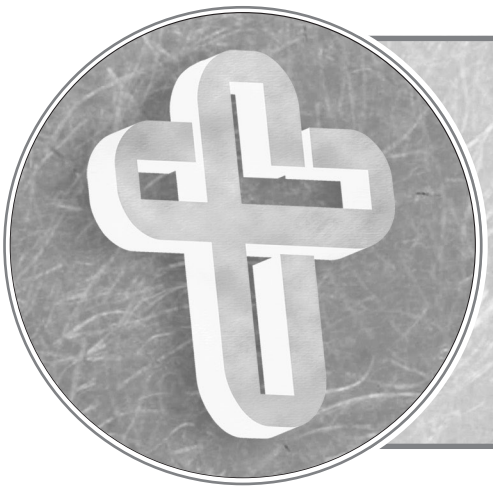


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 02 2025

Savior to the Gentiles

Scripture Story: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 43.
Key Text: Matthew 15:25-28.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson teaches us about prejudice as well as faith. In this story we see how the Phoenician woman came to Jesus even though the odds were all against her. Her people were scorned and looked down upon by the Jews because they were pagans, yet there was still that spark of hope in her heart that gave her the courage to approach Jesus and beseech the healing of her daughter. Jesus seemed to at first deny her, but when she kept persistently seeking Him, He granted her prayer. He was in a way testing her faith. She was a perfect example of faith against all odds. Jesus knew she would be a good example to all witnesses to show that prejudice has no place in His kingdom. It didn't matter where she was from or what her past was; she too could be accepted through faith. Psalm 145:18, 19 says: "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them" (NIV).

Make it clear to the students how prejudice is as rampant today as ever. Ask them to share any stories about experiencing prejudice in their lives, whether it be about race or even age or gender.

But don't stop there. This offers an excellent opportunity to discuss not only our experiencing prejudice, but our responses.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Come to a deeper understanding of prejudice and its negative impact on people. *(Know)*
- Desire to put your faith in God even when the odds don't favor you. (*Feel)*
- Eliminate all bias and prejudice from your life. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 14: "The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.)"

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.*

After going over the *What Do You Think?* section, divide the students into groups. Have them take a pen and piece of paper and write down examples of prejudice that they have either witnessed, read, seen on television, or any other ways they have been exposed to it. Afterward, have each group read their examples and then discuss and compare the differences and similarities.

(Note to Teacher: It will be up to you to keep the discussion "redemptive," rather than digressing into a "gripe" session.)

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In the 1950s John Howard Griffin, a White journalist, took melatonin tablets that made his skin turn dark. In addition to that he rubbed dye on his skin and shaved his head. After he changed his appearance, he went to New Orleans and lived his daily life as an African American. He befriended many other Black people, and they thought he was the same race as they were. He befriended a shoe shiner, and he confided the truth about his true race. After his confession, his newfound friend showed him the ropes about life as a Black man in New Orleans. Afterward he traveled all over the South living as a Black man. He wrote about how Whites treated him as a second-class citizen. He was allowed to stay in certain hotels only; he couldn't use the regular restroom but was forced to use the "Black restroom." He could not drink out of the "White" water fountains, but had to walk farther to quench his thirst from a "Black fountain." He spoke about how he was always forced to sit at the back of the bus, and how many restaurants had refused to serve him. Toward the end of his experiment he washed the dye off and was once again White, his natural skin color. He wrote about how the next day he walked into a fancy restaurant and they seated him at the finest spot and served him whatever food he asked for. He said, "I am the same person, just a different color skin, and to these people it's solely the color that defines me."

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In our world today we can find prejudice anywhere. Bias has been embedded into our minds whether we realize it or not. No doubt many of the Whites in the above story had no clue how bias and prejudice were operating in their lives. In their eyes, the color of a person's skin gave them value. But in God's eyes, we are all equal. He died for every human being on this earth—no exceptions. All He asks of us is to put our faith in Him.

The story of the Phoenician woman is not one of the more famous stories in the Bible, yet its importance is obvious. She sets forth the perfect example of faith and trust. Even though the odds were against her, she didn't give up on asking Christ to heal her daughter. She truly put her faith in Him. And because of that, Jesus was able to use her to all who witnessed the event as an example of eliminating prejudice and how, no matter who comes to His throne, no one will be turned away.

