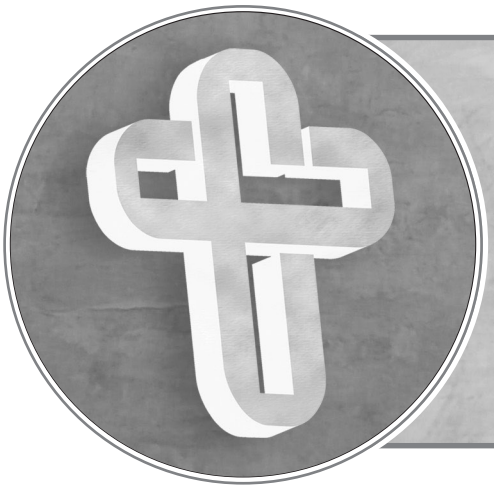


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY–MARCH 2026

reflecting Jesus

Scripture Story: Acts 3; Acts 4:1-31.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 6.
Key Text: Acts 4:13.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Peter and John healing the crippled beggar provides a great launching pad for spiritual conversations on a variety of topics. This healing story is followed with an explanation that Peter preached to the onlookers. Soon the Sanhedrin got involved and before they knew it, Peter and John landed in jail.

The prison gave Peter the opportunity to testify about Jesus. He explained, "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:8-12, NIV).

Regardless of what direction you go with this lesson, it is ultimately about Jesus. A natural emphasis for this Bible passage might be on outreach and service. Keep in mind that the whole narrative is triggered by a service project that John and Peter did for the lame man. Of course, the miracle of healing was performed in the name and power of Christ. Another highlight that merits emphasis is the importance of witnessing. The text provides an ideal case study in how we ought to share our faith. After all, the witnessing in the story is based solely on Jesus—His death, resurrection, and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit.

In presenting this lesson, take your cues from Peter and John—just keep on talking about Jesus. May it be said of you, as it was said of them, "and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, NIV).

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Hear the story of men who changed the world through Christ living in them. *(Know)*
- Sense the compassion that Jesus feels for all of His children. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to share the story of Jesus with people who do not know Him. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Christian Behavior, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 22

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life (Gen. 7:2; Exod. 20:15; Lev. 11:1-47; Ps. 106:3; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 10:5; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:4; 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 John 2:6; 3 John 2).

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.

As an alternate activity, use this scenario:

Divide your class into small groups. Give each group the assignment of designing a seminar entitled "How to Share Christ." Each group should brainstorm a list of as many ideas as possible. Then have the students share their lists with the whole class while you keep a master list. Put an asterisk next to the ideas that at least some people in the class would be willing to implement in the week ahead.

Illustration

In January 2008 a news story hogged the headlines about a 15-year-old girl in Australia named Demi-Lee Brennan. Brennan became the world's first-known transplant patient to change blood types from O negative to O positive, taking on the immune system of her organ donor. Initially, the doctors assumed someone had made a mistake, because the assumption has always been that a change like that can't happen. Now Demi-Lee is dubbed a "one-in-six-billion miracle."

The blood stem cells in Brennan's new liver invaded her body's bone marrow, taking over her entire immune system. She now has an entirely different kind of blood—blood that welcomes life, rather than carrying death. "It's like my second chance at life," Demi-Lee says.

The story is one of good news—for Demi-Lee and many others! The rare phenomenon now means that she no longer has to take a cocktail of antirejection drugs for the rest of her life. She is now a healthy teenager who displays no signs of her ordeal—other than the scar on her body.

Moreover, the success in her procedure gives hope to the 1,800 desperate Australians awaiting a similar transplant. The story is now the subject of medical research being conducted around the globe. Former head of Westmead's liver transplant unit, Dr. Stuart Dorney, comments: "We now need to go back over everything that happened to Demi and see why, and if, it can be replicated."[1]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Demi-Lee's story is not unlike your story and mine. We, too, have been offered a blood transplant—at Calvary. Now our Savior, Jesus Christ, bears the scar of our healing. Consequently, when we put our faith in Jesus, He gives us life eternal. And that is the good news!

