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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

4TH QUARTER 2025



The Ultimate Power

The Cornerstone Connections Creative Council:

Chris Annan-Nunoo
David Bermejo
Larry Burton
Becky De Oliveira
Dwain Esmond

Barry Gane
Karl Haffner
Don Keele
Ulrike Müller
Lauren Popp

Benjamin Sulit
Gay Tuballes
Emma Weslake

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Youth Sabbath School Bible Study Guide

cornerstone connections

REAL. SOLID. STORIES.

4th Quarter 2025
The Ultimate Power

world Sabbath School directors
Jim Howard, Daniel Ebenezer

General Conference adviser
Ted N. C. Wilson

Biblical Research Institute adviser
Clinton Wahlen

art/design direction
Review and Herald® Design Center

circulation
Rebecca Hilde

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a word about what's ahead...

The **goal** of *Cornerstone Connections* is to lead you to the Bible to see the big story of God and people. This big story continues from the first generation in Eden to your generation today. It's about the lives of people as the God of the universe interacts with them.

If you are looking for a word from God that is **real**, *Cornerstone Connections* captures the message of Scripture and challenges you to make the connections to your real life.

God's Word is not only real; it is rock **solid**. For the first generation to hear God's voice in the garden as well as the last group standing before Christ at the Second Coming, the Word of God has been and continues to be reliable.

The word from God comes to us in the **stories** of people who encountered Him and made a decision to either follow Him or walk away.

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in *Into the Story* in each lesson. *Out of the Story* will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you will also find:

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White's input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
- **Further Insight**—one or two quotes that will provide further insight into the central message of the lesson.
- **Connecting to Life**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Study the Bible lesson during the week in preparation for Sabbath School. On Sabbath you will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and elaborate on what you learned with your teacher and other students in your Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally.

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The General Conference Sabbath School Department

PS: Don't forget to check out the reading plan.

*A special modern adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. To access this book in an e-format, go to www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

4TH QUARTER 2025

October

4—Keeping It Real! [p. 5]

Jesus is truth, but He was constantly surrounded by lies. He challenged the pretense and false piety of the religious leaders, which is why they were determined to rid themselves of Him forever.

11—What Belongs to God [p. 9]

The religious leaders attempted to use Scripture to trap Jesus. However, all of Jesus' arguments were based on Scripture. He proved that God's Word is reliable. An assurance that we can still have today.

18—Preparing for Tomorrow Today [p. 13]

One of the key issues in the last days is remaining faithful to Jesus. So long as we are "in Christ," we have nothing to fear. What does that mean?

25—May I Help You? [p. 17]

When no servant was present to wash the disciples' feet, and they were too filled with their own competitiveness to lower themselves to the task, Jesus did the job Himself. Service requires us to get our hands dirty for "the least of these."

November

1—My Way Versus God's Way [p. 21]

Jesus would have saved Judas had he surrendered, but Judas chose a path of greed rather than salvation. He could not bring himself to surrender to a humble Messiah. Are we able to?

8—The Choice [p. 25]

Christ came face-to-face with the hell of becoming a Sinbearer, yet He made the decision to choose God's will over His own. He won the spiritual battle by surrendering to His Father's will. How will you meet the temptation to go your own way?

15—Trials [p. 29]

The trials Christ endured the night before He was crucified revealed betrayal and injustice on the part of the Jewish legal system, as well as cowardice and corruption from the Roman authorities. But Christ was always in complete control.

22—Christwise [p. 33]

It is from the bloody tree at Calvary that Jesus calls us to live lives of sacrifice, forgiveness, perseverance, selflessness, and grace. Never underestimate the power of gazing upon the cross!

29—Resurrection Power [p. 37]

Satan and his evil host engineered the dark events that led to the death of Christ. They thought Christ's sinless life and perfect death would be rendered moot by power of the grave. They were wrong!

December

6—First Witness [p. 41]

Mary of Magdala's love of Christ won her a revelation that no other human could match: she was the first person to witness Jesus in His glorified post-death state. A lesson for us in that those who love Jesus with their whole heart and seek after Him will be given fresh revelations of God's divine grace.

13—Journeying With Jesus [p. 45]

Viewing the two travelers on the road to Emmaus as they walked in disillusionment and dismay, we may wonder to ourselves, *Couldn't they see the truth right in front of their eyes?* But it may be that humanity is blinder today than they were on that ancient road.

20—Making Things Right [p. 49]

Drained from grief, and in need of encouragement after Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples responded to the stress differently. Thomas chose to doubt and Peter distanced himself from the group. How would Jesus bring them back to unity?

27—Calling Change Agents [p. 53]

God doesn't need Christians standing around looking into the sky and wondering when Jesus will be coming back. He needs change agents—fully committed disciples who will fulfill the Great Commission and reach lost people and teach them to obey *everything* Jesus commanded. What will you choose?

The Ultimate Power

FOURTH QUARTER 2025



Youth Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide



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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 04 2025

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!



cornerstoneconnections 5

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!

is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

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

"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

connectingtolife

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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 11 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 22:15-46; 23; Mark 12:13-44; Luke 20:20-47; 21:1-4.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 66; 67.

what belongs to God



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flashlight

"The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The last six are included in the other, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. . . . When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607).

keytext

"Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'"

(Matthew 22:37-40, NIV)

what do you think?

- Is it hypocritical to act “nicely” when you’d really rather not?
- Which matters more to God, our intentions or our actions?
- Is a certain level of insincerity necessary to smooth over conflicts or combustible situations?
- Jesus used some harsh-sounding words when He talked to the Pharisees. How do you reconcile His blunt words with our understanding of “Christian” attitude and behavior?
- How can an intelligent, well-thought-out answer bring glory to God?
- In what ways can each of us be hypocritical unintentionally?
- What hypocritical attitudes bother you the most?

did you know?

From Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered August 28, 1963: “But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: in the process of gaining our rightful

place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”

INTO THE STORY

“Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, ‘Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?’

“But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. ‘Why are you trying to trap me?’ he asked. ‘Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.’ They brought the coin, and he asked them, ‘Whose image is this? And whose inscription?’

“‘Caesar’s,’ they replied.

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’

“And they were amazed at him.”

The Greatest Commandment

“One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, ‘Of all the commandments, which is the most important?’

“‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.’

“‘Well said, teacher,’ the man replied. ‘You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’

“When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

“As he taught, Jesus said, ‘Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.’”

