disappointment broke her heart. Ellen White said it “cost her her life” as Annie succumbed to tuberculosis. At the end of her short life, Annie had not amassed many of the world’s riches or achieved great public position. She was, however, remembered most touchingly by her brother, Uriah, who incorporated one of Annie’s favorite phrases in the closing of his letters: “Yours, in the blessed hope.”

Even though Annie Smith died brokenhearted, her legacy lives on: Ten of her poems are still used today as hymns in The Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal. Her story is a part of Adventist history. And her enduring influence shows the kind of success that no amount of money can buy.
message. He said things that were quite tough to hear. I mean, let’s face it, he was telling people to “shape up”

accepting the good news meant changing one’s way of life, orienting it toward God’s way.

How does this relate to your understanding of repentance, change, and baptism? Is it a mere ritual or does it symbolize something deeper and greater?

2. A Flawed, Fatal Promise
At the same time, the actions of Herod and his “family” spoke to the evil and corruption John—and Jesus—would reject. Instead of ruling wisely and helping his subjects, Herod was all about pleasure and ease, conditions that would lead to a horrific crime. The murder of John was nothing more than the fulfillment of a rash promise made while under the influence of alcohol—a perfect argument for temperance if there ever was one!
This kind of pressure—and the tragic results—still affect lives today. The kids who “experiment” at a party or at a friend’s home and then suffer injury, or worse, in a subsequent traffic accident are the spiritual descendents of Herod, living for pleasure and not considering the consequences. And making a promise to “go along” with your friends can have life-altering results, sometimes serious and tragic ones.

What criteria do you use in choosing to “go along” with the crowd? Do you stand apart when it’s necessary?

3. A Promise for Restoration
As you read the biblical passages provided about John’s ministry (Malachi 4; John 1:6-28), you might get the idea that while Jesus was all about healing and God’s love, John preached a pretty harsh, judgmental

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Taking It Personally
Making the lesson personal and applicable to the student is key for making it have meaning in their own life.

- For this reason write three words on a large pad or board:
  - Reward
  - Compensation
  - Congratulation
- Ask students to write examples of rewards they received or hope to receive based upon their dedication and hard work.
- Ask students what compensation they hope their achievements bring them.
- Ask students what part congratulation plays in their motivation to work and achieve.
- Compare that with the example of John the Baptist’s earthly rewards/congratulations for following his call.
- Lead them into a discussion of what it means to receive rewards of spiritual and eternal value.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.
- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.
- Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
and “get in line.” He knew that if the King was coming, He shouldn’t find a misbehaving, hard-hearted, cynical bunch of people—but rather an expectant crowd, with hearts clearly humbled, repentant, and ready to receive their King and enter into His kingdom.

Clearly, while John received a lot of attention because he was rather odd, he wasn’t really popular—certainly not with the religious leaders or the regional ruler! John had a hard edge, for sure, but he loved God and His people so much that he didn’t want to see any of them miss the boat when the Messiah came. He did his job—prepared the way for Messiah.

Do you think you would risk being “uncool,” or being labeled a freak, in order to help others hear a message that would save them? Could you sacrifice the rewards of life to take a hard line?

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Get students to pair off and plan how one would support the other in a public witnessing effort. It could be street dialogue (“Do you know God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life?” “Why no! Tell me about it.”) or a plan to pass out literature or to invite passersby to a meeting.

Who will take the lead? Who will support them?

Will you switch off? Why is the supporting person’s role as important as the leader’s? What lessons do you learn from this exercise?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

If you stop and think about it, there are very, very few great successes in life that are solely the work of one person. Even the most eccentric individual, if they are truly honest, will admit that someone somewhere gave them some help along the way.

While it is without question that Jesus and only Jesus could complete the mission He had—no one else could go to the cross, die, and rise again—it is also true that other people helped Him in His earthly ministry. From the disciples who accompanied Him to others who supplied items of need, to John the Baptist, who announced His mission, there are many who contributed to the life and work of Jesus.

As you consider what you’ve experienced in life so far, who’s helped you? Parents? Siblings? Friends? Teachers? A pastor? These relationships are part of life, and part of helping others in our common Christian walk. We’re here, in part, to encourage one another!

The story of John the Baptist and his role in supporting the ministry of Jesus should offer encouragement: even those of us who have small parts to play can be a key element of success in God’s great plan.
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).
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 descriptive as you can:

  I would consider my life to have been successful if . . .

- 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 Melanchthon 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.

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 cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away 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 desert 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.” I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who 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 him a prophet.

“On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them 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.”

(John 1:21, 23, NIV)
What was John’s role in Jesus’ ministry?

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

What circumstances led to John’s imprisonment? His beheading?

What was Jesus’ reaction and response to John’s disciples when they came to question Him? Do you think He was disappointed in them or John for what could have been perceived as a challenge to Him?

What sort of mission and impact did the Jews believe the Messiah would have when He came on the human scene? Did Jesus’ ministry meet their expectations or match John’s call for repentance? Why? Why not?

Other Eyes

“A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him or her.”—David Brinkley, American journalist.

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”—Martin Luther King, Jr., 20th-century U.S. civil rights leader and clergyman.

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, NKJV).

“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah 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 desert, “Make straight the way for the Lord”’” (John 1:21, 23, NIV).

“There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe” (John 1:6, 7, NIV).

“Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Christ’” (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).
Sabbath

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 with a “prison break.” Read Mark 6:17-28 to learn more about how John ended up in prison and to 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?

Wednesday

Read and think about this week’s Punch Lines. What theme comes through? Notice this: 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 these verses written by Paul for a further emphasis about God’s ideal for success: Philippians 2:3-8.

Thursday

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?

Friday

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 Messiah?
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The three-and-one-half-year ministry of the adult Jesus includes His repeated manifestations that the kingdom of God is at hand. A subordinate theme is the attitude of those from Nazareth who found it especially difficult to believe His divine connection, given they saw Him raised from infancy. Interwoven through all this is the prophetic timetable that was fulfilled at every turn. This week’s lesson illustrates all three elements as we see Jesus come home to Nazareth.

The words He speaks in the synagogue excite His listeners as if they are hearing the text for the first time. In a way, they are, for He speaks them with grace, power, and authority, giving a true interpretation at odds with their own. Their excitement turns quickly to anger as they realize the import of His words. In a flash, they turn on Him with murderous intent.

The lesson ends with a miraculous rescue, directed by His Father. Jesus allows Himself to be forced to a hilltop by the frenzied mob, but then is miraculously cloaked by angels as He literally disappears and walks unseen through the crowd. Imagine their perplexity! Imagine His sorrow at their actions and His resolve to bring the great controversy to a close.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Recognize that Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies and understand what Messiah came to do. (Know)

• Realize that Jesus was unaccepted by those who knew Him longest. (Feel)

• Resolve to trust that “His Sonship to the Eternal” is their pathway to eternity. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Confession/repentance

• Kingdom of God

• Integrity

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Jesus didn’t draw people to Himself by focusing on externals. It was the power of His message coupled with the working of the Holy Spirit that softened hearts and ennobled minds. “His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface. All the sayings of Christ have a value beyond their unpretending appearance. Minds that are quickened by the Holy Spirit will discern the value of these sayings. They will discern the precious gems of truth, though these may be buried treasures” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 110). Ask your students for personal examples they can share.

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 1514 Polish mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) put forth a mathematical model that the Earth rotated around the sun. His heliocentric (Greek for “sun-centered”) theory was at odds with the established view of the Roman Catholic Church that the Earth was at the center of the universe. The publication of his insight, in 1543, marked the beginning of the Scientific Revolution. He died soon after it was published, thereby avoiding the wrath of the church for stepping away from its view of things. It provided the basis for later scientific study by Johannes Kepler, Galileo, and Isaac Newton.

Italian mathematician and astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) improved the telescope and was first to turn its optical power from objects on Earth to the sky, making numerous observations that led him to advocate the Copernican view about the Earth and sun. This put him into the view of the church when a Dominican friar called him a heretic in 1614. In 1616, at the request of Pope Paul V, he was formally warned against defending the Copernican theory. After years of focus on his teachings, Galileo was interrogated before the Inquisition in 1633, softened some of his views, and ordered by Pope Urban VIII to be imprisoned indefinitely under house arrest. He died at his villa in 1642.

Galileo endured the consequences of his sun-centered view.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Most times, when someone reads a section of the Scriptures aloud, listeners usually respond with silence, affirmative head nods, maybe some amens, or sometimes even throaty exultations. One day long ago in Nazareth, when Jesus read that day’s scripture in the synagogue, the listeners turned on Him with a vengeance, wanting to kill Him for having heard what He’d said. His powerful words drew a powerful response.

Like Galileo, Jesus endured the consequences of providing a new way of looking at things that was at odds with the church of His time (the Jewish leaders).

Are you willing to endure hardship for holding to a Son-centered view?

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Ask your students about the special difficulty Jesus faced by going home to Nazareth to interact with those who had known Him the longest. If any in your class converted to Seventh-day Adventism after leaving their childhood home, ask them to share any awkward or difficult incidents they may have experienced upon returning home.

Ellen White’s added insight explains it was Jesus reading their minds and speaking to their unspoken thoughts that led to their turning on Him. Their view of themselves as God’s chosen people was imperiled.

Can your students think of any other time when Jesus was saved from harm because it was not yet His time?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 4:21-30; 12:31-33; Matthew 15:30-32.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

In his Gospel Luke emphasizes the human side of the nature of Jesus, presenting Him as the Friend of humanity. In this week’s story the reaction that greeted Jesus was far from friendly. This was His first visit to His earthly hometown since taking up His public ministry. Mary and His brothers and sisters still lived there and were likely in the synagogue to see their neighbors turn on Him.

Jesus read Isaiah 6:1, 2 from a scroll while standing—a customary show of reverence for the written Word. He purposefully did not read the closing clause of verse 2 that talked about vengeance because the Jews had wrongly believed their salvation was automatic because they were Jews, not by a personal submission to God. Also according to custom, Jesus presented His sermon while seated. That special seat, located on a raised platform near the lectern, was sometimes called “the chair of Moses.”

They clamored for signs of His divinity, but it was their lack of faith that prevented Jesus from performing miracles in Nazareth. It was not because He was unable to do so but because they were unprepared to receive the blessings He wished to give them.
“Aware that the words of Jesus described them perfectly, they were unwilling to hear more. To accept Him they must admit that they were no better than the heathen, whom they looked upon as dogs” (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 731).

“As they opened the door to doubt, their hearts became so much the harder for having been momentarily softened. Satan was determined that blind eyes should not that day be opened, nor souls bound in slavery be set at liberty. With intense energy he worked to fasten them in unbelief. They made no account of the sign already given, when they had been stirred by the conviction that it was their Redeemer who addressed them” (The Desire of Ages, p. 238).

