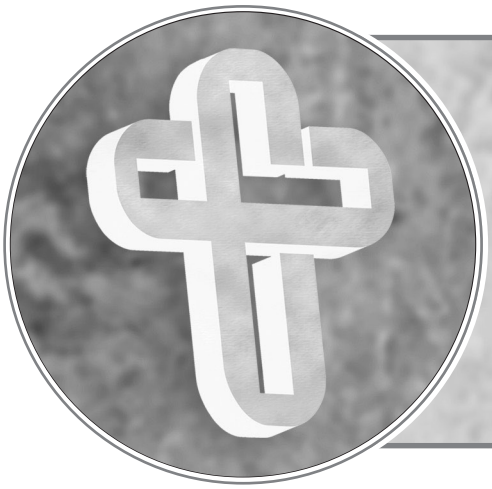


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 2025

making things right

Scripture Story: Luke 24:33-48; John 20:19-29; 21:1-22.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 84; 85.
Key Text: John 21:15.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples were emotionally exhausted and in need of encouragement. They were still drained from grief, yet excited at the knowledge that Jesus had risen from the dead. The stress and pressure was affecting each of them differently. Thomas decided not to believe, pulling away from his friends and not believing their word that they had indeed seen Jesus in the flesh and alive. Faced with all of their personal stories, he simply shut the door on the possibility unless he were to see it himself. He separated himself from the strength and comfort of his friends, emotionally pushing away from them.

Peter, on the other hand, longed to belong with the other disciples the way he used to. But when he denied Jesus in His weakest hour, Peter had lost their respect and trust. He had used to be a loud-mouthed fellow, speaking his mind before he knew it himself. He bragged that he loved Jesus more than the others did. But now that he had been tested and failed, he was publicly humiliated and distanced from the group.

Jesus not only had a commission for His disciples to go out and preach to all the world, but He also wanted to reunite them into the bonded group they used to be. Thomas needed to be shown the proof he required to bring him back into unity with the believing group. Peter needed an opportunity to show himself loyal to Jesus after his denial. Jesus also needed to show the others that He had forgiven Peter and that He still trusted him with the important work to be done.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand their need for other people and relationships. *(Know)*
- Sense their need for God's intervention to heal breaches in trust as well as damage to their own self-worth from past mistakes. *(Feel)*
- Turn to God to heal their hearts and help them build and nurture relationships with the people around them. *(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.*

Invite the students to share their own defense tactics that they use when they are uncomfortable, ill at ease, or under stress. How do they respond? Do they pull away from the group? Do they seek solace with other people? Do they get quiet or tight-lipped?

Make a list of all the different reactions to stress and post it where everyone can see it. Go through each point and ask what their first response would be if they saw a person acting this way. Would they assume the person was rude? Would they avoid the person? Would they recognize someone in need of help?

Illustration

"Three times Peter had openly denied his Lord, and three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty, pressing home that pointed question, like a barbed arrow to his wounded heart. Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter's repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple.

"Peter was naturally forward and impulsive, and Satan had taken advantage of these characteristics to overthrow him. Just before the fall of Peter, Jesus had said to him, "Satan hath desired to have [you], that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' (Luke 22:31, 32). That time had now come, and the transformation in Peter was evident. The close, testing questions of the Lord had not called out one forward, self-sufficient reply; and because of his humiliation and repentance, Peter was better prepared than ever before to act as shepherd to the flock. . . .

"Before his fall, Peter was always speaking unadvisedly, from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say. But the converted Peter was very different. He retained his former fervor, but the grace of Christ regulated his zeal. He was no longer impetuous, self-confident, and self-exalted, but calm, self-possessed, and teachable. He could then feed the lambs as well as the sheep of Christ's flock.

"The Saviour's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love" (Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 224).

Peter was forgiven and reunited with his fellow disciples in service to God and to the lost sheep of Israel. His words of encouragement to trust and remain faithful to God are as much for us today as they were for his time.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes we don't think that other people's problems affect us a great deal. We wish they wouldn't bother us. But we aren't as independent as we might like to think. We were created to need each other, and only when we care for each other are we truly secure and happy. Even the disciples had to learn that lesson, and Jesus took great pains to show them just how much they needed to be a united group.

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.*

- In what ways does Jesus show the disciples that He loves them?
- When could Jesus have given the disciples a talking to, or a rude awakening?
- What was Jesus trying to do when He questioned Peter?
- Why was this way of reaching His goal the kindest and gentlest way to achieve it?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Job 42:7-17; 1 Corinthians

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

One-Minute Learning

Do a one-minute paper at the end of class. In this exercise, students write down what they consider (a) the main point of the class and (b) the main question they still have as they leave. Collect and read these unsigned papers. You can use some of these questions to begin the next lesson.

