

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY 04 2025

# the living message

**Scripture Story:** John 1:1-18.
**Commentary:** *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 1.
**Key Text:** John 1:1.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

The time of Jesus' coming to earth marked the beginning of the most important stage of the plan of salvation. God the Son took on human form to save us. The human race could be saved only by God sacrificing His Son in the place of the fallen human beings.

Jesus' coming to earth—God the Son in human form—was the climax of the long story of Israel's covenant relationship with God and God's quest to reconcile humanity with Him. Jesus, the Logos, the Word of God, came to show the world what God was like. This perspective needs to be in place before we even begin to read the Gospels. We must explore every story, every parable, every miracle, every saying of Jesus with the question "What does this tell us about God?"

God had already revealed Himself to His people through prophets, through the sacrificial system, through the written words of Scripture. But none of these revelations were able to completely capture God's character. Only Jesus was able to do that; only Jesus is God's living message to humanity—not just for the 33 or so years He walked the earth, but for us today.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the purpose for which God became a human being. *(Know)*
- Feel God's love for humanity expressed in Jesus. *(Feel)*
- Choose to follow the God they see revealed in Jesus. *(Respond)*

### III. EXPLORE

**The Son,** Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. . . . (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)"

## TEACHING

### I. GETTING STARTED

#### *Activity*

*Refer the students to the* What Do You Think? *section of their lesson, discuss their responses.*

What does it mean to think of Jesus as God's message to humanity?

Ask them to share what Jesus said or did in the Gospels to communicate God's message to fallen humanity. In what way does Jesus deliver God's message to us today?

#### *Illustration*

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Writer Louis Cassels penned a story about a man who simply couldn't believe in the Incarnation—this

idea of God coming to earth as the Man Jesus Christ. One winter as he sat in the living room reading his newspaper through the gathering snowstorm, he heard a thudding noise from outside. He looked out to find a small group of birds, huddled and miserable in the snow. Looking for shelter, they had tried to fly right through the living room window.

The man went out and opened his barn door and tried to guide the frightened birds into the barn. But they were as frightened of him as they were of the storm, and they would not follow him, even when he tried to lure them with bread crumbs. He knew that they'd freeze if left outside in the storm, yet he had no way to communicate with them, no way to tell them there was a place of safety. *If only I could become a bird for just a few minutes!* he thought. *Then I could tell them, and they'd understand.*

For the first time the man really understood the story of the Incarnation—that God had to become a human being in order to reach us with the message of salvation. Only by becoming one of us could He lead us to safety.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### *Bridge to the Story*

*Share the following in your own words:*

We send and receive messages. We use texts, e-mails, social media messages, and voice mails. Every day we use body language to send messages without words. You have probably noticed how angry someone is by the way they move and the look on their face.

What we want is to send a clear message. What would happen if you greeted your best friend every day with friendly words and a frown on your face? You might not keep that friend for long, because they would start to believe that you don't really mean the words you say.

We send messages to others all the time. But our messages get through best when we speak to people in the language and format with which they're most comfortable. You'd probably use different language if you were asking your teacher for extra time on an assignment than if you were sending a text message to a friend inviting her to a party. When it comes to communicating with other species, as the man in the story found, the gap is usually too great to bridge. But God bridged the ultimate gap by finding a way to speak to us in our own language—by becoming one of us and living among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

### *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.*

- Reproduce the boxes from Monday's section of the student lesson on a white/chalkboard at the front of the room. Say: "The Scripture passage we've read in John 1 tells us that Jesus came to reveal to us God's character of love. As we read in the Gospels the stories of what Jesus did, we are reading the record of God's message to us, the picture of God's character in human form."
- Get the class to suggest three stories from Jesus' life. Divide the class into three groups and ask each group to read and discuss one of the stories. Ask them to brainstorm a list of what each story teaches us about God. After allowing 10 to 15 minutes for discussion, bring the groups back together and ask each group to report on their story. Write down their findings in the boxes at the front. Discuss what picture of God's character we get from all these stories.
- Ask: "Would these messages about God's character have had the same effect if they were passed on through a prophet and written down? What's the advantage to having Jesus come personally to do these things?"

