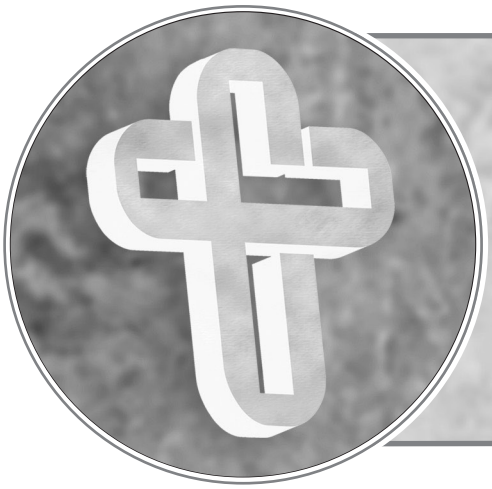


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER 04 2025

keeping it real!

Scripture Story: Matthew 21:1-19, 23-46; Mark 11:1-21, 27-33; 12:1-12; Luke 19:29-48; 20:1-19; John 12:12-19.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 63-65.
Key Text: Luke 19:41, 42.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Nothing was as it seemed. A joyful multitude celebrated Christ as King. Prophecy was being fulfilled, and the people finally *appeared* to be accepting God's Son. However, this was not the case. The same people who shouted "Hosanna" would cry "Crucify Him" just days later.

The priests and Pharisees, who were supposed to be leading the people to God, did all they could to deter people from following Christ. Jesus continued to challenge their pretense and false piety. Thus, they were determined more than ever to rid themselves of Him.

God's people turned out not to be His people after all. It was all a show! For centuries they sang, prayed, and looked for the Messiah. When the Son of God came, they rejected Him. Nothing was as it seemed.

Even Jesus showed a few surprises. In the midst of His grand parade, Jesus showed great pain as He wept over Jerusalem and the hypocrisy of those around Him. Though He came to bless, the disciples witnessed Jesus curse a fig tree, which, like Israel, was not as it seemed. It appeared to have fruit, but it was barren! *Nothing* was as it seemed.

This lesson is about Jesus' frustration with fake spirituality. He is truth, but He was constantly surrounded by lies. This story also serves as a warning to us to be authentic in our relationship with Christ. God is looking for people who are totally committed to Him and bear the fruits of love, obedience, and humility.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the relationship between God's mercy and judgment. *(Know)*
- Sense the heart of God concerning sin and its consequence. *(Feel)*
- Evaluate the authenticity of their own spiritual life. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10: "In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor.

5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)"

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.*

Have students get into pairs. Each student should come up with one "Would you rather . . ." scenario (see the What Do You Think? section for examples) to ask their partner. Give them time to discuss with their partner and then bring the class back together.

Discuss the last scenario in the *What Do You Think?* section. Ask students whether they think it is better to be a hardened criminal who everyone knows is bad or to be a hardened criminal who attends church and has the people around him thinking he is a saint. What are the seeming advantages of each position? What are the disadvantages? Which do you think God prefers? Why? How do your answers reflect this quote in *The Desire of Ages*? "He declares that the open sinner is less guilty than is he who professes to serve God, but who bears no fruit to His glory" (p. 584).

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 1979 New York weatherman Bob Harris, or "Dr. Bob" as he was known, faced his own personal storm. He had created quite a name for himself in the New York area. Sometime earlier, he had contacted the CBS television station and introduced himself as a Ph.D. in geophysics from the prestigious Columbia University. Truth be told, he had studied math, physics, and geology at three different colleges but never finished any degree. He decided he wanted to be a weatherman. Well, his phony degree paved the way. Before long, "Dr. Bob" began work as an off-camera weatherman for WCBS. His career took off as he began to work for other stations and even did weather for a nationally syndicated news program. He also worked for the baseball commissioner, the Long Island Railroad, and the New York *Times*.

He was just 40 years old when it all began to crumble. An anonymous letter came to the television station that caused his superiors to check out his credentials. It was then they found out that Dr. Bob was a fraud. The television station and the New York *Times* fired him. His story made national news, and he suffered public humiliation. Bob Harris was pretending to be something he was not and it finally caught up with him. He lost his job. It is a mistake he will always regret.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Bob Harris was not the only one who was pretending to be something he was not. This week's lesson is filled with people who claimed to be one thing although they were something else. This week's story also records Jesus' strong reaction to folks' phoniness. He cried. He cursed a fig tree. He even overturned tables. Why? Because if there's one thing that God doesn't like, it's hypocrisy! God calls for us to keep it real.

