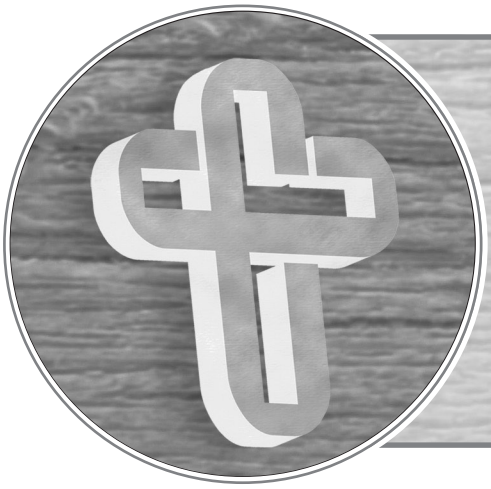


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 21 2025

faith-full soldier

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 12:22-28; Luke 7:1-17.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 32; 33.
Key Text: Matthew 8:10.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

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

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

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

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

II. TARGET

The students will:

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

III. EXPLORE

The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 12: "The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for

whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:3-7; Matt. 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

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

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

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

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

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

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

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

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

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

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- Both the centurion episode and the story of the demon-possessed man give us a look into the heart of the Jewish leaders. What can we learn about the leaders from the way in which they came to Jesus about the centurion's servant?
- What are we to make of the statements the Pharisees made about Jesus after He cast out the demon from the possessed man? Make the point that Jesus was not universally loved. He often faced strong detractors, some of whom killed Him.
- In each episode Jesus' words are quite powerful. After He spoke, the centurion's servant was healed that same hour. When He commanded, the demons left the possessed man, and not only that, but the man could see and speak again. What does this tell us about the power of Jesus' words and of the Word of God—the Bible?
- The Pharisees were believers, yet they seemed to sow division among the people. Are God's people

called to be a family, even when we disagree with each other? What if those disagreements are theological? Do we still remain a family?

- We see vivid pictures of human compassion in these two stories. The centurion cared about his servant. The friends of the demon-possessed man cared about him. How do we show that we care for hurting people? How can we bring them to God?
- Make the point that Jesus recognized ethnic and social distinctions among different groups of people, but He never allowed these things to prevent Him from ministering to people in need.

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

Sharing Context and Background

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

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

   In verses 7-9 we see something of how this centurion viewed the Jews. He notes that he is not worthy that Jesus should set foot in his house. His faith in Jesus is matched and surpassed by the sense of his own unworthiness. This centurion is an intuitive person who knows who he is and who God is. Sometimes people who are unbelievers have a sense of humility that many believers lack.
2. **Blinded by the Light?** When God's blessings are taken for granted, they become lost to the blessed. Consider this comment by Ellen G. White on the knowledge entrusted to the Jews for centuries:

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

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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Parent Support

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

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

pricked the Pharisees. This often led them to attack Him, even at times when the results of His ministry were obviously God-ordained. This happened during the episode with the demon-possessed man.

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

We should never put off the voice of the Holy Spirit when we are presented with truth.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

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

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

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

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

"Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence," wrote Ellen G. White in *Steps to Christ* (p. 94). Prayer is the key, indeed, but faith is the hand that holds the key.

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

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



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

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

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 12:22-28; Luke 7:1-17.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 32; 33.

