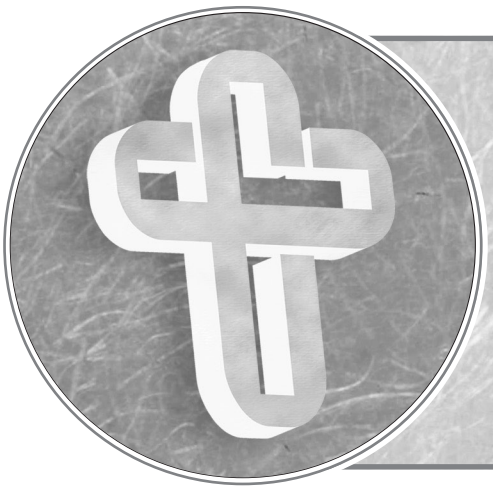


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 09 2025

moving mountains

Scripture Story: Matthew 17:9-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-45.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 44-47.
Key Text: Matthew 16:24.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

One of the greatest hurdles for the disciples to overcome during their time with Jesus was to break through the faith barrier. They would listen to His parables, see Him perform miracles, and be taught privately for the trials they would face after Jesus returned to heaven.

In spite of all the one-on-one time, the disciples were still weak in their faith. They had so much growing to do. Jesus continued to lead them toward a full-blown faith that would allow God's purposes and workings to be in full control in each of their lives.

Imagine the scene as Jesus and the three disciples were coming down off the mountain and they encountered the chaos of the crowd. There was no faith to be found. The disciples were humiliated, the father was devastated, the boy was in crisis, the crowd was boisterous and bordering on becoming an out-of-control mob, and the scribes were smirking and jeering.

As soon as the crowd saw Jesus, things changed. Isn't that how we are today? When we can get a glimpse of the Savior, the craziness and the clatter of our lives becomes calm and reorganized.

As Jesus talked with the disciples, He used a familiar saying that would help them understand how they needed to grow in faith.

By having faith, we can accomplish what seems impossible. By having faith, our relationship with Christ grows in ways that we can't even begin to imagine. By having faith, we are able to allow God to work out His purposes daily in our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that to grow in faith they have to be honest about their own spiritual condition. *(Know)*
- Desire to have a growing faith experience. *(Feel)*
- Determine their own action steps to grow in their own personal faith. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Growing in Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 11: "By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every

moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)"

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 words "Belief," "Wisdom," "Knowledge," and "Faith" on separate 8½" x 11" (A4) sheets of paper.

Distribute the sheets of paper to four students and ask them to stand at the front of the classroom facing the class. Ask the class to decide what order the words should be in, each time giving reasons for their choice of order.

Ask, "Which of these has to come first, before any of the others can happen? Why?" Ask which has to come next (using each word). When the activity is finished post them in the final order. They will be used later in the lesson.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

On April 11, 1970, *Apollo 13* was launched to send astronauts on a third lunar landing mission. Just two days after launch, the space capsule was crippled by an explosion, which caused a loss of electricity and oxygen. The three astronauts were stranded in space. Their first call to Earth was "Houston, we've got a problem." They needed help, but this had never happened before. Thousands of miles away from Earth, the astronauts were totally dependent on what the scientists at the Houston Space Center could tell them in order to fix their spacecraft enough to come home. The astronauts had to trust the scientists enough to keep communicating. When the scientists gave them the solutions, the astronauts had to trust in what they were told to do to fix the spacecraft.

As the world watched, bringing the astronauts home seemed an impossibility. How could the scientists on Earth fix a disabled spacecraft floating thousands of miles above the Earth?

In order to come home the *Apollo 13* astronauts had to take the following steps:

- They had to contact their base in Houston.
- They had to believe the scientists could solve the problems.
- They had to wait for an answer.
- They had to put action to the solutions that the scientists gave them.

Impossible things are never accomplished without faith that leads to action. Who was in the driver's seat in this situation: the *Apollo 13* astronauts or the Houston scientists? Who is in the driver's seat of your life: you or Jesus?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Ask the students if anyone came up with the same answer. Then share the following in your own words:

God allows us to have free choice in having faith in Him. He doesn't force His way into our lives. As humans, we can't grow in faith without depending on God. We need Him for faith, and He needs us to make the choice to allow Him to work in our lives before He can begin to take action that will direct us.

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.*

- Distribute a sheet of paper and various colored markers to each student. Ask them to mind-map[1] the following things:
- The main characters in this story.
- The actions of the characters in the story.
- Something new that they learned about this story.
- Ask them to consider the following questions and add them to their mind maps:
- Which of the father's actions actually healed the son? (None of them. Jesus healed him.)
- Which of these actions, if omitted, could have prevented his son's healing? (Any one of them.)
- The disciples had been with Jesus for just over three years when this story took place. After having spent so much time with Him, how did they manage to fail in such a big way?
- What do you think the nine disciples who failed to heal the boy were feeling? What do you think the three disciples who had been with Jesus were thinking and feeling?
- The crowd wavered from attacking the disciples and making fun of them to believing Jesus could heal the boy. Have you ever experienced this wavering in your life? Add something on your

mind map that would illustrate this incident in your life.