Our lesson today tells about a miracle of healing. But it is really about much more than just the healing of the lame man that Peter and John performed in God's Spirit. This story is our story of where we, too, can find life—in Jesus! It is a story we have to share with others. Our lives depend on it.

The lesson this week focuses on Peter. This is the same apostle who wrote a letter to Christians and described the world as full of "lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3, NKJV). Then he adds, "Of course, your old friends don't understand why you don't join in with the old gang anymore. But you don't have to give an account to them. They're the ones who will be called on the carpet—and before God himself. Listen to the Message. It was preached to those believers who are now dead, and yet even though they died (just as all people must), they will still get in on the life that God has given in Jesus" (1 Peter 4:4-6, *The Message*).

Who doesn't want in on "the life that God has given in Jesus"? Sure, we may not fit into this world, but who cares? Life with Jesus is the best way to live.

Peter practiced what he preached. He was not intimidated in the least by the authorities that interrogated him for healing a crippled man. Then they threw Peter in jail for witnessing about Jesus. But He was happy to "stick out" from the crowd for Christ!

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.*

- The lame man begged for money, but Peter gave him something much more valuable—the use of his legs. Have you ever asked God for help in a small matter, only to be surprised by a much grander answer to prayer than you could have imagined? If so, share your story with the rest of the class. Next, discuss the pros and cons of this suggestion when it comes to prayer: "Ask God for what you want, but don't be surprised when He gives you what you *really* need."
- Note that the lame man went "into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8, NIV). Think about what it is that people

get really excited about in our culture today. Concerts? Yes. Football games? Absolutely. Political rallies? Sure. Church? Not so much. Why do you suppose that is? Is it possible or even desirable to try to replicate this lame man's excitement in church?

- Acts 3:10 tells us that people "were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened" to the lame man. Would you characterize what is happening today in the church as something that sparks "wonder and amazement" in onlookers? Why or why not? Are these same kinds of miracles possible today? If so, why do they occur so rarely?
- How do you respond when people grill you with questions about your faith? What can you learn from the way Peter responded to the leaders of the Sanhedrin?
- Acts 4:13 speaks of the "courage of Peter and John." When it comes to witnessing for Jesus, what might "courage" look like for you?

Sharing Context and Background

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

In the ancient world it was often the custom for beggars to sit at the entrance to the Temple. This was a strategic location because when people are on their way to worship God they are disposed to showing compassion to those in need. So this scene of Peter and John going to the Temple at the customary time of prayer (3:00 p.m.) and encountering a crippled beggar was a familiar one. What followed, of course, was anything but ordinary.

Peter commanded the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6, NIV). In other words, Peter was saying "by the authority of Jesus . . ." This healing occurred through the power of the Holy Spirit, not their own.

This miracle attracted a crowd, so Peter capitalized on the opportunity to share Jesus Christ. Notice that Peter clearly presented his message by who Jesus is, how the Jews rejected Him, why this rejection was deadly, and how they needed to respond to set things right with God. Peter shared a message of hope, emphasizing that it was not too late to accept Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.

Peter then called them to repentance: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus" (Acts 3:19, 20, NIV). Note that the result of repentance is that God will bless you with a time of "refreshing." As Hosea put it, "Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth" (Hosea 6:3, NIV). Would you like to be refreshed? It is possible through repentance.

Peter and John then were called to testify before the Jewish council, which was comprised of "the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law" (Acts 4:5, NIV). This was the same council that had condemned Jesus to death (see Luke 22:66). It had 70 members

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite 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 Acts of the Apostles. *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 spoke 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

Teaching by Example

The most powerful way to teach students to share their faith is to live an intentionally evangelistic life. You can use the most advanced teaching techniques in the world, but if you're not actually an active witness for Christ yourself, your teaching will fall flat. The best way to inspire students with the topic of this lesson is to bring someone you have led to Christ and let them share their testimony. Ask your friend to tell of the difference Jesus has made in their life. And don't be surprised when your students take note that you and your saved friend have been with Jesus!

plus the high priest. The majority of the group were Sadducees. They were influential and wealthy men of Jerusalem who did not believe in the Resurrection. Thus, they were highly offended by Peter and John, who "were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2, NIV).