Their guilty consciences rose to silence His words of truth. With murderous hearts, even on the Sabbath, they took Him to a cliff and were prepared to hurl Him down. The traditionally accepted site, referred to as the “Mount of the Precipitation,” is likely not the actual location of this incident because it is more than a Sabbath day’s journey from Nazareth. More likely is a limestone cliff about 40 feet (12 m) high at the southwestern corner of Nazareth. Angels shielded Him and took Him to safety. His hour had not yet come.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Search online for images of “Mount Precipice,” the traditional site where Jesus was taken by the Nazareth mob, then shielded by angels. Assuming the site is correct, you can point to it with certainty as a place where Jesus walked, angels gathered, and a supernatural rescue took place. As your students view the images, ask them to think about and share ideas about places in today’s world where angels tread.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Point Out the Parallels

There are many parallels to notice when reading Bible stories, and pointing them out to your students, or asking them to look for them, goes a long way in understanding the Bible even better. In the story found in Luke 4:16-30 here are some to note:

The synagogue as a focal point used by Jesus when He was 12, when He drove out the money changers, and when He spoke to the locals in Nazareth.

Jesus quoting Scripture to help people see He is the fulfillment of what had long been foretold.

The times Jesus was miraculously rescued because it was not yet His time to die.

“Other Eyes

Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

Flashlight

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

Punch Lines

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

In this week’s lesson, when Jesus spoke to the people in the synagogue, His words at first were greeted with amazement. Yet many thought, Was this not Joseph’s son? and fostered doubt concerning Him. He then brought a message home to each of His listeners that did not go down easy. It was as if they were seeing themselves in a mirror and not liking what they saw. They became so furious that the people in His hometown sought to kill Him by throwing Him off a cliff!

What is your reaction as you hear Jesus’ words spoken to you?

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 23, 24.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
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).

keytext

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

(Luke 4:18, 19, NIV)
what do you think?

What would you expect to see today if you’d joined a throng 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
- accepts online donations
- blogs
- wears sharp-looking suits
- has a beautiful wife
- podcasts his sermons
- drives a sleek sports car
- has great hair
- has a movie deal

What if you found out en route 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 anyone special? Then, upon seeing him, you realize he doesn’t fit what you’d envisioned at all and He is someone special!

did you know?

Ellen G. White, in vision, saw Jesus many times. Although she doesn’t relate much about His physical appearance (a bit taller than most men at that time; broad and high forehead; beard), 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. And he stood up to read. 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 release the oppressed, 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. His behavior quickly turned to fury. Why?

‘I tell you the truth,’ 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 down 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 Feast. . . . 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, 43, 46-49, NIV).

“He went to Nazareth, where he had grown up. And when he was offered the scroll to read, he went up to the synagogue on the sabbath day as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 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 preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 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, as he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:16-30, NIV).

“’O 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, but 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, 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 time had not yet come” (John 7:28-30, NIV).

other eyes

“The only significance of life consists in helping to establish the kingdom of God; and this can be done only by means of the acknowledgment and profession of the truth by each one of us.” —Leo Tolstoy, 19th-century Russian writer.

“There is no refuge from confession but suicide; and suicide is confession.” —Daniel Webster, 19th-century American statesman.
Sabbath

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

Jesus had no pizzazz. His message resounded with many, but mostly not among those from His hometown or the religious leadership. “But it was not simply the absence of outward glory in His life that led the Jews to reject Jesus. He was the embodiment of purity, and they were impure. He dwelt among men an example of spotless integrity. His blameless life flashed light upon their hearts. His sincerity revealed their insincerity. It made manifest the hollow-ness of their pretentious piety, and discovered iniquity to them in its odious character. Such a light was unwelcome” (The Desire of Ages, p. 243).

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 (Mark 9:14-29) when he cried “I do believe; help my unbelief” (NASB) How about you? Have you found it difficult to hear God speak through people who you may consider “not religious enough”? Why? Why not?

Sunday

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. Luke says: “But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.” God calls us to speak the truth, even when it’s not popular. Does He always protect us from the consequences? Explain.

Monday

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

His Sonship to the Eternal” is a deeply profound and stirring phrase. Also stirring is the fact we are heirs to His kingdom, connected to the Eternal through the grace of His Sonship. Praise God.

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

The incarnation of the Son of God, at once fully human and fully God, is an abiding mystery. 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

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?

Friday

If you’ve experienced a conversion to Seventh-day Adventism from the faith of your childhood or parents, you may have some awareness of what it was like for Jesus to be questioned or doubted by those who knew Him in His youth. If so, how is (was) that experience for you?

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_________________________________
I’m a follower

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 25.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Peter and the other fishermen—his brother Andrew and their friends and business partners, James and John—had put in a hard and unsuccessful night’s fishing when Jesus asked them to let their nets down again. Peter was skeptical, but he was willing to take a chance on trusting Jesus. When Jesus’ advice resulted in a huge catch of fish, Peter was convinced he’d experienced a miracle. Certain that Jesus was more than just another great teacher, Peter was overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness and fell to his knees before Jesus. He asked Jesus to go away from him, feeling he wasn’t worthy to be in the presence of someone who might be the Messiah. But Jesus’ response was to ask Peter and the others to follow Him—and they instantly did, leaving everything else behind.

Jesus still calls people—including young people—to leave everything behind and follow Him. But what are we to leave behind? Our families, work, and livelihood, as Jesus asked the fishermen to do? What does that call mean for young people who are still living with their parents, going to school, planning a future career? What does total commitment to Jesus look like in the twenty-first century? This week’s lesson explores some of those questions.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Know that God calls people to leave their everyday lives behind and follow Him. (Know)

• Sense God’s presence and His call in their lives. (Feel)
• Choose to respond to God’s call and follow Jesus completely. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Purpose
• Discipleship
• Obedience

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Write the answers to What Do You Think? on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart and ask each student to share the answers they checked. Tally answers on the board, adding any that they wrote in themselves, to see which responses are most popular.

For each response, ask: “Why do you think someone might say this? What is it about the idea of following Jesus that might get this reaction from some people?”

Ask: “What things in our lives hold us back from completely following Jesus?” Have students brainstorm ideas and write them on the board. Then, across
from that list, ask them to suggest benefits of following Jesus—what we get if we obey His call. Do the benefits outweigh what we would have to give up?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

As a young man, William Wilberforce had a brilliant political career ahead of him. He entered the English Parliament at the age of 21, one of the youngest men ever to do so. He was wealthy, well-educated, a good speaker, and looked like he would be a huge success.

But soon after his political career began, William Wilberforce had a conversion experience and decided to dedicate his life completely to God. Still in his early 20s, he considered abandoning politics, perhaps entering the ministry or some other career in which he could dedicate himself to doing God’s work.

He went to several people he trusted for advice, including his old minister John Newton, author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.” Newton, who had been the captain of a slave ship before he was converted, advised Wilberforce, as did other people, that he could continue to serve God by staying in government and working to do God’s will there.

Instead of giving up his political career to follow God, Wilberforce dedicated his political career to God. He worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to end the slave trade, which he saw as one of the great evils of his day. Despite many setbacks and poor health, Wilberforce continued to be a voice in Parliament for those who were working to end slavery. He finally saw success for his efforts—first with the abolition of the slave trade, then, just before his death, with the abolition of all slavery and the freeing of all slaves in the British Empire (this was more than 30 years before American slaves were freed during the U.S. Civil War).

Wilberforce was an example of a young adult who obeyed the call to “Come, follow Me.” He did it not by leaving the career he had started, but by transforming all his goals and plans to conform to what he believed God wanted him to do.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

On a sunny morning near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus met up with a group of fishermen. He’d met these men and talked to them before; they were interested in what He had to say, but none of them had yet made a complete commitment to Him. Now, seeing that they had fished all night without catching anything, He challenged them to try once more. When they found themselves with more fish than they could handle, Jesus quickly shifted gears. He invited them to do a new kind of fishing—going out into the world and saving people for His kingdom. But to do that, they’d have to leave behind everything that was familiar, including their fishing boats.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Divide your class into four groups and give each group one of the following Bible passages:

- Matthew 8:18-22
- Matthew 9:9
- Matthew 19:16-22

After each group reads their text, have them prepare a short skit in which they act out the story of that verse for the rest of the group. When each of the four scenes has been presented, ask: “What do all these stories have in common? What does Jesus ask people to do before they follow Him? How do they respond?”

Then ask for a few volunteers from the group (probably those who were most enthused about acting out a scene in the last activity). Ask this group, on the spot, to improvise a scene in which Jesus approaches a modern teenager and asks him or her to leave something behind, and follow Him. As they prepare to act, ask them: “What sorts of things does Jesus ask us to leave behind for Him today? How do we respond?”

After the role play has been presented, discuss what kinds of things Jesus asks us to leave behind if we’re going to follow Him. At first glance it seems obvious that He would ask us to leave our sins behind—but which sins? Is that as easy as it sounds?

Will Jesus ask us to leave other things behind that aren’t sinful, but might still get in the way of following Him? (See the Sharing Context and Background section for further thoughts on this.) Ask students what they think “total commitment” to Jesus means in today’s world? Can a young person who is completely committed to Jesus still:
• Date?
• Go to school?
• Hang out with friends?
• Plan for college and a future career?
• Buy a car?
• Wear the latest fashions?
• Have a part-time job?

How might total commitment to following Jesus affect your decisions in any one of these areas of your life? In what way is Jesus calling you to leave your nets and follow Him?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: See the Punch Lines section of the student lesson.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

When we think of leaving everything behind to follow Jesus, it’s typical to think of leaving behind a life of sin. The criminal leaves his life of crime, the drug addict leaves her addiction; people begin a new life when they follow Jesus.

But the fishermen in today’s story, and the other people whose experiences were explored in the Out of the Story passages, were not living particularly sinful lives. Even Matthew, the tax collector, was just doing his job—although it was a job that many considered sinful and disreputable. The fishermen were working for a living to support their families. The disciple who wanted to bury his father was taking care of family responsibilities. And the rich young ruler was a good man who kept the commandments.

Throughout the last 2,000 years Christians have wrestled with what it means to really leave everything behind to follow Jesus. For the early disciples, it was straightforward. Many of them, like Peter and his friends, made a complete break with their former lives and left homes, families, and jobs to travel around Galilee with Jesus. Even after Jesus’ return to heaven, they committed themselves full-time to missionary work. Total dedication in the early days of Christianity meant risking your life, since persecution was often a reality (as it still is in many parts of the world today).