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Colossians 2:9, 10; Galatians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:5-11.

### *Sharing Context and Background*

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

"Incarnation" is a complex concept. On the surface it seems clear—God taking on human form, coming to earth to be born as a human being, growing up to reveal God's character of love, and dying to save us.

Yet the nature of Christ as both human and divine is a concept that we cannot fully

### *Tips for Top-Notch Teaching*

RABBI 101

*Using Bible Stories*

When you try an activity such as the one suggested in *Out of the Story for Teachers* above (a group form of the same activity in Monday's student lesson), you'll find a tremendous diversity in how well students know their Bibles. Some will instantly be able to think of stories from Jesus' life, while others will barely be familiar with any of the great stories from the Gospels.

While it's sometimes good to allow students to choose their own groups and work with friends they're comfortable with, there can be advantages to assigning groups yourself. Try to mix groups so that each group contains a few young people who know their Bibles well and can help the others.

comprehend with our finite human minds.

Keep in mind the meaning of Jesus' incarnation:

1. Only a human-divine Savior could bring salvation to lost humankind. We don't understand completely how Jesus could have a dual nature, but it was a necessity that He be fully human and fully God. Only God in human form, still God but subject to the same experience as ordinary human beings, could accomplish the requirements for reconciling sinful human beings to God and restoring in them the image of God.
2. By becoming human, Jesus limited Himself in particular ways. He put a veil over His glory, so that sinful people would not die when they saw Him in person. But Jesus never stopped being God. While He was on the earth, "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM' " (John 8:58).
3. Jesus is God in nature as is His Father and the Holy Spirit. The disciples (and all of Israel, it seems) mistakenly thought that the Father is the true God. It took them a long time to realize who Jesus really is. Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).

As you discuss what it meant for God to become man, you may come across questions you can't answer. That's OK. You can spend your lifetime studying the answers to questions about the Trinity and the nature of Jesus. But don't lose sight of the big picture. God made the ultimate sacrifice and became human and the purpose of everything Jesus said and did was to reveal God to us, and to be God with us.



## Teaching From . . .

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

- **Key Text**
  *Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.*
- **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 share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.*
- **Further Insight**
  *Ask them how the quotes in* Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

## III. CLOSING

### *Activity*

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

Say: "After we've talked about how Jesus revealed God's character to us, what message do you think He is trying to communicate to you?"

Hand out 3" x 5" index cards or small pieces of paper with pencils and ask students to write their response to God. Encourage them to take the card with them and use it in prayer this week.

### *Summary*

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Jesus came to earth for one purpose—to be "God with us." When you think of God, picture Jesus—walking the dusty roads of Galilee, healing and touching sick people, taking little children on His lap, telling people about God's love. *That's* what God is like. He shows love to each of His children and provides for them in practical ways.

And that's what God wants us to do—to carry on Jesus' work of representing His character by the love we show to others every day. We are living messages to the people around us who don't yet know or have not accepted the fact that God is their loving Creator and Savior.



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 1.

