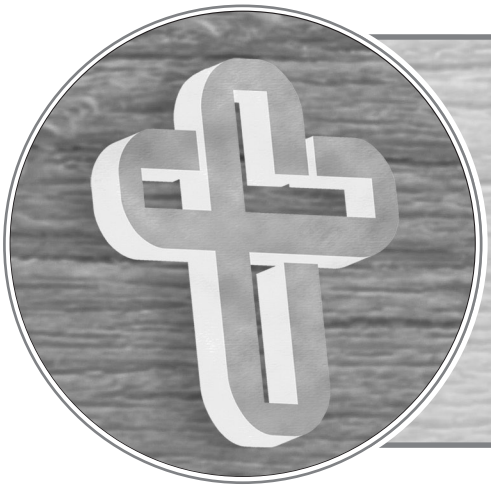


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
APRIL 19 2025

do you want to get well?

Scripture Story: John 5.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.
Key Text: John 5:6-8.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of the lame man is a compelling reminder of the power of God to heal us of our ailments. It seems at times, though, that some people, who are physically or spiritually handicapped really do not want to be healed. This explains the seemingly strange question that Jesus asked the paralytic: "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6).

Couldn't Jesus have assumed the man wanted healing? After all, he was at the pool reputed to be a place of healing. Still, Jesus asked.

It's a fair question. It's the same question that we must ask ourselves if we are serious about overcoming the habits that sabotage the soul. Truth be told, often what poisons spiritual life is a daily diet of destructive choices. Some people enjoy the pleasure they get from those choices much more than they are afraid of the negative consequences. As a result, they do not really want to give up certain destructive behaviors.

As a pastor, I have seen a steady parade of people march through my office seeking freedom from some sin. The confession rings familiar: "Help!" comes the cry. "I want freedom from _____" (you can fill in the blank).

At first I thought I could cure everybody's problems. That's because I failed to start with Jesus' question. However, I came to discover the discernment that Jesus displayed in His question of the paralytic. The curious thing about us is that often the very behavioral patterns that tend to destroy us are the ones we are most reticent to change. We say on an intellectual or spiritual level, "Yes, my pride is ruining my life. My anger is destroying my relationships. Gluttony is sabotaging my self-esteem." Yet we can't seem to change—nor do we really want to.

This lesson will challenge students to honestly confront the question of whether or not they really want freedom from spiritual disabilities. But more important, it will point them to the One who will not only release and heal them but also create in them the desire to want to be healed.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about the power of God to heal. *(Know)*
- Realize that God can help us sense our need for change. *(Feel)*
- Assess the cost of sin versus healing and freedom. *(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 partakers 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

Lead students to generate a list of what leads to good decisions. Their list might include such things as knowledge, example of a positive person, experience, etc. Write beside that list some things that may lead people to bad decisions. Included in this list might be such things as lack of knowledge, bad examples, lack of experience, and addiction. Today we will look at what happens when a person makes bad choices and over time gets stuck in a destructive behavior.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In today's lesson Jesus asks a lame man, "Do you want to get well?" Strange question, huh? Why wouldn't he want healing? Truth be told, some people have even lost the desire to be released from their infirmities.

Consider the story that Kurt shared one morning at church:

"Last week I was driving north on Pike Street in downtown Seattle when I passed a homeless man sleeping in an alley. He didn't have a blanket and it was below freezing, even though the night was still young. I couldn't shake that image in my mind."

Kurt paused to collect his emotion. "I worried he might freeze to death, so I did a U-turn and went back to the alley. I introduced myself and learned that his name was Ray. I told him to come home and live with me until he could get back on his feet again, or at least until the weather got warmer."

Kurt went on to tell how Ray enjoyed a hot shower, a big meal, a warm bed, a key to the house with an invitation to stay however long he wanted.

The irony of the story is that the man stayed for only two days and then disappeared. He left a note scribbled on a paper sack. It read: "Thanks, but I prefer to live on the streets." How could this be? Ray scored the jackpot where all his needs were cared for! At last, he was redeemed from the streets of crime and hate.

But who said he wanted to be redeemed? Ray preferred the life of a homeless drunk.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Jesus made it His mission to reveal what true religion was. He did not follow the human-made traditions of the Jewish rabbis. Instead, He showed people God's desire to heal them and to make the Sabbath a delight. He offered healing to the lame man on the Sabbath day and changed his life forever. This miracle provides lessons to us about our own walk with God.

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.*

Review this story from the perspective of different people. For each of the following characters in the story, consider the questions "What am I thinking? feeling? believing about God?"