faith-full soldier

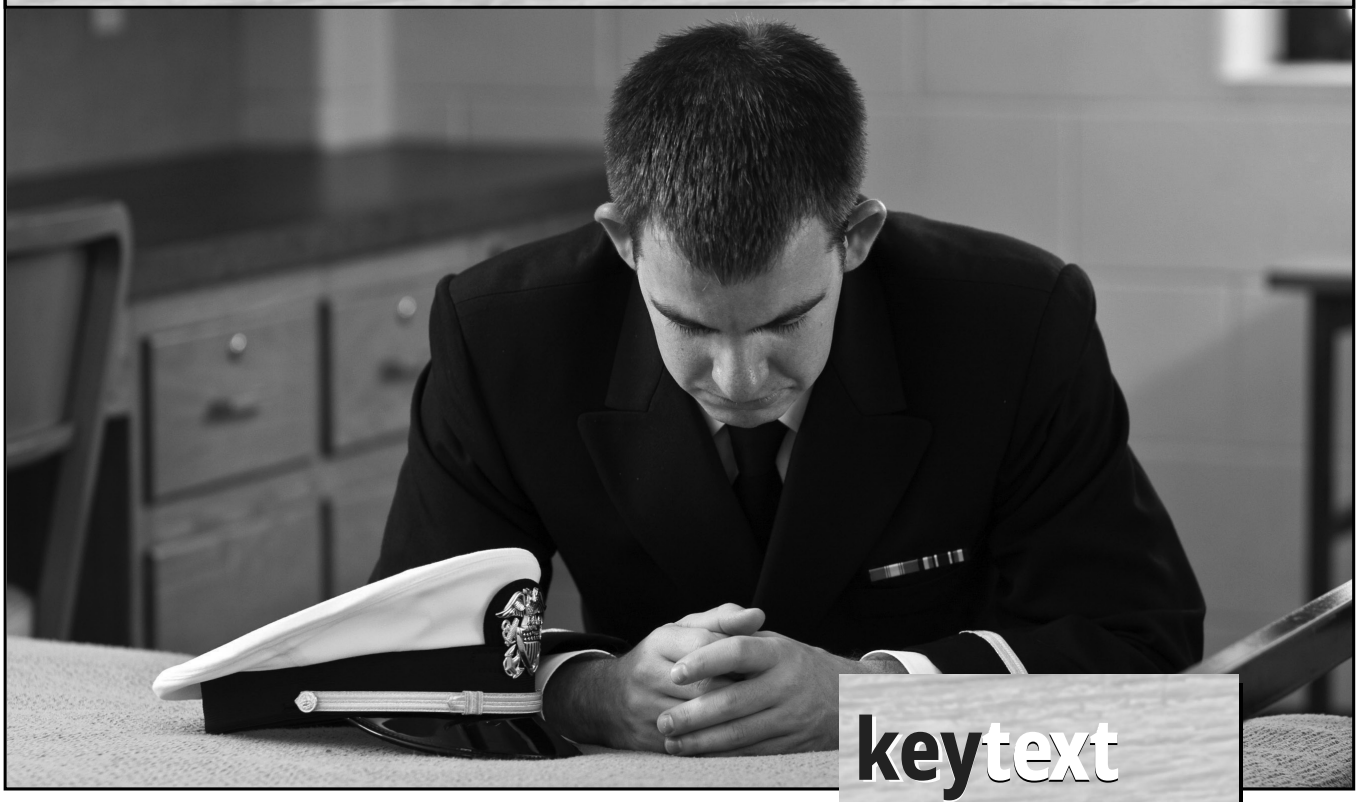


Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"The Jewish elders who recommended the centurion to Christ had shown how far they were from possessing the spirit of the gospel. They did not recognize that our great need is our only claim on God's mercy. In their self-righteousness they commended the centurion because of the favor he had shown to 'our nation.' But the centurion said of himself, 'I am not worthy.' His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 316).

key text

"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, 'Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.' "

(Matthew 8:10, NIV)

what do you think?

Think for a moment about the power entrusted to the president of the United States by the Constitution. Below is a list of statements about the president's power. Write T or F next to each statement depending on whether you think the president has that power or not.

The president can:

1. Declare war on any other nation without getting the approval of the U.S. Congress.
2. Designate certain parts of the country as national park reserves.
3. Go anywhere in America they wish and at any time, including your home.
4. Veto bills that they do not agree with, and that veto can never be overturned.
5. Choose to disregard a law if they do not agree with it.

did you know?

Did you know that out-standing Roman soldiers called "centurions" were given this title because they commanded a century—a legion of 100 soldiers or so? Centurions would be the equivalent of today's captains or lieutenants. They often fought alongside their soldiers, leading them from the front into battle. According to a StudyLight .org Bible encyclopedia, centurions were responsible for drilling their men; inspecting their arms, food, clothing; and commanding them in battle. The Romans believed that if they had strong, brave centurions, their military would be almost invincible, and for hundreds of years they were.

