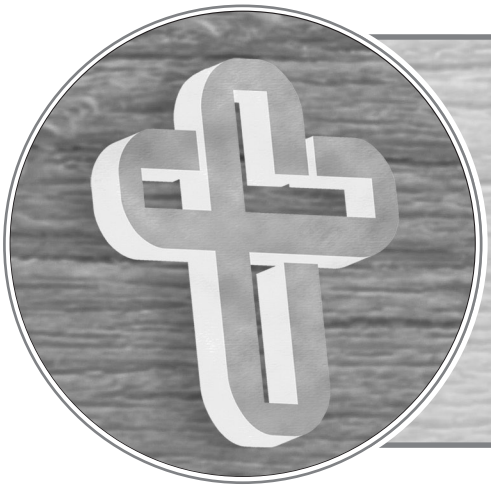


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 12 2025

seeing is believing?

Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 20.
Key Text: John 4:48-50.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This is a lesson about faith and trust in God's Word. 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 signs and wonders, you will by no means believe" (John 4:48). 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, "Go your way; your son lives" (verse 50). 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 the importance of trusting God's Word even when appearances suggest not to. *(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 we too must trust His promises. *(Feel)*
- Resolve to trust God fully, even without seeing signs and wonders. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 1: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"

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. Highlight that trust and faith usually come from knowing a person and their character. Although we may not be able to see God, we know His character through His Word.

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 gasoline 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 got eight 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 had 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). In essence faith is believing without seeing. 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 without seeing" that Jesus had healed his son. He realized the words of Jesus pertaining to signs and wonders were an indictment

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

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."

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.

- 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 the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the knowledge gained from Scripture, the example of Jesus and those living a Christlike life, they can stand in faith that God is with them, an ever-present helper in time of trouble.

Use the following as other 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 lesson begins in John 4:43 with the phrase "After the two days" (NIV), 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 Festival" (NIV) 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 kilometers) 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 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 943).

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.*

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 Saviour'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. 198, 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, 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 Seventh-day Adventist 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. If not, then what can one trust? 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, that God desires to bless us beyond our highest thoughts and we can turn to God as an ever-present help in time of need. Our very salvation depends on trusting that God's Word is true and will accomplish what it says. This week, let's spend more time in God's Word so that we can strengthen our faith in Him.



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 Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 20.

seeing is believing?



Photo by Jacqui Janetzco

flashlight

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

keytext

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

(John 4:48-50, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever experienced a trust-building activity such as a "rope challenge course" or a "trust fall," or been entrusted to perform a highly responsible job such as babysitting? If so, write what you learned about trust through such activities.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

did you know?

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

INTO THE STORY

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

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

" 'Unless you people see signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.'

"The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'

" 'Go,' Jesus replied, 'your son will live.'

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

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

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

(John 4:43-54, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

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

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

_____
_____
_____

What do you think caused his changed view?

_____
_____
_____

What did the official believe as he returned home?

_____
_____
_____

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

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

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

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

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

further insight

"When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 200

Sabbath

Read John 4:43-54.

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

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

Sunday

Read Mark 13:21, 22.

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

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read Mark 11:24.

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

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Genesis 3:1-7.

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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

_____

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read Hebrews 11:1.

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

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

1. _____
2. _____

Thursday

Read John 20:29.

Think of a time someone was offering you a good thing for nothing, no strings attached. Did your doubt radar kick in? Then it turned out to be true, exactly as offered. It is hard to know whom to trust these days, because there are so many people who are dishonest. However, we can always trust God's Word in spite of the fact that we were not eyewitnesses to what is recorded there. What does Jesus have to say, in today's reading, about people like us who believe without seeing?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read John 1:14 and John 3:16.

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

_____

_____

_____

this week's reading*

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

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