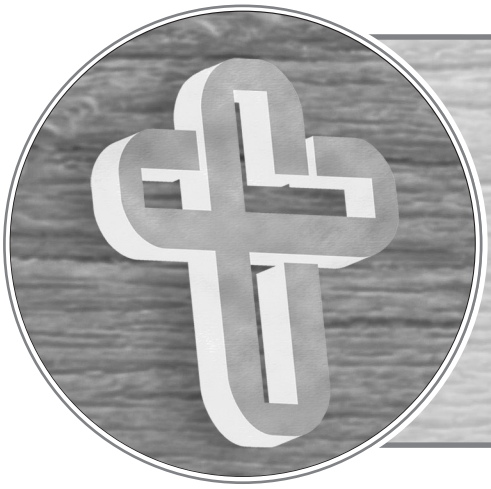


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 07 2025

front and center

Scripture Story: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 29.
Key Text: Mark 3:3, 4.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

You can tell a lot about a person by looking at what they spend their time doing and by what makes them angry. As Christ mingled with people and healed them from their disease He was often criticized mindlessly for "working" on the Sabbath. Jesus became "indignant," not because of criticism, but because the leaders of the Jewish faith missed the point of the Sabbath and led others down the same empty way of life. Such is the case with the story of the man with the withered hand who was healed by Jesus in the synagogue one Sabbath morning.

Throughout this week's lesson there is a tension between thinking about what we should not do and being preoccupied with the things we should be doing. Sometimes when we disagree with someone else, we simply "let it go." But in this story and on this subject, Jesus would not let it go. Ellen White says: "Jesus did not let the matter pass without administering a rebuke to His enemies. He declared that in their blindness they had mistaken the object of the Sabbath" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 285). It is essential that we review the ultimate purpose of the Sabbath with young people, not in vague terms, but with the same passion that Jesus defended its sacredness long ago. The Sabbath is made "for man" (Mark 2:27, 28). It is a nonnegotiable reminder of who God is, and who we are in relation to Him (Genesis 2:1-3; Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). We can best keep the Sabbath by being passionate about "doing good" and "saving lives," as noted in this week's story. Consider how to keep the students focused on the primary purpose of Sabbath and the best things to experience on that day.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the reminders of God's purpose in the Sabbath. *(Know)*
- Sense the importance of genuine worship. *(Feel)*
- Fill their Sabbath hours with goodness. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 20: "The gracious Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from eve-

ning to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Lev. 23:32; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11.)"

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. Often students will place themselves in the middle of a continuum, but the point is to get them to show their tendency. For students who tend to stew with anger you might ask: "What do you tend to do as your frustration builds? Does it lessen over time? Does it help if you calmly talk about it with people?" For those who explode, you might ask them to share what might be problematic about such eruptions, as well as what is positive about "not hiding" how you feel. What makes us angry and how we respond show what our values are. In this week's lesson we see how valuable the true Sabbathkeeping is for Jesus.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

During a Bible study on the Sabbath a frustrated young person blurted out, "Just tell me what I am NOT supposed to do on the Sabbath, and I will be fine!" Apparently this young person was so confused because people were pulling him back and forth with criticism on appropriate Sabbath behavior. He was missing the point. I handed him a bottle of water and replied, "I'll give you a list of what NOT to do, but first, give me a list of what is NOT in this bottle of water." I was met with stunned silence by the request, so I repeated the challenge. "Go ahead, just make a list of the things that are contained in that bottle of water. Look at the ingredients on the back, and then just start naming things that aren't in it." He was still stunned, so I offered a few hints to get him going: "Is there chili in the water? How about guacamole? radishes? What about mashed potatoes? aluminum foil? motor oil? Scotch tape? aloe vera gel? 100 percent cotton socks? apple seeds? polyester? . . ." "OK, OK, OK, I get it!" he interrupted. We then began to look at all things that Jesus did on the Sabbath and formulated our approach to Sabbathkeeping based on what we *should* do instead of what we *should not* do.

Calvin Miller said: "Our focus needs to be on hungering after what God wants rather than merely trying to quit what He doesn't want."

How is this principle true in your life as well as aspects of life other than the Sabbath?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

This principle works in many areas of life: looking for a job, finding a spouse, picking out a pair of shoes. Keep your eyes on what to do instead of what not to do. As you study the story for this week, you will notice three perspectives on the story from three different Gospel writers. Notice how they are different, but notice the central message in the story as you answer the questions that guide you through the passage.