(Mark 12:13-17, 28-34, 38-40, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

When the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus, what did He quote from to answer them?

If the commandments are based on love, is love a feeling, an action, an attitude, or a combination of all three? Explain.

What principle can you derive from Jesus' statement to "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's"?

For whom was Jesus showing love when He talked about the "teachers of the law"?

Jesus obviously didn't believe that smoothing things over was always the right course of action. When is it proper to "say it like you see it"?

Compare Jesus' direct language with the smooth, flattering words of the Pharisees trying to trap him. What does this tell us about the integrity of a Christian's speech?

punch lines

"All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37, NIV).

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

"Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:17, 18, NIV).

"The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just. The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip" (Psalm 37:30, 31, NIV).

"To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue" (Proverbs 16:1, NIV).

further insight

"It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 615

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 5:37.

Today's reading tells us to let our "yes" be "yes" and our "no" be "no." Words can be used to deceive more often than we notice. Do you ever use your tone of voice to make yourself sound worse when calling in sick to work or school? Do you ever promise to "look into" something without really meaning it? Do you ever promise to pray for someone and then never remember them in your prayers? How can you ensure that your words are not motivated by an urge to manipulate or play games? Think about how you talk. What are your motives behind your words?

Sunday

Read Leviticus 19:17, 18.

Keeping the peace is important, but there are times when it is proper to stand up and say something—stand up for what is right. When people are being put down or treated differently because of their ethnicity, skin color, political views, or gender, what do you think your responsibility is as a Christian? Does silence mean consent when you hear someone being mistreated?

Jesus stood up for the common people who were being mistreated by the religious leaders. He didn't leave them to fight their battle alone. He said something when they didn't have the social power to say something for themselves. Who can you stand up for today?

Monday

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

Love for God and love for your neighbor are the key points that God's law hangs upon. It's pretty simple. First, we must love God and put Him first. Next, we must love each other and think about other people's feelings and well-

being before our own. Can you get it right with other people if you don't have it right with God? Is it possible to be right with God if we aren't taking care of each other? Explain.

Tuesday

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

Loving other people is a lot harder to *do* than to *say*. People frustrate us. They get in our way. They hurt our feelings, misunderstand us, and talk behind our backs. Sometimes people joke about their jobs, saying, "My job would be perfect if it weren't for the people!" Sometimes we just can't understand where some people are coming from. How can we empathize with people who frustrate us? How does putting our relationship with God first help us to empathize with others?

Wednesday

Read Proverbs 16:1.

What is in our hearts ends up coming out of our mouths. If we are angry, it's hard to hide that in our tones, even if we manage to say the right words. It's been said that one of the hardest things to hide is being in love! When something happens on the inside of us, it is natural for that to come out of our mouths. The trick is to be right on the inside so that what comes out of our mouths brings glory to God. How can you put the law of God in your heart? Proverbs 16:1 says that the "proper answer of the tongue" comes from the Lord (NIV). What can you do to shift your focus toward God when you are the most tempted to lash out?

Thursday

Read Jeremiah 17:9, 10.

It is common for people to try to put their best foot forward. We try to appear at our best when being looked at by other people. We will hide our true opinions if we think that they aren't popular. This isn't entirely honest, putting something false on display to hide the truth underneath. What things do you hide for the sake of appearances? What things do you pretend so that you will look better?

Friday

Read Psalm 37:30, 31.

Are you ever tempted to "tweak the truth" a little bit to get what you want or need? Do you make yourself seem more rushed when you arrive late? Do you try to make yourself seem more helpless when asking for an extension on the due date of a paper? How can we trust God enough to be honest and straightforward and let Him sort out the rest?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 66; 67.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 18 2025

Scripture Story: John 12:20-43; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 68 ; 69.

preparing for tomorrow today



Photo by Terill Thomas

flashlight

"Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,' He says, 'but My words shall not pass away'" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 632).

keytext

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. . . . If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. . . . The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

(Matthew 24:42-44, NIV)

what do you think?

T (true) or F (false)?

- ___ The second coming of Christ is one of the predominant themes in the Bible.
- ___ Christians should thoroughly understand biblical prophecy.
- ___ Believing that Jesus is coming again is an essential part of our identity as Seventh-day Adventists.
- ___ Events in the Middle East point to the soon return of Jesus.
- ___ Even if Jesus does not return in my lifetime I can have peace placing my hope in His soon return.

did you know?

One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in 'the region and shadow of death,' a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing. . . . The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 299).

INTO THE STORY

"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?'"

"Jesus said to them: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he," and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.'

"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged

in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.' . . .

"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!" "

(Mark 13:3-37, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What does this passage teach us about the second coming of Jesus?

How does this passage inform our understanding of world issues?

What does it mean to “watch” for Jesus to come? Is this any different than “waiting” for Him to come? If so, how?

Contrast Mark’s account (Mark 13) of Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives with the other Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24 and Luke 21:5-38). In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? What does this comparison study tell you about . . .

Mark?

Matthew?

Luke?

punch lines

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (**Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV**).

“In all history there has never been such a time of terror. It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel. Yet in the end they will be saved!” (**Jeremiah 30:7, NLT**).

“In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation” (**1 Peter 5:10, NLT**).

“As for me, I look to the LORD for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me” (**Micah 7:7, NLT**).

“For the LORD of Heaven’s Armies has a day of reckoning. He will punish the proud and mighty and bring down everything that is exalted” (**Isaiah 2:12, NLT**).

further insight

“There’s something equally as important as coming to Christ. Are you in a saving relationship with Christ? If you are, then you’re ready for His coming right now!”—Morris Venden, Seventh-day Adventist

pastor and author

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Acts 1:9-11.

Reflect on why you answered either true or false for each question in the *What Do You Think?* section. Go back to each question and think about somebody giving the opposite answer as you. What rationale might they use? Could you defend the opposite answer? Why or why not?

Sunday

Supplement the Scripture reading from *Into the Story* by reading the following passages listed under "READ." Reflect on the thought questions under the heading "THINK" and then put the passages into practice by doing the suggested activity under "ACT."

READ

- 1 Thessalonians 4:17
- Daniel 12:1-3
- Revelation 1:7; 6:14; 13:11-18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
- 2 Peter 3:10, 11
- 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52
- 2 Thessalonians 2:8

THINK

- Is my faith in Jesus strong enough to carry me through the last days?
- How can I live today in order to be ready for the Second Coming?
- How would I explain to a friend to "watch and be ready" for Jesus' second coming?