- How did this event help the father and son to grow in their faith? the crowd? the disciples? you?

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. **The disciples were confronted with a situation they couldn't solve.** Although the disciples had healed people before, this time they failed and they failed big. There was a crowd gathered and they must have felt the pressure of being in such a public setting and not fulfilling what they had been tasked by Jesus to do.

   The scribes were constantly looking for some way to bring derision on Jesus and His followers. The failure of the disciples allowed an opening for the scribes to begin questioning whether Jesus was who He claimed to be. There were willing ears in the crowd who were ready to take up the chant that there was a chance that Jesus and His followers were fakes.
2. **Jesus had just come down from the mountain.** Just prior to this story, Jesus had been on the mountaintop with three of His disciples. They had witnessed the Transfiguration and knew that God had shown them something special. They had been in a solitary setting and now were confronted by a noisy, raucous crowd.

   The situation was on the brink of being out of control. People were running around and shouting. The disciples were standing by, helpless to change the situation. The boy was writhing on

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Motivating Your Students

In today's world it's often hard to catch and keep the attention of students. Here are some things to consider as you try to motivate your Sabbath School class to become involved in studying their lesson on a daily basis and participating in class.

1. Build a relationship with your students that promotes personal encouragement, honesty, and support.
2. Be a role model. If you aren't in the Word daily, it will show.
3. Don't assume your students are someone they are not.
4. Provide opportunities for your students to take the initiative.
5. Allow students decision-making choices about their Sabbath School class and outreach.
6. Peer pressure can be good or it can be bad. Help guide your students to use their influence on others in positive ways.
7. Guide your students into making commitments. Begin with short-term goals and then lead them into lifetime commitments.
8. Make sure your class is a safe place for your students to express their beliefs and feelings.

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.*

the ground and his father was in agony, seeing his hopes for healing crushed under the failure of the disciples and the doubt of the crowd.

When Jesus arrived, things quickly calmed down. His presence had a calming and soothing effect. As He surveyed the situation, Jesus recognized what was going on but He took His time. He didn't immediately heal the son. He asked the father for a history of his son's struggle. He wanted to know if the father had faith. He began to build a relationship with him. Then Jesus turned His attention toward the boy.

3. **Jesus wanted the people to understand what having faith really means.** Jesus used a phrase well known to the Jews when He spoke of removing mountains. According to William Barclay in *The Daily Study Bible Series*, The Gospel of Matthew, volume 2: "A great teacher, who could really expound and interpret Scripture and who could explain and resolve difficulties, was regularly known as an *uprooter*, or even a *pulverizer*, of mountains. To tear up, to uproot, to pulverize mountains were all regular phrases for removing difficulties. Jesus never meant this to be taken physically and literally. After all, ordinary people seldom find any necessity to remove a physical mountain. What Jesus meant was: 'If you have faith enough, all difficulties can be solved, and even the hardest task can be accomplished.' Faith in God is the instrument which enables men and women to remove the hills of difficulty which block their path."

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the class to read 1 Peter 1:3-8. Remind them of the order in which they placed the words "Wisdom," "Belief," "Knowledge," and "Faith." Ask them if their choice of order has changed after what they have learned in class. Why or why not?

Summary

The story is told of how during World War II, Allied soldiers checking bombed-out buildings for snipers discovered words etched on a basement wall. A Jew who had been in hiding had probably written them. The words said:

"I believe in the sun—even when it does not shine;
I believe in love—even when it is not shown;
I believe in God—even when He does not speak."

The person who wrote this had been stripped of all that was normal to them. Yet their faith was strong enough to help them move the mountains of doubt and threat of loss of everything important in their life.

Distribute a mustard seed to each student. Remind them that during the next week when they face impossible situations, even if they have only a tiny amount of faith, with His help they will be able to do whatever God puts in their path.

[1] A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items that are arranged radially around a central word or idea.



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*),* chapters 44-47.

*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 17:9-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-45.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 44-47.

moving mountains



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key text

"Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; *I* am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how."

(Matthew 16:24-26, *The Message*; italics in original)

flashlight

" 'If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.' How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour's answer is, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. . . . Look not to self, but to Christ. . . . You can never perish while you do this—never" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429).

what do you think?

Rank the following in the order that they occur in the life of a Christian.

____ belief
____ wisdom
____ knowledge
____ faith

Explain the reasons for the order you chose.

_____
_____
_____

did you know?

Disciples were by definition "apprentices," to assume the role of their teachers. Jesus had already sent His disciples out, and they had healed the sick and driven out demons. Had they not seen enough to believe?

Ancient peoples thought of mountains as rooted far beneath the earth (Gundry 1982:353), so "moving mountains" was a typical Jewish teacher's image for doing what was virtually impossible. With this illustration Jesus indicates that even were we moving mountains, we would only be scratching the surface of a life of faith. What could we do with faith greater than that of a tiny mustard seed! Like children who have only begun to walk, most of us have only begun our adventure of faith. (Taken from www.BibleGateway.com.)

