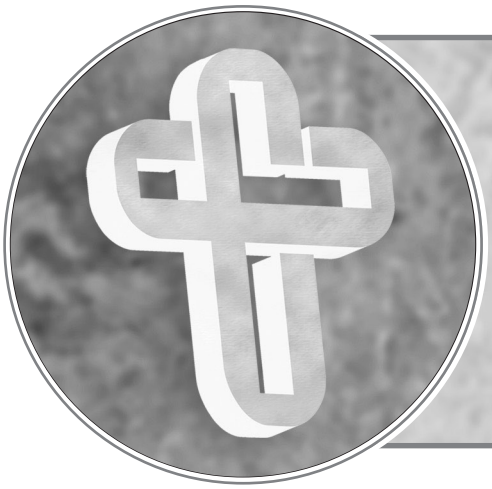


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 06 2025

first witness

Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 82.
Key Text: John 20:17.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Mary Magdalene's reaction to Jesus' crucifixion is perhaps the most heartrending of all of Jesus' followers. We can picture her tear-stained face and hear her sobbing cries of anguish. The Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus have a very human face, and that face is Mary's.

Mary of Magdala loved Jesus very much, and for good reason. Mark 16:9 tells us that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. That's reason enough to make anyone rejoice, but Mary was also a prostitute. Mary's gratitude for what Jesus had done in her life preceded His death. It was this same Mary who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, to the utter dismay of everyone gathered at Simon's house that day (Luke 7). She had been forgiven much, so she loved much.

Mary's all-encompassing love of Christ won her a revelation that no other human being could match. She was the first person to witness Jesus in His glorified post-death state. Jesus conversed with her and comforted her before He did so for any of His disciples. This is one of the most important points to be emphasized this week. Those who love Jesus with their whole heart and seek after Him will be given fresh revelations of God's divine grace.

Also, it bears noting that in patriarchal culture, Jesus chose to show His glorified state to a woman. Jesus broke many social taboos of His day, and this is one more poignant example of that.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that God offers hope to all who are brokenhearted. *(Know)*
- Experience the joy of knowing that God has a unique role for each of them to play in His plan of redemption. *(Feel)*
- Embrace the joy of knowing that Jesus rose from the dead and offers this hope to them. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Nature of Humanity, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 7: "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:4;

4:7, 8, 11, 20.)"

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.*

The purpose of this activity is to get the students thinking about the role of women in Scripture. You may expand the activity by focusing on the exploits of other women in Scripture, such as Rahab, Huldah, and Dorcas, to name a few.

There are some who criticize what they consider the Bible's "servile" roles for women in Scripture. Remind the students that the Bible records the stories within the cultural framework of the time in which the events occurred. This does not mean that God approved or sanctioned social mores that subjugated women. This week's lesson gives us a picture of how God views the role of women in His plan.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The September 29, 1992, edition of *Today in the Word*, a daily devotional by Moody Bible Institute, carried the following story:

"Edith Rockefeller McCormick, the daughter of John D. Rockefeller, maintained a large household staff. She applied one rule to every servant without exception: they were not permitted to speak to her. The rule was broken only once, when word arrived at the family's country retreat that their young son had died of scarlet fever.

"The McCormicks were hosting a dinner party, but following a discussion in the servants' quarters it was decided that Mrs. McCormick needed to know right away. When the tragic news was whispered to her, she merely nodded her head and the party continued without interruption."

To be sure, Mrs. Edith McCormick felt the pain of the loss of her young son, but her high breeding didn't allow for a public show of emotion—even at the death of her child. We all deal with grief differently, but one thing is for sure: if we live long enough on this sinful planet, we will all grieve over something or someone.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Can you imagine what it must have taken for Edith Rockefeller McCormick to continue sitting there at a dinner party while the news of her son's death hung in the air? Her reaction begs the question: Did she really love her son?

Now contrast her reaction with that of Mary Magdalene in the aftermath of the death of Jesus. One gets the sense that had it not been for the Sabbath, Mary would have remained at Jesus' tomb until the angel showed up to call Him back to life. Mary's grief gave way to hope and joy as she met the resurrected Savior.

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.*

- John's Resurrection narrative is unique in several ways. For instance, John is the only person who mentions that Jesus' burial cloth was folded neatly along with the strips of linen used to wrap Him. Luke mentions the strips of linen, but he omits the folding nugget. Why do you think John mentioned this? This detail should not be overlooked, especially by teenagers who hate to clean their rooms! It is also important because the Jewish leaders alleged that someone had stolen Jesus' body. Thieves would not have stopped to fold clothes.
- Peter and John rushed to the tomb once Mary and the other women told the disciples that Jesus' body was missing. Luke 24:12 makes clear that even after seeing the empty tomb and grave clothes, Peter left "wondering to himself what had happened" (NIV). The disciples did not understand Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' resurrection, and they had forgotten His words.
- The first recorded words of Jesus after He had risen were: "Woman, why are you crying?" (John 20:13, NIV). Jesus knew why Mary was weeping. Why did He ask her this question? Might this question be linked to the hope that Jesus had spoken about before His crucifixion? Perhaps Jesus was asking a deeper question: Why are

you weeping when I told you that I would rise again?