Once the Roman Empire “converted” to Christianity and it was safe and comfortable to be a Christian, the Desert Fathers (and Mothers) set off to live lives of isolation and deprivation in the wilderness, leaving behind the comforts of home to focus completely on prayer and worship of God. Out of their movement grew the monastic movements within medieval Christianity. Although some monks and nuns were truly dedicated to a life spent pursuing God (and Reformers such as Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and others came along every few generations to remind them of their purpose), laziness and corruption crept into monastic life too. For many of the early Protestant groups, following Jesus all the way once
again meant risking punishment and even death. It also meant, for some, giving up worldly possessions, living in community with other believers, and going to overseas mission fields.

But most of us don’t make those kinds of sacrifices—especially in twenty-first-century North America. For most of us, following Jesus means what it has meant to most Christians throughout history—living a “normal” life with the same material comforts and goals as the rest of society; paying lip service to our “commitment” to Jesus without allowing it to make any serious difference in our lives.

As you discuss this week’s lesson, challenge your students with these questions: “Can a committed Christian ever live a ‘normal’ life? In what ways does God call us to be out of step with society? What does He want us to give up in order to follow Him?”

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask students to think again about the role play, with Jesus inviting a modern teen to give up everything and follow Him. Allow them to reflect for a few quiet minutes, with eyes closed, on what Jesus might ask them to do if He came along and said, “Follow Me.” As they sit quietly thinking, remind them that He does, in fact, call each one of us to follow Him. Total commitment to Jesus will mean different things to different people; but for everyone it means living a life that’s structured around God’s values, not the world’s. Invite each student to reflect as you pray on what that will mean for them.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Peter, Andrew, James, and John witnessed an amazing display of Jesus’ power—and also of His ability to take care of them. After seeing the incredible catch of fish, they knew He was something out of the ordinary. But they also knew that He had the ability to supply their needs. They could trust Him. Maybe that’s why they were so willing to leave everything behind to follow Him—just walk away from their nets and fishing boats and start a whole new life.

Jesus still asks us to do the same. He may not be asking you to leave home right now, but He’s asking you to lay aside your commitment to a life planned around your values and start a life that’s centered around His values—complete dedication to God, service to Him and to others. You’ll have to work out for yourself what that will mean in your life—not all the disciples were called to the same kind of work or the same kind of life. But they were all called to a changed life, a life that was 100 percent committed to Jesus. And that’s what He calls us to.
**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 co-laborers with the Man of Nazareth. . . . The Lord Jesus seeks the cooperation 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*, pp. 249, 250).

**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 catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”

(*Luke 5:8-11, NIV*)
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.)

**what do you think?**

**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.

**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 catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”

*Luke 5:1-11, NIV*
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 to say “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?

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 to say “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?

OUT OF THE STORY

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th-century German pastor and theologian.

“Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship.”—Ellen White, 19th-century author and cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Let this be thy whole endeavor, this thy prayer, this thy desire—that thou mayest be stripped of all selfishness, and with entire simplicity follow Jesus only.”—Thomas à Kempis, 15th-century monk.
**Sabbath**

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.

Peter would see __________________ and hear __________________________. and smell ___________________________, and taste _______________________, and touch _______________________.

Now, think about Peter’s thoughts and feelings and write some 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 though ________________________.

When Jesus called Peter to follow Him, I think Peter felt __________________________.

**Monday**

Read the Key Text for this week. 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**

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*, Mrs. 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?

**Wednesday**

We see many examples in the Bible of Jesus calling people to leave their everyday lives and follow Him. Look at the verses in the Punch Lines section of the lesson. 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**

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 playing video games gets in the way of Jesus, you could make a commitment to stop playing 15 minutes earlier than you usually do and use that time to study your Bible or pray.

**Friday**

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?

the day the devil went to church

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This story of the demoniac is ripe with teaching opportunities. You can use this lesson to teach a variety of spiritual truths. Pray that the Spirit will guide you to emphasize the spiritual insight that will be most life-transforming for the students.

One option for emphasis could be to explore the occult and satanic worship. (The student lesson in the quarterly is weighted in this direction.) Many young people today are exposed to the supernatural world through popular entertainment choices such as movies (Underworld, The Sixth Sense, The Exorcism of Emily Rose), television programs (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Ghost Whisperer, Sabrina the Teenage Witch), books (Harry Potter, Goosebumps), and video games (Doom, The Darkness).

Another teaching you might explore considers the role of Jesus as a teacher. The passage highlights the amazement that people had because Jesus taught as one with great authority. A worthwhile track to take on this text would be to challenge the young people to accept Jesus as Teacher. Often we speak of accepting Jesus as Savior (i.e., to trust Him for salvation after I die); but Christianity gets real practical when we accept Jesus as Teacher (i.e., to trust that what He taught determines how I will live every day). To underscore the idea of the authority of Jesus’ teaching as the best way to live today could be a very helpful discussion.

Finally, you may wish to explore the topic of temptation with the students and emphasize that healing and freedom come by being in the presence of Jesus. Too often we try to be good by willpower—only to fall again and again to the same old sin. The key, as it flows naturally out of this story, is not to try harder to be good; rather, it is to be in the presence of Jesus.

Ellen White points out that the demon-possessed man had just enough spiritual power to come to Jesus—and that was all he needed; after all, wholeness happens when we live in Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Think about the cosmic battle between good and evil. (Know)
- Realize how high the stakes really are in this spiritual battle. (Feel)
- Completely trust in Jesus as Savior and Teacher. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Occult/astrology
- Character
- Authority/respect

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? sec-

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
Rice? How many of you have seen a movie based on her books (Interview With the Vampire, Exit to Eden, The Feast of All Saints, etc.)? What did you think of her work before her conversion? How do you react to her testimony? What comparisons do you find between Anne Rice’s testimony and the story of the demon-possessed man in Mark 1?

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them. Next, have the class read the story as a drama from The Message translation. Encourage each reader to put emotion into it. For example, when the narrator says the man was “deeply disturbed and yelling,” the demoniac should read his lines accordingly. Assign students to read the following lines:

- **Narrator reads all the parts that are not in italics, underlined, or in bold.**
- **The person reading for the demon-possessed man should read what is underlined.**
- **The person reading the quotes of Jesus should read the bold type.**
- **The person reading for everyone should read what is in italics.**

**Reading:**

(21, 22) Then they entered Capernaum. When the Sabbath arrived, Jesus lost no time in getting to the meeting place. He spent the day there teaching—so straightforward, so confident—not quibbling and quoting like the religion scholars.

(23, 24) Suddenly, while still in the meeting place, he was interrupted by a man who was deeply disturbed and yelling, “What business do you have here with us, Jesus? Nazarene! I know what you’re up to! You’re the Holy One of God, and you’ve come to destroy us!”

(25, 26) Jesus shut him up: “Quiet! Get out of him!” The afflicting spirit threw the man into spasms, protesting loudly—and got out.

(27, 28) Everyone there was incredulous, buzzing with curiosity. “What’s going on here? A new teaching that does what it says? He shuts up defiling, demonic spirits and sends them packing!” News of this traveled fast and was soon all over Galilee.

**Questions for discussion**

- Is there anything in the story that jumps out at...
you when you listen to it read aloud as a drama? If so, what?

- What does this story have to teach us about Satan? Jesus? the crowd?
- What lessons can we learn from this passage?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **Note the context.** Mark, the shortest of the four Gospels, starts with Jesus’ baptism, moves to the temptation in the wilderness, and then quickly transitions to the calling of the disciples in order to go public with the proclamation of the gospel. “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said, ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” Jesus launches His ministry by teaching in the synagogue. No sooner do you finish reading the story of Satan attacking Jesus in the desert for 40 days, and now Jesus is confronted once again by the devil (only this time it is in church!) through this demon-possessed man.

2. **Note the culture.** William Barclay explains the prevalence of the belief in demons and devils in the ancient world. Consider his commentary: “Dr. A. Rendle Short cites a fact which shows the intensity with which the ancient world believed in demons. In many ancient cemeteries skulls were found which had been trepanned. That is to say, a hole had been bored in the skull. In one cemetery, out of 120 skulls, six had been trepanned. With the limited surgical technique available, that was no small operation. Further, it was clear from the bone growth that the trepanning had been done during life. It was also clear that the hole in the skull was too small to be of any physical or surgical value; and it is known that the removed disc of bone was often worn as an amulet round the neck. The reason for the trepanning was to allow the demon to escape from the person’s body. If primitive surgeons were prepared to undertake that operation, and if people were prepared to undergo it, the belief in demon-possession must have been intensely real.”

3. **Note the city.** Jesus had recently moved from Nazareth to Capernaum (see Matthew 4:12, 13). Capernaum was known as a city of great wealth. Its reputation for great sin and decadence was well deserved. Being the headquarters for many Roman troops, pagan influences from all around the Roman Empire were commonplace. This was an ideal place for Jesus to confront the skeptics and believers alike with the gospel (Mark 1:14, 15).

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
“The mind of this wretched sufferer had been darkened by Satan, but in the Savior'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).”

**Summary**

*Share the following story in your own words:*  
In his book *The Heat: Steelworkers' Lives and Legends*, Joe Gutierrez shares five stories from his 42 years as a steelworker. His story entitled “Snow Danced in August” describes a scene of silvery dust flakes that frequently floated to the floor in an area of the mill where steel strips rolled over pads in a tall cooling tower. For years, workers and visitors alike flocked to the sight, which was especially picturesque at night.

The dust was asbestos. “Everybody breathed it,” wrote Gutierrez. He now suffers from the slow, choking grip of asbestosis, as do many plant workers.

“Who am I? I’m everybody. Can’t walk too far now. I get tired real fast and it hurts when I breathe, sometimes. And to think we used to fight over that job.”

How many things in our world are like the silver flakes in that steel mill? Enchanting but deadly.

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2. As quoted at www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1720092,00.html.
“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).
What do you think?

How involved are the students in your school in each of the following? (Write down a number from 1 to 10 in the space below: 1=little involvement and 10=very involved.)
- Magic
- Horoscopes
- Ouija board playing
- Wearing satanic graffiti
- Palm reading
- Séances

What do you think?
A=Agree  ?=Not sure  D=Disagree
- Dabbling in the occult is relatively harmless.
- The satanic themes found in rock music are gimmicks to increase the sales of the recordings.
- Harry Potter is a harmless little fairy tale.

Did you know?

According to The Barna Group, “Teenagers relish experiences and the supernatural world provides fertile ground for their explorations. In fact, three quarters of America’s youth (73%) have engaged in at least one type of psychic or witchcraft-related activity, beyond mere media exposure or horoscope usage.

“The most common types of witchcraft behaviors were using a Ouija board and reading a book about witchcraft or Wicca, each of which had been done by more than one third of teenagers. More than one quarter of teens have played a game featuring sorcery or witchcraft elements. One tenth of teens had participated in a séance and 1 out of 12 had tried to cast a spell or mix a magic potion.”—(Source: www. barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdate ID=216.)

