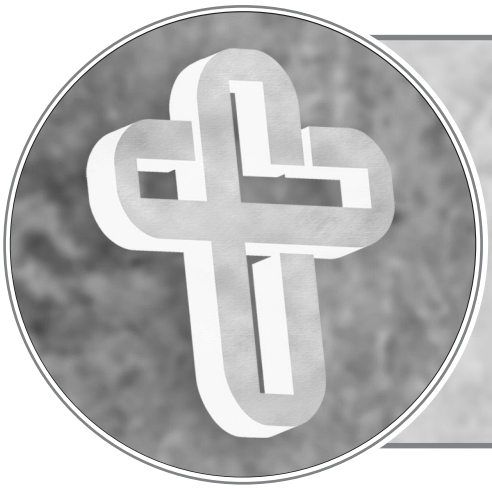


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025

may I help you?

Scripture Story: Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 22:7-18, 24; John 13:1-17.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 70; 71.
Key Text: Matthew 25:40.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Service is often seen as an unpleasant duty, an obligation, or a punishment. However, Jesus taught that serving should be a Christian's way of life. Serving others, however, isn't a theological ideal; it is something that the Holy Spirit whispers to everyone, believer and nonbeliever alike. Ellen White tells us that there will be many people in heaven who never opened a Bible or knew about God, but who followed their consciences and helped people around them.

Jesus taught His disciples about service through an object lesson. When no servant was present to wash their feet, and when the disciples were too filled with their own competitiveness to lower themselves to the task, Jesus did the job Himself—washing their dusty, dirty feet. Jesus was showing them the importance of service. He was also showing them that their perceptions of status and social importance were of no consequence in His kingdom.

Jesus also told the parable of the sheep and the goats. Those who join in God's kingdom and are saved are the ones who fed, clothed, and comforted "the least of these." Service is not only about fund-raising for worthy causes; it also requires you to get your hands dirty with the socially unpopular, the dirty, the poor, the neglected and rejected. The condition of our hearts is not gauged by our lip service or theological stances, but by our actions. How did we treat the most vulnerable around us? When we saw suffering, did we try to relieve it?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that service is the way of life, not a once-in-a-while experience. *(Know)*
- Sense their own responsibility toward the vulnerable people around them. *(Feel)*
- Choose to listen to the Holy Spirit and look for opportunities to serve. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 17: "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching ministries par-

ticularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)"

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 each student make a list of their talents. (There might be singing, drawing, math, athletics, etc.) Have them also list as many strengths as they can think of. Invite the students to share some of their lists with each other. Ask them how they can use their gifts to help other people both now and in the future.

For example, a talent in science might turn a person to becoming a medical doctor one day and helping many sick people. But what can you do with an aptitude for science that can help people right now?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

During the American Revolution a small group of soldiers was laboring to repair a defensive barrier. The work was hard, their backs were sore, and their commanding officer kept barking orders at them from where he stood a few yards away, his arms crossed over his chest. It wasn't a huge job, but it was bigger than the few men could accomplish easily. Their commander was getting more and more irritated with them, shouting for them to hurry up and put their backs into it.

Riding alone in civilian clothes, a man stopped to watch. He rode up to the commanding officer and looked on in silence for several minutes.

"Why don't you help them?" the man asked the commanding officer.

"Sir, I am a corporal!" the officer snapped, irritated at being interrupted in his supervisory role.

The man shrugged his shoulders, dismounted, and went to help the struggling soldiers. He worked with them, muddying his clothes and straining his back right along with them. After some solid work, the job was done. The man wiped his face and hands and walked back to his horse.

"Mr. Corporal," he said. "Next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief and I will come again."

The man was none other than George Washington.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Service is not menial labor. It is not reserved for the lowest members of society. Service is our responsibility to each other. George Washington saw that helping his men would do more for them than simply commanding them. By helping them, by serving by their side, he encouraged them more than a great speech or quotable quote could ever do. He also showed his corporal what leading really means. True leadership is not a "desk job."