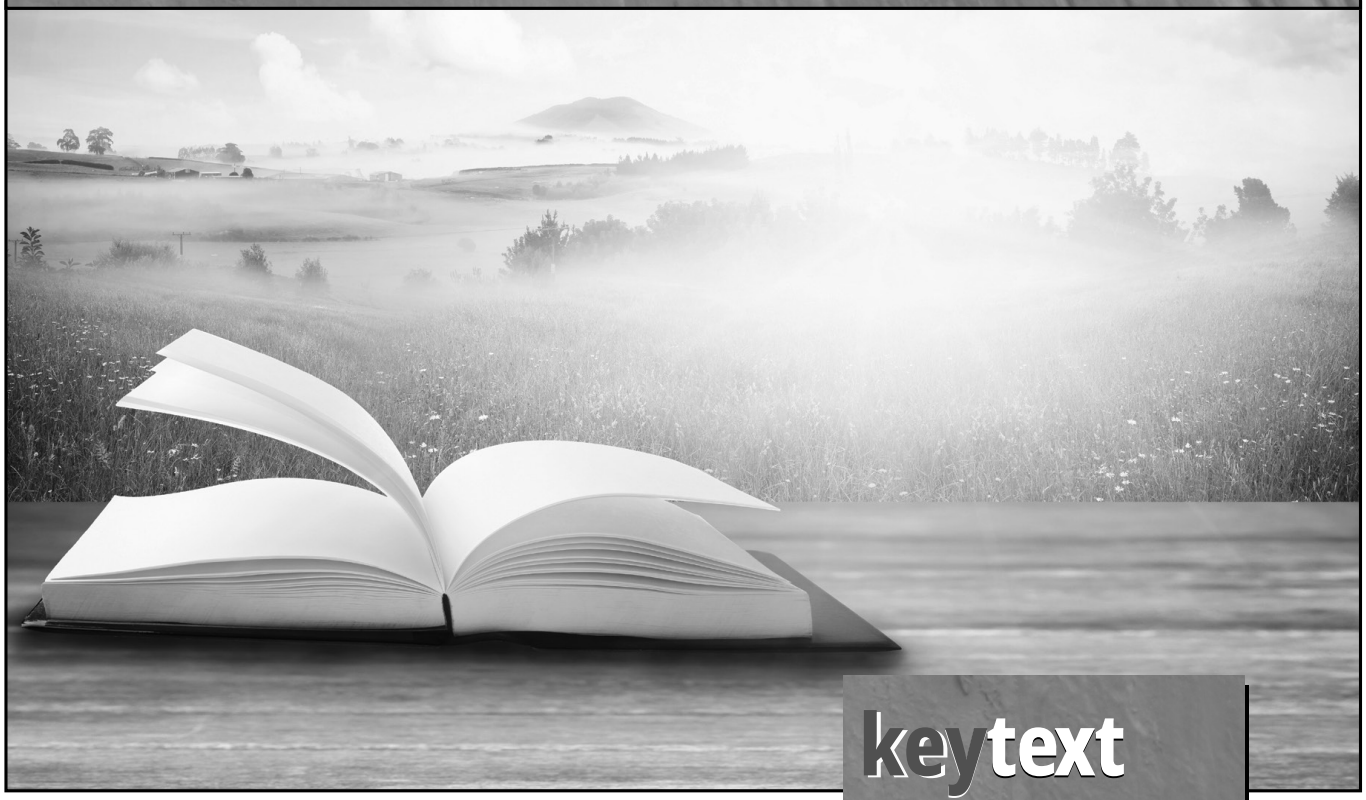
*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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# STUDENT LESSON

**Scripture Story:** John 1:1-18.
**Commentary:** *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 1.

# the living message



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## keytext

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

**(John 1:1)**

## flashlight

"By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. . . . But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which 'angels desire to look,' and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19).

# what do you think?

**What's your favorite way to get a message to someone?**

____ phone
____ e-mail or Facebook message
____ MSN/chat
____ text message on my phone
____ handwritten note
____ face to face
____ through another person

Why do you prefer this method of sending a message?

_____
_____
_____

# did you know?

**In the Phillips translation of the** New Testament, the first verse of John 1 (today's *Key Text*) is translated as "At the beginning God expressed himself." That translation does a good job of capturing Jesus' special relationship to God and the reason He came to this planet. The Greek word for "Word" in John 1:1-3 is *logos*, which means "God's speech, God's message, what God has to say."

In other words, what God has to say to this planet was—Jesus. If we read the beginning of John 1 as the behind-the-scenes introduction to the whole story of Jesus, then we learn that Jesus was sent here for one specific purpose: to tell us what God is like. People have a lot of false and mistaken ideas about God, but we can point to the stories of Jesus in the Gospels and say, "This is what God is like! And this is what God has to say to us!"

# INTO THE STORY

**"In the beginning was the** Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . .

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

**(John 1:1-18)**



# OUT OF THE STORY

If Jesus came to show the world what God is like, what can we say about the character of God based on the life Jesus lived? Try to come up with five or six words that describe God as revealed by Jesus.