This technique keeps the students attentive during class and also helps you gauge where the students are in their learning. Where are they spiritually? What ideas can you focus on next Sabbath to help them in their personal experience with God?

—Taken from: trc.virginia.edu/Publications/Teaching_Concerns/Spring_1995/TC_Spring_1995_Students_Thinking.htm.

12:12-30; 13.

Sharing Context and Background

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

When Jesus died, the disciples were put through the most emotional, stressful times of their lives up to that point. Not only were their hopes dashed that Jesus had, in fact, been the Messiah, but they also lost a close friend in the cruelest way that Rome could think up. They were grief-stricken for their personal loss. But they were also second-guessing everything they thought they knew up to that point. Had Jesus really been the Christ? Had everything they had grown to trust and believe been false? If He did not overthrow Rome and become their king, had He lied about who He was? They were also afraid for their own lives. What would happen to them, Jesus' devoted followers, if the Jewish leaders and Rome would crucify Jesus?

When Jesus rose from the dead and showed Himself to them, the disciples were overjoyed! However, this was an equally emotionally intense time for them. The shock of Jesus rising from the dead, the remembering of Jesus' words that pointed to this, and the emotional jolt each time they saw Him, was taking its toll on them. They would gather together to encourage each other and remind each other of Jesus' promises. But not everyone responded to this stressful time in the same way.

Peter and the others had been fishermen up to the point when Jesus called them. Some theologians conjecture that they had not been successful in the rabbinical schools and had been forced to take up their fathers' trades. When Jesus called them to follow Him, He had shown them their value to Him. But when Jesus died, and even after He had risen,

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.*

they felt lost. What would they do? How would they support themselves? The whirlwind time with Jesus was over, so they turned back to what they knew—fishing.

Even in the fishing boat, they were talking about Jesus. This was a time of transition, and while they knew that Jesus had risen, they also knew that things would never be the same again. Peter had lost the respect of his friends and fellow disciples. He was not the loyal follower of his Master that he had believed he was. The others felt let down too. Even in the joy of Jesus' resurrection they felt lost and disillusioned. They needed something . . . Someone to reunite them.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to think of one way in which they would like to contribute to the church as a Sabbath School class. Perhaps they will want to help with song service, welcome visitors, or help in an outreach for the community. They might not have a solid idea right away, but ask them to think about it and come to Sabbath School the next week with an idea.

What makes them feel that they are part of the church? What makes them feel that they contribute and are appreciated? How would they like to make that happen?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Unity was important to Jesus, but it was also important to the disciples. They wanted to be united. Peter wanted to be part of the group, respected once more. God wants us to be united because that is how He created us to be happiest, most useful, and most secure. Belonging is important on many levels of the human experience.

Belonging in a spiritual family is a key part of our spiritual growth. We need each other for encouragement, accountability, and friendship. When we join with other believers . . . really join with them—not just sitting in a service and then escaping—we experience the fellowship that God intended for us to enjoy.

Sometimes, like Peter, we have to make up for past mistakes. Sometimes, like Thomas, we have to choose to believe instead of choosing not to. The end result is the same, however. We are no longer struggling alone.



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 84, 85.

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: Luke 24:33-48; John 20:19-29; 21:1-22.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 84; 85.

making things right



Photo © Thinkstock 2021

keytext

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

" 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' "

(John 21:15, NIV)

flashlight

"Another lesson Christ had to give, relating especially to Peter. Peter's denial of his Lord had been in shameful contrast to his former professions of loyalty. He had dishonored Christ, and had incurred the distrust of his brethren. They thought he would not be allowed to take his former position among them, and he himself felt that he had forfeited his trust. . . . The Saviour gave him opportunity to regain the confidence of his brethren, and, so far as possible, to remove the reproach he had brought upon the gospel" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 811).

what do you think?

Answer the following questions, giving your most honest answer:

1. Where do you feel the most loved and accepted?
2. What makes you feel loved and accepted? What can a person do to show that they care for you in a way that is meaningful to you?
3. Is it possible to love others without first loving yourself?
4. Is it possible to love someone if you are holding a grudge?
5. Is it possible to love yourself if you haven't forgiven yourself for your shortcomings?
6. What is your strongest defense reflex when you are feeling insecure or unaccepted?
7. At what times do you find yourself using those words or actions?

did you know?