ACT

- Pray that you can stay connected to Jesus through every circumstance in life.
- Meet with some friends and talk about current events in light of what the Bible teaches about the Second Coming.
- Read the final chapters in *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White.

Monday

Read Matthew 24:42-44.

Consider the following story that illustrates the difference between watching and waiting.

A fishing vessel returned home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and identified some of them: "I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne."

One man became concerned because his wife was not there. Later, he left the boat with a heavy heart fearing something tragic had happened to her. He hurried to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him, saying, "I have been waiting for you!"

He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were watching for them!"

Watching is not a spectator sport. As Oswald Chambers put it: "The only way to wait for the Second Coming is to watch that you do what you should do, so that when He comes is a matter of indifference. It is the attitude of a child, certain that God knows what He is about. When the Lord does come, it will be as natural as breathing."

Tuesday

Read 1 Peter 5:10.

After reading the *Flashlight* section, consider another observation Ellen White wrote about the Second Coming:

"Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to co-operate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 634).

How do you live in the here and now, knowing that our Lord is about to return? What are you doing for the salvation of souls?

Wednesday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

After each text included in *Punch Lines*, write a simple summary. For example, after Jeremiah 30:7 you might write, "Salvation is sure!"

Thursday

Read Micah 7:7.

If I knew Jesus was going to come tomorrow, how would I live today? Is that the way I will live today? Why or why not?

Friday

Read Matthew 28:19, 20.

As you think with anticipation of Jesus' second coming, what can you do to prepare starting today? How much of your time, energy, means, resources, talents, and spiritual gifts are you willing to contribute to share your hope of Jesus' return with others?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 68, 69.

*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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 25 2025

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

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).

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)

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 guilty 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

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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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 01 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23; John 13:18-38; 14-17.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 72; 73.

my way versus God's way



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 652).

keytext

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. . . . Where I am going, you cannot come.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

(John 13:33-35, NIV)

what do you think?

On a scale of 1 to 10, list the things that you think can lead

people to stray from God and to deny what He's done for them through Jesus (1—the most likely and 10—the least).

- ___ pride
- ___ lack of self-discipline
- ___ tragedy
- ___ lack of trust
- ___ wanting to do their own thing
- ___ fear that they aren't good enough
- ___ indifference
- ___ lack of care about eternal life
- ___ unbelief
- ___ anger

did you know?

Passover is a Jewish festival. Its purpose is to remember God's intervention in sparing the Jews when He killed the firstborn of Egypt.

The word translated "Passover" comes from a Hebrew word, *pesach*, meaning "to pass over," which is what God did when the angel of death passed over every Jewish house that had the blood on their doorposts. It is followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which recalls the Exodus from Egypt and the freeing of the Israelites from slavery.

Passover starts on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan, the full moon of that month, the first month on the Hebrew calendar's festival year. The first and last days of this seven-day feast were observed as legal holidays or holy days. The people would also hold special prayer services as well as holiday meals. Jews were known to have observed the festival for eight days. Most still do. If you know some practicing Jews, they might invite you to their house for a Passover seder, the practice of celebrating the Passover.

INTO THE STORY

"Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

(Matthew 26:20-29, KJV)

"And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

"And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

"And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

"Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He

said unto him,
Thou hast said.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."



OUT OF THE STORY

What does Jesus mean when He says, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"?

What do you think went through the disciples' minds when they heard these words of Jesus?

What do you think possessed Judas to betray Jesus? How do greed and pride fit into this story?

How do you think Jesus felt knowing that He was eating in the presence of someone who would betray Him?

What do you think initially led Judas away from accepting Christ?

What do you think keeps people from coming to God with humility and full surrender?

Why do you think Jesus used the bread and wine to represent His body and blood?

punch lines

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (**Philippians 2:12, NKJV**).

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud" (**Proverbs 16:18, 19, NIV**).

"For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory" (**Psalms 149:4, NIV**).

"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness" (**2 Corinthians 11:30, NIV**).

further insight

"And if we consent, [Christ] will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668

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Sabbath

Read Matthew 6:24.

Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb for the world. He let the people kill Him in order to save all humanity. Do you think that Judas truly understood this? Why do you think he let money and power reign in his heart? Judas is a good example of what Matthew 6:24 is saying: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (NIV). Judas never truly served Christ. He let money and greed rule over him. He never let himself be humble enough to accept Christ's love and sacrifice. He simply threw it all away for some silver.

Write down in your journal a few things that can lead us away from salvation.

Sunday

Read Proverbs 16:18, 19.

Many times when people are led away from Christ, it's because of their own selfishness or pride. Many don't want to humble themselves and surrender fully to God. Others simply don't want to change their way of life in order to follow Him.

To be humble is to understand our own weaknesses and need of God; to know that we are not perfect, that we are sinners, and that we need to learn and grow—and are willing to do just that.

What are some ways in which we can go about daily surrendering to God?

Monday

Read John 13:33-35.

Today, page through your Bible looking for stories and prophecies that speak to these topics: salvation, humility, greed, sacrifice. Find at least one example of each.

In your journal or notebook, write in your own words some parallels between those stories and today's story about Judas. What do you think initially puts greed or pride into people's hearts? What is it that steers them away from salvation? What do you think can bring a person back to accepting Jesus as their Savior?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 149:4.

Salvation is a gift. We can accept it or reject it. Nobody, not even God, can force it on us. Humility is one of the first things that leads to salvation. If we have pride in our hearts, then we will try to be self-sufficient and have trouble relying on the Lord. Humility is also a gift. Yet we can make choices that will impact the presence of humility in our lives.

Write down on the lines below three ways in which we can increase humility in our lives.

Wednesday

Read Hebrews 9:28.

Why do you think the Passover is so important to the Jews today? What are the similarities between the Passover and the Lord's Supper?

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:12.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (NIV) states it clearly: we are all God's children if we receive Him and accept Him. It has nothing to do with anything that we ourselves could possibly do, but what Christ has done for us.

Because of His sacrifice on our behalf, we can have eternal life. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die, and He instituted the Lord's Supper as a reminder of Himself and His death in our behalf. How seriously do you take the Lord's Supper when it's offered in your church?

Friday

Read Luke 22:18.