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.*

- What do you think is more important: eliminating prejudice, or having faith in God? Or do you think they are of equal importance?
- Name a few other instances in the Bible in which people harbored prejudice.
- Why do you think Jesus seemed to ignore the woman's plea in the beginning?
- Have you ever been in, or witnessed, a situation similar to this story?
- What do you think went through the woman's mind when Jesus healed her daughter?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 91:14-16; Colossians 3:11; Psalm 145:18, 19.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Prejudice in the Media

In this story the main focus is about prejudice and faith, as well as the gospel. Try to center the students' attention on modern-day prejudice as well as ancient biblical prejudice. Try to find stories and examples on the Web on these topics, especially of things that have happened in recent years. This is important because it helps them become more aware of the fact that these types of things surround them on a daily basis, especially since media is such a part of their daily life.

on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Phoenicians were of the old Canaanite race; thus, they considered themselves Canaanites. It was the Greeks who called them Phoenicians, apparently after the name of a purple dye (Gr. *phoinix*).

Phoenician Deities. The ancient Phoenicians had a very cruel and degrading form of religion. They were known to, among other things, sacrifice their children to their gods. This was not totally uncommon in the ancient world at that time, which explains why, time and again, the writers of the Old Testament warned against doing the same thing. It's difficult to imagine today any religion asking that of anyone. But it's apparent that the entire practice is based on Satanic deception that cruelly mocked the one true Sacrifice, who died for the sins of the world. The ancient Hebrews were repulsed by this horrible practice and generally showed contempt for the "gods" that would ask such a thing. Hebrew scholars believe that the goddess Ashtoreth spoken of so often in the Bible is a combination of the Greek name Astarte and the Hebrew word *boshet*, which translates "shame," another illustration indicating the Hebrew contempt for their cultic practices.

The Phoenician practice influenced other religions as well, such as in the famous city of Carthage, which had originally been settled by Phoenicians, who were seafaring people. Altars have been found there as well with the bones of small children. How glad we can be that our God never asks anything like that of us. When the Lord wanted to show us in symbols what Messiah's sacrifice was all about, He asked that animals be slain—never, never human children.

Jesus' response. There were many Jews living in Phoenicia, so it was most likely that the woman had heard of Jesus before this time. For her to address Jesus by the title "Son of David," which implied recognition of His being the Messiah, seems surprising. But it could be that she had heard from the Jews living in her country about the miraculous

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.*

deeds Jesus had performed, and her faith had already begun to grow.

Jesus' response, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24, KJV), comes across as callous. Even modern-day people have a difficult time with His words, taking them literally and not within their full context. But Jesus was in actuality seeking to teach the disciples a lesson. A typical rabbi would have responded exactly how the disciples had responded: harsh, calculated, sans mercy—especially in light of the Hebrews' contempt for the Phoenician people. In addition, she was not only a Gentile; she was a woman. But Jesus was no typical rabbi. By acting out the contrast between the usual Jewish attitude and His own, He revealed to them the favor with which He looked upon the Gentiles. "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34, 35, NRSV). He is no respecter of persons. Faith is faith, wherever it may be found.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Bring a short story, movie or YouTube clip, or possibly documentary, about overcoming prejudice or faith. Try to find something that's powerful and that will have a moving effect on the students. Afterward discuss their opinions on what they just saw or heard.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

How many times in your life have you witnessed prejudice? How many times in your life have you witnessed faith? The Lord knows our hearts despite what others see. He can read our minds and look into our souls more so than any human on this earth ever could. The Lord wants us to look past differences of culture, background, race, or shady histories. He wants us to look to and put our faith solely in Him. In God's kingdom prejudice doesn't exist. In His heaven we are all equally entitled to His love and glory. And as we see this Phoenician woman's example of faith, and Jesus' example of unconditional love, we should yearn and strive to follow it. In the upcoming days, ask the Lord to remove all bias from your heart, and look to the heavenly Father for the faith to live accepting of those different than we are.



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 43.

*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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AUGUST 22 2025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 43.

Savior to the Gentiles



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keytext

"The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said. He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' 'Yes it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' "

(Matthew 15:25-28, NIV)

flashlight

"Christ knew this woman's situation. He knew that she was longing to see Him, and He placed Himself in her path. By ministering to her sorrow, He could give a living representation of the lesson He designed to teach. For this He had brought His disciples into this region. He desired them to see the ignorance existing in cities and villages close to the land of Israel. The people who had been given every opportunity to understand the truth were without a knowledge of the needs of those around them. No effort was made to help souls in darkness. The partition wall which Jewish pride had erected shut even the disciples from sympathy with the heathen world. But these barriers were to be broken down" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 400).

what do you think?

Many things in today's society cause prejudice against others. Rate each item below 1 to 10 on how powerfully they cause prejudice, with 1 being the least cause and 10 being the greatest.

____ religion
____ race
____ location
____ culture
____ poverty
____ wealth
____ gender
____ political preference

did you know?