- The paralytic
- Jesus
- The great number of disabled people lying by the pool
- The Jews

What principles of Sabbathkeeping emerge from this story? What does this passage teach us about outreach and service? How would you respond to the critics who claimed that the paralytic's disability was the direct result of his sin? Look carefully at the way Jesus interacts with this man and think about what Jesus would say about the notion of sin causing physical ailments. See John 9:1-3.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Dos and Don'ts of Teaching

These 10 tips may be self-evident, but it's always good to remind yourself of the basics:

- *Do* provide a safe place where all opinions can be expressed without criticism.
- *Do* prepare well.
- *Do* pray for the Spirit to take over.
- *D*o create an environment full of fun and laughter.
- *Do* involve all the senses in the learning experience.
- *Don't* talk too much.
- *Don't* try to drown noise by a greater noise.
- *Don't* complain.
- *Don't* put students on the spot or embarrass them.
- *Don't* question in rotation.

Note the two reasons that the Pharisees were so upset with Jesus: (1) breaking the Sabbath and (2) claiming to be God's Son. Which sin do you think was more offensive to the Jews? Why?

Notice in the story how the Pharisees were more concerned about their rules than they were about the well-being of a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. Clearly they valued rules above relationships. But Jesus showed that caring for those who were hurting and keeping God's commandments went hand in hand. Read Luke 4:15-20 and Mark 6:2 and compare it to this week's passage. How did Jesus keep the Sabbath?

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. **Sabbath Laws.** The Jews said to the paralytic: "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat" (John 5:10, NIV). There is no such law in the Old Testament forbidding someone to carry a mat. It was the Pharisees' interpretation of God's command to "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exodus 20:8, NIV) that they are citing here. This was one of hundreds of rules they added to the Old Testament laws.
2. **Eternal Life.** John 5:24 offers this wonderful promise: "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" (NIV). Accepting Jesus as Savior brings the assurance of a new life in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).
3. **Reference to Moses.** In John 5:45 Jesus said to the Jews: "Your accuser is Moses,

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.*

on whom your hopes are set" (NIV). The Pharisees were well versed in the writings of Moses and prided themselves on following all the teachings of this great patriarch. Now for Jesus to suggest that Moses would accuse them—even though they followed all his laws to the letter—was an infuriating attack against them. Moses wrote of Jesus (see Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:9; 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15) and yet they missed the significance of the Messiah when He came. They were too caught up in the traditions of man and forgot the real focus of the law.

4. **Sabbath Miracles.** *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (vol. 5, p. 949) points out that this is the first of seven miracles that Jesus performed on the Sabbath. "Now for the first time Jesus openly challenged the rabbinical Sabbath regulations (see on Mark 1:22; 2:23-28; 7:6-13). That He did so when the city was filled with visitors for the feast, and that He dramatized His rejection of such traditions by performing a miracle and publicizing it by having the man carry his bed, demonstrate the importance He attached to the question."
5. **Bethesda.** The name Bethesda seems to come from the Aramaic, *beth chesda'*, or "house of mercy."

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Make a list of common teenage struggles from which teens need healing. Break the class into groups and assign one struggle per group. Have the group brainstorm a plan as to how someone could experience the healing power of God in that area. Have each group then present their suggestions to the entire class. Pray with the class, claiming the promise in John 14:13.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

Candie was a teenager who lived a life of spiritual bondage. But then she met Jesus. An evangelist extended to her the invitation of Jesus: "Do you want to get well?" The preacher said, "God's amazing grace can heal any brokenness."

Candie couldn't believe it. She feared that she had sinned beyond the boundaries of God's grace. But she accepted God's grace anyhow. Just as Jesus healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, He healed Candie. Now, 20 years later, Candie works as a social worker helping other teens find freedom in Christ.

Only Christ can reconstruct the composition of a human heart. Only He can stoop into the shadows and salvage the brokenness of a spiritual casualty like Candie.

Let's remember that we are all sinners and many of us struggle with a destructive behavior. Some people have given up hope that they could ever be free. Pray to accept the Holy Spirit in your life. He will help you to do what you may not want to do but what you need to do. The Holy Spirit renews our minds and gives up the power to live a holy life. This is salvation, and God is desperate that you should have it. Accept God's free gift today.



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 21.

*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 5.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.

do you want to get well?



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' . . . Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'"

(John 5:6-8, NIV)

flashlight

"The sick man was lying on his mat, and occasionally lifting his head to gaze at the pool, when a tender, compassionate face bent over him, and the words, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' arrested his attention. Hope came to his heart. . . .