Jesus promised His second coming when He said: "For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18, NIV). We have assurance of knowing that Jesus died and will return. The Lord's Supper is a way by which we can remember truly the depth of His sacrifice and come to understand salvation and what it means for us. Titus 2:11-13 states: "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (NIV). God gave His Son out of grace. His Son humbled Himself and obeyed His Father. The best way to go is to accept that grace and humility, and remember the sacrifice that was made for us.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 72; 73.

*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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 08 2025

Scripture Story: Mark 14:32-42.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 74.

the choice



flashlight

"[Christ] felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 686).

keytext

"He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' "

(Mark 14:35, 36, NKJV)

what do you think?

Rank the following moments according to what you think

caused Christ the most agony.

- ___ Enduring the scourging/beating.
- ___ Hearing His own people cry "crucify Him."
- ___ Being betrayed and abandoned by His closest friends.
- ___ Deciding to accept the cup of suffering and sin in Gethsemane.
- ___ Experiencing the absence of God on Calvary.

All the events surrounding the passion of Christ were severely traumatic. What do you think was most traumatic for Christ? Why? If you had to go through a traumatic experience, would you prefer to have it forced upon you or to face it knowing it was your choice?

did you know?

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke, says of Christ, "And being in agony prayed fervently . . ." The Greek word for agony means to be "engaged in combat." The word "agony" was used by the Greeks to denote "intense emotion," and severe emotional and physical anguish. It is the same word they used for the arena in which battles would take place for entertainment. What was so entertaining to them was the intense life-and-death emotion that characterized the games. Clearly, what took place in the Garden of Gethsemane was a battle, filled with intense emotion.

From *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

"Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

"Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'"

(Mark 14:32-42, NKJV)

INTO THE STORY

"Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.'

"He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.'

"Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The



OUT OF THE STORY

After you read this story, make a list of things Jesus knew and didn't know about the future.

How do you think the disciples reacted to hearing Jesus say, in verse 34, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (NKJV)?

When had Christ ever spoken like this or conveyed such emotion?

Underline the phrases in this passage that indicate how much the decision to go forward to Calvary weighed on Christ.

Why did Jesus want the disciples to keep praying? Was it for them or Him that He longed for them to be praying?

How is Christ's attitude in verses 41 and 42 different from the first part of the scene?

Why do you think the story of Gethsemane is such a pivotal story told in Scripture? What does this event reveal about Christ?

What do you think was "the cup" Christ referred to in His prayer to the Father?

punch lines

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (**Hebrews 4:15, 16, NKJV**).

"[Christ] who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (**Hebrews 5:7, 8, NKJV**).

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (**2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV**).

"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (**Mark 8:31-33, NKJV**).

"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (**John 10:17, 18, NIV**).

further insight

"So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 685

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read **John 10:17, 18.**

Read and respond to the question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Does it matter that Christ had the choice to go to Calvary or to walk away? Of all the painful experiences that faced Christ in the garden, the reality of our hopelessness pained him more. In a way, what happened after He made His choice was horrible, but by that time He had resolved to endure it. Reflect on the fact that Christ was not the victim caught between a rock and a hard place, but a Savior willingly offering His life as a sacrifice. What do you think is the difference?

Sunday

Read **Hebrews 5:7, 8.**

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. Up to this point in the life of Christ, He had been in control and deliberate about God's plan. But in Gethsemane this attitude changed. Christ's humanity shrank from the task and longed for another way, but finally accepted the hard part of the plan. What do you think are some of the key truths that emerge about Christ and you in the Garden of Gethsemane? In what way does a similar spiritual war occur in your life today? What message does Christ's victory in the garden give to you as you make choices about your life?

Monday

Read **Mark 14:35, 36.**

The *Key Text* this week is perhaps the hardest prayer to pray: "Not what I will, but what You will." In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to pray this prayer? What is it about God's will that tends to make us hesitant to embrace it? Is there any question

that God has our best in mind? Or, is it that God's ways of accomplishing His will in our lives aren't always what we would choose?

Take a few moments and identify three or four friends that you believe want to live fully for God. Pray a prayer of surrender to God's will as the Savior did in the garden for yourself and for your friends.

Tuesday

Read **2 Corinthians 5:21.**

Read the quote in the *Flashlight* section and imagine the worst of what sin can do. Consider the most repulsive of sin's effects on this earth and on people, and reflect on what must have made Christ "shudder" against what He was going to face. As hard as it is to wonder what Christ faced, as sinners we can never imagine what sin looks like from the perspective of One who "knew no sin." Whom do you know that has a real hatred for sin and a deep sense of the love of God?

If Ellen White emphasizes anything in this chapter, it is the full exposure of both hatred of sin and love of God. Make a list in your journal of what you love about God's love and a list of the things you hate about sin. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His will and His willingness to redeem you.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* texts in this week's lesson touch on Christ's choice to embrace God's will and die for humanity. Read the list and identify two or three that really speak to you personally. Why do these passages connect with you today? If you were to order these verses to be read in a sequence like a Bible study, how would you organize them? Think of someone you know who might be encouraged or inspired by these passages and share them. Feel free to add any other verses you think would encourage or inspire.

Thursday

Read **Hebrews 4:15, 16.**

Gethsemane was about a choice. Clearly, the most important decision made on earth happened in that garden. It is likely that you have some pressing decisions to make in your life, but none more important than accepting Christ's sacrifice for you. Sometime this week, go to a garden, or the closest thing to a garden, and make the decision to receive God's grace and embrace His will for your life. You might want to take a few moments to journal or write about your experience in the garden and keep it in your Bible for future reference.

Friday

Read **1 Corinthians 15:22.**

Two choices. Two gardens. Reflect on the choice made in Eden, which ushered in a world of sin for humanity. Also, reflect on the choice Christ made in the Garden of Gethsemane thousands of years later. A third choice still remains that opens the way to eternal life in a garden home in heaven. Adam and Eve made a choice. Christ made His choice. What will be your choice?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapter 74.

*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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 15, 2025

Scripture Story: Luke 23:1-25.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 75-77.

trials



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Standing behind Pilate, in view of all in the court, Christ heard the abuse; but to all the false charges against Him He answered not a word. His whole bearing gave evidence of conscious innocence. He stood unmoved by the fury of the waves that beat about Him. It was as if the heavy surges of wrath, rising higher and higher, like the waves of the boisterous ocean, broke about Him, but did not touch Him. He stood silent, but His silence was eloquence. It was as a light shining from the inner to the outer man" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 726).

keytext

"Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!'