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.*

- *Circle* the people and things in this story that appeared to be something they were not.
- *Place a star* by the character you most identify with.
- The same people who praised Jesus on Sunday yelled for Him to be crucified on Friday. How could this happen?
- Why was Jesus irritated with the fig tree?
- Do you think Jesus overreacted in this story? Why or why not?
- Jesus told a parable about a man who had two sons. He asked them to work. One said, "Yes, sir," but never went to work. One said, "No," but regretted it and went to work anyway. Which one did the will of the father? Why? What does this passage teach us about God?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Matthew 21:28-32, 42-45; Isaiah 1:16, 17; 28:21; Hosea 11:8; 13:9; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Beating Boredom

We have all had disruptive students. Oftentimes, disruptions come as a result of boredom. One way to curb disruptions and boredom is to keep students engaged both physically and mentally. Allow students to move around, to work in groups, and to discover information on their own. Also, you can break the monotony of ordinary questions and answers. Accept responses to questions in creative ways other than verbally spoken. For example, in this week's *Out of the Story* section, the question is asked, "What character in the story do you most identify with? Why?" Allow students to write, draw, sing, or even rap a response.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Jesus' earthly ministry was coming to an end. His ministry was often marked by hardship and humility. As Jesus marched into Jerusalem during His final week, He was met with royal treatment. People cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The disciples longed for this kind of recognition. It seemed they were finally coming into their own.

More than fulfilling the disciples' dreams, Jesus was fulfilling the words of prophecy. Zechariah 9:9 prophesied that the Messiah would come to Jerusalem riding on a donkey. This was the Jewish custom for the entry of a king. The people, sensing what was taking place, began shouting honor due only to the King of kings.

The crowd was filled with those whose lives Jesus had transformed. Those who were healed from blindness led the processional. Those who could not speak before Jesus healed them shouted the loudest praise. Those who used to be lame leaped for joy! Lazarus, who was raised from the dead, led the donkey on which Christ rode. This commotion infuriated the Pharisees. When they couldn't contain it, they became more bent on Jesus' demise.

As the processional reached the crest of the hill, Jesus stopped. As He saw Jerusalem in all her jeweled splendor, something welled up within Him. It was not the pride or joy the accompanying crowd felt. Jesus was overcome by heart-wrenching grief. As He looked at Jerusalem, He could see the destruction that awaited her because she would not turn from her ways. He also saw what she would have been had she remained faithful to God.

Israel had only a form of godliness. She carried out rituals and was steeped in religion, but was far from the God to which they pointed. God had given much mercy, grace, and love. He was now giving His only Son, but Israel refused to change her ways.

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 fig tree Jesus found on the way to Jerusalem was a great illustration for Israel. Fruit grows on fig trees *before* the leaves do, so when Jesus saw this tree full of leaves, it was supposed to be full of fruit. Though it had a form of fruitfulness, it was barren like all the other trees. The pretentiousness of Israel, (appearing to be godly, yet being so godless), is what angered God. "He declares that the open sinner is less guilty than is he who professes to serve God, but who bears no fruit to His glory" (*The Desire of Ages,* p. 584).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student a piece of paper and instruct them to draw a large clock. Ask students to draw a picture beside three times of the day when they think they might be tempted not to be real in their relationship with Jesus. Have students break into groups of three and share their pictures. Afterward, have students pray for one another to be authentic in their spiritual walk, even when tempted to do otherwise.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Sin is serious to God and should also be serious to us. In His mercy, God gives us grace, but a time is coming when mercy will end and judgment will begin. In our story, God's patience with pretense had run out for Israel. God had done all He could do to show Israel His love for them, including emptying heaven of His only Son. Israel rejected Jesus and the freedom He came to give. Israel would much rather serve God with their lips than with their lives.

Jesus wept bitterly over the judgment Israel would now face. Oh, how He loved them! Oh, how He loves us! Christ desires that we, too, be changed inside and out. He wants us to live for Him not just on the weekends, but every day. He is not looking for us to conform for our teachers or parents. God wants us to be transformed into disciples who serve Him with our whole heart!



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 63-65.

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

OCTOBER042025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 21:1-19, 23-46; Mark 11:1-21, 27-33; 12:1-12; Luke 19:29-48; 20:1-19; John 12:12-19.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 63-65.

keeping it real!



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"In every age there is given to men their day of light and privilege, a probationary time in which they may become reconciled to God. But there is a limit to this grace. Mercy may plead for years and be slighted and rejected; but there comes a time when mercy makes her last plea. The heart becomes so hardened that it ceases to respond to the Spirit of God. Then the sweet, winning voice entreats the sinner no longer, and reproofs and warnings cease" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 587).

keytext

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.' "

(Luke 19:41, 42, NIV)

what do you think?

Would you rather:

____ Make all your social network posts public?
____ Let the world know what you think of Jesus?
____ Spend two years in jail for a crime you didn't commit?
____ Make people think you are a Christian, even if you don't really believe?
____ Share your faith in Jesus in the most authentic ways, lovingly, with sensitivity toward others, and with the openness to be led by the Holy Spirit?

did you know?

The fig tree is peculiar because the fruit appears before the leaves do. When Jesus was hiking toward Jerusalem, He grew hungry. He saw a fig tree with lots of leaves on it. It wasn't the season for figs, but lots of fig leaves was supposed to mean lots of figs. Jesus found that there were no figs on the tree at all, and He cursed it. Later the disciples found that the tree had died. Was Jesus mad at the tree? No. The figless tree served as a warning to people who try to look holy and pretend to bear good fruit in their actions, but are just putting on a show for others. God wants us to keep it real and keep it right!

