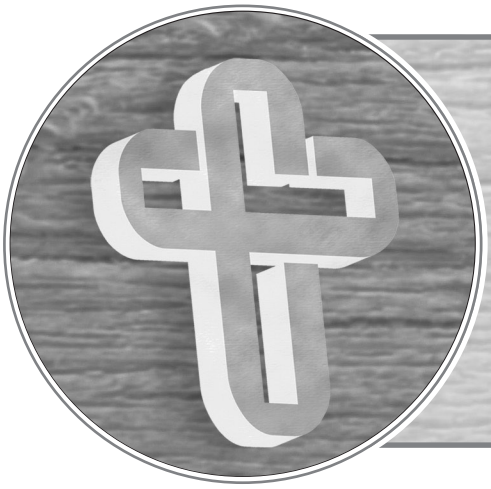


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MAY 24 2025

willing and able

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-28.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 27.
Key Text: Mark 1:41, 42.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week's lesson focuses on the stunning event of the leper who came to Christ for healing. The dreadful disease was common in New Testament times, and anyone who contracted the infectious skin disease was considered dead and isolated from the community. If being excommunicated did not imprint hopelessness on the victim's mind, the foul disease itself would be a continual reminder of eminent death. Moreover, leprosy was seen as a judgment of God. No disease depicted sin's work like leprosy on a human being. In this story the dying man dares to enter society because he hears that Christ is coming close and has never turned anyone away. His appeal and Christ's response are the central message of this story: God is willing and able to save.

In *The Desire of Ages* Ellen White observes: "When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life" (p. 266). The words of Christ, "I am willing," and the touch of His hand declare what God wants more than anything else—to save His children. Throughout this lesson there are several angles to appeal to the young person to respond to God's gift of salvation. One way is to approach from the viewpoint of the leper—one who seeks and asks. Another approach is from the viewpoint of God, who never turns away an honest seeker. And finally, you might consider stepping back and seeing the larger picture through the Old Testament ritual for the cleansing of the leper, as discussed in the *Context and Background* section.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Observe key elements to the plan of salvation. *(Know)*
- Sense God's urgent desire to forgive and to save people. *(Feel)*
- Decide to ask for God's matchless gift of salvation. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10: "In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partak-

ers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)"

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 ranking activity in the *What Do You Think?* section. It is likely that most of the students would rank "to receive the gift of salvation" as the number one choice. But it is possible that some might respond differently. Either way, it is crucial to invite the students to explain why they answered the way they did. Some might choose "serving others with a humble heart" or "to live in harmony with His commands." Why they think these are important to God provides rich discussion.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In January 2008 a story about an amazing transformation made the headlines. A 15-year-old girl in Australia named Demi-Lee Brennan became the world's first person to change blood types. Demi-Lee was a transplant patient with O negative blood type, but that changed when the transplant caused her to take on the immune system of her organ donor, changing her blood type to O positive. Initially the doctors thought it must have been a mistake because that had never happened before, and such a transformation in the human system simply couldn't happen. Apparently, the blood stem cells in this young lady's new liver invaded her body's bone marrow, and ultimately took over her entire immune system. Now she has an entirely different blood type. Her new blood embraces life and healing and is restoring to this day. Brennan says, "It's like my second chance at life."

It is the same with us when we invite Christ to save us from our sin. Some changes take place over the course of a lifetime: developing good, healthy, wholesome habits is the continual journey. Character qualities that mark us are made over seasons, but your invitation to forgiveness and a new standing in Christ is but a simple, sincere request away.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The kind of massive transformation Demi-Lee Brennan experienced was an internal change, which in turn showed up in her new life. This week we meet up with a mind who was transformed from the inside out. As someone dying from leprosy, you know the changes that occur in your body began not on the skin but somewhere deep inside. As Christ restores this man, look carefully at the story and see whether this change begins internally or externally.

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?
- How is the disease of leprosy like sin?
- The leper makes an interesting appeal, saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Is there any question from the leper's perspective as to whether Jesus is able to heal him or not? What is the primary issue? Why do you think someone with leprosy would think this way? (Read John 9:1-3; 5:13, 14; Mark 2:3-5; Isaiah 59:1, 2.)
- Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What is the message God has in it for you today?
- Explain the advice of Jesus to immediately show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded. Why do you think

Jesus asked the leper to do this?
- What other story in the Bible does this event remind you of?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

- Why do you think Jesus insisted that the man healed of leprosy go show himself to the priest? Read Leviticus 14:1-9 and see if you can imagine what the ritual might have pointed to and the lasting image that would have been imprinted on the one healed.
- What would this event look like today? *Some might compare this miracle to someone being healed of AIDS or cancer. AIDS is probably the most comparable disease in that there is no cure and those who contract the disease are basically preparing to die. Also, initially, people treated those with the HIV virus with a similar kind of isolation, fearing it to be contagious.* All of these internal elements only compound the physical impact of the disease.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Exodus 4:6, 7; Numbers 12:10; 2 Kings 5:1-10; Luke 17:11-15.