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:*

- Compare the three perspectives of the same event and note how the stories are different and how they are similar.
- What words and phrases do Mark and Luke use that Matthew leaves out?
- What words or phrases does Luke use that Mark and Matthew leave out?
- What words or phrases does Mark alone use?
- When Jesus invites the man with the withered hand to "stand in front of everyone," what do you think is His frame of mind? Why did He do this?
- What criteria does Jesus use for Sabbathkeeping? How does Jesus' question "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:9, NIV) change the way you look at Sabbath?
- Consider Jesus' question: "If any of you has a

sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!" (Matthew 12:11, 12, NIV). What is the central point of this exchange?

- How would you describe the reaction of the Jewish leaders to what Christ does in the synagogue?
- What would you say is the primary purpose of the Sabbath according to this story?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

- What other experiences in the Christian faith seem a little empty because we tend to miss their true purpose? (*Communion/foot-washing service; giving tithes and offerings; memorizing scriptures; kneeling for prayer)*
- How do you see Christ's way of Sabbathkeeping reaching people who don't know God or have contact with a community of faith? *(Doing good and saving lives are really the ultimate witness to the world. Being right and having answers don't necessarily compel people to follow Christ.)*

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Luke 4; Genesis 2:1-3; Isaiah 66; Luke 13; Mark 2; Acts 13; 16; 20.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Compare and Contrast

A couple of ways we describe a relationship between two things or ideas is to compare and contrast and to demonstrate cause and effect. In this week's lesson we asked the students to compare different perspectives on the story to see how we see things differently. One way to demonstrate this visually is by using a Venn diagram. Draw two large circles beside each other but intersect in the middle, leaving three spaces (left of the first circle, right of the second circle, and the center where the two circles cross). Invite students to compare Gospel stories, noting the details that are unique in the outside circles and that which is common in both on the inside where the circles overlap. What does this do? This activity strengthens their capacity to see details as well as the big picture.

To be fair to the religious leaders, they were the ones trying to preserve the Hebrew faith during seasons of moral, ethical, and intellectual bankruptcy. The Pharisees and scribes were passionate people who became more devoted to the law than to the bigger picture of God's will. In order to preserve the rich beauty of God's law and the history of God's people, they made

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.*

rules and subsets and tried to capture every scenario that might trip a believer up in their walk with God. This behavior, of course, became a deformed catalog of unbelievably tedious rules—especially regarding Sabbathkeeping.

These rules were set up so people wouldn't have to think about it. But the last thing God wanted was for us not to think about it. The last thing God wanted was for us not to think about Him. You could spit on a rock, but not on the ground, because adding moisture to the soil would be a part of the process of making the earth more likely to grow something—farming.

When Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, the only thing the leaders see is the breaking of a rule.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of two or three and ask them to respond to the following questions:

In pairs, make a list of five things you think should be done on Sabbath that you don't currently do. Have students share their lists around the room and listen to the responses of others. Now ask: "If you were to focus on those five things next Sabbath, would you be bored? Would you still be tempted by some of the things that would not be best to do on the Sabbath? Would your activities be a positive witness to others?"

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It's so human to take a beautiful experience and mindlessly repeat it until it loses its meaning. It happens in so many areas of life. If we don't think about why the Sabbath is given and what God's greatest desire is for us, we get lost in all the rules and nuances to the point where our behavior becomes mindless. Watching animals at the zoo, you will occasionally notice creatures that lumber and walk and repeat behavior in their small area only because that is what they have always done. It is sad, but God wants us to live, to remember we are created for a greater purpose than to pace around. God wants us to practice goodness and participate in the cause of saving lives for eternity because that is our ultimate purpose as created beings—to become like our Creator. We will never experience this if we forget who God is, and we remember by entering into His work on the Sabbath. His work? That's right. God's work is to serve, to save, to live fully and abundantly for others.



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 29.

*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 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 29.

front and center



Photo © Jupiterimages Corporation

key text

"Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent."

(Mark 3:3, 4, NIV)

flashlight

"In the healing of the withered hand, Jesus condemned the custom of the Jews, and left the fourth commandment standing as God had given it. 'It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days,' He declared. By sweeping away the senseless restrictions of the Jews, Christ honored the Sabbath, while those who complained of Him were dishonoring God's holy day" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 287).

what do you think?

When I get angry, I react . . .

Slowly and thoughtfully Immediately out of impulse

1 2 3 4 5 6

Where are you on the spectrum? What are the positives and negatives of this kind of response?

What makes me angry?

____ Individuals lying to protect their interests.

____ Underprivileged being neglected.

____ Children being mistreated.

____ People you trust betraying your confidence.

____ Callous people making jokes at the expense of others.

did you know?

