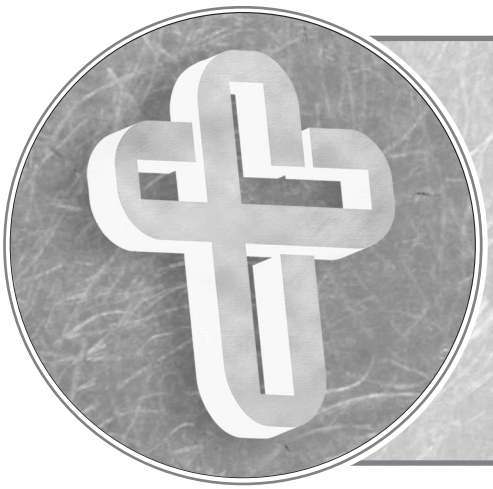


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 23 2025

two seekers

Scripture Story: Mark 10:17-23; Luke 10:25-37.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 53; 54; 57.
Key Text: Mark 10:19-21.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Unlike popular movies, some stories don't have a happy ending. This week's lesson examines the rich young ruler who came to Christ with the question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" After a thorough discussion Jesus appealed to the weak link in his chain of faith—his wealth. His genuine desire for eternal life was unmistakable, but when Jesus challenged him to give up his wealth and follow Him, it became clear he loved his money more than eternal life. This lesson is about learning to seek for what we love most or discovering that what we love most will lead us away from what we seek. So the story ends sadly, but it doesn't have to for Christ's followers today.

The second story has to do with an expert in the law who sought Christ with the same question about eternal life. His prejudice was exposed and he was given the opportunity to respond actively to the call to live differently. While we don't know what he did, we can challenge our young people to examine the things that get in our way from a rich, enduring walk with Christ. Coming to an understanding of "what matters the most" is an awakening these two individuals in this week's lesson discovered. Jesus said: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Observe how our truest values can be undisclosed. *(Know)*
- Sense God's deep desire to free us of short-sighted treasures. *(Feel)*
- Choose to value eternity more than anything else in the world. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Stewardship, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 21: "We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow human beings, and by returning tithe and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. Stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of their faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; Rom. 15:26, 27; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:7.)"

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.*

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity in the *What Do You Think?* section.

As the students rank the list, invite them to share their responses. You may want to look for trends in their answers. It may be that money and wealth are the prominent response, but if it isn't, discuss why they answered the way they did. Furthermore, how much more difficult is it when people are not even aware that they treasure something that might be in the way of their walk with God?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Finns who can't get enough of winter swarm to a town called Kemi for the grand opening of the famous ice castle. There is a chapel, an art gallery, a theater, and even an ice playground for kids.

The whole experience is a huge undertaking that captures the attention of people all over the world. This entire project takes months of work and more than a million dollars to build and keep up, not to mention that a surprisingly warm day could cause a meltdown. But the sad truth is that by the end of April the castle will be melting and the people will be going somewhere else. This ice castle is a reminder that the world will pass away, so we should consider placing our treasure in something eternal.

When have you put your emphasis on something that doesn't last? How does getting a vision of the big picture help you prioritize what is important to you today?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

While the ice is melting, the stories of the lawyer, the ruler, and the good Samaritan have lasted for centuries, bearing witness to a truth that is sometimes hard to take. What matters most to us will be revealed. Read the stories carefully, and try to witness the mood of the two seekers to get a clear sense of their request.

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.*

Read the two stories carefully and highlight their basic question for Jesus. What do they want from Him?

Below, make a list of the commonalities of these two seekers as well as the differences.

Commonalities

_____

_____

Differences

_____

_____

- *Underline* the key words and phrases you see in this passage.
- Why do you think Jesus first and foremost directs both seekers back to the law of God?
- Is there anything you can tell from the text that signifies either of these seekers is genuine? What evidence, if any, is there that their heart might be in the right place?
- Why do you think Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone."
- What do you think is the primary lesson in each story?
- What do you think is the message God has for you in these stories?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

- Why does an expert on God's Word ask such a basic question? What do you think is his attitude or motivation?
- How do you know what your deepest treasure is? Is the only way to know what you value to have to give it up or have someone take it from you? Explain.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Acts 9; Luke 9; Daniel 3;

Genesis 39; Philippians 3:1-11.

Sharing Context and Background

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

The two encounters featured in this week's lesson have a similar question but come from different settings. The first in our study is the encounter between Jesus and the expert in the law. To simply say "a lawyer" doesn't accurately convey the gravity of this scene. He wasn't "just a lawyer," but an expert in the law of God. Other than the Author Himself, few would have known the law better than this man. Yet he inquired about the single most basic question about life: eternal life. It is important to note that the mood of this exchange is key to understanding the lawyer's motives. The Bible says that he asked this question to "test" Jesus (Luke 10:25).