... They were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed."

(Luke 23:20-23, NKJV)

what do you think?

Rank the following emotions from the most extreme to the

least (1—least extreme, 5—the most):

- ___ feeling hated
- ___ feeling alone
- ___ feeling betrayed
- ___ feeling abandoned by friends
- ___ feeling falsely accused

Describe the emotion you feel is most painful or extreme. Explain your answers.

did you know?

The Sanhedrin was a 71-member supreme court comprised of scribes, rabbis, Pharisees, priests, Sadducees, and elders presided over by the high priest. The constitution of the Sanhedrin held by law: it could not convene at night—only by daylight and only in the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Temple courts. Also, you could condemn someone to death based only upon the testimony of two witnesses—never by their own testimony. Furthermore, a death sentence was never to be carried out on the same day as the trial or during the Passover, in order to give time for the court to make sure they were not making a big mistake. These rules were always strictly adhered to—except for one case.

INTO THE STORY

"Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.' Then Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.' So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no fault in this Man.' But they were the more fierce, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.' When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see

Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. . . . Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, 'You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him' (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, 'Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas'—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Then he said to them the third time, 'Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.' But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will."

(Luke 23:1-25, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

For a step-by-step description of the six trials of Christ, read the following sequence:

1. Before Annas, John 18:12-23
2. Before Caiaphas and the elders, Mark 14:55-65
3. Before the Sanhedrin, Matthew 27:1, 2
4. Before Pilate, Luke 23:1-7
5. Before Herod, Luke 23:8-12
6. Before Pilate, Luke 23:13-25 (also John 18:28-19:45)

Circle the names of individuals and groups mentioned in the passage (Luke 23:1-25) that were part of the trials of Christ. Compare the attitudes of the religious leaders to those of Pilate and Herod. What do you know about these people, and what is revealed about them as Christ is tried?

As you read through this portion of the trials, underline every phrase or sentence that conveys accusations or the stubborn intent to execute Jesus. How would you describe their mind-set as they try to convict Christ?

What one verse or phrase seems to summarize the meaning of this event? Explain.

Christ seems to be alone during His trials. What do you think was going through His mind? What thoughts kept Him so composed?

What are some unanswered questions you wonder about as you read the story of Christ's trials?

How do you think the trials are part of the plan of redemption? How are all the events that lead up to Calvary related to each other?

punch lines

"Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.' . . . So from that day on they planned together to kill Him" (John 11:47-50, 53, NASB).

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?" (Isaiah 53:7, 8, ESV).

"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you" (Deuteronomy 19:15-19, NASB).

further insight

"He suffered in proportion to the perfection of His holiness and His hatred of sin. His trial by men who acted as fiends was to Him a perpetual sacrifice."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 700

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 53.

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. The trials of Christ demonstrate the supreme hatred that the Jewish leaders felt for Christ, the ambivalence of leaders such as Pilate and Herod, and the absence of the disciples and the loyalty of people who previously adored Jesus.

What is the greatest tragedy of the trials: the injustice, or the loneliness, or something else? Explain. According to Isaiah 53, what are the trials that Christ suffered in light of the plan of redemption?

Sunday

Read John 11:47-53.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the *Out of the Story* questions to guide your study. Take a moment to scan through the sequence of Christ's six trials and indicate which encounter was the most frustrating for you to read. Do the trials tend to stir up anger as well as sympathy? As you answered the questions in this week's lesson, what do you think is the message God has for you in the story?

Monday

Read Luke 23:20-23.

The *Key Text* in this week's lesson conveys the conflict between what Pilate knew was right and the unbridled hatred of the Jewish leaders and the riotous crowd. Read the text and think of how you get torn between what is clearly right and what others want you to do that is wrong. Often, the everyday decisions we make are not as life-changing as Pilate's, but they are com-

plicated. What specific areas of your life do you feel torn between right and wrong? Like Pilate, we all hear voices that pull at us. These voices come from inside as well as outside from others. Whom do you know that stands for what is good and true, no matter what they face? Ask them about the voices they hear and the voices they choose to listen to. Model their courage and make the decision ahead of time to stand.

Tuesday

Read Deuteronomy 19:15-19.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and try to imagine the scene. During high-pressure moments, such as the trial, everyone's colors are more clearly seen—including Christ's. Try to picture Christ the way Ellen White portrays Him in this passage. Think of some biblical characters who have made their stand. Notice how as they choose to be true, no matter what the result, their character shines clear. For Christ, this had to do with letting what was on the inside become visible on the outside. What part of your inner character do you want to show on the outside? Honesty? Kindness? Your devotion to God? Share with someone this week what is on the inside.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* texts in this week's lesson feature large portions of Scripture that relate specifically to Christ's trial or to the larger themes of truth and justice. Look for a couple of specific themes in the *Punch Lines*: identify a verse that speaks to you personally and offers a challenge for you to live differently, from the inside out. Identify a passage that informs your understanding of what happened to Christ in a way you might not have thought of before. Which verse of all the *Punch Lines* challenges you the most? Why?

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Clearly, Jesus was falsely accused and grossly mistreated. Christ is innocent, but humanity is guilty of sin. Paul states: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV). Write on a card or piece of paper the verdict: guilty or not guilty. Condemned to death or set free for eternity. Make a list of similar phrases that describe what Christ experienced and what you experience as a result. You will notice that such a list reminds you of what matters most. Place this paper or card out in the open where you can see it every day.

Friday

Read Isaiah 53:7, 8.

What do you think is the most God-honoring response to the way Christ was mistreated during His trials? Worship? Gratitude? Surrender? Belief? Devotion? Praise? Reflect and write out a prayer to God using one or more of the responses you feel are most relevant to you today.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 75-77.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 22 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 27:31-53; Mark 15:20-38; Luke 23:26-46; John 19:16-30.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 78; 79.

Christwise



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flashlight

"The Saviour made no murmur of complaint. His face remained calm and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, nor words of sympathy and unchanging fidelity to stay His human heart. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 744).

keytext

"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last."

(Luke 23:44-46, NIV)

what do you think?

