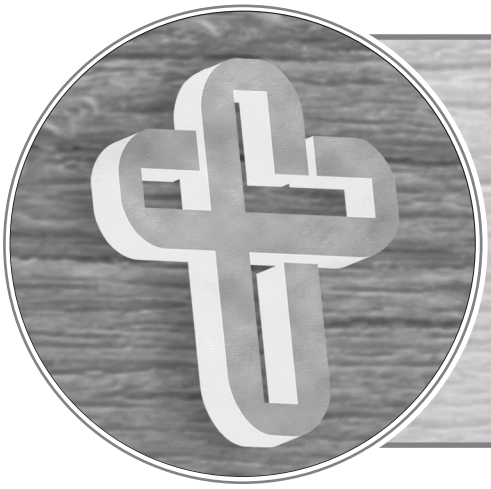


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MAY 10 2025

i am a follower

Scripture Story: Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 25.
Key Text: Luke 5:8-11.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Peter and the other fishermen—his brother Andrew and their friends and business partners, James and John—had put in a hard and unsuccessful night's fishing when Jesus asked them to let their nets down again. Peter was skeptical, but he was willing to take a chance on trusting Jesus. When Jesus' advice resulted in a huge catch of fish, Peter was convinced he'd experienced a miracle. Certain that Jesus was more than just another great teacher, Peter was overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness and fell to his knees before Jesus. He asked Jesus to go away from him, feeling he wasn't worthy to be in the presence of someone who might be the Messiah. But Jesus' response was to ask Peter and the others to follow Him—and they instantly did, leaving everything else behind.

Jesus still calls people—including young people—to leave everything behind and follow Him. But what are we to leave behind? Our families, work, and livelihood, as Jesus asked the fishermen to do? What does that call mean for young people who are still living with their parents, going to school, planning a future career? What does total commitment to Jesus look like in the twenty-first century? This week's lesson explores some of those questions.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God calls people to leave their everyday lives behind and follow Him. *(Know)*
- Sense God's presence and His call in their lives. *(Feel)*
- Choose to respond to God's call and follow Jesus completely. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)"

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.*

Write the answers to *What Do You Think?* on a white/chalkboard and ask each student to share the answers they checked. Tally answers on the board, adding any that they wrote in themselves, to see which responses are most popular.

For each response, ask: "Why do you think someone might say this? What is it about the idea of following Jesus that might get this reaction from some people?"

Ask: "What things in our lives hold us back from completely following Jesus?" Have students brainstorm ideas and write them on the board. Then, across from that list, ask them to suggest benefits of following Jesus—what we get if we obey His call. Do the benefits outweigh what we would have to give up?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

As a young man, William Wilberforce had a brilliant political career ahead of him. He entered the English Parliament at the age of 21, one of the youngest men ever to do so. He was wealthy, well-educated, a good speaker, and looked like he would be a huge success.

But soon after his political career began, William Wilberforce had a conversion experience and decided to dedicate his life completely to God. Still in his early 20s, he considered abandoning politics, perhaps entering the ministry or some other career in which he could dedicate himself to doing God's work.

He went to several people he trusted for advice, including his old minister John Newton, author of the hymn "Amazing Grace." Newton, who had been the captain of a slave ship before he was converted, advised Wilberforce, as did other people, that he could continue to serve God by staying in government and working to do God's will there.

Instead of giving up his political career to follow God, Wilberforce dedicated his political career to God. He worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to end the slave trade, which he saw as one of the great evils of his day. Despite many setbacks and poor health, Wilberforce continued to be a voice in Parliament for those who were working to end slavery. He finally saw success for his efforts—first with the abolition of the slave trade, then, just before his death, with the abolition of all slavery and the freeing of all slaves in the British Empire (this was more than 30 years before American slaves were freed during the U.S. Civil War).

Wilberforce was an example of a young adult who obeyed the call to "come, follow Me." He did it not by leaving the career he had started, but by transforming all his goals and plans to conform to what he believed God wanted him to do.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

On a sunny morning near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus met up with a group of fishermen. He'd met these men and talked to them before; they were interested in what He had to say, but none of them had yet made a complete commitment to Him. Now, seeing that they had fished all night without catching anything, He challenged them to try once more. When they found themselves with more fish than they could handle, Jesus quickly shifted gears. He invited them to do a new kind of fishing—going out into the world and saving people for His kingdom. But to do that, they'd have to leave behind everything that was familiar, including their fishing boats.

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.*

Divide your class into four groups and give each group one of the following Bible passages:

- Luke 5:1-11
- Matthew 8:18-22
- Matthew 9:9
- Matthew 19:16-22

After each group reads their text, have them prepare a short skit in which they act out the story of that verse for the rest of the group. When each of the four scenes has been presented, ask: "What do all these stories have in common? What does Jesus ask people to do before they follow Him? How do they respond?"

Then ask for a few volunteers from the group (probably those who were most enthused about acting out a scene in the previous activity). Ask this group, on the spot, to improvise a scene in which Jesus approaches a modern teenager and asks him or her to leave something behind and follow Him. As they prepare to act, ask them: "What sorts of things does Jesus ask us to leave behind for Him today? How do we respond?"