The spirit of this encounter was thoughtful and earnest. But the very question demonstrates that the rabbis of that time taught that eternal life was a reward to be earned.

The parable of the good Samaritan is used as more than just a teaching tool or a powerful illustration—but a painful exposure to a deep prejudice that could likely cause the expert to miss out on eternal life.

The second encounter is with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-31). Like the expert in the law, his motives seem pure and his desire appears genuine. In Jewish society a notion existed that riches were the blessing of God, but did not eliminate the possibility that wealth could fully corrupt a person. In this case, the young ruler seemed to be truly living a righteous life. It seems evident that "he had not used his wealth to do harm, but rather was fully committed to good" (*The Victor Bible Background*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

The Power of Relationships

Showing relationships is a powerful activity in the learning process. Different ways can be used to demonstrate how things are related: (1) Compare and contrast. In this lesson there are two individuals who come to Christ with the same question. When you compare and contrast, the students think critically and carefully about the attributes of each story. (2) Cause and effect. Early in childhood development children learn how certain actions or events can cause an effect. Nebuchadnezzar's stubborn pride and arrogance caused his seven-year season of humility as an animal. Looking to the snake on a stick in the desert caused some to be saved. As we wrestle with spiritual truths, we understand them more when we learn how to see them relationally.

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.*

Commentary: New Testament, p. 129). His sincerity moved Jesus to a unique response: "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21, NIV). But Jesus knew the deceitfulness of riches—a spell so powerful that you can live well and right but deny the truth that you love it more than anything else.

These two stories depict real people who met Jesus face-to-face with the same burning question humanity has today, "How do I live forever?" Keeping the law is not the way, but treasuring anything more than your relationship with Jesus will rob you of eternal life that comes through Him.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Using tape or glue and strips of paper about six inches (15 centimeters) long, invite each student to make a chain. *Say: "*The chain represents our nature as humans. Think of specific aspects of your character—both good and bad—as links in a chain. There are some links that hold your faith together. Is there one link in this chain weaker than another? It is likely. If there is a point where we will be tested, it will probably focus on the area of our weakness. If it is the love of wealth or popularity, or even success, you can be sure that that link in the chain will be challenged."

Share this brief story: On returning from a mission trip students reported about the transformation that happened through selfless service to others. The circumstances were rough and often uncomfortable. Some students stated: "This trip has made me more grateful for what I have, and I know I will appreciate the blessings of life more." But the last student to share simply said, "This trip was amazing. The biggest change in me was not that I appreciate what I have more, but that I love it less."

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

As Joshua once said, "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15, ESV). The choice will come to every person in one form or another. No one is going to sneak into the kingdom of heaven or find their way in a crowd to eternal life. Every person must make a choice. Times of testing will come to you. God will probably test our commitment to Him at its weakest, most vulnerable point or points, such as the links in a chain. Not to belittle us, but to expose the hidden treasures we cling to that secretly may be more valuable to us than our relationship to God. The weak link in the rich man's commitment to God was his love of his wealth. Even though his initial interest in eternal life was sincere, what became clear was his surprising devotion to riches. He simply counted the cost and made his decision. In the other story, the expert in the law who came to Christ truly wanted one thing: to please God with loving devotion. But his prejudice was exposed, and his choice was to change his mind or hold tight to his ideas. Based upon the answer "the one who had shown mercy," it is clear that he got the message. What did he do? We don't know but more important, what will *you* do?



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 53; 54; 57.

*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: Mark 10:17-23; Luke 10:25-37.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 53:, 54; 57.

two seekers



Photo by Terrill Thomas

key text

"'You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal. . . ." ' 'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.' Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor. . . . Then come, follow me.' "

(Mark 10:19-21, NIV)

flashlight

"When Christ's followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' " (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 523).

what do you think?

Rank the following: which do you think is the hardest to give up for following Christ (1—least difficult, 6—most difficult)?

____ popularity or public opinion
____ money/wealth
____ ideas and prejudices
____ security of your future
____ power and influence
____ success and achievement

Which do you think is the most difficult to surrender to Christ? While different people can treasure different things, how does being aware that you might treasure something more than Christ affect your choices?

did you know?

When the rich young ruler came to Christ wanting to know how to achieve eternal life, Jesus gave him "the look." What you may not know is that it is one of several places in the Gospels where Jesus gave someone "the look." However, Mark is the only writer that says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21, NIV). "The look" conveyed a loving appeal to follow. "The look" was a challenge to aim his heart beyond the world. "The look" conveyed grief as well, because Christ knew his heart was so deeply entangled with wealth that such a leap of faith was more than the ruler was willing to take. The word for "look" means to go beyond seeing something to perceiving it.