Review how well you remember the details surrounding the cross by taking the following quiz:

- What was written on the cross of Jesus?
 - Jesus is Lord
 - Jesus is the Son of God
 - Jesus saves
 - This is Jesus, the King of the Jews
- In fulfillment of another prophecy, which awful punishment was not inflicted on Jesus during His last 24 hours:
 - Body scourged
 - Purple robe draped over His cut and bleeding back
 - Legs broken on the cross
 - Side pierced with a spear
- Simon, the man who carried the cross for Jesus, was from:
 - Cyrene
 - Jerusalem
 - Rome
 - Alexandria
- When the centurion in charge of Jesus' crucifixion heard what Jesus said from the cross and saw Him breathe His last, what did he conclude?
 - "Truly, this was the Son of God."
 - "Truly, this was a good man."
 - "Truly, this man was not like the other criminals who were crucified today."
 - "Truly, God will avenge these murderers."

Answers: 1. d, 2. c, 3. a, 4. d

did you know?

Some Bible scholars say that Golgotha ("skull") gets its name from its appearance. Golgotha could have been a place for regular executions. It was easily accessible, just outside the city. In this way government leaders believed that executions held there would serve as a deterrent to crime.

INTO THE STORY

"As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

"Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the

Son of God!' In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.''" In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

"From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?').

"When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'

"Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people."

(Matthew 27:32-53, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why did darkness fall over the countryside and the city for three hours?

What did Jesus die from?

Why didn't Jesus come down from the cross?

What is the significance of the curtain in the Temple being torn in two?

If you were the editor of the *Jerusalem Herald*, write the headline you would use to announce the story of the Crucifixion:

Imagine it is the day following Jesus' death. Write an obituary for Him:

punch lines

"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (**Titus 2:11-14, NIV**).

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (**Isaiah 53:5, NIV**).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'" (**Galatians 3:13, NIV**).

further insight

"With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most intense agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 752

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read **Matthew 27:32-53**; **Mark 15:20-38**;
Luke 23:26-49; and **John 19:16-37**.

Ellen White says, "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83). How well do you know the story of the Crucifixion?

How can my thinking about the closing scenes of Christ's life help me to love Him more and to be filled with His spirit?

How can imagining Christ's life and death help me to overcome temptation?

Sunday

Read **Galatians 3:13**.

After reviewing the *Into the Story* section, react to the observation of John Stott in *The Cross of Christ*:

"I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the cross. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I turn to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness.

"That is the God for me. He set aside His immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death."¹

How does the cross affect your belief in God? Could God have redeemed the human race without pain or suffering? Explain. What does the cross tell us about Jesus' love?

Monday

Read **Luke 23:44-46**.

Consider the *Key Text* in the context of Mel Gibson's comments about his film *The Passion of the Christ*:

"It's time to get back to a basic message, the message that was given. . . . Christ spoke of faith, hope, love, and forgiveness. And these are things I think we need to be reminded of again. He forgave as He was tortured and killed. And we could do with a little of that behavior."²

Tuesday

Read **Hebrews 12:1, 2**.

Read the *Flashlight* section and ask yourself these questions:

- How could Jesus remain calm on the cross? Was this human strength, divine strength, or a combination of both? Do we have access to this same power to be calm in dire circumstances?

- If you could have offered Jesus "words of sympathy" while He hung on the cross, what would you have said to Him?

- What "enemy" is God calling you to pray for?

Wednesday

Read **Isaiah 53** and **Leviticus 16:1-34**.

What parallels do you notice between Jesus as our sacrifice and the ancient practice of sacrificing a lamb?

Thursday

Read **Titus 2:11-14**.

This passage found in this week's *Punch Lines*. Give three examples of what your life would look like if you were to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life in this present age? Be as specific as possible.

Friday

Read **Isaiah 53:5**.

Keeping in mind what happened at the cross, how can I live under the influence of Christ today?

¹ Edythe Draper, *Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), as quoted in Bible Illustrator, Parsons Technology.

² Mel Gibson, interviewed on *The O'Reilly Factor*, Jan. 16, 2003.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 78; 79.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 29 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 80; 81.

resurrection power



Photo by Hiskia Missah

flashlight

"When Jesus was laid in the grave, Satan triumphed. He dared to hope that the Savior would not take up His life again. He claimed the Lord's body, and set his guard about the tomb, seeking to hold Christ a prisoner. He was bitterly angry when his angels fled at the approach of the heavenly messenger. When he saw Christ come forth in triumph, he knew that his kingdom would have an end, and that he must finally die" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 782).

keytext

"There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men."

(Matthew 28:2-4, NIV)

what do you think?

Why are you amazed by Christ's resurrection story?

(Circle one.)

- Death is the one permanent state from which no one can escape.
- The resurrection of Jesus proclaims victory over sin and death and gives us hope that when Jesus returns our mortal bodies can take on immortality.
- We all want to live again after we die.
- Resurrection at Jesus' coming offers hope and meaning to our mortal lives.

did you know?

When the angel of the Lord spoke to Jesus in Joseph's tomb, "the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785). Jesus' power over life and death not only assured our salvation, but also gave us the blessed hope that like Christ, we, too, will one day be raised back to life to live in peace with God.

INTO THE STORY

"There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men."

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to

them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."' Then they remembered his words.

"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened."

(Matthew 28:2-4; Luke 24:1-12, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read through the narrative of Jesus' resurrection closely. Try to see it with fresh eyes. Put an X by something that was new to you. What hadn't you noticed before?

Why do you think the earth quaked when the angel came to open the tomb of Jesus? What does this tell you about the significance of Jesus' resurrection?

Jesus foretold His resurrection. Why didn't the disciples believe that Jesus had risen when they heard the news?

Many people claim to worship on the first day of the week (Sunday) because Jesus rose on that day. Is there anything in this week's *Out of the Story* that tells us to worship on Sunday as a memorial of Jesus' resurrection?

When the women came seeking Jesus, the angel asked, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" Think for a moment. Do people today look for the living among the dead through movies, music, the occult, etc.? Explain.

punch lines

"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" **(1 Corinthians 15:14-17, NIV).**

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" **(1 Thessalonians 4:16, NIV).**

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die'" **(John 11:25, NIV).**

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" **(Romans 10:9, NIV).**

further insight

"A restored creation, a redeemed race, that having conquered sin could never fall,—this, the result to flow from Christ's completed work, God and angels saw."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 769

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Genesis 3:1-4 and Ecclesiastes 9:5.

Now that you've completed the *What Do You Think?* activity, write a sentence below explaining why you chose the answer that you did.