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 evil 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 evil 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 evil spirits and they obey him.’ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.”

(Mark 1:21-28, NIV)
“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 saints” (Ephesians 6:13-18, NIV).

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

“Be self-controlled and alert. 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 your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8, 9, NIV).

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.” —C. S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters.
Sabbath

A story in the news tells of a toddler who found a baby rattlesnake and began playing with it, not realizing that his “toy” was a deadly serpent.

Before the child’s mother could attempt a rescue, however, the snake bit the boy’s arm. The child was rushed to the hospital and, fortunately, survived. But the story could have ended tragically had the mother not found the child before the venom produced its lethal results.

In the same way, many Christians “play” with sin, thinking it won’t bite. As evangelist Billy Sunday once observed, “One reason that sin flourishes is that it is treated like a cream puff instead of a rattlesnake.”

Review the list (magic, horoscopes, Ouija board playing, wearing satanic graffiti, palm reading, séances) from the What Do You Think? section and identify each one as a snake or a cream puff. Consider other potential snakes:

• Watching impure movies
• Playing Dungeons and Dragons
• Dabbling in witchcraft
• Listening to satanic music
• Experimenting with drugs

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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).

What is my plea of the Savior?

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 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. Consider the story below and 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?

Story: Tom and Jennifer are parked on Lookout Mountain. The valley is a polka-dot mirage of city lights. The sky is a black velvet dome studded with diamonds. The air is thick with romance.

Make no mistake—Tom and Jennifer have discussed how far they would allow their physical relationship to go before they got married. They were committed to purity. The line was drawn and they had every intention of sticking to their commitment.

But on this evening a gallon of ice water cannot simmer their feelings. Tom and Jennifer can’t stop themselves. Never mind the promises. When suddenly—headlights. Directly behind them.

Tom and Jennifer jerk apart. They twirl around and stare out the back window. They can’t believe it.

Jennifer’s father!

Suddenly the hormones are perfectly under control. In a heartbeat they are different people. The temptation to go too far is far gone! What made the difference?

Simple: the presence of Jennifer’s father.

Monday

Read the Key Text and reflect on the following:

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

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 27.
Key Text: Mark 1:41, 42.

**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson focuses on the stunning event of the leper who came to Christ for healing. The dreadful disease was common in New Testament times, and anyone who contracted the infectious skin disease was considered dead and isolated from the community. If being excommunicated did not imprint hopelessness on the victim’s mind, the foul disease itself would be a continual reminder of eminent death. Moreover, leprosy was seen as a judgment of God. No disease depicted sin’s work like leprosy on a human being. In this story, the dying man dares to enter society because he hears that Christ is coming close and has never turned anyone away. His appeal and Christ’s response are the central message of this story: God is willing and able to save.

In *The Desire of Ages* Ellen White observes: “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 words of Christ, “I am willing,” and the touch of His hand declare what God wants more than anything else—to save His children. Throughout this lesson there are several angles to appeal to the young person to respond to God’s gift of salvation. One way is to approach from the viewpoint of the leper—one who seeks and asks. Another approach is from the viewpoint of God who never turns away an honest seeker. And finally, you might consider stepping back and seeing the larger picture through the Old Testament ritual for the cleansing of the leper, as discussed in the *Context and Background* section.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Observe key elements to the plan of salvation. *(Know)*
- Sense God’s urgent desire to forgive and to save people. *(Feel)*
- Decide to ask for God’s matchless gift of salvation. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Forgiveness from God
- Experience of salvation
- Sin

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

**TEACHING**

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section. It is likely that most of the students would rank “to receive the gift of salvation” as the number one
choice. But it is possible that some might respond differently. Either way, it is crucial to invite the students to explain why they answered the way they did. Some might choose “serving others with a humble heart” or “to live in harmony with His commands.” Why they think these are important to God provides rich discussion.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In January 2008 a story about an amazing transformation made the headlines. A 15-year-old girl in Australia named Demi-Lee Brennan became the world’s first person to change blood types. Demi-Lee was a transplant patient with O negative blood type, but that changed when the transplant caused her to take on the immune system of her organ donor, changing her blood type to O positive. Initially the doctors thought it must have been a mistake because that has never happened before, and such a transformation in the human system simply can’t happen. Apparently, the blood stem cells in this young lady’s new liver invaded her body’s bone marrow, and ultimately took over her entire immune system. Now she has an entirely different blood type. Her new blood embraces life and healing and is restoring to this day. Brennan says, “It’s like my second chance at life.”

It is the same with us when we invite Christ to save us from our sin. Some changes take place over the course of a lifetime: developing good, healthy, wholesome habits is the continual journey. Character qualities that mark us are made over seasons, but your invitation to forgiveness and a new standing in Christ is but a simple, sincere request away.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The kind of massive transformation Demi-Lee Brennan experienced was an internal change, which in turn showed up in her new life. This week we meet up with a mind who was transformed from the inside out. As someone dying from leprosy, you know the changes that occur in your body began not on the skin but somewhere deep inside. As Christ restores this man, look carefully at the story and see whether this change begins internally or externally.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

• 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, 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 himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices 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?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

• Why do you think Jesus insisted that the man healed of leprosy go show himself to the priest? Read Leviticus 14:1-9 and see if you can imagine what the ritual might have pointed to and the lasting image that would have been imprinted on the one healed.
• What would this event look like today? Some might compare this miracle to someone being healed of AIDS or cancer. AIDS is probably the most comparable disease in that there is no cure and those who contract the disease are basically preparing to die. Also, initially, people treated those with the HIV virus with a similar kind of isolation, fearing it to be contagious. All of these internal elements only compound the physical impact of the disease.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Exodus 4:6, 7; Numbers 12:10; 2 Kings 5:1-10; Luke 17:11-15.
But in this story Jesus asks this man who had been healed to show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded. Why, and what is this ceremony all about?

The Ritual of Cleansing and the Law of the Leper:
There were several reasons to make a visit to the priest their first action as healed individuals. First of all, in order to be recommunicated back into society the priest had to examine you and pronounce you clean. But there is more to the command Jesus made than just getting your paperwork fixed. The ceremony of cleansing for the leper had a deep, enduring spiritual experience embedded in the ritual. In Leviticus 14:2-7 this ritual is described. The bird that is sacrificed is clearly Christ, and the live bird that is set free over the open field is unmistakably any sinner who receives the mercy of God.

Imagine the scene: A leper comes to the priest and the priest must perform this ceremony outside the city. Where was Christ crucified? Outside the city. Then, the leper watches as two live birds are brought out and one is killed over running water (or as the Hebrew has it living water). The blood of the bird is mixed with the living water and gathered in an earthen vessel. The one who has been healed watches intently the dead bird and the bowl of blood and water. What could such a person be thinking? Why blood? Why a bird—a living creature? What does this mean? The meaning is made clear when the one healed watches as the live bird is dipped in the blood and water and set free over an open field. Picture the

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

There is no other disease in Scripture that portrays the work of sin like leprosy. In fact, the term “walking death” captures the common perception of the disease. When people were diagnosed with leprosy, they were virtually excommunicated from society. In some cases their names were taken off the public records of living citizens, for it was only a matter of time. But some may not know that leprosy attacks the central nervous system first before it ever affects the skin. Jerry Vines graphically captures the way leprosy destroys a person:

“For no reason he would have a feeling of fatigue. Then his joints would begin to get sore. One day he would notice little white spots all over his skin. Later those white spots would begin to harden into nodules. They would turn from white to pink to brown, and then become scaly. The appearance of his face would change until he began to resemble a lion. The nodules would ulcerate all over his body, producing a foul odor. They would cover his vocal chords so that when he breathed there would be a wheezing sound. When he talked his voice would be raspy. His eyebrows would fall out. His hair would turn white. Inch by inch this man’s body would begin to rot. As he walked he would have putrid spots where the pus oozed out of his feet. His fingers and toes would begin to fall off” (Jerry Vines, Exploring the Gospels—Mark [Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990], p. 29).

But in this story Jesus asks this man who had been healed to show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded. Why, and what is this ceremony all about?

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
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).

**Scripture Story:**

**Commentary:**
The Desire of Ages, chapter 27.

"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured." (Mark 1:41, 42, NIV)

**Activity**
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into groups of two or three and ask them to respond to the following questions:

Say: “Think of some examples of people today who get alienated or written off because of something they have done or something that happens to them.” Make sure you make two lists: one for choices that cause negative impact, and two, things that happen to people that are out of their control. (Someone getting the HIV virus by promiscuous sex is an example of a choice one makes that brings serious results. Getting it from a blood transfusion, however, is an example of something that happens to someone.)

Share the results around the classroom and ask this question as a way to wrap up the lesson: “Is there any scenario we can think up from which Christ cannot save, if we ask?” The answer is clearly “No.” God is willing and able.

**Summary**
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Sometimes the storied lives of people such as the leper can seem like a fairy tale, like something so unreal that you put it in the category of a cartoon. But the event was real, and the experience is real today. By the thousands, people will come to Christ and ask for a new life. Some will doubt and think, “This is too good to be true,” but will ask anyway, just as the leper did long ago, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Whatever gets in the way of your asking God to save you needs to be put away because God’s voice does not give that message. The overwhelming, undeniable truth is that God is willing and more than able to cover you and restore your life completely. He is willing to do this as often as you ask.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Redemptive Rituals**
Symbols and rituals are key to this lesson, but they are also a core value in the teaching ministry God established long ago. Symbols such as the cross, bread and wine, an olive branch, and a dove can be rich devices for teaching or they can become empty figures that are meaningless, depending on how we integrate them into our lives. It is important to explain the symbols in the Bible with vivid stories, giving attention to the greater meaning. The sanctuary service is filled with meaning about the story of redemption. Many can learn what the candelsticks represent or the altar of burnt offering or the table of showbread without hearing the story. The commentary on this week’s lesson captures the details of a ritual through the lens of the story of redemption. Keep the symbols and stories before the young people and help them make real connections from the ancient story to their life today.

No wonder Jesus wanted them to see the priest, because He knew that if they were to go through this ritual, the significance of their salvation would be deeply embedded in their heart and mind.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero)*, chapter 27.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
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).

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 27.

"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said, 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured."

(Mark 1:41, 42, NIV)
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 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?

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.

“When he 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 cured 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.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ‘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.’”

“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 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 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 mea-sure 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, 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, Message).

other eyes

“For a small reward, a man will hurry away on a long journey; while for eternal life, many will hardly take a single step.”—Thomas à Kempis, 15th-century monk.

“We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. . . . That is Christianity.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century British author and theologian.
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Making It Real

Sabbath
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 says in Matthew 18:12-14. 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?

Sunday
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
The Key Text this week comes from Mark 1:41, 42, saying, “Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.” Luke’s Gospel says the man was “full of leprosy” (NKJV) 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 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.