INTO THE STORY

"When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' So Jesus went with them.

"He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: 'Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, "Go," and he goes; and that one, "Come," and he comes. I say to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.'

"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.' Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well."

"Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'

"But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.'

"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'"

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

OUT OF THE STORY

Today's *Into the Story* passage presents two different stories from Jesus' ministry travels. What differences or parallels do you see in each?

_____
_____
_____

What did the Jewish leaders say to Jesus during the centurion episode? What was their attitude?

_____
_____
_____

Look at the second story in the *Into the Story* section. What is the attitude of the Jewish leaders in this story? What accusation are they making about Jesus here?

_____
_____
_____

Pay close attention to spots in the stories where there is a turn in the action. Place an X at each spot.

What does Jesus say in each story? Look for the power and authority in His words. Does He seem shy or timid? Is He overly concerned about what the Jewish elites would think of Him?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What lessons can we learn about what people make up the family of God?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!' " **(Zechariah 4:7, NIV).**

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" **(Hebrews 11:6, NIV).**

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you" **(1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV).**

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" **(Galatians 6:2, NIV).**

"I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me" **(John 14:30, NIV).**

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

further insight

"He who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 321

"Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. . . . The Spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim His blessing."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 54

Sabbath

Read John 17:1-5.

How did you do in the *What Do You Think?* activity? Some of those statements were very tricky, and you may have needed to consult your civics textbooks to be sure.

The Constitution is the document that defines the president's authority and what they are supposed to abide by. Who or what was the source of Jesus' authority while on earth (John 17:1-5)?

_____

_____

How did the centurion know that Jesus had the authority simply to speak and heal his servant? After all, he was not a follower of Jesus. Explain your answer.

_____

_____

"The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. . . . The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures" (The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 12).

Sunday

Read John 15:12.

After reading the *Into the Story* Bible passage, complete the *Out of the Story* questions.

Notice that both the centurion's servant and the demon-possessed man were brought to Jesus by other people. Write about a time you took a friend to Jesus. Maybe you did it by praying for them, or maybe you invited them to church. Share what led you to do this.

_____

_____

As the family of God we are called to reach out to all people. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12, NIV).

Monday

Read Mark 12:32-34.

Read this week's *Key Text* again. Wouldn't you love for Jesus to give you a compliment like the one He gave the centurion? Jesus was known to give awesome compliments. What did He say to the religious teacher in today's reading?

Why was Jesus so "impressed" by the centurion's display of faith?

_____

_____

The centurion was not a Jew. In fact, he was part of the Roman force that occupied the Jews. Can you think of a time you saw a non-Christian show great faith in God? How did that person's show of faith impact you? How did it strengthen your faith?

Tuesday

Read James 2:1-7.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation and then read Luke 7:1-5.

What special favor had the centurion done for the Jews?

_____

_____

The Jewish leaders felt that this made the centurion worthy of Jesus' help and support. Do we sometimes feel the same way about rich and powerful people who have done great things? What does the apostle James say about how we should treat all people, whether rich or poor, deserving of our help or not (see James 2:1-7)?

_____

_____

As the family of God, we are called to reach out to all people in need of God's care. Our need draws God to us—nothing else.

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. Who is the speaker in Zechariah 4:7?

What often-quoted verse precedes Zechariah 4:7? What point do you think God was making to Zechariah, Zerubbabel, and Judah?

These two verses remind us that God is truly the "author" and "finisher" of our faith, and everything else in our lives.

Thursday

Read Matthew 12:24.

When Jesus freed the demon-possessed man and restored his sight and speech, the people were astonished, but the Pharisees were not impressed.

Have you ever faced criticism for doing something good?

Should such criticism stop you from using your gifts and talents to do good?

Friday

Read Matthew 10:1.

Jesus was empowered to do great works on earth, but did you know that He also gave this power to His disciples and to us today. Consider what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 10:1. If God gave this power to you, what would you do with it?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 32; 33.

* 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.