

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 29 2025

it's your turn

Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 18.
Key Text: John 3:29, 30.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Imagine what it must have been like for John the Baptist. He and Jesus were cousins, although they had no direct contact with each other during their childhoods (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 109). As they grew into adulthood, Jesus spent more time in His father's carpenter shop, while John the Baptist went out preaching. Jesus watched from a distance as John the Baptist "prepared the way" for the coming Messiah.

Then the time came for Jesus to take center stage. He started preaching and baptizing—just like John. As the people flocked from John to Jesus, John had a choice to make: to be jealous or to be excited for Jesus. John chose the latter. He chose to take a step back to the sidelines.

This is a decision that we all face at one point in our lives. The real question is, Which will we choose? Human nature and society combined tell us to be jealous, but as Christians what should our choice be?

John the Baptist chose to take joy in Jesus' success. He lived in the same world that we live in. He knew that his time had come to an end. He had prepared the way and that was God's plan for him. Now it was time for someone else, Jesus, to take over. He stepped aside—and took joy in that.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the importance of humility in a Christian's life. *(Know)*
- Sense the closeness of God when they allow Him to control their thoughts. *(Feel)*
- Commit to being humble and doing unselfish acts. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 19: "The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)"

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 how they ranked the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Ask students why they chose the one they did as their first choice.

Humility is usually not a top choice in the most desirable characteristics (as evidenced in the *Did You Know?* section). But how close does it follow with other desirable characteristics? Have students discuss the importance of humility in a relationship.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Grades were never Derek's strongpoint. He'd rather be out playing baseball or buried in a good book. His mother tried everything to get Derek to study harder—even paying him for good grades. Derek changed schools in the middle of high school and found himself in a class of academics—nearly every student had good grades. This motivated Derek to do better, and for the first time he received straight A's—no matter that it was the final quarter of his senior year. It motivated him to do better in college. But his first semester of college Derek found himself on familiar ground when he received a D in his U.S. History class. That first year, Derek even received an F in a Bible class. Throughout college, his grades never improved much, he never achieved straight A's again.

It was seven years before Derek attempted graduate school. That first quarter, Derek studied hard. He did all the reading requirements—sometimes 300 pages a night—and turned his assignments in on time. In one class he felt defeated as he learned he had a D after the first exam. *Here we go again*, he thought to himself. In that class the professor offered the students a choice between writing reaction papers and doing a project. Derek chose the project. Imagine his surprise when he received his final grade report for that quarter: three A's and one A-.

Derek was proud of himself. It made him feel good that he had accomplished something that he had done only once before. He was sharing this with a friend when she commented, "It's all God." Derek felt the air go out of his balloon. He wanted to receive congratulations for his achievement, yet at the same time he knew he should praise God.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Has there been a time in your life when you have accomplished something that you didn't think you could do? Climbed a mountain? Rode a bike 50 miles? Confronted a friend? Achieved good grades? How did you feel when that happened? Pride or humbleness? Think about Derek's story. Was there any part of him that had achieved success, or was it all God? Is it wrong to take pride in one's accomplishments? Where is the line between pride and humility? And how does that connect with John the Baptist's line: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

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.*

- Have the students read through the *Into the Story* section. As they read, have them *underline* what they find new and interesting in the story. Also have them write down at least one thing that made them think about the story. Then have volunteers discuss what they underlined and wrote.
- John's followers were jealous that Jesus was so much more popular. They looked for anything to nitpick about so they could complain to John. They argued over the issue of the purpose of baptism and the language to use when baptizing people. Why do you think that people argue over simple religious practices? (In some churches the deacons practice the Communion service before they actually do it.) What are some issues that your church argues over that really do not make sense to

you? Why do you think the adults argue over these practices?