What do the verses in Genesis 3:1-4—specifically verse 4—tell you about why many people are fascinated by the idea of life after death? What do you think Satan meant by “You will not surely die”?

Satan still uses this lie to convince men and women that there is life after death, that we won’t “surely” die. But what does the Bible say in Ecclesiastes 9:5? Until God calls people back to life at Jesus’ return, the dead are dead.

Sunday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:14-17.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explain what you think would have happened if Satan and his fallen angels had successfully sealed off Joseph’s tomb, preventing Jesus from rising again.

In rising from the dead, Jesus broke Satan’s power over all created things—forever!

Monday

Read Matthew 28:2-4.

This Sabbath’s *Key Text* is essential to understanding the significance of Jesus’ sacrifice for sin. Think about it. Did Matthew really need to record that the angel sent from heaven to open the tomb of Jesus caused an

earthquake when he landed on earth? Wasn’t Jesus’ resurrection fireworks enough? What’s with the “special effects”?

Read Matthew 27:45-53. What happened in nature on the day that Jesus was crucified?

Jesus’ disciples grieved His death at Calvary, but they were not alone. All of heaven yearned to see Jesus raised back to life. And when the signal was given, the angel of God left heaven like a bolt of lightning!

Tuesday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

This week’s *Flashlight* quotation from Ellen White opens a window into Satan’s devious machinations. Satan never would have tempted Jesus as powerfully as he did if he had not known that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Kill the Savior, and the world dies.

Satan became the “accuser in chief” of all humanity, constantly accusing us of breaking God’s law. Since Jesus’ sinless life met the demands of God’s law, and His perfect death paid the price for all our sins, Satan’s last hope to prevent the salvation of humanity was to prevent Jesus from ever rising again. The Resurrection made Christ’s life and death effectual for us.

Wednesday

This week’s *Punch Lines* texts begin with perhaps the most important verse in all of Scripture. To whom was Jesus speaking when He stated that He was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)? What was the event that led Jesus to make this startling statement?

Notice how closely Romans 10:9 ties belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ to salvation. Can you be saved if you do not believe that

Jesus was raised from the dead? Explain your answer.

Jesus’ resurrection is our hope for the future!

Thursday

Read John 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:55.

What does Jesus’ resurrection mean to you? Do you ever think about it during the day? When was the last time that you got into a discussion about it?

To believe in the Resurrection is to believe that God has power over life and death—over *your* life and over *your* death. If God is controlling your life, should you be afraid of anything?

List two fears that you would like to turn over to God right now.

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

The life that Jesus lived fulfilled the demands of God’s perfect law, the law that Adam and Eve broke when they sinned. The death that Christ died paid the price for Adam and Eve’s sin and the sins of the entire world.

Together they give us the assurance that we are saved. Together they are “the good news” of salvation.

this week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 80; 81.

*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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 13 2025

Scripture Story: Luke 24:13-34.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 83.

journeying with Jesus



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"Christ never forces His company upon anyone. He interests Himself in those who need Him. Gladly will He enter the humblest home, and cheer the lowliest heart. But if men are too indifferent to think of the heavenly Guest, or ask Him to abide with them, He passes on. Thus many meet with great loss. They do not know Christ any more than did the disciples as He walked with them by the way" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 800).

keytext

"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. . . .

"And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'"

(Luke 24:30-32, NKJV)

what do you think?

Agree or Disagree

The disciples, having been eyewitnesses to Christ, had an easier time believing and being faithful than followers today. Explain.

What is more helpful for believing: a firsthand experience, or having the Bible and all of history to testify on Jesus' behalf? Do you ever think that if you could have been there and seen Jesus, your faith in Him would be stronger?

did you know?

Perhaps one of the greatest ironies is couched in the word the disciples used for their fellow traveler. The word *paroikeis*, typically translated "visitor," means to inhabit a place as a stranger. Another way to say it is: "Is it possible that you are the only one who doesn't have a clue about what is going on here?" But in truth, as you'll read in the story for this week, Jesus was more *at home* with understanding than the two disciples.

INTO THE STORY

"Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

"And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?'

"Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?'

"And He said to them, 'What things?'

"So they said

to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.'

"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

"Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them.

"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

"And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'

(Luke 24:13-32, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story and *underline* the phrases that you think are key to understanding the interchange between Jesus and the two disciples.

How does the Bible describe their attitude? What do they do and say that reveals their emotional state?

Why do you think Jesus is not immediately recognized? Is it because Jesus is concealing His identity, or are they so confused that they don't see who He is?

When the disciples said, "We thought He was the *one* who would redeem Israel," what other way could this happen other than Christ dying?

What do you think changed in their understanding of Christ and His death when Jesus taught them from the Scriptures as they walked? What in particular do you think made their hearts burn?

When Christ broke the bread, what images do you think went through their minds? What do you think is the message God has for you in this passage?

punch lines

"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all" (**Acts 4:33, NKJV**).

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (**Matthew 16:21, NKJV**).

"When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead'" (**Matthew 17:8, 9, NKJV**).

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (**Hebrews 2:9, NKJV**).

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (**1 Corinthians 13:12, NKJV**).

further insight

"The miracles of Christ are a proof of His divinity; but a stronger proof that He is the world's Redeemer is found in comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the history of the New."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 799

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Acts 4:33.

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Many think that being there would enhance the evidence so much that less faith would be required to believe. Is that how it works?

How can we believe in the Resurrection today with the same kind of faith and passion as believers did back then—perhaps even more? Explain.

Sunday

Read Matthew 16:21.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide you through this amazing story. What parts of this story were new to you? How do you think this story helps believers today who struggle with having all the right information but still miss the Savior? What lesson or insight did you gain from this story that might change the way you see Christ in your everyday life? How can you pay attention to Him as you walk each day?

Monday

Read Luke 24:30-32.

The *Key Text* this week emphasizes the way God's word brings clarity to our minds and feels like a warm light burning within us.

When in your life has God's Word illuminated your mind with clarity and warmed your heart with purpose? Think about some of the revelations you have witnessed in the

Bible. If you had to choose three stories from Scripture that clarify God's purpose and plan for your life, what three stories would you choose? Write them down and send them to a friend or someone you know who might be struggling. Share your story of going from confusion to clarity.

Tuesday

Read Matthew 17:8, 9.