- The students were asked to share two lessons that they might take away from the *Into the Story* passage. One takeaway is the blessing that comes to those who seek earnestly after Christ. Another is the tender compassion that Jesus showed toward those who were brokenhearted at His death. Jesus was the first Comforter sent by God to earth.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Psalm 39:7; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Lamentations 3:24.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. **Cosmic Conflict.** The resurrection of Jesus fits into the struggle between God and Satan, and we must never forget this. Isaiah 14:12-15 gives a description of the thinking that led God to expel Satan and his followers from heaven. Revelation 12:12 describes Satan's attitude when he was hurled out of heaven, and gives this frightful warning: "But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short" (NIV).

Satan's anger at God has been directed toward the inhabitants of earth. It is his goal to destroy every human being by any means necessary. Jesus chose to come to earth that He might save us—not in the might of His divine nature, but in the weakness of humanity. The resurrection of Jesus not only saved humanity; it also sealed Satan's fate. The only parts left in this cosmic drama are the second coming of Jesus to retrieve the righteous, the millennium examination of life's record, and the end of sin forever.

2. **Quick Stop.** After His resurrection, Jesus forbade Mary to touch Him until He had returned to God the Father. Though Jesus had died, the acceptance of His life as a ransom for sinful humanity was not just dependent on what He had done. The sacrifice had to be accepted by God, as was the case in the earthly Jewish sacrificial system. Ellen White notes: "He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of men had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life. The Father ratified the covenant made with Christ, that He would receive repentant and obedient men, and would love them even as He loves His Son" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 790).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Joy was the emotion that enveloped the disciples in the days following the resurrection of Jesus. Ask the students to close their eyes and picture the

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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Unlock the Talk

Getting teens to talk in Sabbath School—about the lesson, that is—can be tough. Many times teens haven't formed opinions about the material, or worse yet, they don't want to share them in a high-pressure environment. Here are a few ways to get your teens talking and sharing.

1. Look for opportunities to keep the conversation peer centered. Look for opportunities to have the teens break up into pairs or small groups where they can talk together and come up with responses.
2. Keep discussions fairly brief, unless the teens take hold of a topic and seek more interaction time.
3. Once students begin sharing, someone will likely say something wrong or slightly embarrassing, etc. Correct these errors in a general way. Avoid drawing attention to individual students, if possible.

newly resurrected Christ walking toward them. His face is glowing. His clothing is luminescent. A warm smile greets each of them as He extends His arms. This is their personal Savior, and the Savior of the world.

Ask the students to think of something they want to say to Jesus. Maybe they want to thank Him for something, ask His forgiveness for something, etc. Allow the students a minute of silence to converse with Jesus.

Close with a prayer thanking Jesus for His sacrifice and the hope of eternal life.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

"Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning," wrote the psalmist David (Psalm 30:5, NIV). Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, the disciples, and all the other unmentioned believers who witnessed the resurrected Lord would testify to the truth of David's words.

Mary Magdalene was the first person to arrive at Jesus' tomb. She embodied the pain that everyone felt. When she discovered that Jesus' body was missing, a sad terror sent her running to the disciples for help. In the next frantic moments, Mary yearned to know what had become of her Lord. The answer came from Christ Himself.

Jesus appeared to her before He had even returned to see His Father. He appeared to His disciples only after He had gone back to His Father and returned. Mary Magdalene was no spiritual giant of her time. She was a simple sinner who believed that Jesus could change her life. He did, and she remained forever grateful. For this devotion, she received a unique honor.

The lesson teaches us that God sees our sorrows and offers us hope that is found only in Christ.



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 82.

Humble Hero is book 3 in a special adaptation of the Conflict of the Ages series, created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Read more about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 82.

first witness



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "'"

(John 20:17, NIV)

flashlight

"Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, that He had broken the fetters of the tomb, and could no longer be held by the enemy death; to reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them again and again. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them. Go tell My brethren, He said, that they meet Me in Galilee" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 793).

what do you think?

Most of the time when people assemble lists of great Bible figures, few women are mentioned. Yet women have played a variety of unique and important roles in God's unfolding plan of salvation.

Here are five great Bible heroines. Match each name with the clue that best matches each of them.

