

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY 25 2025

what you seek is what you get

Scripture Story: Luke 2:21-39.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 4; 5.
Key Text: Luke 2:25, 26.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Perhaps one of the most profound moments in the stories of Christ's childhood is that of Joseph and Mary having Jesus dedicated in the Temple. While this act was a normal part of the religion of the Jews, something very extraordinary occurred as Simeon recognized the Savior, and Anna responded with prophetic praise because she, too, had been waiting for the Christ to come.

In this week's lesson there are several angles from which students may benefit from the study of Christ's dedication. First, there is the picture of a small group of believers actively seeking the coming of Christ's kingdom. This small group of believers comprised of people of humble origins who recognized the significance of the times in which they lived and who knew that the time was near for the coming of the Messiah. Clearly there is an image of a remnant similar to that which may be true of those waiting for Christ to come a second time. Second, there are images in the dedication itself that convey truths about Christ as our Redeemer. Bringing the firstborn son to be dedicated is an act connected to the deliverance of Israel during the Exodus. Ironically, the child who is the Redeemer is presented to the priest in a rite signifying redemption. Furthermore, as Ellen White observes: "The Shekinah had departed from the sanctuary, but in the Child of Bethlehem was veiled the glory before which angels bow" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 52). And third, the people who witnessed Christ in the Temple that day were ordinary believers, much like God's people today. Anna and Simeon are model believers for us today—ordinary people who have one prominent hope that is the theme of each day: the promised Savior will come. Young people today can live with the same hope and the same single-minded focus as Simeon and Anna.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the importance of seeking after the truth. *(Know)*
- Witness a remnant of believers who remain focused on Christ. *(Feel)*
- Choose to live each ordinary moment with extraordinary expectations. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 13: "The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Dan. 7:9-

14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Micah 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4.)"

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. How is the remnant waiting at Christ's first coming like the remnant that will watch for Christ's soon return?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of a ranger in a national park leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger became quite engaged with being a tour guide to the hikers, pointing out every flower and critter in the forest. As he guided the hikers through the forest, the constant communications on his radio distracted him and the wildlife he was so keenly in touch with; thus he turned off his radio so he could share the wonders of the forest uninterrupted. The people were excited to listen to the exuberant ranger, and some were even taking notes as they followed the evidences of wildlife in detail. What the ranger failed to notice was what was following them. As they made their way to the fire lookout, a frantic ranger coming from another direction approached him and the group. Trying to catch his breath, he exclaimed, "Why isn't your radio on? We have been trying to warn you for more than a mile now that a grizzly bear has been stalking your entire group for the past half hour!" They were about to learn that the operative word in wilderness is "wild." It is possible to be in touch with one thing and be completely out of touch with another.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How might this be true for people who live at the time when Christ will arrive? Whether it be His first appearance or His second coming, is it possible to live with our radios off?

Simeon and Anna were among a small group of people tuned in to the hope that the day of Christ would come. And the only way to witness the Savior, or the Consolation of Israel, was to be waiting and watching for that day.

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.*

- Read the story and try to envision the sights of the Temple, and the story as it might have played out.
- *Underline* what you think are three key phrases in this passage.
- As you pay attention to every word as you read, what new insights do you see in the story?
- With so little information about the childhood events of Jesus, why do you think this story is recorded in the Bible?
- Examine the words spoken by Simeon to God and his words to Mary. When you consider these prophetic statements, what can you discern about the kind of person Simeon was?
- Consider also Anna's response (although her exact words are not recorded) and think about whether Simeon and Anna were typical people with common expectations about the Messiah, or whether they were somewhat unique for their time. What do you think and why?
- How do you think Anna's lifestyle, always living at the Temple, fasting and praying, affected her influence on others? The last phrase of her story observes: "She gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). How do you think people responded to her words?
- Since it was revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Messiah, imagine how hard he must have been looking at the end of his years, knowing any day he would witness God's Son. How does this anticipation relate to those of us living in the present season of earth's history?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Isaiah 6; Matthew 13:14; John 4; Luke 24; Matthew 25.

More Questions for Teachers

How does the work of the Holy Spirit resemble the movement of the wind? After discussing this question, look up Acts 2:1-12 and Acts 2:36-47 and examine the specific ways in which the Spirit works on people.