INTO THE STORY

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

"'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'

"He answered, '"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbor as yourself."'

"'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'

"In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

"'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'

"The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'

"Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

"'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother."'

"'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.'

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'

"At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

"Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'"

(Luke 10:25-37; Mark 10:17-23, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the two stories carefully and *highlight* their basic question for Jesus. What do they want from Him?

Below, make a list of the commonalities of these two seekers as well as the differences.

Commonalities: _____
_____

Differences: _____
_____

Underline the key words and phrases you see in this passage.

Why do you think Jesus first and foremost directs both seekers back to the law of God?
_____

Is there anything you can tell from the text that signifies either of these seekers is genuine? What evidence (if any) is there that their heart might be in the right place?
_____
_____

Why do you think Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone"?
_____
_____

What do you think is the message God has for you in these stories?
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" **(Matthew 6:19-21, NIV).**

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" **(Joshua 24:15, NIV).**

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts" **(Deuteronomy 6:5, 6, NIV).**

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" **(John 13:34, NIV).**

"The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple" **(Psalm 19:7, NIV).**

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" **(Mark 8:36, 37, NASB).**

further insight

"For if the things of this world are cherished, however uncertain and unworthy they may be, they will become all-absorbing."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 520

"All should consider what it means to desire heaven, and yet to turn away because of the conditions laid down."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 523

Sabbath

Read Philippians 3:1-14.

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. As you think about the list of things that tend to get in the way of people making a full surrender to Christ, which elements have little or no pull on you? Why? Note Paul's testimony and passion in today's Bible reading for following Christ alone. Look carefully at his list of things he can say about himself in verses 3-6. Is there anything on the list you ranked that would have a hold on Paul? Is it your desire to be able to say with Paul, "Nothing gets in the way of my relationship with God"? As you reflect on the areas you are compelled or influenced by, pray a specific prayer of surrender today.

Sunday

Read Mark 8:36, 37.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. Which story speaks to you personally today? Which seems more dangerous: knowing you treasure worldly things but not having the courage to be willing to surrender them, or not knowing your heart is so entangled while thinking you are fine? For both seekers Jesus brings them to truth about their treasure (the lawyer—his prejudice, the ruler—his wealth) and urges them to surrender. If you were brought to such a place today, how would you respond? What do you think God is saying to you by these two encounters?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read Mark 10:17-21.

In today's reading, what do you think Jesus saw in the man who asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life? What do you think Jesus saw in the ruler? Think of someone you know who genuinely wants to do the right thing or who desires to follow Christ but somehow can't seem to do it. Pray for them today and perhaps send them a note or an e-mail encouraging them with the news that Jesus sees them and loves them.

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 11:25, 26.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and reflect on the things you do for a reward. List them. It seems as though everything we do has a reward, but not everything has the same reward. What is worth more to you than eternal life? Whom do you know who values heaven and eternal life more than anything else on earth? If you want to make their day, tell them in whatever way you think is best, "I want to thank you for the way you love eternal life more than anything else." See what happens.

Wednesday

Read Jeremiah 7:23.

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson pierce through the pleasantries of life and hit the core issue: What do we want most? What do we treasure? What are we willing to do, to give, to resist, to embrace to obtain our heart's desire? If you were to order the *Punch Lines* in a Bible study for the rich young ruler, what order would you put them in, and why? If you were to do a Bible study for the expert in the law, how would you organize these verses to make the greatest impact? Why? Think of someone you know who reminds you of the lawyer or the ruler, or both, and dedicate time to pray for them today.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read 1 John 5:12.

Make a list of your assets—the things you own. It doesn't have to be a specific list, but a general category of "my stuff." Make a list of things you want to acquire before you die. Make a list of things you want to achieve before you die. Make a list of experiences you want to have before you die. Make a list of things you want others to say about you when you die. (You can use the Notes section of this guide.) Not to be morbid, but examine this list. Surely it contains noble attributes. But would you trade any or all of those things for eternal life with Christ? The easy answer is no. But the real answer is to be played out in your life as you live each day. Today, make a priority list of five things to do today, but make sure you include the one thing you would never trade anything for.

Friday

Read Joshua 24:15.

Reflect on experiences in your life when you were torn between two good things. How do you make decisions in the here and now about noble things to achieve? By what reference point do you look at the things you want or choose to do? Take time to ruminate on a biblical character who had to make big decisions that were monumental to the ultimate outcome of their life. As you look at their story, consider how your story resonates with the great challenge for all who choose to follow Christ—the challenge to make Him first and best above all.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 53; 54; 57.

*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.