____ Deborah
____ Ruth
____ Abigail
____ Esther
____ Mary

a. She bravely went before a king to save her people.
b. A prophet and judge of Israel (Judges 4).
c. A faithful foreigner who served her mother-in-law.
d. Her common sense and quick thinking saved her family's life (1 Samuel 25).
e. She was chosen to bear the Son of God (Luke 1).

did you know?

Did you know that Mary Magdalene got her name from the town of Magdala where she lived? Magdala was a small fishing town located on the Sea of Galilee. The Scriptures record that Jesus visited Magdala once during His earthly ministry (Matthew 15:39). It was during this visit that Jesus delivered Mary of Magdala from demon possession. She never forgot how Jesus set her free and her devotion to Christ continued after His death.

INTO THE STORY

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

"So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. "Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

"They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

"'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

"Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

"She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

"Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'

"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her."

(John 20:1-18, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Go through this week's Scripture story and put an *X* by parts of the story that are new to you. Look for something you had not caught or realized before.

The writer of this narrative is John. Did you notice how John referred to himself during this episode? Did you catch the fact that he made sure everyone knew that he "outran" Peter in getting to Jesus' tomb. Why did he note this fact?

_____
_____
_____

What is the attitude of the women who came to Jesus' tomb? How was this an act of heroism, given the fact that a rabid mob had just crucified their Lord two days earlier?

_____
_____
_____

Why did Mary Magdalene remain at the tomb weeping? What kind of relationship do you think she had with Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

What do you think caused Mary not to recognize Jesus? How can that happen to us today?

_____
_____
_____

What two lessons can you take away from this biblical episode?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love" **(John 15:9, NIV).**

"Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother' " **(Matthew 12:49, 50, NIV).**

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" **(Psalm 30:5, NIV).**

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" **(Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).**

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" **(1 John 3:1, NIV).**

further insight

"Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785

Sabbath

Read Matthew 12:49, 50, and Luke 24:1-12.

How did you do matching up the biblical names of heroines in the *What Do You Think?* section with the clues describing their contributions in Scripture? For the record, the answers are: (a) Esther; (b) Deborah; (c) Ruth; (d) Abigail; (e) Mary.

According to Luke, who were the first people to arrive at Jesus' tomb on the day of the resurrection?

_____

_____

Peter and John came to the tomb. But where were all the *others* who had vowed never to leave Jesus' side?

Sunday

Read John 20:1-17.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage by answering the *Out of the Story* questions. Jesus had many more followers than the 12 disciples we have all come to know. Some of His most devoted disciples were women, some of whom came to His tomb to care for His body.

Imagine that you were one of the women who saw Jesus' empty tomb. What words would you use to describe the experience? Read John 20:1-17 once again and then share five words that would have best captured the moment for you. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

Monday

Read John 20:17.

This week's *Key Text* is one of the most powerful texts in the Bible.

Who is Jesus talking to in this scripture?

_____

What is the main message that Jesus is communicating?

_____

_____

The first human to see the resurrected Christ was a once demon-possessed woman. Not only that, but Jesus told her His future plans and then trusted her to deliver this news to His disciples. God gave to Mary Magdalene a privilege that no other human—male or female—could claim.

What's the message here?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read John 15:9.

This week's *Flashlight* has a sense of urgency to it.

What did Jesus say to His disciples in John 16:22?

_____

_____

How about Matthew 20:17-19?

_____

_____

Jesus did everything He could to prepare His disciples for His death, by pointing them to the Resurrection. This was the hope that He was eager to communicate to Mary Magdalene, His disciples, and all of us today. Because Jesus conquered death, we need not fear it. We have hope!

Wednesday

Read 1 John 3:1.

Have you noticed the not-so-hidden theme in this week's *Punch Lines*? The theme can be summed up in one word—love.

While reading this week's Scripture story, did you notice anything peculiar? Where were Jesus' family members?

What does John 19:25-27 tell us about how Jesus viewed His family?

_____

_____

Jesus said in Matthew 12:49, 50 that those who do the will of His Father were His true family. The people who wept bitterly over the death of Jesus, and made their way to His tomb at the first opportunity, were those who had surrendered their lives to His Father's will. They were His family.

Thursday

Read Psalm 30:5.

A teen guy posted the following message online:

"Dear God, life seems so rough right now, and I'm all but ready to give up on everything, including life. This period of pain has been going on for over a year, and it is affecting both me and my family. I pray that happiness can find me again, that the sun will come out, and that I can once again find reasons to love life. I don't want to live like this anymore. Please help me."

Based on what you learned this week, what would you say to encourage this guy?

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 6:5.

One day Jesus will break through the heavens and return to earth to save all who have confessed and accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. That is the blessed hope that keeps God's earthly family going. What are you doing to prepare for Jesus' soon return?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapter 82.

*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.