The strict rules that Jewish leaders made for Sabbath observance were intended to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, but failed to reveal the greater purpose of the day of rest. For example, did you know that if a wall collapsed on someone it was lawful to clear only enough debris to see if the individual were alive or dead? If alive, you were allowed to help the person—if dead, you had to leave them until sundown.

INTO THE STORY

"Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'

"He said to them, 'If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'

"Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus."

"Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.'

"Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent.

"He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."

"On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Get up and stand in front of everyone.' So he got up and stood there.

"Then Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?'

"He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus."

(Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Compare the three perspectives of the same event and note how the stories are different and how they are similar.

What words and phrases do Mark and Luke use that Matthew leaves out?

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What words or phrases does Luke use that Mark and Matthew leave out?

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What words or phrases does Mark alone use?

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What criteria does Jesus use for Sabbathkeeping? How does Jesus' question "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" change the way you look at Sabbath?

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Consider Jesus' question: "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!" What is the central point of this exchange?

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How would you describe the reaction of the Jewish leaders to what Christ does in the synagogue?

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What would you say is the primary purpose of the Sabbath according to this story?

_____

_____

punch lines

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" **(Exodus 20:8-11, NASB).**

"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil" **(Isaiah 56:2, ESV).**

"Then Jesus said to them, 'The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!' " **(Mark 2:27, 28, NLT).**

"Keep my Sabbaths as holy rest days, signposts between me and you, signaling that I am GOD, *your* God" **(Ezekiel 20:20, *The Message*).**

further insight

"The object of God's work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 285

Sabbath

Read Luke 13:10-17 and Mark 3:1-6.

The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath" (The Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 20). Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What makes people angry reveals what is important to them. Think about the kinds of things that you feel strongly enough about to get angry. In Luke 13:10-17, a similar story is told about a woman who was healed in a similar way, yet it is the synagogue leader who gets "indignant." Compare what makes Jesus upset in Mark 3:1-6 with what makes Jewish leaders angry in Luke 13:10-17, and see if you can identify what is most important to Jesus, and what is most important to the Jewish leaders. Think about what is most important to you—the kinds of things you choose to get angry about.

Sunday

Read Mark 2:27, 28.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. This week's lesson gives you three perspectives of the same event (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Mark is the writer, but he is writing Peter's words, which is why the stories have a lot of emotion. Luke's perspective offers a lot of details that convey information. Matthew seems to have a special message for Jewish people when he tells the story. Which perspective do you identify with most? Why? If you were to write your own perspective, what would be your emphasis? What do you think is the central issue in this story?

_____

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_____

Monday

Read Mark 3:3, 4.

The *Key Text* to memorize this week comes from Mark 3:3, 4. As you imprint this story on your mind, how does it relate to the way you approach the Sabbath? What are the most important reasons you have for keeping the Sabbath? Whom do you know that models Sabbathkeeping the way Jesus kept it? What are some of the activities they focus on and what do they avoid?

_____

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 56:1, 2.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and consider what it would be like to honor God by just doing good on the Sabbath. Throughout the storied life of Christ, the religious leaders are preoccupied with "what not to do," which distracts them from experiencing God's power in their life. While some focused on *what not to do*, Jesus remained fixated on what should be done. How does changing your emphasis from what not to do to what you should do change your perspective on the types of activities you might engage in? How can the counsel in today's reading help us focus on what we should be doing?

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_____

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson are reminders of how central the Sabbath is to the Christian experience. As you read these verses, which passage speaks to you personally today? What new insights about the Sabbath do you see as you read these passages? Number the verses listed in the *Punch Lines* section according to the order you would read them in a Bible study to someone who is learning about the Sabbath for the first time. Which verse would you start with? Which passage would close your study? Why did you arrange them in that order?

Thursday

Read Jeremiah 29:11-13.

This week's lesson is not solely about the Sabbath; it is about the importance of people, misguided thinking, and human nature. But the Sabbath was intended to keep us connected to God and to His children in such a way that we would never forget who we are and where we are going. Jesus taught that the Sabbath is about "doing good" and "saving lives." What kinds of things could you do this Sabbath that would expand the beauty of the Sabbath in your experience? Consider how you might involve a family member or a close friend in your endeavors this week.

Friday

Read Isaiah 66:22, 23.

Reflect on the Sabbaths that have been most meaningful for you. What kinds of activities and experiences come to your mind as you think about those special Sabbaths? In today's reading, we are reminded that Sabbath will be part of our lives throughout eternity, as it was before sin entered the world (Genesis 2:1-3). Imagine what Sabbath will be like in heaven and consider how that could begin on earth with you today.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 29.

* 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.