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.*

- What kinds of service does Jesus talk about in these passages?
- Where would you rank these service opportunities if they were paying jobs?
- Would they be highly respected, elite jobs?
- What was Jesus trying to explain about serving others?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Mark 9:33-37; 14:1-11; Matthew 15:32.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It is important to remember that society in ancient Judea was stratified. People were born into

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Responses to Silence

Being faced with a classroom full of silent students who will not participate can be a harrowing experience for any teacher. How do you get longer, more meaningful, and more frequent responses from your students? After they give you an initial response, try these tips:

1. Maintain a deliberate silence.
2. Make a declarative statement.
3. Make a reflective statement giving a sense of what the students said.
4. Declare perplexity over the response.
5. Invite elaboration.
6. Encourage other students to comment.
7. Give students time to think after they are questioned.

a particular station in life, and there was very little they could do to move outside of it. You learned the trade of your father if you were male, and you learned to keep house if you were female. If your parents were wealthy and respected, you would also be wealthy and respected. If your parents were poor or had a poor reputation then you would also inherit their poverty or poor esteem in the public eye. One could not easily marry outside one's station, since marriages were arranged between families and the families were mostly concerned with property, wealth, and business connections. Personal attraction didn't factor into marriages at all. If you were poor, you would always be poor. If you were a servant, you didn't have any hope of being anything else. You would marry a servant, and your children would be servants too.

Servants held the low jobs in society. They dealt with the dirt and grime. They washed the smelly feet of their betters, using a bowl of water and their hands to remove the dust and grime. No one wanted to take the position of a servant. It was unthinkable! Respected members of society *acted* like respected members of society. They associated with people of similar ranking and always tried to impress their betters. No one wanted to be mistaken for a lower class than they occupied. It was insulting. It was demeaning.

This is why Jesus' teaching was so radical. Jesus taught that social ranking didn't matter. In God's eyes, we are all equal. Jesus taught that *serving* was the most important aspect of life! This turned their entire social paradigm on its head. Jesus told the common people that they had value outside of the social structure. People would be part of His kingdom based on their ability to serve each other, not based on birth or breeding. According to Jesus' teaching, who your family was, what level of society you belonged to, or how wealthy you were did not matter in God's eyes. In fact, according to some

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.*

scholars, Jesus chose His students from the failures of the rabbinical schools. He chose fishermen who had not made the cut in the school system and had to go take up their fathers' trades.

Jesus called down the pompous rich for their hypocrisy and abuse of the poor. Jesus was indeed a radical.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have each student make a list of five people whom they come across in an average week who could use a helping hand. Examples might include parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, teachers, strangers, bus drivers, fellow students, coworkers, etc. Make the lists as specific as possible. Then have the student write beside each listed person the way they could help them. Encourage the students to choose at least one person from their list and make a point of connecting with and helping that person in some way. Ask them to share their experiences the next week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus taught that a life of service was the key to entering His heavenly kingdom. Knowing theology or even scanning the Bible won't save us. It is easy to get into a rut and think that we are OK with God because our family goes to church or because we read our Bibles from time to time. It takes more than that. We must listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This is part of developing a personal relationship with God. Ser-vice helps us to put the world into God's perspective. The most precious things to God are not the newest gadgets or the corporate climb. God cares about people. When we get that into its proper priority, we understand God better too.



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 70, 71.

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

OCTOBER252025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 22:7-18, 24; John 13:1-17.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 70; 71.

may I help you?



Photo by Alden Ho

keytext

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' "

(Matthew 25:40, NIV)

flashlight

"Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. . . . Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638).

what do you think?

Rate each of these statements from 1 to 5.

1 = strongly agree, and 5 = strongly disagree.

- When my church organizes a community project, I feel I need to help out.
  1 2 3 4 5
- People feel comfortable asking me to help them with things because I generally say yes.
  1 2 3 4 5
- When I agree to help out, it is normally because I feel pressured or guilted into doing it.
  1 2 3 4 5
- I think that people should help themselves and stop being a burden on those around them who do better than they do.
  1 2 3 4 5

did you know?