INTO THE STORY

"They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

"'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

"'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'"

"Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'

"'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'"

"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!' "

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.' "

"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, '"My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it a "den of robbers."'

"The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant.

"'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him.

"'Yes,' replied Jesus, 'have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?"' . . .

"Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, 'May you never bear fruit again!' Immediately

the tree withered."

(Matthew 21:7-9; Luke 19:39, 40; John 12:19; Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 21:12-19, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the Pharisees were offended by what the people were doing?

_____

What did Jesus say would happen to Jerusalem?

_____

_____

From whom does the Bible say God ordained praise? How can you praise God this week?

_____

_____

The same people who praised Jesus on Sunday yelled for Him to be crucified on Friday. How could this happen?

_____

_____

What was Jesus' reaction to the fig tree? Why?

_____

_____

What character in the story do you most identify with? Why?

_____

_____

What does this passage teach us about God?

_____

_____

How can we use this information in our lives today?

_____

_____

_____

punch lines

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" **(2 Peter 3:9, KJV).**

"Say to them: 'The Lord God says: As surely as I live, I do not want any who are wicked to die. I want them to stop doing evil and live. Stop! Stop your wicked ways! You don't want to die, do you, people of Israel?'" **(Ezekiel 33:11, NCV).**

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" **(1 Peter 3:3, 4, NIV).**

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!" **(Revelation 3:15, NIV).**

"For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" **(1 Peter 4:17, NIV).**

further insight

"Many persons are by their own endeavors hewn, polished, and beautified; but they cannot become 'living stones,' because they are not connected with Christ. Without this connection, no man can be saved."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 599

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 29:13.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you had to answer some pretty difficult questions. The last one deals with whether we are going to be real in our relationship with God. God is looking for wholehearted service and love, not just a show for our parents or church family.

Isaiah 29:13 says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught" (NIV). Jerusalem *appeared* to follow God, but her heart was far from Him. What about you? Is your relationship with God real, or does it only appear so for everybody else?

Sunday

Read 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

Read the *Into the Story* section and then answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section of your lesson. It includes a story about a fig tree. Jesus curses it because it was not bearing fruit. Although it wasn't time for fruit, it was covered with leaves, and that signified that it should have been covered with fruit too. This tree was a hypocrite—appearing to be one thing while being something else.

This is an easy trap to fall into—appearing to be holy or Christian but not really being changed on the inside. To God, not serving Him but telling everyone you are is worse than not serving Him at all! He wants your service, and He wants *all* of it! What are some areas of your life that you need to invite God to take over *fully*?

Monday

Read Luke 19:41, 42.

Consider this week's *Key Text*. In the story of Jesus' great march to Jerusalem, He stopped on the side of the road. Can you imagine the surprise of everyone in Jesus' grand processional when in the midst of their celebration He started crying? Those around Christ thought they were doing Him a favor, but Jesus was able to look past the outward festivities and see their inward falsities. Why do you think Jesus reacted this way?

Their sin broke God's heart. Sin should break our hearts too. Say a prayer today asking God to help you view sin the way He does.

Tuesday

Read Ezekiel 33:11.

In this week's *Flashlight* Ellen White talks about the mercy God gives us as sinners. People often call God "the God of second chances," but the record shows He gives a lot more than two chances. By the time Christ came, humanity had almost 2,000 years of chances. Jesus' coming to earth as a last-ditch effort to save humanity was mercy at its best—but even that was rejected.

What would you do if people continued to reject your help and promise of deliverance? How do you think the story of Jerusalem is similar to our story? What does this reveal about how God will respond to sin in these last days?

_____

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read 2 Peter 3:9.

Have you ever wondered, "If God is so loving, how can He destroy people?" In Isaiah 28:21 the Bible characterizes the punishment for sin as a "strange work" for our merciful God (NIV). He does not delight in it, but judgment and consequences are both necessary to save humanity from complete destruction.

Read this week's *Punch Lines* section. In the lines below, write out what these texts reveal about God.

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Revelation 3:15.

People often use the phrase "Keep it real." This is not a new concept. God has been calling for this since the beginning of time. God presents choices and desperately desires for us to choose Him. He continually calls us to relationship and service with Him. Whatever choice we make, however, God wants us to be honest about it. God is calling for us to keep it real!

If things are not right between you and God, today is a great day to change that! God offers mercy and forgiveness for our sins and mistakes. Pray a prayer confessing your sins to God and ask for His power to keep you from falling.

Friday

Read 1 Peter 4:17.

God is calling us to have a *real* relationship with Him. God is also calling us to have a *right* relationship with Him. Take some time to evaluate your spiritual walk with Christ. Is it authentic? Is your service based on love for God or the desire to please other people? What can you do this week to "keep it real" with Christ and have a more authentic relationship with Him?

_____

_____

_____

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 63-65.

*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.