Wednesday
The Punch Lines in this week’s lesson speak of God’s desire and eagerness to save us. Think about how these punchy 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
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? Remember the leper’s initial fear, “If you are willing . . .” 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, but there is no record of him thanking Jesus. Write a note of thanksgiving to Jesus for being willing and able to deliver you.

Friday
Think of a time when 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. Consider how every time you reach out to God and express your desire to belong to Him your life changes for eternity.

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this week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 27.

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

**I. SYNOPSIS**

In this story we will learn about accepting others even if at first we don’t like what we see in these people. In Jesus’ time tax collectors were hated. They were seen as dishonest and sinful because they were often corrupt. Yet Jesus went out of His way to seek their company. He would rather be in the midst of sinners than in a room filled with so-called “just and noble” men. He knew that it was the sinners who needed His help rather than the righteous. As He said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Matt. 9:12, NIV).

God wants us to accept all people. He doesn’t want us to look at their appearance, reputation, or pasts. Let the students know that if God—who is Lord of the universe and who created all things—can forgive our sins, then surely we can accept others and seek to help them find salvation.

While we should guide our students to choose their friends wisely, we should also share with them the importance of seeking out the “sick.” If we constantly befriend only those who are obviously “healthy,” then how will we make a difference in the world? Jesus came into this world, not as King, but as a man without a home. He came into this world as a man who ate with tax collectors and found His company among sinners. The Lord instructs us to accept all who come in need. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40, NKJV).

**II. TARGET**

The students will:
- Realize the importance of accepting others, despite their appearances or pasts. *(Know)*
- Feel a desire to reach out and witness to those who need it most. *(Feel)*
- Find more opportunities to show all people God’s love. *(Respond)*

**III. EXPLORE**

- Acceptance (of others)
- Self-image
- Purpose (knowing your)

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

**TEACHING**

**I. GETTING STARTED**

**Activity**

*Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Ask the class to imagine the following scenario.

You are in church and the following kinds of people arrive. Ask the class how they think they would respond if these people were to come in to church:

1. A homeless drunk whose smell fills the entire room.
2. A famous rock star.

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3. The president of the United States.
5. Someone dressed in the garb of a non-Christian religion, such as an Orthodox Jew, a Muslim, or a Hindu.

Talk about your various responses and what they tell us about ourselves and our attitudes toward others. How well are we reflecting the character of Jesus?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In the United States a group of Christian women have taken as their mission to witness to prostitutes in Las Vegas, invite them to church, and help them learn more about God’s love. These women have been bashed endlessly by people who say that “prostitutes have no business in church.” They have been scorned on account of their ministry. People think that what they are doing is wrong. One of these missionaries, Annie Lobert, says about Las Vegas: “This is a world that has been largely rejected by the church, but the Lord our God is putting a stop to that in a BIG way!” She is an ex-prostitute who knows firsthand what these girls have to go through. She has led many of them out of this horrible way of life and into accepting Jesus. Their goal is to save as many people as possible. Even though they have been attacked on all sides from Christians who think that they are immersing themselves among sinful people, they have not stopped. They know that the Lord wants them to bring as many people to Him as possible.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Many times when we see people who have bad reputations we try to keep our distance. We don’t want to damage our reputation by associating with them, or we feel as if they are beneath us. Yet instead of looking at all the bad, we should look for their potential and try to see past their faults and be able to see them and help them seek out their true purpose in life. Jesus saw Levi and, instead of judging him and his faults, He saw that this man had potential. He recognized that this man, too, could be in His kingdom.

Jeremiah 31:3 (NKJV) says: “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.’”

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them:

- What do you think initially angered the Pharisees in this story?
- Give a few reasons why you think people hated the tax collectors so much.
- How do you think Levi felt when Jesus said, “Follow Me”?
- In this story Jesus said, “Who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before” (Matthew 9:16, NLT). What do you think He meant by that?
- What do you think Jesus saw when He first met Levi? What do you think His disciples saw?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Timothy 1:15; Ephesians 1:3-6; Genesis 4:7; John 15:16; 1:12; Matthew 11:28; Acts 10:35.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

During the time of Jesus, ancient Israel was under the dominion of the powerful Roman Empire, which would tax all the provinces under its control. In ancient Israel a group of tax collectors was taken from the people themselves, who were contracted by Rome to collect taxes for the Romans. Their pay would be that they could keep a “fraction” or a percentage of the taxes they collected. Of course, this led to the potential for great abuse, for the more they collected, the more they got to keep.

These tax collectors were known as crooks and cheats. Although there were some honorable exceptions, most weren’t. This helps us understand the words found in Luke 3:12-14 (NKJV): “Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he [Jesus] said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’” Interesting, Jesus wasn’t attacking them for being tax collectors; He was warning them about cheating the people from whom they were supposed to collect the taxes.

These tax collectors could become very rich, too.
Some of them would actually petition the Roman government for the right to collect taxes and tolls from their own people. Then, having paid the government for this right, they were free to collect as much as they could, trying to milk every extra “dime” for themselves. Rome received a certain amount; the rest was theirs to keep for themselves.

Tax collectors gathered various taxes. The Roman Empire levied upon the Jews a land tax, a poll tax, even a tax for the function and operation of the Temple. There were different kinds of taxes for every territory. Some provinces, such as Galilee, were not under a Roman governor; thus, taxes remained in the province rather than going to Rome. This helps us better understand how outraged some of the leaders and perhaps people were because Jesus would associate with these greedy tax collectors—who truly were working against the interests of their own nation. How low could you get! And yet, Jesus loved them and wanted to save them. What a message for us!

III. CLOSING

Activity
Download from the Internet pictures of all sorts of people, from the rich and famous to the most unsavory, ugly, and unloving. Try to imagine their stories. How did they get the way that they are? Now, try and imagine how God, who knows all things, would view them. How different is God’s view of them from ours? What should we learn from that difference?

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
We all have seen people who appear to be unwor-

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Other Eyes
Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

• Flashlight
Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

• Punch Lines
Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
thy of our acceptance. There have been cruel, heartless, insensitive, sinful, and arrogant individuals whom we have more than likely tried to avoid at all costs. Yet before we judge someone, we must first try to identify with them. Many people who outwardly seem unacceptable may have suffered in ways that we ourselves might never understand. But Jesus calls us to accept all individuals, even if we don’t at first like what we see. He wants us to give all people a chance in showing them the road to eternal life. He wants us to help people know that no matter what their past has been, or no matter what horrible things they might have done, they still have a chance to find their true purpose; they still have a chance to come to the light of Jesus. We should never close the door to anyone, but demonstrate Jesus’ love and acceptance through our unselfish love toward them.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero)*, chapter 28.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
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).
what do you think?

In 2001 a huge money scandal involving the Enron Corporation was revealed. Many Enron 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.

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

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”?

Why are tax collectors hated so much?

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

Why were tax collectors hated so much?

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.”’”


STORY

OF THE

OUT

IN

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.”’”


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**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” (Psalm 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).

“You must look into people, as well as at them.” —Lord Chesterfield, 18th-century English statesman and author.

“Many individuals have, like uncut diamonds, shining qualities beneath a rough exterior.” —Juvenal, 1st-century Roman poet.

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” —Martin Luther King, Jr., 20th-century American clergyman and civil rights leader.
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. _______________________________

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.

Read through your Bible and try to find as many texts as you can about forgiveness and acceptance. Write down the three which you think are most important in your notebook or daily journal.

Many of us seek to be with people of good reputation. But Jesus didn’t. Often we pass people by 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, “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” 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.

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. After you’ve read these things, write in your notebook ways in which you can follow these examples.

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.

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. Can you think of some other examples in which society tries to convince us that image is all that matters?

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

I. SYNOPSIS

You can tell a lot about a person by looking at what they spend their time doing and by what makes them angry. As Christ mingled with people and healed them from their disease He was often criticized mindlessly for “working” on the Sabbath. Jesus did not become “indignant” because of criticism, but because the leaders of the Jewish faith missed the point of the Sabbath and led others down the same empty way of life. Such is the case with the story of the man with the withered hand who was healed by Jesus up front and on stage in the synagogue one Sabbath morning.

Throughout this week’s lesson there is a tension between thinking about what we should not do versus being preoccupied with the things we should be doing. Sometimes when we disagree with someone else, we simply “let it go.” But in this story and on this subject, Jesus would not let it go. Ellen White says: “Jesus did not let the matter pass without administering a rebuke to His enemies. He declared that in their blindness they had mistaken the object of the Sabbath.” It is essential that we review the ultimate purpose of the Sabbath with young people, not in vague terms, but with the same passion that Jesus defended its sacredness long ago. The Sabbath is made “for man” (Mark 2:27, 28). It is a nonnegotiable reminder of who God is, and who we are in relation to Him (Genesis 2:1-3; Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). We can best keep the Sabbath by being passionate about “doing good” and “saving lives” as noted in this week’s story. Consider how to keep the students focused on the primary purpose of Sabbath and the best things to experience on that day.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• See the reminders of God’s purpose in the Sabbath. (Know)
• Sense the importance of genuine worship. (Feel)
• Fill their Sabbath hours with goodness. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Sabbath
• Anger
• Service

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

 Invite the students to share their responses to the voting activity in the What Do You Think? section. Often students will place themselves in the middle of a continuum, but the point is to get them to show their tendency. For students who tend to stew with anger you might ask: “What do you tend to do as your frus-
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

During a Bible study on the Sabbath a frustrated young person blurted out, “Just tell me what I am NOT supposed to do on the Sabbath and I will be fine!” Apparently, this young person was so confused because people were pulling him back and forth with criticism on appropriate Sabbath behavior. He was missing the point. Why do we always focus on what not to do? I handed him a bottle of water and replied, “I’ll give you a list of what NOT to do, but first, give me a list of what is NOT in this bottle of water.” Sitting there, stunned in silence by the request, I repeated the challenge. “Go ahead, just make a list of the things that are contained in that bottle of water. Look at the ingredients on the back and then just start naming things that aren’t in it.” Still stunned I offered a few hints to get him going: “Is there chili in the water? How about guacamole? Radishes? What about mashed potatoes? Aluminum foil? Motor oil? Scotch tape? Aloe Vera gel? 100% cotton socks? Apple seeds? Polyester? . . .” “Okay, okay, okay, I get it!” he interrupted. We then began to look at all things that Jesus did on the Sabbath and formulated our approach to Sabbathkeeping based on what we should do instead of what we should not do.

Calvin Miller said: “Our focus needs to be on hungering after what God wants rather than merely trying to quit what He doesn’t want.”