Read the quote in the *Flashlight* section and ruminate on the times in your life when you were "indifferent" to God's voice and presence. How did you emerge from the fog of apathy? Think of someone you know who persistently tries to see Christ in everyday life. Invite them to share with you what they do to fight apathy from clouding their vision of Christ.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* texts in this week's lesson capture how important the resurrection is to the Christian faith. Included in the listed verses are a couple that show how Christ clearly foretold the disciples of the Resurrection. How could they forget? Even the Pharisees remembered Christ's promise to rise from the dead (Matthew 27:62-66). Which verse speaks to you personally?

Thursday

Read Hebrews 2:9.

Take a several-mile hike this week—either by yourself or with a friend—not simply for exercise, but to deepen your understanding. Simply talk about all the events of the life of Christ that are meaningful to you. Think and imagine the trial where the disciples recaptured the fire of their faith by listening to God's Word. Bring your Bible and read

from the last moments of Christ's life. Take the time to get clear about who He is and what He longs to do in your heart. Confess the things that tend to get in the way of His leading in your life. Stay focused on this for several miles and see what emerges.

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 13:12.

How does God reveal Himself to you? Think about the events in your life in which God has shown Himself to you in unmistakable ways. Did clarity come immediately or as part of a longer process? Imagine the experiences of others such as Saul/Paul or Thomas and how they got to a point where they were sure in their faith in Christ.

How is the Resurrection relevant today?

Pray for an opportunity to testify to this event with someone this week.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapter 83.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 2025

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



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).

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)

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?

How did Peter seem to feel about this questioning?

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?

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?

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

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" (**Psalms 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

connectingtolife

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

this week's reading*

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

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 27, 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 86; 87.

calling change agents



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Photo by Barin Von Foregger

flashlight

"Christ had sojourned in the world for thirty-three years; He had endured its scorn, insult, and mockery; He had been rejected and crucified. Now, when about to ascend to His throne of glory,—as He reviews the ingratitude of the people He came to save,—will He not withdraw from them His sympathy and love? Will not His affections be centered upon that realm where He is appreciated, and where sinless angels wait to do His bidding? No; His promise to those loved ones whom He leaves on earth is, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 830).

keytext

"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus . . . will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"

(Acts 1:10, 11, NIV)

what do you think?

Are you a good follower? Or do you tend to be more of a

leader? Rank yourself from 1 ("That's not me at all") to 10 ("That is totally me") after the following statements:

- ☐ I lean on God for everything.
- ☐ My friends tell me I'm really good at following directions.
- ☐ If I sense God is calling me to do something I do it without hesitation.
- ☐ I ask my parents or other adults for advice.
- ☐ I believe that God makes His will known through His Spirit.
- ☐ I'm content to be a support person on a team.
- ☐ I prefer one-on-one mentoring to being in front of a big crowd of people.
- ☐ I believe the kingdom of God gets built through personal relationships—one friend at a time.
- ☐ I never worry about anything.
- ☐ I prefer singing in a choir rather than singing a solo.

did you know?

According to a site on friendship evangelism, polls suggest that approximately 90 percent of converts come to faith because they were invited by a "relative, friend, or neighbor."

the temple, praising God."

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"

(Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

"When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually a t



OUT OF THE STORY

Matthew 28:16-20

Notice that before Jesus challenges His disciples with the Great Commission, He reminds them that all authority has been given to Him (verse 18). Why do you think He did this?

Why do you think Jesus reminded His disciples that He would always be with them?

Acts 1:9-12

What attitude do you sense in the angels' question "Why do you stand here looking into the sky?"

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| a. Sympathy | c. Sincerity |
| b. Curiosity | d. All of the above |

Explain.

Luke 24:51, 52

Would you characterize this passage as positive or negative? Why?

punch lines

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

"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**).

"This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world" (**1 John 5:3, 4, NIV**).

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (**Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV**).

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (**Psalms 32:7, NIV**).

further insight

"He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 823

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 43:10.

Add up your points from the *What Do You Think?* section to discover your "Follower Quotient." Use this key:

- 0-20 points = You are a leader, not a follower.
- 21-40 points = You tend to lead rather than follow.
- 41-60 points = You are comfortable leading or following.
- 61-80 points = You lean toward following.
- 81-100 points = You are a gifted team player, supporter, and follower.

Compare your score with the score of friends in your Sabbath School class. Discuss the following questions:

How might you sense God calling you to help build the kingdom of God as a leader? a follower?

Do you tend to be a change agent?

Review the instructions that Jesus gave to His followers at His ascension. How can you make His calling personal and follow those directions today?

Sunday

Read Revelation 2:10.

Read the sections *Into the Story* and *Out of the Story*. If we are to accept the challenge that Jesus gave His followers as He ascended to heaven, would our message be charming? popular? offensive? Why or why not?

Monday

Read Acts 1:9-11.

Compare the *Key Text* with this quotation from Ellen White: "God is not partial. All who are made partakers of His salvation here, and who hope to share the glories of the kingdom hereafter, must gather with Christ. Each must feel that he is responsible for his own case, and for the influence he exerts over others" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 179).

Ask yourself:

- What influence do I exert over others?
- What does it mean to "gather with Christ"?
- Do I understand that I am responsible for my own case? What does that look like in my life?

Tuesday

Read 1 John 5:3, 4.

Read this week's *Flashlight*. Escape to a quiet place and reflect on God's love for you.

Wednesday

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Dig deeper into God's Word by reading these additional texts:

- Matthew 5:14-16
- Mark 1:17
- Acts 1:8
- 2 Timothy 4:1-8
- Luke 9:23-27

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

At Jesus' ascension, the two men dressed in white asked the disciples, "Why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky?" (Acts 1:11, *The Message*). In other words: "Are you going to be a stargazer or a change agent?" Jesus asks you to choose being a

witness for Him today. How will you answer?

Friday

Read Psalm 32:7.

Ellen White writes: "When Christ ascended to heaven, the sense of His presence was still with His followers. It was a personal presence, full of love and light. Jesus, the Saviour, 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 still upon His lips, been taken up from them into heaven, and the tones of His voice had come back to them, as the cloud of angels received Him—'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Matthew 28:20. . . . They knew that He had ascended to heaven to prepare places for them, and that He would come again and take them to Himself" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 73).

Do you enjoy the sense of Christ's personal presence? If so, in what ways? How will you respond to His call to a consistent relationship with Him?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 86; 87.

*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.