In John 3:14 Jesus refers Nicodemus to an old story every teacher in Israel would know. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and explain how that story is connected to the mission of Christ on earth. How does the snake being lifted up represent Christ being lifted up on Calvary? Compare the two events and discover why you think Jesus made this comparison.

It is likely that John 3:16 is the most popular verse from Scripture, perhaps because it is so simple a child can receive it and so profound a scholar cannot fully comprehend it. Have you ever heard something again and again and it lost its meaning? Rewrite this verse in your own words and do not use any of the words in the passage (except such words as "in," "the," "to," "but," "and," etc.). Share it with each other in the class.

If you could go to Jesus privately and in person as did Nicodemus, what would you say/ask? Why? In the same way that Jesus "changed the subject" on Nicodemus, what subject do you think Jesus would take up with you? Why?

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week's lesson highlights the dedication of the Christ child by Mary and Joseph, but the central event in the story has to do with the response of Simeon and Anna—two people waiting for the Messiah to appear.

About 40 days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would present the Savior of the world to be dedicated, as a sign of God's merciful provision and their devotion to God.

Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple in obedience to the law. Mary has to go through the rite of purification, and Jesus is to be dedicated. There are three different parts to their coming to this service. First is the *rite of purification*, which has to do with the mother. When a child was born, the mother was considered unclean for about 40 days—seven days for their male child and thirty-three days for the mother—to be able to come to the Temple, according to Leviticus 12:1-4. At this time the rite of purification could be done. This rite included an offering (a lamb as a burnt offering and a turtledove as a sin offering). During this time, only wealthy people could afford a lamb, which meant that poorer families could offer two pigeons or turtledoves instead (Leviticus 12:6-8). Clearly Mary and Joseph were not wealthy.

Second, there is the *dedication of the child.* There were two parts to this dedication: if the child was a boy and born to the tribe of Levi, he would

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 quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

A Variety of Senses

Clearly, we discover the world, ideas, and information through our five senses. Some would suggest intuition is also a sense to include. But when we teach, do we use methods that engage the senses? The closing activity in this lesson evokes the visual sense. Every human seems to favor one or two senses above some of the others; thus, variety becomes key in teaching. One teacher brought in a loaf of hot, fresh bread one morning to a Sabbath School class where students were able to see, taste, touch, and smell, the bread. The lesson was on Jesus' claim to be "the Bread of Life"—a bread that will never leave you hungry again. Think about the senses and how you might use them all.

automatically become part of the priestly class. For the firstborn baby boys from other tribes, parents would bring a small offering for the service of the priests—this offering was usually about five shekels (Numbers 18:1-16).

The third part of the dedication was a *consecration of the firstborn child to the Lord* (Exodus 13:2, 12), a requirement of all Jewish families. Simeon, a faithful servant of God, and Anna witness this event and are aware of who Jesus is because they are of a few people who believed in the soon coming of the promised Messiah and who were watching for the day of the Lord's appearing.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Divide the class into two groups. Invite one group to scan the room and look for items that have the color blue in them. Ask the other group to examine the room looking for items that have red in them.

As the students report, ask: "When you walked into the room today, did you think, *Wow, there are at least five items in this room that have red in them?* Probably not. As you scanned the room you were looking for something particular. How is that like the vision Simeon and Anna had for the coming Messiah? How do you think our lives would be different if we were to watch for Christ in a similar way? What would change?"

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Mary and Joseph were probably still reeling and exhausted by the events of the birth of Jesus when they brought the baby to the Temple at the appointed time. Simeon, knowing his days were numbered but promised by God to see the Messiah, looked each baby in the eye, wondering, "Is this the One?" Anna spent day and night in the Temple serving the Lord, very focused on the day the Messiah would appear. Perhaps neither really knew if the Messiah would first appear as a baby, but when the glory of heaven was revealed, only a few were watching.

It is possible to go through your days, your weeks, and even a lifetime busy and focused on many things, except the one thing that truly matters. Maybe you could find ways to put around you reminders of the one person, the one most important event that is in your future. It's not graduation. It's not marriage. It's not a job. It's the coming of the Messiah—the Savior, Jesus Christ. As sure as He came to earth 2,000 years ago, He promises to return again. What will be your focus prior to that day?



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 4; 5.

*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: Luke 2:21-39.
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what you seek is what you get



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keytext

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

(Luke 2:25, 26)

flashlight

"As Simeon enters the temple, he sees a family presenting their first-born son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 55).

what do you think?