During the times Jesus was preaching, prejudices were common, especially against non-Jews. Many places that Jesus walked overlooked the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, both containing heathen temples, palaces, markets, and shipping harbors. The Phoenician religion was based on the process and power of nature. These extreme religious differences fueled the anger of the Jews and sparked even more hatred and prejudice between the two groups. To be a Phoenician was to be considered beyond notice to many Jews.

INTO THE STORY

"Jesus left and went to the territory near the towns of Tyre and Sidon. Suddenly a Canaanite woman from there came out shouting, 'Lord and Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is full of demons.' Jesus did not say a word. But the woman kept following along and shouting, so his disciples came up and asked him to send her away.

"Jesus said, 'I was sent only to the people of Israel! They are like a flock of lost sheep.'

"The woman came closer. Then she knelt down and begged, 'Please help me, Lord!'

"Jesus replied, 'It isn't right to take food away from children and feed it to dogs.'

"'Lord, this is true,' the woman said, 'but even puppies get the crumbs that fall from their owner's table.'

"Jesus answered, 'Dear woman, you really do have a lot of faith, and you will be given what you want.' At that moment her daughter was healed."

(Matthew 15:21-28, CEV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is the main focus of this story?

_____
_____
_____

Who are some of the key characters?

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think Jesus ignored the woman's pleas in the beginning?

_____
_____
_____

Why were the Phoenicians so hated in Jesus' time?

_____
_____
_____

What ultimately caused Jesus to fulfill the woman's plea and save her daughter?

_____
_____

What can we learn about faith in this story? How can we apply this moral to our everyday lives?

_____
_____
_____

What are some different ways in which God can answer our prayers, even if He doesn't grant them as we want them to be granted?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed" **(Deuteronomy 31:8, ESV).**

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" **(Isaiah 41:10, NIV).**

"Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" **(Colossians 3:11, NIV).**

"The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them" **(Psalm 145:18, 19, NIV).**

"Those who seek the LORD lack no good thing" **(Psalm 34:10, ESV).**

further insight

"The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 403

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 4:16.

This woman demonstrated a powerful amount of faith in Jesus. She was a heathen, and all Jews looked down upon her. However, rather than letting others' opinions of her keep her from moving forward, she came to Jesus with a heart full of hope and faith in Him. In our lives there are many ways in which we let doubt reign in our hearts. Many people saw this woman as a sinner, but we can look to her as an example of how to demonstrate our faith.

We are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of Jesus, yet humbly ask Him for what we wish. Many times we assume our wishes are either too extravagant or too unimportant for God to worry about, but all we have to do is trust and hope in the Lord to do what He sees fit. How can I put my faith in God in the coming week for the little and the monumental things?

_____

_____

_____

Sunday

Read John 13:35.

In this lesson we learned how prejudice can affect us in many negative ways. It can eat us alive until we don't try to see people for who they truly are, but we see a veil of all our biases and prejudices made into one ugly image. Jesus looked past this woman's flaws and noticed her faith in Him. Below, list a few ways in which we can demonstrate Christ's unconditional love and look past others' flaws:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Monday

Read Psalm 145:18, 19.

Take your Bible and search it to find as many verses as you can on the topics of prejudice and faith. Try to find different stories or Bible quotes that involve those topics and then tie them together. There are many stories in the New Testament about faith. Compare each one to the other, pointing out similarities and differences between the main characters.

Tuesday

Read 1 John 4:20.

The *Flashlight* quote revealed how we can be blind to the needs of people around us because of our prejudices.

Try to identify areas in your life in which you might hold some prejudice against others. Often prejudices can be subconscious. Ask God to help you identify areas of prejudice in your life so you can eliminate them, ask Him to reveal to you the needs of those people against whom you've been biased as well.

Wednesday

Read Luke 11:9, 10.

Faith can be a difficult thing. It means going against the odds and putting your trust in something that you don't fully understand. But faith should not be blind. This Phoenician woman knew that Jesus was a healer. She knew that He had the power to heal her daughter, even when others didn't. Even when it looked as if she wouldn't get her wish she still kept pleading with Jesus. The reading for today says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find" (NIV).

What areas of your life—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—need the healing power of Jesus?

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:11 and Acts 10:34.

These verses tell us that we are all equal in God's eyes. If we are equal in His eyes, then why should we see others as beneath or above us? We should treat all with the same equality that Jesus demonstrated. He showed us that it didn't matter who you are or where you are from; all people are entitled to His gift of hope and eternal life. Write down a few examples in a journal or notebook of what can help you break down the barriers of prejudice and show God's love to all people.

Friday

Read Hebrews 10:23.

We must hold tightly to the confession of our hope. Hope leads to trust, and trust leads to faith. We must never let go of the promise that God has given us. Write down three examples of how God has worked in your life when you had faith in Him.

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

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 43.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *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. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.