CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
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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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keytext

"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.