How is this principle true in your life as well as aspects of life other than the Sabbath?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

This principle works in many areas of life: looking for a job, finding a spouse, picking out a pair of shoes. Keep your eyes on what to do instead of what not to do. As you study the story for this week, you will notice three perspectives on the story from three different Gospel writers. Notice how they are different, but notice the central message in the story as you answer the questions that guide you through the passage.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them:

• 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?
• When Jesus invites the man with the withered hand to “stand in front of everyone,” what do you think is His frame of mind? Why did He do this?
• 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?” (Luke 6:9, NIV), 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!” (Matthew 12:11, 12, NIV). 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?

More Questions for Teachers:

• What other experiences in the Christian faith seem a little empty because we tend to miss the true purpose for why it exists? (Communion/foot-washing service. Giving tithes and offerings. Memorizing Scripture. Kneeling for prayer.)
• How do you see Christ’s way of Sabbathkeeping reaching people who don’t know God or have contact with a community of faith? (Doing good and saving lives are really the ultimate witness to the world. Being right and having answers
“The commandment says that there must be no work on the Sabbath. The scribe immediately asks: ‘What is work?’ Work then is defined under thirty-nine different heads which are called ‘fathers of work.’ One of the things which are forbidden is the carrying of a burden. Immediately the scribe asks: ‘What is a burden?’ So in the Mishnah there is definition after definition of what constitutes a burden—milk enough for a gulp, honey enough to put on a sore, oil enough to anoint the smallest member (which is further defined as the little toe of a child one day old), water enough to rub off an eye-plaster, leather enough to make an amulet, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, coarse sand enough to cover a plasterer’s trowel, reed enough to make a pen, a pebble big enough to throw at a bird, anything which weighs as much as two dried figs” (William Barclay, *The Mind of Christ*, pp. 152, 153).

**Sharing Context and Background**

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

To be fair to the religious leaders, they were the ones trying to preserve the Hebrew faith during seasons of moral, ethical, and intellectual bankruptcy. The Pharisees and scribes were passionate people but simply became more devoted to the law than to the bigger picture of God’s will. In order to preserve the rich beauty of God’s law and the history of God’s people, they made rules and subsets and tried to capture every scenario that might trip a believer up in their walk with God. This behavior, of course, became a deformed catalog of unbelievably tedious rules—especially regarding Sabbathkeeping.

William Barclay comments: “The commandment says that there must be no work on the Sabbath. The scribe immediately asks: ‘What is work?’ Work then is defined under thirty-nine different heads which are called ‘fathers of work.’ One of the things which are forbidden is the carrying of a burden. Immediately the scribe asks: ‘What is a burden?’ So in the Mishnah there is definition after definition of what constitutes a burden—milk enough for a gulp, honey enough to put on a sore, oil enough to anoint the smallest member (which is further defined as the little toe of a child one day old), water enough to rub off an eye-plaster, leather enough to make an amulet, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, coarse sand enough to cover a plasterer’s trowel, reed enough to make a pen, a pebble big enough to throw at a bird, anything which weighs as much as two dried figs” (William Barclay, *The Mind of Christ*, pp. 152, 153).

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Compare and Contrast**

A couple of ways we describe a relationship between two things or ideas is to compare and contrast and to demonstrate cause and effect. In this week’s lesson we asked the students to compare different perspectives on the story to see how we see things differently. One way to visually demonstrate this is by using a Venn diagram. Draw two large circles beside each other but intersect in the middle, leaving three spaces (left of the first circle, right of the second circle, and the center where the two circles cross). Invite students to compare Gospel stories noting the details that are unique in the outside circles and that which is common in both on the inside where the circles overlap. What does this do? This activity strengthens their capacity to see details as well as the big picture.

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book *The Desire of Ages*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
These rules were set up so people wouldn’t have to think about it. But the last thing God wanted was for us to not think about it. The last thing God wanted was for us to not think about Him. You could spit on a rock, but not on the ground, because adding moisture to the soil would be a part of the process of making the earth more likely to grow something—farming.

When Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, the only thing the leaders see is the breaking of a rule. William Barclay comments:

“Medical attention could be given only if a life was in danger. . . . A fracture could not be attended to. Cold water might not be poured on a sprained hand or foot. A cut finger might be bandaged with a plain bandage but not with ointment. That is to say, at the most an injury could be kept from getting worse; it must not be made better" (William Barclay, The Gospel of Mark, p. 67).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into groups of two or three and ask them to respond to the following questions:

In pairs, make a list of five things you think should be done on Sabbath that you don’t currently do. Have students share their lists around the room and hear the responses of others. Now ask: “If you were to focus on those five things next Sabbath, would you be bored? Would you still be tempted by some of the things that would not be best to do on the Sabbath? Would your activities be a positive witness to others?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It’s so human to take a beautiful experience and mindlessly repeat it until it loses its meaning. It happens in so many areas of life. If we don’t think about why the Sabbath is given and what God’s greatest desire is for us, we get lost in all the rules and nuances to the point where our behavior becomes mindless. Watching animals at the zoo you will occasionally notice creatures that lumber and walk and repeat behavior in their small area only because that is what they have always done. It is sad, but God wants us to live, to remember we are created for a greater purpose than to pace around. God wants us to practice goodness and participate in the cause of saving lives for eternity because that is our ultimate purpose as created beings—to become like our Creator. We will never experience this if we forget who God is, and we remember by entering into His work on the Sabbath. His work? That’s right. God’s work is to serve, to save, to live fully and abundantly for others.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 29.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
**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 restriction 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 shiveled 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)
When I get angry, I . . .
Slowly Immediately Explode
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.

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 must leave them until sundown.

42 corners connections

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 accuse 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 man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’

“Their eyes were filled with anger. ‘You have healed on the Sabbath!’

“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 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.”

“When Jesus went into their synagogue, and a man there was who had a shriveled hand. 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. 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.

“When 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 they 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)
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?

“Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy surely takes the rest of the week.”—Alice Walker, current American novelist, poet, and essayist.

“To Jesus the most important thing in the world was not the correct performance of a ritual, but the spontaneous answer to the cry of human need.”—William Barclay, 20th-century Scottish theologian and Bible commentator.
Sabbath

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 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?

Tuesday

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 story 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?

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

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. Make a list of 10 “good” things you want to experience this coming Sabbath. Remember, Jesus maintained 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

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 Isaiah 66:22, 23 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.
**PREPARING TO TEACH**

**I. SYNOPSIS**

This week’s lesson focuses on the calling of the 12 disciples and the Sermon on the Mount, which follows this call. Five disciples were with Jesus from the very onset of His ministry, but it is instructive that Jesus ministered for more than a year before He chose the rest of the group. Jesus lived a life of discipleship to His Father before He asked anyone to follow Him. Is that a lesson for us?

Although Jesus was God in human flesh, He did not depend on His deity to determine whom He should select to be His disciples. Instead, He spent a night in prayer, after which He chose the twelve. Jesus was about to launch a movement that would change the world, so He wanted to be sure that He had the right people. This is one of the important parts of the story to be emphasized. God is waiting, listening, and ready to give us guidance—no matter how big or small our decisions are.

Following His call of the twelve, Jesus moved to lay out the principles of the kingdom of heaven by which they must live. The multitude that overheard His message was made up largely of downtrodden and forgotten people—people at the margins of society. Jesus’ message was for them. Make the point this week that our call to discipleship is always followed by a call to live that discipleship in service to humanity. How do we do that? By following the principles outlined in the Sermon on the Mount. We are all integral parts of God’s family, but continued membership in God’s family is determined by the love we show to one another.

**II. TARGET**

The students will:
- Discover that God calls all to follow Him, and some to special ministry. (*Know*)
- Look for opportunities to serve lost members of God’s family. (*Feel*)
- Accept and live passionate lives of discipleship. (*Respond*)

**III. EXPLORE**

- Kingdom of God
- Knowing God
- Selflessness

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

**TEACHING**

**I. GETTING STARTED**

**Activity**

*Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

The objective of this activity is to compare the rollout of a new product with the way in which Jesus rolled out His new product: the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

Give the students an opportunity to share highlights from their marketing campaigns. Then ask them to consider how Jesus rolled out His campaign. First, He “lived” the product—so well, in fact,
that multitudes followed Him because of what He had. Second, He chose people, whom He personally trained, to help Him “promote and market” the product. Finally, He laid out the principles by which He wanted His people to live. If they were representing His product, He wanted their lives to match their profession.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Pastor Jimmy Chapman of Washington, Georgia, once related the interesting story behind the call of one of history’s Christian giants.

“In Yorkshire, England, during the early 1800s, two sons were born to a family named Taylor. The older one set out to make a name for himself by entering Parliament and gaining public prestige. But the younger son chose to give his life to Christ. He later recalled, ‘Well do I remember, as in unreserved consecration, I put myself, my life, my friends, my all, upon the altar. I felt I was in the presence of God, entering into covenant with the Almighty.’

“With that commitment, Hudson Taylor turned his face toward China and obscurity. As a result, he is known and honored on every continent as a faithful missionary and the founder of the China Inland Mission (now known as Overseas Missionary Fellowship). For the other son, however, there is no lasting monument. When you look in the encyclopedia to see what the other son has done, you find these words, ‘the brother of Hudson Taylor.’ ‘. . . he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever’ (1 John 2:17).”

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

From the moment that God walked through the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day in search of Adam and Eve to this very day, God has been calling fallen human beings. Why He bothers with us should make us wonder.

If the truth be told, God doesn’t need us to do His work. Did Jesus really need Thomas’s doubting and Peter’s verbosity? Probably not, but they needed Him. The call of the 12 disciples was another way of demonstrating that fallen human beings can be reclaimed and repurposed for the cause of God. It is a privilege to hear and accept God’s call to discipleship.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them:*

- Most students and probably adults have never read the entire Sermon on the Mount. Take a moment to read the sermon in full (Matthew 5–7). Ask the students to share parts of the sermon that they’d never heard before, or were not familiar with.

- Among the topics addressed by Jesus are: peace, kindness, slander, God’s people as salt in the earth, where murder begins, where adultery begins, marriage and divorce, making oaths, going the extra mile, loving enemies, doing good, fasting, worrying, judging, seeking God, the way to heaven, and how to build a life—among others. Choose some of these topics and ask the students to share what Jesus said about each.

- In this sermon on the mountainside Jesus was addressing His disciples within earshot of a multitude who had followed Him. The Jews should have already known the principles enunciated by Jesus here. Why didn’t they? Did the religious teachers of the day have anything to do with the situation?

- Much of what Jesus outlined in the principles that undergirded the kingdom of heaven is considered radical today. For instance, most people do not believe that it is possible to love an enemy. If someone smacks you on the cheek, would you offer them the other? Was Jesus asking the Jews—who were chafing under Roman occupation—to become doormats?

- Ask the students how they can live out the principles of the Sermon on the Mount in their day-to-day lives. Ask: “Can someone who is not called by God live for God?”