Nevertheless, members of the council were amazed because they knew Peter and John to be unschooled and yet they noticed what being with Jesus had done for these two disciples (Acts 4:13). Seeing the difference that Jesus makes in a person's life is at the heart of the most powerful testimonies.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Peter was a changed person after his time spent with Jesus. Jesus' presence and power had transformed his life. Discover Peter's transformation by comparing these two incidents.

Draw a Venn diagram on the board. Have volunteers indicate where the various people, events, or things listed below should be placed in the Venn diagram. Instruct them that only the things concerning Jesus' trial should be on the left and only the things concerning Peter and John's trial on the right. All that these two events have in common should be placed in the middle. Have the class read about Jesus in front of the leaders in Matthew 26:57-74 and about Peter and John in Acts 4:5-22.

Peter	scribes
Jesus	questionings
John	Peter denied Jesus
Caiphas	Peter proclaimed Jesus
chief priest	Peter cursed and swore
elders	Peter was full of the Holy Spirit

Say: Do you see the contrast? Almost everything is the same except for Peter's reaction. In one scene, Peter is so afraid of consequences that he swears that he does not know Jesus. In the other scene, he boldly proclaims who Jesus is even though he knows there will be consequences. If the leaders thought this was the same scared Peter who denied Jesus and thought that they could scare him this time, they were wrong! Ask the class if there is a change that they would like the Holy Spirit to make in them. Print or write the following on a piece of paper for each person.

From _____ to _____.

Have each person fill in the blanks to indicate a way in which they would like to be changed by the Holy Spirit. For example, someone may put "From neglecting my personal devotion to being consistent with reading my Bible." Let whoever is comfortable share with the class. Close with prayer, asking God to pour out His Spirit on all (include yourself) to change everyone into who He would like them to be.

[1] "Girl's Change in Blood Type Deemed Miraculous," Preaching Today.com, https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2008/june/2060208.html

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 Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 6.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY 17 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Acts 3; Acts 4:1-31.
Commentary: The *Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 6.

reflecting Jesus



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keytext

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

(Acts 4:13, NKJV)

flashlight

"After the Savior's ascension, the sense of the divine presence, full of love and light, was still with them. It was a personal presence. Jesus, the Savior, who had walked and talked and prayed with them, who had spoken hope and comfort to their hearts, had, while the message of peace was upon His lips, been taken from them into heaven. As the chariot of angels received Him, His words had come to them, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end.' Matthew 28:20. . . . Their union with Him was stronger now than when He was with them in person. The light and love and power of an indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, marveled" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 65).

what do you think?

Number the following methods of sharing Christ from least effective (1) to most effective (10).

____ Preaching on a busy street corner
____ Going door to door with a survey about spiritual matters
____ Inviting a friend to church
____ Living a good life through example
____ Going on a mission trip
____ Wearing clothes that display a Christian message
____ Bringing a friend to church
____ Giving a speech in class about my faith
____ Hanging out with friends who are spiritual
____ Handing out gospel pamphlets

did you know?

As the priests listened to the apostles' fearless words, 'they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.'

"Of the disciples after the transfiguration of Christ it is written that at the close of that wonderful scene 'they saw no man, save Jesus only.' Matthew 17:8. 'Jesus only'—in these words is contained the secret of the life and power that marked the history of the early church. When the disciples first heard the words of Christ, they felt their need of Him. They sought, they found, they followed Him" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 64).

INTO THE STORY

"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, 'Look at us!' So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

"Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."

"The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: 'By what power or what name did you do this?'

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: 'Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.'

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

(Acts 3:1-10; Acts 4:5-13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the passages in the Into the Story *section and answer the following questions:*

Acts 3:1-10

When is the last time you jumped for joy, praising God? What happened?