- John refused to be pulled into this petty jealousy act. He knew he could hinder the work of Jesus if he allowed himself to be pulled into their web. He knew he had been called to direct people to Jesus. Sometimes the biggest deterrent to Christianity is Christians themselves. What are some ways that we can show non-Christians what it really means to be a Christian?
- What does the phrase "He must increase, but I must decrease" mean to you?
- John was truly a humble person. John's attitude showed humility to his disciples and ultimately to everyone who left him to flock to Jesus. John could have been upset because no one wanted to listen to him anymore. He knew that his job was over and it was time for someone else to finish the work. Why is it so difficult to be humble? What can one do to become more humble?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: 2 Samuel 11; 12; Ruth; Psalm 25:9, 10.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Think-Pair-Share

It's always difficult to get kids to discuss topics. Sometimes teachers get nervous when there is silence, and feel they need to fill that silence. Actually, students are just trying to think of something to say. Give students time to formulate their thoughts. Writing down their thoughts also gives them something to fall back on during the discussion. Encourage your students to write in the margins of their Bibles or in the student lesson. If they don't bring their lesson to Sabbath School, make sure you have scrap paper for them to write on. Once they have something down on paper, they will be more willing to discuss the topic. For those students who have trouble writing, have them draw what they see as they read the verses. Drawings can also stimulate discussion.

RABBI 101

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. John the Baptist was different in an odd sort of way. He wore strange clothes, and ate even stranger food. Today we judge people by how they look and what they wear; not so with John the Baptist. Despite his appearance, people still wanted to hear what he had to say. He preached one message and one message only—Repent.

John wasn't concerned with what people thought of him, only that they listened

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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.*

to what he had to say. He knew that he had a special task—to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He knew the Messiah would come soon, and his job would be done. He was content with that.

When his disciples came to him bitter with jealousy over the multitudes who were flocking to hear Jesus, John didn't get upset. He was happy and filled with joy. His job was done. Over. Finished. He was no longer needed. In fact, soon after that he went to prison.

2. In biblical times the "friend of the bridegroom" was the one who made arrangements between the families of the bride and the groom. When the arrangements had been agreed upon by both families, the friend received joy from completing the task well. Just so, John was filled with joy at completing his task of preparing the way for Jesus. John rejoiced in the popularity of Jesus. He could not regret that the people were attracted to Jesus and leaving him to go listen to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

"He must increase, but I must decrease," are probably the last recorded words of John before his imprisonment. His words show us John the Baptist's true character as humble, submissive, and unselfish.

Discuss with your students the differences between being humble, submissive, and unselfish. Are there any differences? What are the drawbacks, if any, in our society of being humble, submissive, and unselfish?

Then challenge your students to do at least one humble act, one submissive act, and one unselfish act this week.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give the students colored index cards and markers. Have them write on the index card: "I will do one unselfish act this week." Have them leave space so they can write what they did that week. Share with them that the reason you have them write this down is that the act of writing is like making a commitment or a contract to actually put this week's lesson into action in their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

John the Baptist may have preached 2,000 years ago, but his message is still relevant today. Just as Jesus came into this world, He wants to come into our life. Not only is His message relevant, so is His story. John stood against the crowd and was humble. He didn't try to stay in the limelight, he didn't bad-mouth people, he didn't argue over semantics. He simply said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." The ultimate act of humility, John stepped out of the limelight and let another take over. His acts of humility and selflessness are the character traits of a true follower of Christ. Ellen White reminds us that as we let God take complete control of our thoughts, we are made full in Christ. We naturally become humble, like John.



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 18.

*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.

LESSON 13

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MARCH 29 2025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 18.

it's your turn



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flashlight

"John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 179).

key text

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

(John 3:29, 30)

what do you think?

Think about what true humility means to you. Write your own definition of humility:

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Read Philippians 2:5-8 and reflect on the example of true humility Jesus left for us. What can you learn from Jesus' life of true humility and surrender to the will of God? How can you apply these principles in your own life?

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INTO THE STORY

"After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

"Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!'

"John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before Him." He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.' "

(John 3:22-36)



did you know?