Sharing Context and Background

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

There is no other disease in Scripture that portrays the work of sin like leprosy. In fact, the term "walking death" captures the common perception of the disease. When people were diagnosed with leprosy, they were virtually excommunicated from society. In some cases their names were taken off the public records of living citizens, for it was only a matter of time. But some may not know that leprosy attacks the central nervous system before it ever affects the skin.

In this story Jesus asks this man who had been healed to show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded. Why, and what is this ceremony all about?

The Ritual of Cleansing and the Law of the Leper: There were several reasons to make a visit to the priest their first action as healed individuals. First of all, for lepers to be recommunicated back into society, the priest had to examine them and pronounce them clean. But there is more to the command Jesus made than just getting paperwork fixed. The ceremony of cleansing for the leper had a deep, enduring spiritual experience embedded in the ritual. In Leviticus 14:2-7 this ritual is described. The bird that is sacrificed is clearly Christ, and the live bird that is set free over the open field is unmistakably any sinner who receives the mercy of God.

Imagine the scene: A leper comes to the priest, and the priest must perform this ceremony outside the city. Where was Christ crucified? Outside the city. Then the leper watches as two live birds are brought out and one is killed over running water (or as the Hebrew has it, *living water*). The blood of the bird is mixed with the living water and gathered in an earthen vessel. The one who has been healed watches intently the dead bird and the bowl

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

Redemptive Rituals

Symbols and rituals are key to this lesson, but they are also a core value in the teaching ministry God established long ago. Symbols such as the cross, bread and wine, an olive branch, and a dove can be rich devices for teaching or they can become empty figures that are meaningless, depending on how we integrate them into our lives. It is important to explain the symbols in the Bible with vivid stories, giving attention to the greater meaning. The sanctuary service is filled with meaning about the story of redemption. Many can learn what the candlesticks represent or the altar of burnt offering or the table of showbread without hearing the story. The commentary on this week's lesson captures the details of a ritual through the lens of the story of redemption. Keep the symbols and stories before the young people and help them make real connections from the ancient story to their life today.

of blood and water. What could such a person be thinking? Why blood? Why a bird—a living creature? What does this mean? The meaning is made clear when the one healed watches as the live bird is dipped in the blood and water and set free over an open field. Picture the man standing there gazing into the sky as the live bird flaps its wings and the blood and water spray off as the bird soars freely. If leprosy portrays sin, then going to experience this ritual is the most important ritual of all, because it typifies your redemption. It is not lost on anyone that this service is about the Savior and the sinner.

No wonder Jesus wanted them to see the priest. He knew that if they were to go through this ritual, the significance of their salvation would be deeply embedded in their heart and mind.

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:

Say: "Think of some examples of people today who get alienated or written off because of something they have done or something that happens to them." Make sure you make two lists: one for choices that cause negative impact, and the other for things that happen to people that are out of their control. (Someone getting the HIV virus by promiscuous sex is an example of a choice one makes that brings serious results. Getting it from a blood transfusion, however, is an example of something that happens to someone.)

Share the results around the classroom and ask this question as a way to wrap up the lesson: "Is there any scenario we can think up from which Christ cannot save, if we ask?" The answer is clearly "No." God is willing and able.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Sometimes the storied lives of people such as the leper can seem unreal. But the event was real, and the experience is real today. By the thousands people will come to Christ and ask for a new life. Some will doubt and think, *This is too good to be true,* but will ask anyway, just as the leper did long ago, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Whatever gets in the way of your asking God to save you needs to be put away, because God's voice does not give that message. The overwhelming, undeniable truth is that God is willing and more than able to cover you and restore your life completely. He is willing to do this as often as you ask.



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 27.

*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.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MAY24 2025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-28.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 27.

willing and able



© 2009 Jupiterimages Corporation/digitally altered by Truman

keytext

"Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed."

(Mark 1:41, 42, NIV)

flashlight

"In some instances of healing, Jesus did not at once grant the blessing sought. But in the case of leprosy, no sooner was the appeal made than it was granted. When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 266).

what do you think?

Rank the following choices in order of what you think God wants the most, and be ready to explain your answer.

____ To serve others with a humble heart
____ To become a wise and proficient people
____ To have a clear sense of purpose about your career
____ To live in harmony with His commands
____ To receive with certainty the gift of salvation
____ To be generous with your time and talents

Explain your choice for what you think is most important to God. What is the relationship between your choice and the others on the list?

did you know?