INTO THE STORY

"When they came back down the mountain to the other disciples, they saw a huge crowd around them, and the religion scholars cross-examining them. As soon as the people in the crowd saw Jesus, admiring excitement stirred them. They ran and greeted him. He asked, 'What's going on? What's all the commotion?'

"A man out of the crowd answered, 'Teacher, I brought my mute son, made speechless by a demon, to you. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and goes stiff as a board. I told your disciples, hoping they could deliver him, but they couldn't.'

"Jesus said, 'What a generation! No sense of God! How many times do I have to go over these things? How much longer do I have to put up with this? Bring the boy here.' They brought him. When the demon saw Jesus, it threw the boy into a seizure, causing him to writhe on the ground and foam at the mouth.

"He asked the boy's father, 'How long has this been going on?'

" 'Ever since he was a little boy. Many times it pitches him into fire or the river to do away with him. If you can do anything, do it. Have a heart and help us!'

"Jesus said, 'If? There are no "ifs" among believers. Anything can happen.'

"No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the father cried, 'Then I believe. Help me with my doubts!'

"Seeing that the crowd was forming fast, Jesus gave the vile spirit its marching orders: 'Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you—Out of him, and stay out!' Screaming, and with much thrashing about, it left. The boy was pale as a corpse, so people started saying, 'He's dead.' But Jesus, taking his hand, raised him. The boy stood up."

(Mark 9:14-27, *The Message*)

"Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'

"He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'"

(Matthew 17:19-21, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "O unbelieving and perverse generation, . . . how long shall I stay with you?" (Matthew 17:17, NIV).

Why were the disciples not able to heal this boy after they had already been healing other people?

At what point did the father actually have the faith required for his son to be healed?

What role would the father's faith have played if the demon-possessed boy had not been willing to be submissive to Jesus? How does this affect you today when your parents pray for you?

Why don't we see more healing today?

punch lines

"So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly" **(Ecclesiastes 7:25, NIV).**

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" **(Proverbs 1:5-7, NIV).**

"Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; see for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—then guide me on the road to eternal life" **(Psalm 139:23, 24, *The Message*).**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" **(Matthew 11:28, 29, NIV).**

further insight

"If you have faith like [a grain of mustard seed], you will lay hold upon God's word, and upon all the helpful agencies He has appointed. Thus your faith will strengthen, and will bring to your aid the power of heaven."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 431

Sabbath

Read 2 Peter 1:3-8.

In a small group of friends, share the answers you gave in the *What Do You Think?* section. Does today's Bible reading change the order in which you originally listed the items in *What Do You Think?* If so, what changes did you make and why?

Sunday

Read Mark 9:29.

Think about the story of Jesus, the disciples, and the demon-possessed boy. Reflect on the following questions:

In today's reading, Jesus said, "This kind can come out only by prayer." Certainly the disciples had been praying when they had cast out other demons before. But it wasn't enough for this situation. How many demons have you cast out? What do you need to do to have enough understanding of and relationship with God to cast out demons or to move mountains?

Monday

Read Matthew 17:20.

At this time in your life, Jesus wants you to have the faith to move mountains. Are you excited about moving mountains? Is it really about the mountains, or about letting your faith in God grow? Describe how you can let your faith develop and grow at the stage of life you're in. What is your first step? Is faith necessary in everyday, ordinary things, such as studying for a test? Why or why not?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 34:15.

Just give me the facts." People always want to know the bottom line of what has to be done to achieve any worthy goal. What does Ellen White mean when she writes that "you can never perish" when you cry out to Jesus? Does she mean perishing literally or spiritually? Knowing that you can never perish while you cry out to Jesus, what would crying out in your life look like today?

Wednesday

Read 2 Peter 3:18.

God already knows what is in your heart. You need to see what He sees by being honest with yourself about your spiritual condition.

Read the *Punch Lines* again. Make a list of three action steps you see you need to take based on your self-evaluation. What do these texts say to you today about where you are spiritually? How can you implement them in ways that will help you grow in your relationship with Jesus?

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5.

Ellen White writes about how the crowd was beginning to turn on the disciples when they couldn't heal the demon-possessed boy. The scribes who were in the crowd were encouraging this behavior. As soon as Jesus appeared, the crowd changed and they fell silent, waiting to see what Jesus would do. Compare this to Jesus and the crowds when He stood before Pilate. How quickly the crowd was ready to cry "Crucify Him!" What does this tell you about where they were in their faith experience? Did they have faith only as long as Jesus kept healing people and multiplying loaves of bread and fish? Have you fallen into this same kind of trap in your life—believing in Jesus when everything goes well, but turning on Him in the hard times? Name two things you can do this week to help grow your faith for the hard times.

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Should your faith impact every area of your life? If so, what does your life of faith look like when you are at home, at school, hanging out with friends, alone, or at church? Ask God to help you show your faith in Him, wherever you are and whatever you do.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 44-47.

*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.