Which of the following characteristics matter most to you in another person: compassion, consideration, friendliness, generosity, honesty, humbleness, humorous, integrity, intelligence, sensitivity, or thoughtfulness?

Humility is seen as reverence (respect) for the Lord. Humility is recognizing that you are a created being and God is the Creator. It is being able to see yourself in the light of who God is.

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the people were constantly coming to John to be baptized?

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What do you think was the real reason behind John the Baptist's disciples complaining about more people listening to Jesus than to John?

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What does John's illustration about the bridegroom tell us about John the Baptist?

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What is the main point John is trying to make?

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How does this message impact how I am to live?

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How can I "testify to what I have seen and heard"?

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punch lines

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" **(Matthew 5:5-9).**

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" **(Matthew 23:11, 12).**

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" **(James 1:19, 20).**

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" **(Leviticus 19:18).**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" **(Matthew 5:43-45).**

further insight

"Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 179

"Happy are they who are willing for self to be humbled, saying . . . , 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' "—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 182

Sabbath

Read Titus 3:2 and Colossians 3:11, 12.

Unfortunately, humility is not a characteristic that is often displayed in society today. We are quick to anger when things do not go our way. Think about the people you encounter on a daily basis: teachers, parents, teenagers, cashiers. In the last year, which one has shown the most humility? Briefly write the circumstances and why it stands out in your memory.

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Sunday

Read James 1:19, 20.

Look back through the *Into the Story* and *Out of the Story* sections. Notice that John's disciples and Jesus' disciples argued over baptism—even about the language that should be used at a baptism. Jealousy and anger are contrary to humility. As John's disciples complained to him about the popularity of Jesus and baptism, John had a choice to make: get angry or be humble. John chose the latter because he knew that anger and jealousy were not the answer. When was the last time you got angry, when humility would have been a better option? What can you do not to let anger overtake you the next time, and let humility be the answer?

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Monday

Read John 3:30.

Too often people don't do the decreasing part. We want to stand out and be applauded for what we have done—that's human nature. Even those who stand in the background want to be recognized for their contribution. In fact, we are taught to give recognition to work done well—we even expect it. But what does it really mean, "I must decrease"? In what ways can you do this today?

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Tuesday

Read Philippians 2:13.

In the *Flashlight* section we see that John's task was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. That was the only task that God called John to do. John delighted in the task and was a witness to its successfulness as people flocked to Jesus. John had a deeper understanding. Surrounded as he was by human nature, he understood his part in God's work. And it was time for his job to be over. Instead of letting his disciples pull him in to hindering Jesus' work, he expressed his joy at working with Jesus, and then slowly stepped back and let Jesus take over completely.

Wednesday

Read Matthew 5.

Being meek and merciful is closely related to being humble. But people often mistake a meek or merciful person for someone who is submissive to others. What do you think? Read through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and write what you think meek, merciful, peacemaker, and pure in heart really mean.

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 2:24 and Ephesians 4:26, 31, 32.

In nearly all Asian countries, including India where Mahatma Gandhi lived, saving face is most important. To admit that you made an error would be to lose face. For Gandhi to admit to errors was a big thing in Asia. Because of his humbleness he was instrumental in bringing India into its own country.

People in other countries are not that different. While they may not have the same saving/losing face philosophy, no one likes to admit they make mistakes. But admitting to mistakes and stepping back to correct or apologize is a form of humility. Someone who can admit their errors shows true character, and is often well thought of. What can you admit to today that will allow you to become a more humble person?

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Friday

Read Romans 12:10 and Ephesians 4:29.

John experienced joy when he allowed Christ to be in charge of his life.

Write and post these verses somewhere where you will see them every day. Building others up and honoring them above yourself is part of decreasing yourself. This week pray for humility to become second nature to you. Find ways to show humility to those you meet on a daily basis. Encourage your friends to show humility. You never know what may happen. Your classroom may become a better place.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 18.

**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.