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think sending Jesus was God's best way of communicating with us? What other ways had He already tried? What other ways could He have tried?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does it mean to say that Jesus "gives light to every man"? What about people who have never heard of Jesus, or rejected Him? Does He bring light to them too?

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think "the world did not know Him"? If you had lived at Jesus' time, do you think you would have recognized Him as the Son of God? What stops people from recognizing Him today?

_____
_____
_____

What does it mean to be "born of God"?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

# punch lines

**"For unto us a Child is born,** unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" **(Isaiah 9:6).**

**"And she will bring forth a Son,** and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" **(Matthew 1:21).**

**"Then the angel said to them,** 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'" **(Luke 2:10, 11).**

**"Philip said to Him, 'Lord,** show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.'

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show us the Father"?' " **(John 14:8, 9).**

**"Then Simeon blessed them,** and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed' " **(Luke 2:34, 35).**



# further insight

**"God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven."**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25

**"Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love."**

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 26

## Sabbath

**Read John 1.**

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged" (The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4).

The *Into the Story* passage from John 1 describes how Jesus came to be God's message to this world. John uses *metaphors* to describe Jesus. Jesus is the Light. Jesus is the Life. Jesus is the Word.

What does each of those images tell us about Jesus?

Light _____

Life _____

Word _____

What else could you compare Jesus to? What does that comparison mean to you?

## Sunday

**Read Romans 5:8.**

Look back at the *What Do You Think?* portion of the lesson. What's your favorite way to send messages to people?

Sometimes how you send a message depends on what it contains. Texting may be great for chatting idly with friends, but if you want to say something that requires a lot of thought, you may want to compose an e-mail or a handwritten letter. Some of us find it easier to express deeply personal emotions in the written word, while others always prefer to speak face to face.

For God's ultimate message of love to His earthly creation, only one kind of "Logos" would do. God had already communicated for hundreds of years, speaking through prophets, Bible writers, and the Temple worship service. But no secondhand method would do for telling humanity that God loved them enough to die for them. Only God Himself in human form could do that.

What about your message back to God? How can you communicate that to Him?

## Monday

**Read John 3:16.**

What does the life of Jesus tell us about who God is and how God thinks and feels about us?

Think of three stories from Jesus' life that you know and like. Write a very brief summary of each in the boxes below (see example). Then, for each one write what you think that tells us about God.

| **Jesus feeds 5,000 people.**<br><br>God can do a lot with a little.<br><br>God is concerned. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|

## Tuesday

**Read John 1:14.**

According to the *Flashlight* passage from *The Desire of Ages*, Jesus came to earth not just to demonstrate God's love to people on this planet, but to those watching on other, unfallen worlds. Imagine you are a sinless angel watching the drama unfold as God the Son comes to earth as a human being. What do you think your reactions might be? What conclusions would you draw about God?

## Wednesday

Read the verses in the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson. What can you learn from each of these verses about Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?

Isaiah 9:6 _____

Matthew 1:21 _____

Luke 2:10, 11 _____

John 14:8, 9 _____

## Thursday

**Read Matthew 28:19.**

Jesus came to show people what God is like. But when Jesus returned to heaven, His work here wasn't finished. He left His people—His church—behind to continue showing the world what God was like.

As Christians, we don't always do the greatest job of that. But it's sobering to reflect that "your life may be the only Bible some people will ever read." What's one practical thing you can do today that will help someone else see what the God you worship is like?

## Friday

**Read Isaiah 6:8.**

As you think about Jesus' coming to earth and what that reveals to us about God, what is your response? Write a short letter-prayer reflecting your feelings. Use the sentence starters below if they help.

*Dear God,*

*When I think about Jesus coming to earth to show us what You are like, it makes me feel*

_____

_____

_____.

*I want to tell You that* _____

_____

_____.

*Because of Jesus, I think You are* _____

_____

_____.

## this week's reading*

*The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 1.

**Humble Hero* is a special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companionbooks#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.