"Jesus does not ask this sufferer to exercise faith in Him. He simply says, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' But the man's faith takes hold upon that word. Every nerve and muscle thrills with new life, and healthful action comes to his crippled limbs" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202).

what do you think?

List three of the best decisions you have ever made:

1. _____
   _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
   _____

did you know?

John 5:1 conveys the reason that Jesus was in Jerusalem was for "a feast of the Jews." There were three feasts that required all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem: (1) the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, (2) the Feast of Weeks (also called Pentecost), and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus was attending one of these feasts when He came to Jerusalem and healed the lame man by the pool.

INTO THE STORY

"Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?'

" 'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.'

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

"The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, 'It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.'

"But he replied, 'The man who made me well said to me, "Pick up your mat and walk."'

"So they asked him, 'Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?'

"The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

"Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.' The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

"So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.' For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

"Jesus gave them this answer: 'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.' "

(John 5:1-19, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Jesus asked this lame man, "Do you want to get well?"

Why did Jesus not assume this man desired healing?

What does this story teach us about the freedom of human beings to choose?

What does this story teach us about the consequences of our choices?

What does this story teach us about Sabbath observance?

What does this story teach us about caring for the needs of others?

punch lines

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" **(Galatians 5:19-21, NIV).**

"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 3:4, NIV).**

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience" **(Hebrews 4:9-11, NIV).**

"Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath' " **(Mark 2:27, 28, NIV).**

further insight

"God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all. His laws sanction no unreasonable or selfish restrictions."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 204

"God's holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 207

Sabbath

Read James 1:5.

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. . . . 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" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10). Holy lives lead us to wise choices. Reflect on the wisest choice you ever made. Why did that choice come to mind as your wisest choice? What were the consequences of that decision? What have you learned about the importance of wise choices?

_____

_____

_____

Where does today's reading say you can get help to make wise decisions.

Sunday

Read John 10:10.

One day Jesus was moving through the streets of Jerusalem when He happened upon a man who had been crippled for 38 years. Stopping beside the man, Jesus asks one of the strangest questions in Scripture: "Do you want to get well?" Here was a man who could never run or jump or dance. He was trapped in limp and lifeless packaging, yet Jesus was asking if he wanted to be healed. Maybe this crippled man had lost hope. Maybe, after 38 years, he was beginning to think that he would never be healed, so what was the use in desiring it? Maybe, in spite of the wretched conditions, he had become comfortable with his infirmity and really didn't want the responsibilities that life after healing would bring.

In today's reading, who is the thief? What has he stolen or destroyed in your life? Read the last part of the verse again. What is Jesus longing to do for you? Tell God right now how much you want that abundant life. If you don't feel the desire to change from some destructive behaviors, tell Him that too. He will give you His Holy Spirit to help you sense your need.

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read John 5:6-8.

The *Key Text* tells us that "Jesus saw him lying there." Ellen White fleshes out the scene: "The Saviour saw one case of supreme wretchedness. It was that of a man who had been a helpless cripple for thirty-eight years. His disease was in a great degree the result of his own sin, and was looked upon as a judgment from God. Alone and friendless, feeling that he was shut out from God's mercy, the sufferer had passed long years of misery" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202). Read the key text again in John 5:6-8. Instead of the words "made well" substitute something that you need to do but are struggling with. For example you may have lost your desire to graduate but you know you have to. Your text would read, "Do you want to finish school? Get up and pass that class and get that diploma."

Tuesday

Read Mark 3:4.

What does the response in John 5:10 to the man carrying his bed tell you about those who spoke to him?

_____

_____

Those who spoke to the man were more concerned about the rules that they had imposed on Sabbathkeeping than the well-being of the man. How did Jesus feel about this? Look at His question in Mark 3:4 regarding another Sabbath healing. What can we learn about how to keep the Sabbath from Jesus' example?

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read Luke 4:16-20, 38-39, and Mark 6:2.

Jesus provided other examples of how to keep the Sabbath day during His ministry on earth. According to today's Bible reading, how did Jesus keep the Sabbath? Make a list of ways that you can keep the Sabbath like Jesus.

Thursday

Read John 14:13.

If Jesus approached you today and asked if you would like to be healed, how would you respond? What would you ask to be healed of?

_____

_____

_____

Claim the promise in today's reading as you ask for healing today.

Friday

Read Ephesians 2:1.

Ellen White offers this insight into the story of the lame man: "Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. . . . Christ is able and longs to deliver" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203).

Questions to consider:

- What is the state of my spiritual health?
- Am I growing stronger or weaker in the Lord?
- What does Christ "long to deliver" me from?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 21.

* 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.