***Voting*—Agree or disagree (explain your response):**
The awareness of people about Christ at the time of His birth is likely to be similar to people's preparedness before the second coming of Jesus. Please explain your answer.

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did you know?

In the days of Noah, a people loved God, kept His commandments, and got into the ark. In the days of Abraham, a people loved God, stepped out from the majority, and kept His commandments. In the days of ancient Israel, a people loved God and kept His commandments. God called them His chosen, His special people. In the days of the New Testament, Peter preached powerfully. Three thousand were baptized on the day of Pentecost. As they were baptized, they stepped out and became God's special people to keep His commandments."

"God's special people were always characterized by obedience. They loved Him enough to obey Him. They were carved out from the majority. They were a commandment-keeping people. God called them from darkness to light—from error to truth—from commandment-breaking to commandment-keeping." "Just as in every generation God has had a special people, He has a special chosen people today" (Mark Finley, *What the Bible Says About*, pp. 380, 381).

INTO THE STORY

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

" 'Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.'

"And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 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.'

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

"So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

(Luke 2:21, 25-39)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story and try to imagine the scene. Envision the sights of the Temple, and the story as it might have played out.

Underline what you think are three key phrases in this passage.

With so little information about the childhood events of Jesus, why do you think this story is recorded in the Bible?

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Examine the words spoken by Simeon to God, and his words to Mary. When you consider these prophetic statements, what can you discern about the kind of person Simeon was?

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Consider also Anna's response (although her exact words are not recorded). Were Simeon and Anna typical people with common expectations about the Messiah, or were they somewhat unique for their time? What do you think? Explain.

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How do you think Anna's lifestyle—always living at the Temple, fasting, and praying—affected her influence on others? The last part observes that she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. How do you think people responded to her words?

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Since it was revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Messiah, imagine how eagerly he must have been looking at the end of his years, knowing that any day he would witness God's Son. How does this anticipation relate to those of us living in the last days of earth's history?

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punch lines

"You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" **(Jeremiah 29:13).**

"Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth' " **(Isaiah 49:6).**

"I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!" **(Genesis 49:18).**

"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" **(Matthew 13:16, 17).**

"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace" **(Romans 11:5).**

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" **(1 Peter 2:9).**

further insight

"Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left unemployed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift upon gift. The whole treasury of heaven is open to those He seeks to save."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 57

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Think about ways you can be a messenger of hope for Jesus in these last hours of earth's history.

"Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness" (The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 13).

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. To what degree do you think "the remnant" at the first coming will be like "the remnant" that are alive when Christ returns?

God declares in Jeremiah 29:13: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

How common is it in your life to witness someone who lives by this passage? Why do you think seeking God "with all your heart" is such a challenge?

Sunday

Read Luke 2:29-35, 38, and Luke 12:40.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study, you may notice the response that Simeon made to Christ as well as the response of Anna. Compare the two reactions and note how they are similar and how they are different. What do you think is the central lesson in this story for the church? What is the message you think God is trying to say to you in this week's lesson?

Monday

Read Matthew 25:13 and Luke 2:25, 26.

The *Key Text* shows that there were a few people at the time of Christ's birth living with active expectation of the Messiah. Why do you think they referred to the coming Messiah as "the Consolation of Israel"? There were many words and names used to describe the coming Savior. How were these names significant? What were the messages contained in the names associated with the Savior?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 24:14.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson and imagine how Simeon and Anna must have lived each day. How would you describe their experience as they discovered that the Messiah had been born and was before their very eyes? What lesson is there in this passage for you today? How can you share the hope about Jesus' coming with someone whenever the opportunity arises?

Wednesday

Read Revelation 14:6-12.

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today?

Rewrite Jeremiah 29:13 in your own words, but try not to use any of the major words or phrases already in the text. (If you need more space, use the Notes section in the back of your book.)

Thursday

Read 2 Peter 3:10-14.

Imagine if this story were to take place today. Based on the way you currently watch and wait for God to reveal Himself to you, would you be among those who recognized Christ, or those who were preoccupied with other things? Show where you would be on the continuum.

1 2 3 4 5

Actively Expecting — Complacent and Distracted

What would it look like to be actively seeking Christ in your life today?

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:9.

Reflect on this Bible passage. What does it mean to you that you are part of God's remnant people? How can your life show that you are part of a chosen generation that lives purposefully and calls others to prepare for Jesus' soon return?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 4; 5.

**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.