After the role-play has been presented, discuss what kinds of things Jesus asks us to leave behind if we're going to follow Him. At first glance it seems obvi-

ous that He would ask us to leave our sins behind—but which sins? Is that as easy as it sounds?

Will Jesus ask us to leave other things behind that aren't sinful, but might still get in the way of following Him? (See the *Sharing Context and Background* section for further thoughts on this.) Ask students what they think "total commitment" to Jesus means in today's world? Can a young person who is completely committed to Jesus still:

- date?
- go to school?
- hang out with friends?
- plan for college and a future career?
- buy a car?
- wear the latest fashions?
- have a part-time job?

How might total commitment to following Jesus affect your decisions in any one of these areas of your life? In what way is Jesus calling you to leave your nets and follow Him?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: See the *Punch Lines* section of the student lesson.

Sharing Context and Background

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

When we think of leaving everything behind to follow Jesus, it's typical to think of leaving behind a life of sin. The criminal leaves his life of crime, the drug addict leaves her addiction; people begin a new life when they follow Jesus.

But the fishermen in today's story, and the other people whose experiences were explored in the *Out of the Story* passages, were not living particularly sinful lives. Even Matthew, the tax collector, was just doing his job—although it was a job that many considered sinful and disreputable. The fishermen were working for a living to support their families. The disciple who wanted to bury his father was taking care of family responsibilities. And the rich young ruler was a good man who kept the commandments.

Throughout the past 2,000 years Christians have wrestled with what it means to really leave everything behind to follow Jesus. For the early disciples, it was straightforward. Many of them, like Peter and his friends, made a complete break with their former lives and left homes, families, and jobs to travel around Galilee with Jesus. Even after Jesus' return to heaven, they committed themselves full-time to missionary work. Total dedication in the early days of Christianity meant risking your life, since persecution was often a reality (as it still is in many parts of the world today).

For many of the early Protestant groups, following Jesus all the way once again meant risking punishment and even death. It also meant, for some, giving up worldly possessions, living in community with other believers, and going to overseas mission fields.

But most of us don't make those kinds of sacrifices—especially in the twenty-first century. For most of us, following Jesus means what it has meant to most Christians throughout history—living a "normal" life with the same material comforts and goals as the rest of society; paying lip service to our "commitment" to Jesus without allowing it to make any serious differ-

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

Does and Does Not

When you teach a particular topic, it's important to give your students an example of what illustrates a theme, but it can also be helpful to offer an example of what does not illustrate it.

You'll notice in your teacher's lesson that the *Illustration* is about a gentleman who thought he should leave his political career to "dedicate himself to doing God's work." Fortunately, he had some sage counselors around him who helped him realize that doing God's work can involve more than "official" ministry; he could serve God by doing God's will through his political career.

In order to show what does constitute "doing God's work," it was most helpful to dispel the myth and show that official ministry does not constitute the only way to do God's work.

ence in our lives.

As you discuss this week's lesson, challenge your students with these questions: "Can a committed Christian ever live a 'normal' life? In what ways does God call us to be out of step with society? What does He want us to give up in order to follow Him?"

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask students to think again about the role-play, with Jesus inviting a modern teen to give up everything and follow Him. Allow them to reflect for a few quiet minutes, with eyes closed, on what Jesus might ask them to do if He came along and said, "Follow Me." As they sit quietly thinking, remind them that He does, in fact, call each one of us to follow Him. Total commitment to Jesus will mean different things to different people; but for everyone it means living a life that's structured around God's values, not the world's. Invite each student to reflect as you pray on what that will mean for them.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Peter, Andrew, James, and John witnessed an amazing display of Jesus' power—and also of His ability to take care of them. After seeing the incredible catch of fish, they knew He was something out of the ordinary. But they also knew that He had the ability to supply their needs. They could trust Him. Maybe that's why they were so willing to leave everything behind to follow Him—just walk away from their nets and fishing boats and start a whole new life.

Jesus still asks us to do the same. He may not be asking you to leave home right now, but He's asking you to lay aside your commitment to a life planned around *your* values and start a life that's centered around *His* values—complete dedication to God, service to Him and to others. You'll have to work out for yourself what that will mean in your life—not all the disciples were called to the same kind of work or the same kind of life. But they were all called to a changed life, a life that was 100 percent committed to Jesus. And that's what He calls us to.



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 25.

*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 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 25.

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Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

"They were humble and unlearned men, those fishers of Galilee; but Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify them for the position for which He had chosen them. . . . He passed by the wise men of His time, because they were so self-confident that they could not sympathize with suffering humanity, and become colaborers with the Man of Nazareth. . . . The Lord Jesus seeks the co-operation of those who will become unobstructed channels for the communication of His grace. The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 249).

key text

"Simon Peter . . . fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' . . . Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

(Luke 5:8-11, NIV)

what do you think?

If Jesus asked you to leave everything and follow Him, what would your response be?