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think Peter emphasized that the man was healed in the "name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"?

_____
_____
_____

What kind of witness do you suppose this crippled man was for Jesus? Is your testimony about what Jesus has done in your life just as powerful? Why or why not?

_____
_____

Acts 4:5-13

Review the roles that the priests, the captain of the Temple, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin played before in the story of Jesus (see Luke 22:1-6, 47-71; John 18). Why would this healing disturb them?

_____
_____

Compare the question in verse 7 to the question asked in Luke 20:2. Why is this an important question to the Jewish leaders?

_____
_____
_____

In what way does Peter's answer fulfill Jesus' words in Luke 21:12-15?

_____
_____
_____

Write a paraphrase of Acts 4:13.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he'" **(Isaiah 43:10, NIV).**

"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" **(Revelation 2:10, NIV).**

"When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies" **(Jeremiah 15:16, NLT).**

"Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" **(Colossians 3:11, NIV).**

"'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people'" **(Mark 1:17, NIV).**

further insight

"The disciples of Christ had a deep sense of their own inefficiency, and with humiliation and prayer they joined their weakness to His strength, their ignorance to His wisdom, their unworthiness to His righteousness, their poverty to His exhaustless wealth. Thus strengthened and equipped, they hesitated not to press forward in the service of the Master."

— Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 57

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 43:10.

Survey some of the members in your church and ask them how they came to faith. Look for a consistent theme in the stories. Did they come to know Christ through the influence of a friend? family member? pastor? teacher? evangelist? What was it about the witness that was effective?

Further reflect on your own spiritual story. Who has been a witness for Christ in your life? What methods of evangelism do you respond to best? Why?

Sunday

Read Mark 1:17.

Read the sections *Into the Story* and *Out of the Story*. Think about two key verses in the Bible reading and consider the questions that follow:

"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you."

- Do you find it easier to offer God money or yourself? Why?
- What is it that you can offer to friends who may be spiritually crippled?
- Would Peter's witness have been as effective without this healing? Explain. In what ways can serving others enhance evangelism today?

"They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

- Who comes to mind when you think of someone who spends a lot of time with Jesus?
- Ask yourself: How does spending time with Jesus change me?
- True or false: If you spend time with Jesus you can't help witnessing to others. Explain your answer.

Monday

Read Acts 4:13.

In referencing the *Key Text*, Ellen White comments: "'they saw no man, save Jesus only.' Matthew 17:8. 'Jesus only'—in these words is contained the secret of the life and power that marked the history of the early church" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 64).

Is the same "life and power" of Peter and John available to us today? How might we access that power? Should we expect, then, to heal the lame like the apostles did in the early church? If we fail to perform such miracles are we then not connected to Jesus? Explain.

Tuesday

Read Jeremiah 15:16.

Read this week's *Flashlight* and the passages found in the Did You Know? section. Compile a list of specific ways you can live by the mantra "Jesus only."

Wednesday

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Choose one that speaks pointedly to your life today. Why does this text stand out to you now? Think about how you can put that text into practice today.

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:11.

How does a personal encounter with Christ at Calvary affect how you will live today?

Friday

Read Revelation 2:10.

Ellen White offers insight on the conversion of Peter.

"On the day following the healing of the cripple, Annas and Caiaphas, with the other dignitaries of the temple, met together for the trial, and the prisoners were brought before them. In that very room and before some of those very men, Peter had shamefully denied his Lord. This came distinctly to his mind as he appeared for his own trial. He now had an opportunity of redeeming his cowardice.

"Those present who remembered the part that Peter had acted at the trial of his Master, flattered themselves that he could now be intimidated by the threat of imprisonment and death. But the Peter who denied Christ in the hour of His greatest need was impulsive and self-confident, differing widely from the Peter who was brought before the Sanhedrin for examination. Since his fall he had been converted. He was no longer proud and boastful, but modest and self-distrustful. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and by the help of this power he was resolved to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 62, 63).

What will it take for God to shape you into a bold witness for Him—just as He did for Peter?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 6.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.