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Samuel 3; Exodus 20; Matthew 4:1.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

1. **The Best?** The 12 disciples chosen by Jesus were not the best that humanity had to offer,
most people would conclude. Most of them were poor laborers. This is demonstrated to some degree by the disdain with which the Jewish leaders viewed them. Jesus basically took the worst of the human lot and showed what a little exposure to the Sun of Righteousness could do for them.

Consider the results: “Three of them became able writers. John was a profound scholar” (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 594).

Peter became a great preacher. Through these simple men, Jesus had built the foundation for a new church that would span the rest of time until He returns. The question we must ask ourselves is this: If Jesus could do so much with so little, what could He do with us?

2. **Something Better.** Jesus aimed a Spirit-filled barrage at the excesses of His time. This was the message of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, and in the Sermon on the Mount the thrust of Jesus’ message is the same. Here’s what Ellen White wrote about the way in which Jesus delivered His message:

“Christ disappointed the hope of worldly greatness. In the Sermon on the Mount He sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character. Yet He did not make a direct attack on the errors of the people. He saw the misery of the world on account of sin, yet He did not present before them a vivid delineation of their wretchedness. He taught them of something infinitely better than they had known” (The Desire of Ages, p. 299).

3. **A Kingdom of Grace—Not Force.** In the Sermon on the Mount Christ is speaking not only about the future kingdom of glory but about the kingdom of grace that dwells in the hearts of His followers. The Jews had a popular conception of the kingdom as one built on force, able to subdue the hated Romans.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Team Building 101**

Teachers often work hard to get students to work together. Given the subject matter of this week’s lesson, it might be interesting to examine what Jesus did to get His disciples to work together.

The disciples were a diverse bunch. Did the sacredness of the mission make them work together? What about Jesus Himself? Did they all come together because they were in the presence of greatness? The answer to both of these questions is no.

The disciples learned how to be a team by watching how Jesus treated each of them, and they were forced to stick together when He was crucified. Example and sacrifice—these are still the two best ways to teach followers to work together.
In parables, such as the tares, mustard seed, leaven, and dragnet, Jesus sought to give them examples of how to live out the kingdom of grace. “The kingdom Christ came to establish was one that begins within men’s hearts, permeates their lives, and overflows into other men’s hearts and lives with the dynamic and compelling power of love” (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 325).

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask the students to say a silent sentence prayer to God in answer to His call. Ask the students to finish the following statement with their silent prayer to God.

“Father I hear You calling me. By Your grace I plan to...”

The objective of this prayer is to let the students know that God is still looking for disciples to help Him build up His kingdom. Close with a prayer of consecration and dedication to God and His service.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
On a hillside more than 2,000 years ago, Jesus chose 12 human beings to help Him build a kingdom. The kingdom of grace, as it later came to be known, was inaugurated on that day, and we are its beneficiaries today.

The Sermon on the Mount that followed the choosing of the 12 outlined in clear tones the constitution of God’s new kingdom on earth. The way of the world had been changed by Christ—the Way. This new kingdom would be built on selfless love and devotion to God and fellow human beings. The disciples didn’t know it at the time, but they had just been selected for the greatest mission ever entrusted to humans, and that mission transformed their lives.

God calls men and women to a life infinitely more meaningful than the one they are currently living. He gives all who answer the call a new way of living, a new way of being, in the world.
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).
What do you think?

If you were going to launch a new cell phone that would compete with Apple’s iPhone—you designed it, your company built it—what kind of advertisement would you create to get people to buy it? Create a commercial campaign by supplying the information below.

**Campaign slogan** (short catchy phrase describing the new phone):

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**Music sound track:**

**Face of the campaign** (What celebrity/celebrities would you like to be the face of your campaign?):

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

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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.

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### 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 coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.”**

(Luke 6:17-31, NIV)

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**“Looking at his disciples, he said:**

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**“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”**

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**“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.”**

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**“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”**

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**“Blessed are you who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.”**

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**“Blessed are you when men revile you and curse you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.”**

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**“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.”**

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**“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 all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”**

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**“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 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 6:20-31, 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 had 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 Blessed? 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 do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:1, NIV).

“And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12, NIV).

“Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth 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).


“Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is Himself the way.” —Karl Barth, 20th-century Swiss theologian.
Sabbath
Did you create an ad campaign for your new cell phone? How’d it go?

Think for a moment about the time when Jesus selected 12 disciples to join Him in His mission. What “product” was Jesus preparing to share with the world? ___________________________ (John 10:10)

Jesus realized that He could not possibly accomplish His mission alone. He needed help and He needed a strategy. What role did Jesus want the disciples to play in His ministry? (Mark 3:14, 15)

Sunday
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
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
This week’s Flashlight quote highlighted the role that nature played in the ministry of Jesus. Read Psalm 19:1, 2. What do you think the psalmist David meant when he wrote these two verses?

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

Wednesday
Let this week’s Punch Lines smack you around a bit. Don’t worry, it won’t hurt too much.

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. Think about what you know of the disciples. What were some of their weaknesses, blind spots, areas in which they needed to make changes?

Peter:__________________________
James and John:________________
Thomas:______________________
Judas:________________________

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
Now when he 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 mountaintop.

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), chapter 31.

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

I. SYNOPSIS
Jesus never missed a teachable moment. He was always clued in to the needs of those who came to Him, and He never missed a chance to help them grow. In this week’s lesson we see Jesus reaching out to people in need, and in the process teaching His followers—and His detractors—how to live.

The story of the centurion and his sick servant is at the heart of this week’s study. The Jewish leaders had concluded that this Roman commander was worthy of Jesus’ help, unlike the common people whom Jesus helped from day to day, because he had built them a synagogue. Jesus got delayed on His trip to the centurion’s home, but soon the centurion came to meet Him along the way and expressed a confidence in Jesus’ power that no Jew had ever exhibited before. Jesus said as much, adding: “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11, NIV).

There are several points to emphasize here. For one, the faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus to simply speak healing upon His servant is the kind of faith God’s people should exhibit. In response to the centurion’s faith, Jesus dropped an important hint about the makeup of the kingdom of heaven. Those who are believers will find that many others from the east and west will come to follow Christ. Let the students know that the family of God will transcend all cultures and creeds.

In the story of the demon-possessed man brought to Jesus, we see again the attitude of the Pharisees as they accused Jesus of being a devil worshipper. Here again Jesus took the opportunity to answer His critics with logic that they could not refute. In every act of mercy performed by Jesus, He looked for opportunities to make His people better followers of Himself.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Learn that true faith takes God at His Word and believes that He can do anything. (Know)
• Experience the blessing of being a part of God’s family. (Feel)
• Place their implicit trust in God as they seek to be used by Him to help save others. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Church as family (that cares)
• Authority/respect
• Unity in the body of Christ*

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

The answers to the True or False statements are as
follows: 1. False—the United States Congress must approve declarations of war. 2. True. 3. False—even the president is still bound by what’s left of our privacy laws. 4. False—Congress can overturn presidential vetoes provided they have a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives, and a filibuster-proof 60 votes in the Senate. 5. False—the president must abide by the laws of the land like any other citizen.

The objective of this exercise is to make the point that just like the United States Constitution gives the president certain powers, God gave Jesus power and authority over all things in earth and in heaven. The centurion recognized Jesus’ power was not from this world.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In April 1988 the evening news reported on a photographer who was a skydiver. He had jumped from a plane along with numerous other skydivers and filmed the group as they fell and opened their parachutes. On the film shown on the telecast, as the final skydiver opened his chute, the picture went berserk.

The announcer reported that the cameraman had fallen to his death, having jumped out of the plane without his parachute. It wasn’t until he reached for the absent ripcord that he realized he was freefalling without a parachute. Until that point, the jump probably seemed exciting and fun. But tragically, he had acted with thoughtless haste and deadly foolishness.

Nothing could save him, for his faith was in a parachute never buckled on. Faith in anything but an all-sufficient God can be just as tragic spiritually. Only with faith in Jesus Christ dare we step into the dangerous excitement of life.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Faith in Jesus is key to living the Christian life. It was faith in His Father that allowed Jesus to walk around helping people with no seeming concern about where His next meal would come from or where He would lay His head at night.

Occasionally Jesus would see such faith, as He did in the centurion, and where He saw it, He highlighted it. As we explore the story of the centurion and the demon-possessed man brought to Jesus, we see the authority of Jesus to meet every human ill, the care with which the body of Christ should love one another, and sadly, some of the attitudes that must be renounced if we will be Christ’s disciples.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Both the centurion episode and the story of the demon-possessed man give us a look into the heart of the Jewish leaders. What can we learn about the leaders from the way in which they came to Jesus about the centurion’s servant?
- What are we to make of the statements the Pharisees made about Jesus after He cast out the demon from the possessed man? Make the point that Jesus was not universally loved. He often faced strong detractors, some of whom killed Him.
- In each episode, Jesus’ words are quite powerful. After He spoke, the centurion’s servant was healed that same hour. When He commanded, the demons left the possessed man, and not only that, but the man could see and speak again. What does this tell us about the power of Jesus’ words and of the Word of God—the Bible?
- The Pharisees were believers, yet they seemed to sow division among the people. Are God’s people called to be a family, even when we disagree with each other? What if those disagreements are theological? Do we still remain a family?
- We see vivid pictures of human compassion in these two stories. The centurion cared about his servant. The friends of the demon-possessed man cared about him. How do we show that we care for hurting people? How can we bring them to God?
- Make the point that Jesus recognized ethnic and social distinctions among different groups of people, but He never allowed these things to prevent Him from ministering to people in need.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 12:1-8; Hebrews 11; Matthew 20:1-16; Psalm 33:8, 9.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.
1. **Not Worthy.** Jewish synagogues were and are sacred spaces. For a Roman soldier to help build a Jewish synagogue during the time of Jesus was quite a feat. For one, Jews did not like their Roman occupiers. They yearned for the day when the Romans would be overthrown, but not all Romans were cut from the same cloth. Perhaps the centurion decided to do a little “community relations” by helping the people build the synagogue, but after it was finished, he could not go there to worship. Perhaps he would stand afar off, watching the people assemble there, longing to be included. Who knows?

   In verses 7-9 we see something of how this centurion viewed the Jews. He notes that he is not worthy that Jesus should set foot in his house. His faith in Jesus is matched and surpassed by the sense of his own unworthiness. This centurion is an intuitive person who knows who he is and who God is. Sometimes people who are unbelievers have a sense of humility that many believers lack.