According to a study done by the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, the lack of a sense of belonging has been associated with loneliness, emotional distress, psychological disturbance, and mental illness. They wanted to discover if a sense of belonging could actually work as a buffer against clinical depression in people who were at high risk for depression based on their family history, etc. The result? Yes! A sense of belonging makes a huge difference!

INTO THE STORY

" 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

"Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

"He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?'

" 'No,' they answered.

"He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

"Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. . . .

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

" 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

"Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

"Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

"He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

"Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

"The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

"Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

"Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

"Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'

"Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.'"

(John 21:3-8, 15-22, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What was Jesus trying to do when He questioned Peter about his love for Him?

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How did Peter seem to feel about this questioning?

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What would Peter's public insistence of his love for Jesus do for those who were listening, especially after Peter denied Jesus three times when He was arrested?

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Was Jesus' forgiveness of Peter enough to allow Peter to go on with the work Jesus had given them to preach the gospel? What more was needed, both from Peter and from the other disciples?

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Have we really accepted God's forgiveness if we refuse to forgive ourselves?

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punch lines

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" **(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NIV).**

"'Come now, let us settle the matter,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'" **(Isaiah 1:18, NIV).**

"Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'" **(Luke 7:50, NIV).**

"Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap" **(Ecclesiastes 11:4, NIV).**

"Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" **(Psalm 51:7, NIV).**

further insight

"The reproach of the disciple's sin is cast upon Christ. It causes Satan to triumph, and wavering souls to stumble. By giving proof of repentance, the disciple, so far as lies in his power, is to remove this reproach."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 811

Sabbath

Read John 20:19-29.

Answer the *What Do You Think?* questions. Thomas chose not to believe in Jesus' resurrection. But even though he put up a strong defense against believing, Jesus gave Thomas the proof he had been insisting he have before choosing to believe with the other disciples. Instead of judging Thomas' stubbornness, look at what he might have been feeling to cause him to pull away from the group and separate himself beliefwise. How do we do the same thing, and why?

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Sunday

Read Isaiah 1:18.

Answer the *Out of the Story* questions. Peter had fallen in the eyes of the other disciples and the other believers. He had been the loudest talker, but when the test came, Peter had denied Jesus three times in His time of need. Jesus used His questioning of Peter to give him a chance to publicly declare his love for his Master, and to help build a bridge for Peter to become fully accepted by the other 11 once more. Why was it Jesus' deliberate intention that Peter be united with the group again? What could unity do for both Peter and the others?

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Monday

Read John 21:15.

Jesus tells Peter what he must do—"Feed My lambs." This was not only his direction for the ministry—to nurture the new believers who needed gentle care and guidance—but also instructions about how to become united with the believers once more. Peter would be united when he worked side by side with his brothers. By working together, they would be united in their goal, and there would be ample opportunity to build trust once more. The same advice holds for us. How can you contribute to the call to feed the lambs?

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Tuesday

Read Psalm 51:7.

Ellen White tells us that Jesus was giving Peter a chance to make up for his past mistakes. Jesus had forgiven Peter, but Peter still needed to be reinstated with the other disciples. We make our own share of mistakes too. Life is a learning experience, and we aren't always going to get it right on the first try. Is Jesus' forgiveness always enough, or do we sometimes have to take an extra step (with Jesus' help) to make up with the people we have let down? In what ways might we be able to regain trust in broken relationships? What opportunities do you see to mend fences with people you might have hurt in the past?

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Wednesday

In this week's *Punch Lines* we can learn that God is willing to forgive us and make us clean. All we have to do is come to Him in faith and ask for forgiveness.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 tells us that if we are focused on things that might scare us or make us anxious, we won't get anything useful done. This is also true about our past mistakes. If we can't forgive ourselves, we will never be able to move forward and be the people God intends us to be. Refusing to forgive ourselves also affects our relationships. Relationships matter, and it is God's will that we have happy, functional relationships to fulfill our lives. "Two are better than one" and "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

For what do you need to forgive yourself? How can receiving this forgiveness allow you to move forward?

Thursday

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

People are the true treasures of life, and we should not take them for granted. How can you become more closely united with your family, friends, and church? How can you contribute to these relationships in such a way that you can make them happier for having known you? If unity is this important to God, how important should it be to us?

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Friday

Read Proverbs 12:26.

The most frustrating and challenging aspect of life is the maintenance of relationships. Books abound, exploring how to build and maintain relationships with everyone from your family members to your coworkers to random people you meet who might be important to you later. It's not always easy! Relationships, however, are also the most satisfying part of life. It isn't possible to have solid, strong relationships if you haven't taken care of things inside yourself.

How can God help you to be complete within so that you can have satisfying relationships with other people?

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this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 84; 85.

*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.