The word "compassion" comes from the Greek word *splanknizomai* (say that three times fast). It is actually a medical word for the intestines or the deep insides of our being. In fact, the word can actually be translated "to feel something so deeply that your guts twist and cry out!" Kind of gross, but it captures how Christ felt for people sentenced to death by sin. It's not just feeling bad for others; it is being moved to do something about it.

INTO THE STORY

"When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'

"Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' "

"A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'

"Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

"Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.' Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere."

"While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'

"Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' And immediately the leprosy left him.

"Then Jesus ordered him, 'Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.'

"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

(Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16, 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?

_____

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

_____

What words or phrases does Mark alone use?

_____

How is the disease of leprosy like sin?

_____

_____

The leper makes an interesting appeal by saying: "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Is there any question from the leper's perspective as to whether Jesus is able to heal him or not? What is the primary issue? Why do you think someone with leprosy would think this way? (Read John 9:1-3; 5:13, 14; Mark 2:3-5; Isaiah 59:1, 2.)

_____

_____

Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What is the message God has in it for you today?

_____

_____

Explain the advice of Jesus to immediately "show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded." Why do you think Jesus asked the leper to do this?

_____

_____

What other story in the Bible does this event remind you of?

_____

punch lines

"And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day" **(John 6:39, 40, NLT).**

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" **(1 John 1:8, 9, NASB).**

"God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change" **(2 Peter 3:9, *The Message*).**

"Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" **(Matthew 20:34, NASB).**

"Look at it this way. If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go after the one? And if he finds it, doesn't he make far more over it than over the ninety-nine who stay put? Your Father in heaven feels the same way. He doesn't want to lose even one of these simple believers" **(Matthew 18:12-14, *The Message*).**

further insight

"Leprosy and palsy were not so terrible as bigotry and unbelief."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 271

"God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. . . . He waits to make us free."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249

Sabbath

Read Mark 1:40 and Matthew 18:12-14.

Read and respond to the ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. The list provided for you does not include anything bad or immoral, but the exercise of thinking about what God wants most is important to this week's lesson on the healing of the leper. The request of the man with leprosy is not a question but an appeal: "If you are willing, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40, NIV). Compare his request with what Jesus said in today's reading from Matthew. The Savior is clear about His mission and about God's will, but the leper wonders—not as to whether Jesus can heal him, but whether Christ is willing. Why? How does this uncertainty affect our relationship to Christ today?

_____

_____

The faith exercised by the leper is the kind of faith in God still needed today. "This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10).

Sunday

Read Matthew 20:32.

Read the *Into the Story* portion 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). As you read, you will notice slightly different details given by each writer. What insights did you gain as you paid attention to these details? How is the leper's encounter with Jesus like every believer's experience with sin and salvation? How does this story portray how we should come to Christ? How does this story portray how Christ responds to people who come to Him in need? What do you think is the most important verse in this story? Why?

_____

_____

Monday

Read Mark 1:41, 42.

The *Key Text* this week tells us that "Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Luke's Gospel says the man was "full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12) while Christ is "full of compassion." Take some time today and imagine this event as you memorize the words Christ spoke and how He touched the diseased man.

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 7:25.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and reflect on the prayers you pray for help, healing, strength, and forgiveness. This truth screams out what God desires more than anything else: to save you. As you examine this powerful message about God's response to our prayer for "deliverance from sin," think of someone you know who desperately needs to hear how God's answer to the prayer of forgiveness is always an immediate "Yes." Perhaps you could write them a letter and tell them about how the joy of salvation is one prayer away. Include the words of truth and comfort from today's Bible reading.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson speak of God's desire and eagerness to save us. Think about how these verses are portrayed vividly in the story of the leper. As you read through these verses carefully, think about how you would organize these verses if you were giving a Bible study to someone else. Which verse would you put first, second, third, and why?

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Hebrews 4:16.

While leprosy is not as prominent a problem today as it was in Jesus' day, the meaning of the story applies perfectly in any age. Have you ever felt as if you couldn't pray, or because you made such a mistake you found it hard to ask God for forgiveness? Sin causes us to want to hide from God or hesitate to get help, but God does not want us to hesitate. He wants us to "come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most" (Hebrews 4:16, NLT). So today—right now—pray to God with confidence in His mercy for the gift of salvation. The leper left and told everyone about what Jesus had done for him. Share with someone your thanksgiving to Jesus for being willing and able to deliver you.

Friday

Read Psalm 37:4.

Think of a time your life turned dramatically, for good or for bad. Reflect on how quickly life can change course as it did that day for the man who was healed of leprosy. What is your deepest desire? What does God want to do with our desires that are in keeping with His will for our lives? Pray today, telling God that desire, and in faith, thank Him for granting it.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 27.

* 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.