



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 27 2021

it's your turn

Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 18.

Key Text: John 3:29, 30.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Imagine what it must have been like for John the Baptist. He and Jesus were cousins, although they had no direct contact with each other during their childhoods (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 109). As they grew into adulthood, Jesus spent more time in His father's carpenter shop, while John the Baptist went out preaching. Jesus watched from a distance as John the Baptist "prepared the way" for the coming Messiah.

Then the time came for Jesus to take center stage. He started preaching and baptizing—just like John. As the people flocked from John to Jesus, John had a choice to make: to be jealous or to be excited for Jesus. John chose the latter. He chose to take a step back to the sidelines.

This is a decision that we all face at one point in our lives. The real question is, which will we choose? Human nature and society combined tell us to be jealous, but as Christians what should our choice be?

John the Baptist chose to take joy in Jesus' success. He lived in the same world that we live in. He knew that his time had come to an end. He had prepared the way and that was God's plan for him. Now it was time for someone else, Jesus, to take over. He stepped aside—and took joy in that.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the importance of humility in a Christian's life. (*Know*)

- Sense the closeness of God when they allow Him to control their thoughts. (*Feel*)
- Commit to being humble and doing unselfish acts. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs no. 19: The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the *What Do You Think?* section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share how they ranked the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Ask students why they chose the one they did as their first choice.

Humility is usually not a top choice in the most desirable characteristics (as evidenced in the *Did You Know?* section). But how close does it follow with other desirable characteristics? Have students discuss the importance of humility in a relationship.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Grades were never Derek's strongpoint. He'd rather be out playing baseball or buried in a good book. His mother tried everything to get Derek to study harder—even paying him for good grades. Derek changed schools in the middle of high school and found himself in a class of academics—nearly every student had good grades. This motivated Derek to do better, and for the first time he received straight A's—no matter that it was the final quarter of his senior year. It motivated him to do better in college. But his first semester of college Derek found himself on familiar ground when he received a D in his U.S. History class. That first year, Derek even received an F in a Bible class. Throughout college, his grades never improved much, he never achieved straight A's again.

It was seven years before Derek attempted graduate school. That first quarter, Derek studied hard. He did all the reading requirements—sometimes 300 pages a night—and turned his assignments in on time. In one class he felt defeated as he learned he had a D after the first exam. *Here we go again*, he thought to himself. In that class the professor offered the students a choice between writing reaction papers and doing a project. Derek chose the project. Imagine his surprise when he received his final grade report for that quarter: three A's and one A-.

Derek was proud of himself. It made him feel good that he had accomplished something that he had done only once before. He was sharing this with a friend

when she commented, "It's all God." Derek felt the air go out of his balloon. He wanted to receive congratulations for his achievement, yet at the same time he knew he should praise God.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Has there been a time in your life when you have accomplished something that you didn't think you could do? Climbed a mountain? Rode a bike 50 miles? Confronted a friend? Achieved good grades? How did you feel when that happened? Pride or humbleness? Think about Derek's story. Was there any part of him that had achieved success, or was it all God? Is it wrong to take pride in one's accomplishments? Where is the line between pride and humility? And how does that connect with John the Baptist's line: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, NKJV).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the *Into the Story* section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Have the students read through the *Into the Story* section. As they read, have them underline what they find new and interesting in the story. Also have them write down at least one thing that made them think about the story. Then have volunteers discuss what they underlined and wrote.
- John's followers were jealous that Jesus was so much more popular. They looked for anything to nitpick about so they could complain to John. They argued over the issue of the purpose of baptism and the language to use when baptizing people. Why do you think that people argue over simple religious practices? (In some churches the deacons practice the Communion service before they actually do it.) What are some issues that your church argues over that really do not make sense to you? Why do you think the adults argue over these practices?
- John refused to be pulled into this petty jealousy act. He knew he could hinder the work of Jesus if he allowed himself to be pulled into their web. He knew he had been called to direct people to Jesus. Sometimes the biggest deterrent to



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Think-Pair-Share

It's always difficult to get kids to discuss topics. Sometimes teachers get nervous when there is silence, and feel they need to fill that silence. Actually, students are just trying to think of something to say. Give students time to formulate their thoughts. Writing down their thoughts also gives them something to fall back on during the discussion. Encourage your students to write in the margins of their Bibles or in the student lesson. If they don't bring their lesson to Sabbath School, make sure you have scrap paper for them to write on. Once they have something down on paper, they will be more willing to discuss the topic. For those students who have trouble writing, have them draw what they see as they read the verses. Drawings can also stimulate discussion.

Christianity is Christians themselves. What are some ways that we can show non-Christians what it really means to be a Christian?

- What does the phrase “He must increase, but I must decrease” mean to you?
- John was truly a humble person. John’s attitude showed humility to his disciples and ultimately to everyone who left him to flock to Jesus. John could have been upset because no one wanted to listen to him anymore. He knew that his job was over and it was time for someone else to finish the work. Why is it so difficult to be humble? What can one do to become more humble?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 2 Samuel 11; 12; Ruth; Psalm 25:9, 10.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. John the Baptist was different in an odd sort of way. He wore strange clothes, and ate even stranger food. Today we judge people by how they look and what they wear; not so with John the Baptist. Despite his appearance, people still wanted to hear what he had to say. He preached one message and one message only—Repent.

John wasn’t concerned with what people thought of him, only that they listened

to what he had to say. He knew that he had a special task—to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He knew the Messiah would come soon, and his job would be done. He was content with that.

When his disciples came to him bitter with jealousy over the multitudes who were flocking to hear Jesus, John didn’t get upset. He was

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Key Text

Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

• Flashlight

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book *The Desire of Ages*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.

• Punch Lines

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

• Further Insight

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.

happy and filled with joy. His job was done. Over. Finished. He was no longer needed. In fact, soon after that he went to prison.

2. In biblical times the “friend of the bridegroom” was the one who made arrangements between the families of the bride and the groom. When the arrangements had been agreed upon by both families, the friend received joy from completing the task well. Just so, John was filled with joy at completing his task of preparing the way for Jesus. John rejoiced in the popularity of Jesus. He could not regret that the people were attracted to Jesus and leaving him to go listen to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

“He must increase, but I must decrease,” are probably the last recorded words of John before his imprisonment. His words show us John the Baptist’s true character as humble, submissive, and unselfish.

Discuss with your students the differences between being humble, submissive, and unselfish. Are there any differences? What are the drawbacks, if any, in our society of being humble, submissive, and unselfish? Then challenge your students to do at least one humble act, one submissive act, and one unselfish act this week.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give the students colored index cards and markers. Have them write on the index card: “I will do one unselfish act this week.” Have them leave space so they can write what they did that week. Share with them that the reason you have them write this down is that the act of writing is like making a commitment or a contract to actually put this week’s lesson into action in their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

John the Baptist may have preached 2,000 years ago, but his message is still relevant today. Just as Jesus came into this world, He wants to come into our life. Not only is His message relevant, so is His story. John stood against the crowd and was humble. He didn’t try to stay in the limelight, he didn’t bad-mouth people, he didn’t argue over semantics. He simply said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The ultimate act of humility, John stepped out of the limelight and let another take over. His acts of humility and selflessness are the character traits of a true follower of Christ. Ellen White reminds us that as we let God take complete control of our thoughts, we are made full in Christ. We naturally become humble, like John.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 18.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.