2. **Blinded by the Light?** When God’s blessings are taken for granted, they become lost to the blessed. Consider this comment by Ellen G. White on the knowledge entrusted to the Jews for centuries:

   “The Jews had been instructed from childhood concerning the work of the Messiah. The inspired utterances of patriarchs and prophets and the symbolic teaching of the sacrificial service had been theirs. But they had disregarded the light; and now they saw in Jesus nothing to be desired. But the centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings, and still further shut out by the bigotry of the Jews, and by the contempt of his own countrymen for the people of Israel—this man perceived the truth to which the children of Abraham were blinded” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317).

3. **Choosing Deception.** The life that Jesus lived and the works that He performed pricked the Pharisees. This often led them to attack Him, even at times when the results of His ministry were obviously God-ordained. This happened during the episode with the demon-possessed man.

   Jesus defended Himself against their slander that He’d done this miracle with the help of Satan. He also said: “And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matthew 12:31, NIV). The Holy Spirit had been working with many of the Pharisees as they witnessed Jesus in action. God desired to save them, but with every choice to attack Jesus, to disregard His offers of mercy, they hardened their hearts.

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book *The Desire of Ages*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Parent Support

By now you know that the spiritual instruction you give to your youth each week is pivotal to their growth in Christ. However, the most powerful force shaping a teen’s walk with God are their parents or guardians. Gather the parents of your students together once a quarter. Share with them any highlights or concerns you may have about their youth.

If you schedule the meeting for the beginning of the quarter, give them an overview of the upcoming quarter’s lessons. Parents are powerful allies in the spiritual instruction that you hope to impart on Sabbath. They must encourage their teens to study and complete each day’s section. We need their help and support.

The Jewish leaders knew that Jesus’ power was divine, but they chose to attribute it to Satan. This was a deception of the highest order, and their refusal to change doomed them. We should never put off the voice of the Holy Spirit when we are presented with truth.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Choose two Christian songs to play for your students. One should focus on the power of God and the other on the love and compassion of God. Give the students index cards and writing utensils.

As the first song plays, ask the students to write down a time in their life when they exercised faith in God and saw Him answer their prayers. As the second song plays, have them share a time when they helped someone who is not a family member, and how helping that person made them feel.

If time permits, have one or two students share their experiences. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for loving us.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

“Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence,” wrote Ellen G. White in Steps to Christ (p. 94). That treasured quotation has come to mean much to many through the years, but often the emphasis is placed on the power of prayer. Prayer is the key, indeed, but faith is the hand that holds the key.

Without faith akin to that of the centurion we cannot please God, because all who come to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards all who seek Him diligently (see Hebrews 11:6). This week’s lesson reminds us that we have a God who loves to meet our needs. Jesus spent more time attending to those in need than He did preaching the good news of salvation. His was a living, breathing salvation that didn’t require a pulpit to save lives. It also teaches us that as the family of God, we must love all people and seek to bring them to Jesus, the “Place” where they can find salvation and healing.

Finally, we also take away from this study a warning against the human tendency to take the blessings of God for granted. The Jews had been given sacred truths, but because they were not lived, they were lost.

*Fundamental Belief No. 14.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 32, 33.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
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, pp. 316, 317).

“When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, 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 agree or disagree with it.

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.

into the story

“When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, 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 Beelzebub, 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 demons, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.’”

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

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 the 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.
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?

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**punch lines**

“What are you, O 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 speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me” (John 14:30, NIV).

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

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**other eyes**

“The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your own arm.”—Swedish proverb.

“Compassion will cure more sins than condemnation.”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. Congregational minister.

“This is faith: a renouncing of everything we are apt to call our own and relying wholly upon the blood, righteousness, and intercession of Jesus.”—John Newton, 18th-century English author and composer.
Sabbath

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 to simply speak and heal his servant? After all, he was not a follower of Jesus. Explain your answer.

Sunday

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 when 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 this week’s Key Text again. Wouldn’t you love Jesus to give you a compliment like the one He gave the centurion? Jesus was known to give awesome compliments. Read what He said to a religious teacher in Mark 12:32-34.

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 when 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 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 (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 Line. The first Punch Line scripture is one of the most powerful verses in all the Bible. Who is the speaker in Zechariah 4:7? What is the unmistakable message that God wants to deliver to Zerubbabel and all of Judah?

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

When Jesus freed the demon-possessed man and restored his sight and speech, the people were astonished, but the Pharisees were not impressed. “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (Matthew 12:24, NIV).

They were calling Jesus demonic for having cast out demons. Have you ever faced criticism for doing something good? Share one of your experiences.

Friday

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?

used-to-be’s and has-beens

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 34, 35.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson focuses on the healing of the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes. It is a storied event where a man so possessed by evil had to be chained in a cave or a graveyard far from people. The story reveals that thousands of demons occupied his mind and tortured his soul to the point where he tried to cut himself with rocks. When he broke free from the cave and ran at Christ the sight must have been terrifying, but Christ saw the tiny part of his heart that the demons did not occupy and found a mustard seed of faith there, which was enough to free this man from his suffering. Sometimes Christ calls us to exhibit faith in His power, but there are times when our best and only response is like the man whose words spewed only hate and hopelessness, and Christ set him free. Perhaps this is one message that young people need to hear this week.

Another focal point is what happens after the miraculous restoration of the demoniac. He becomes a “has-been.” Where he has been becomes key to his witness to Christ’s mercy. Often young people wonder why they don’t experience power and joy in their walk with God. They believe all the right things and have asked God into their lives, but still they search for a sense that their relationship with God is real. It becomes real when we share it with someone else. Christ tells the man: “Go home and tell everyone what God has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.” Challenge young people to think about their walk with God and fashion their testimony about what God has done for them. As they share it, a new part of their experience with God will come alive.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Personally witness the power and mercy of Christ. (Know)
- Feel compelled to receive and share their story. (Feel)
- Choose to tell their story to someone else. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Witnessing
- Demon possession
- Grace

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share their responses to the voting activity in the What Do You Think? section. So often young people don’t think they have a “testimony” because they haven’t had a dramatic conversion such as the demon-possessed man in this week’s
meant nothing against the tender demeanor of a sweet 89-year-old woman. Just as I began to explain what really happened a young man walked over from the emergency vehicles and explained to the policeman, “I saw the accident . . .” His testimony saved me. He saw the entire accident and decided to turn back and make known what he knew about this strange event.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

According to the above story, how would you define a witness? Clearly, there are those who hear and believe, but only those who are willing to testify are actually witnesses. When have you experienced a scenario such as the one mentioned above?

The amazing story of the “once demon-possessed man” is a powerful example of the power of Christ to save anyone and how anyone’s experience with Christ is powerful. Read the story, answer the questions in this week’s lesson, and consider what your storied testimony might look like.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- 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 demoniac 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 in which 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 did Jesus respond, and why do you think Jesus urged Him to share what he had witnessed?

Extra Questions for Teachers:
• Think of the most compelling sermons you have ever heard. What do you think is the most powerful part of the sermon? It is probably the personal testimonies that really capture our hearts—personal stories of how God made an impact in their life. Why is it when people describe where they have come from to where they are now that it is so inspiring?
• It is likely that the demoniac wanted to stay close to Christ because he was afraid the demons would return. How does telling people what God has done for you strengthen or defend you as in this story?
• How much did the “has-been demoniac” know about Jesus before he went through the 10 cities to spread the news? When have you held back your testimony because you thought you didn’t “know enough”? How does this story change the way you think about what you might have to contribute?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 126:2, 3; Daniel 4; Mark 1:45; Acts 7:58–8:3; Acts 9; Mark 9:14-29.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The setting of this story is crucial because Jesus is dealing with questions about His authority as well as misconceptions about the nature of His ministry among His disciples. Because of the exhausting work they have done and the building popularity of Jesus, they cross the lake for some peace of mind. But the disciples learn a valuable lesson about peace in Mark 4:35-41. The disciples and Jesus are beset by a storm so severe these trained fishermen fear for their lives. But Christ speaks to the wind and the waves and the seas calm. Again, Jesus speaks to heaven and food for thousands appears. He speaks to the elements and they obey. And in this story, He speaks with power to thousands of demons and they run and hide. The context of this story is set in the middle of several life lessons on the power and authority of Christ.

Demon possession has such a range of behavior, from people who are constantly not in their right mind (Mark 5) to people who occasionally demonstrate erratic behavior (Mark 9). A legion of demons, as reported in this story, is equivalent to six thousand Roman troops. A legion of soldiers could have—and did—wreak unspeakable havoc on towns and cities in that region. Combine that with the Jewish mind-set that
demons were everywhere and if the human eye could see them, one would be frozen with fear. Nonetheless, the way in which Christ dispossesses the demons reveals the ultimate power of the Son of God as well as His compassion.

One of the likely reasons the man tried to get in the boat with Jesus was fear that the demons would return as soon as Jesus left. But Christ compels him to tell his story back home. The once-possessed man is said to have told the people of Decapolis what Christ had done for him. Decapolis means Ten Cities. Now these cities were not average Galilean towns; they were essentially inhabited by Greeks, but the territory was predominantly Syrian. But they were isolated by the roads so they didn’t receive the Roman protection as did other cities along the main highways. Therefore, the ten cities banded together and formed their own protection and maintained their Greek culture, religion, and influence in a unique way. That this man’s story paved the way for great inroads for the gospel that would come later is amazing.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

The recipients of Christ’s healing power in the New Testament are many. In groups of two or three, make a list of three people of whom you would want to hear their testimony. Invite the groups to share whom they chose as interview candidates, why they chose them, and what you think they might say. Have the students report.

If your group does well at speaking freely and honestly with each other, you might ask if the group would be willing to share their testimony over the next few weeks.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The demoniac, even though he was screaming and disturbed by demons, came to Christ with a mustard seed of faith. I love the way The Desire of Ages shows this man’s heart that longs for freedom but cannot even speak the right words to ask for help. But Jesus knew his heart and banished the evil spirits from him, bringing him to his right mind. When we come to Jesus, even though we are not entirely right with our lives or even when we are terribly distracted, Christ sees us, hears our hearts, and can draw us close. What Christ does for us will be real, but what will make it last is sharing our testimony with someone else. In the same way that the demoniac sowed seeds throughout Decapolis, our stories, even though simple, can foster growth and new life in ways we will never be able to count.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 34, 35.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“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 opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 337, 338).
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 evil 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.

“A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, 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)

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

“The world doesn’t need a definition of transformation as much as it needs a demonstration.”—Unknown.

“The smallest light still shines in the darkness.”—Unknown.
**Sabbath**

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 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. Read 1 John 1:1-4 and examine what is required for you to have a testimony about what God has done for you.

**Sunday**

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. What part did you connect with, and what was God’s message to you in this story?

**Monday**

The Key Text this week comes from Luke 8:38, 39 (NIV). “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.’” 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 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 opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them” (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 337, 338). 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.

**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**

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 someone 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.

**Friday**

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.

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**this week’s reading**

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 34.

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