____ "What exactly do You mean by *everything*, Lord?"
____ "I'll leave *some things*. . . . Can I still follow You?"
____ "You don't really mean that, do You?"
____ "Absolutely! No problem!"
_____
_____
_____
(Write your own response.)

did you know?

The Sea of Galilee has been a famous spot for fishermen since ancient times. Fishing methods used in Jesus' time probably included fishermen catching fish with their bare hands or in wicker baskets, trapping fish, fishing with hook and line, or spearing fish with arrows or harpoons. But fishing with nets was by far the most popular way to fish. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were probably fishing with circular cast nets, which were weighted to allow the net to encircle the fish. This required great skill and also great dedication on the part of the fishermen.

Jesus called Peter and his companions away from fishing to a task that would also require skill and total dedication—fishing for human beings to bring into the kingdom of God.

INTO THE STORY

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

"When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'

"Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

"When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

"Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

(Luke 5:1-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Did Simon Peter and the other fishermen already know Jesus before this event? How might that have made a difference in their response to Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus performed the miracle of the great catch of fish *before* He asked the fishermen to follow Him?

What impact did the miracle have on Simon Peter and the other fishermen?

Why was Simon Peter's response to the miracle "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man"? What was he thinking? What would you have been thinking at that point?

Why do you think the fishermen followed Jesus without any questions? What do you think they expected from Jesus at that point?

punch lines

"Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' " **(Matthew 8:21, 22, NIV).**

"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him" **(Matthew 9:9, NIV).**

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' " **(Matthew 16:24, NIV).**

"Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me' " **(Matthew 19:21, NIV).**

further insight

"He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250

"Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 60

"There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250

Sabbath

Read Matthew 16:24.

By His miracles He [Jesus] manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah" (The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4). As you read the story of Jesus calling Peter and the other fishermen by the sea, imagine the scene vividly in your mind. Put yourself in Peter's place and try to imagine what you would be experiencing with your five senses as this scene unfolds. Write down some of your ideas below.

When Jesus told him to let down the nets, Peter might have thought _____. After the miraculous catch of fish, he might have felt _____ and thought _____. When Jesus called Peter to follow Him, I think Peter felt _____. How did you feel when you read today's Bible reading?

Sunday

Read Romans 12:6, 7.

Read the *Did You Know?* section of the lesson to learn more about fishing on the Sea of Galilee in Jesus' time. Jesus used the image of "fishing for men" because that was what His disciples were familiar with. For them, it would create a picture of gathering up a great number of people out of the world and into God's kingdom. If He'd been talking to farmers, He might have invited them to come and harvest human crops to bring into God's barn (in fact, He used this kind of image in several of His parables). What types of images might Jesus use today in inviting people to bring others into His kingdom? What images might He use if He were calling . . .

a teacher?
a bus driver?
a doctor?
a teenager?

What talents and abilities has God given you to help spread the gospel?

Monday

Read Luke 5:8-11.

Jesus helps Simon Peter and the other fishermen catch a miraculous amount of fish. Peter immediately falls to his knees and declares that he is a sinful man and not worthy to be in Jesus' presence. Why do you think this miracle might have given Peter a sense of his own sinfulness? Peter tells Jesus to go away—but Jesus doesn't. Have you ever asked God to go away and leave you alone? How did He respond?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 19:21.

The *Flashlight* section emphasizes the fact that Jesus called ordinary people, uneducated fishermen rather than the intellectuals and leaders of the day. If you read the whole quote in its full context from *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White points out that God values education and it can help us to serve God—but sometimes an uneducated person is better able to follow Jesus because they are more humble and less likely to think they can do things on their own. What other attitudes might stand in a person's way and keep them from following Jesus? In today's reading, Jesus is speaking to a rich young ruler. What attitude might Jesus have seen in this man that led Jesus to say that?

_____

Wednesday

We see many examples in the Bible of Jesus calling people to leave their everyday lives and follow Him. Look at the following verses. For each one, write down what Jesus asked people to do if they were to follow Him:

Matthew 8:21, 22 _____
Matthew 9:9 _____
Matthew 16:24 _____
Matthew 19:21 _____

Does God still expect the same thing of people today? Do we need to give up our plans for a job, a family, a "normal" life? Whatever He asks, we can be sure that He asks for total commitment.

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Think about things in your life that might be standing in the way of following Jesus. What is one practical thing you can do today to move those things aside and focus more on Jesus? For example, if you feel the time you spend on social media gets in the way of Jesus, you could make a commitment not to engage for certain hours of the day (mornings work really well) and spend that time instead in prayer and Bible study. What encouragement can you find in today's Bible reading?

Friday

Read Matthew 6:31-33.

If Jesus were to come to you today and say, "Leave _____ behind, and follow Me," what do you think He would ask you to leave?

_____

What would your response be? Based on today's reading, what should it be?

_____

Following Jesus may involve leaving behind something or giving up something. But it could also mean dedicating the life you have now completely to God. God can help you to share His love with others through the life you now live.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 25.

* 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.