Community service is often used in U.S. and Canadian courts of law as a special condition of probation. While punishment is part of the reason for this measure, giving the person less free time to enjoy, benefits exist for the convicted individual, the victim, and the community. Community service may help the offender to atone for their crime. It can be used as a substitute for financial compensation if the offender does not have the funds available. It also can contribute to the offender's rehabilitation, instilling a work ethic and sense of pride in contributing to the community.

INTO THE STORY

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

(Matthew 25:31-40, NIV)

"He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

"Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

"'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'

"Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'

"'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'

"Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.'

"'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'"

(John 13:6-10, 13-15, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What kind of service is Jesus telling us to perform?

Whom should we be serving?

What is the result of serving others, both in our lives now and in the life to come?

How is serving others perceived by the secular society?

Whom do you think it would be easiest to serve? Whom would be the hardest, and why?

What would be the modern equivalent of foot washing from Jesus' day?

What kinds of service do we think are beneath us to perform?

punch lines

"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" **(Matthew 5:46, NIV).**

"Whoever seeks good finds favor" **(Proverbs 11:27, NIV).**

"Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land" **(Ecclesiastes 11:2, NIV).**

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love" **(Galatians 5:13, NIV).**

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" **(Luke 22:27, NIV).**

further insight

"The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasures."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 639

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 11:27.

When we look for places to serve others, the person we help is blessed through our good deeds, and we are blessed in return. In order to reap that blessing, our hearts need to be in the right place. We can't enjoy God's rewards while we are trying to show off our "good works." If we are only trying to pad our résumés with community service in order to look more appealing to an employer, then our motives are tainted. Service to others is not about making ourselves look good.

What is your attitude toward service? How can you serve with unselfish motives? What benefits do you see in serving others?

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Sunday

Read John 13:15.

Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15, NIV). Not every person is easy to serve. Some people don't want help. Others are so difficult to be around that even to think about serving them makes us angry. Still others seem to be black holes of neediness, and no matter how much we do for them, they seem to beg for more. Which people do you find it hardest to serve, and why? How can we become capable of this kind of service? Where is the boundary line between serving and being taken advantage of?

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Monday

Read Matthew 25:40.

Who are "the least of these" mentioned in the *Key Text*? Many unattractive and "untouchable" people live in our communities. They make us want to cross the street to get away from them. They may be dirty, smell bad, or have a bad reputation. They may be unpopular, badly dressed, or have poor hygiene. Which of "the least of these" will you come into contact with today? How can you be of service to people who are least valued in your school or your community?

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Tuesday

Read Galatians 5:13.

Knowing what the Bible teaches isn't enough. We can read our Bibles every day, but if we don't put the Word into action, it isn't able to help us grow and change (see James 2:14-18). Although reading God's Word is important, people who may never have had the opportunity to read the Bible will go to heaven because they listened to the Holy Spirit and did what they knew was right. The Holy Spirit will guide you, telling you what is right and what is not, as you personally spend time in Christ's presence and with other believers. How can you make a point of listening closely to that inner voice today?

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Wednesday

Read Luke 22:27.

Position and prestige are important to people in the world. They are concerned about being "upwardly mobile" and looking successful. "The good life" is an expensive life. When we try to keep up with everyone else, all of our time can be used up pursuing the newest gadgets and clothes. But God wants us to see things differently. Jesus didn't come to impress people with His social standing. Instead, He devoted Himself to the people whom no one else wanted to deal with. Which of your priorities might be standing in your way of serving others?

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Thursday

Read Ecclesiastes 11:2.

Life is busy, and you have responsibilities. You might need to keep your grades up, earn money, or take care of family members. Life is not only busy, but it is demanding. There must be a balance between what you do for others and what you do to take care of your own needs. How can you serve others while you are busy going to school, working, and living your life? Must you dedicate time to community service, or are there less structured ways to serve others?

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Friday

Read Matthew 5:46.

When you serve another person, how do you think you grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and morally? What does service do to your heart?

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this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 70; 71.

*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.