

## Lesson 1: Ten Signs of True Discipleship

### Intro

What do we mean when we talk about discipleship? When we take a look at the life and ministry of Jesus, we see that discipleship went hand in hand with His work. Right from the start He called individuals to follow Him so that they could become His disciples. He also trained and commissioned them to make disciples of other people.

Even today, discipleship is Jesus' main focus. For this reason, He serves as our heavenly High Priest and Mediator. His main invitation is for people to become His disciples. His main commission to Christians is to make disciples of others. Discipleship in reality is the foundation of Jesus' church because without it His church would not be able to survive. For this reason, discipleship isn't just an important topic among others. It is a foundational truth that all other topics are built upon. Therefore, we can only hope to understand biblical teachings, regardless if they are doctrinal or practical aspects of faith and church life, when they are viewed through the eyes of discipleship.

The goal of this course is not to lead you through a theoretical study of discipleship. Rather, the goal is to help you personally grow in your discipleship to Christ. What does that mean? It means that you learn how to follow Jesus in your personal life by learning and practicing the principles that Jesus taught His disciples. Furthermore, and crucially important, that you help others become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.

### What is a disciple?

The Greek word *mathētēs* means *pupil* or *student*. It is a word frequently used in the New Testament and it describes a conscious decision to follow a teacher or a group. Basically, in ancient times a disciple was like an apprentice. They were taught the trade, lived with the family of the teacher, and even went to worship services with them. With this in mind, it is easier to understand the disciples question to Jesus: "Teacher, where are you staying?" (See John 1:38)



Mark

3:13-15

The New Testament often uses the word *disciple* for the 12 apostles. Read Mark 3:13-15 and list the three important signs of discipleship that made the 12 men that Jesus called His disciples.

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_
- b.) \_\_\_\_\_
- c.) \_\_\_\_\_

These three points are important and help us understand today what it means for us to be a disciple of Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus means:

- Being called by Jesus,
- Being with Him,
- Being empowered and sent out by Him to preach the Gospel.

It's important to note that the New Testament word for *preach* is not limited to the act of preaching sermons. It simply means to proclaim or to make known what happened during a particular situation. Thus preaching also includes sharing our personal testimony. Therefore it is applicable to all, even those who do not feel called to preach a sermon.



**John**

[illegible]

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**First Sign      A disciple of Jesus is called to fellowship with Him.**

Jesus describes Himself as the vine and His disciples as the branches. Of course, they can only live if they are connected to Him. In the parable, which expression is repetitively used to describe what fellowship with Jesus is like?

Verse 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 7: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 9: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 10: \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus clearly describes that we can abide in Him and that He wants to abide in us.

What are the consequences if we are not in fellowship with Him?

Verse 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6: \_\_\_\_\_

First of all, discipleship is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Without this relationship everything else is meaningless. I could have an intimate knowledge of all of the Adventist beliefs and be able to explain them with clarity, my lifestyle could be a shining example, my energies for the Church could be 110%, but without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, all of it would be worthless. The moment we reduce our Christian life to a list of norms and intellectual knowledge, we miss the goal that Jesus has called us to -- a personal relationship with Him.

**Quote #1**      "'Abide in Me, and I in you.' Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character." (*The Desire of Ages*, pg. 676)

**Second Sign      A disciple has experienced forgiveness of sins and justification by faith.**

How does Jesus describe this idea in verse 3?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A person can only become a disciple after they have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ. Our belief in Jesus Christ as Savior is the key, the foundation of discipleship.

**Third Sign      A Disciple of Jesus bears fruit. Through his life and words the believer testifies to the changing power of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus says this multiple times in this parable. Write down the main statements in regard to this sign below.

Verse 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 8: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus describes here a spiritual “natural” law. When we are separated from Him, we can do nothing. But when we are connected to Him, the natural result is an abundance of good fruit. Let’s not forget that the good fruit isn’t the result of our doing. It’s much more than that. It is the result of us abiding in Him and He in us. This is the only way we can bear good fruit. This growth happens as naturally as a growing tree, but not because we are straining to produce the fruit ourselves.

The fruit that God wants us to bear is reflected in our character. He wants to restore in us His image, which was lost as a result of Adam’s sin, so that our character reflects His character. The Bible calls this transformation *sanctification* (see Galatians 5:22,23; Romans 6:22; and Colossians 1:10).

**Quote #2**      “When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in our lives; not one will be missing.” (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 676)

But the “fruit” is not limited to our character. It also represents the people we lead to Jesus. In short, those we disciple. Every disciple of Jesus is called to share the gospel with others (see John 4:35-38; Matthew 28:18-20).

**Fourth Sign      A disciple of Jesus lives according to the word of God.**

How does Jesus share this thought in verse 7?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



In the following texts how does Jesus describe the relationship between His word and our discipleship?

John 8:31-32: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

John 17:17: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A disciple of Jesus studies daily and meditates on the word of God. They take God's word seriously and use it as the standard in their life. God's word strengthens, encourages, reprimands, admonishes, and comforts them. It is the source of their spiritual growth.

**Fifth Sign      A disciple of Jesus lives a life of prayer.**

What does Jesus say about prayer in verse 7?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sixth Sign      A disciple of Jesus is obedient to God's commandments.**

How does Jesus describe the connection between our relationship to him and our obedience to His commandments in verse 10?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Following Jesus in a practical way means that we are obedient to Him. We have decided to accept Jesus not only as our Savior but also as the Lord of our life. When we are obedient to Jesus we intentionally place Him at the head of our life. We surrender and give Him complete Lordship over every aspect of our lives. When Christ is accepted as Lord over every aspect of our lives, then He can live in us through the Holy Spirit.

**Seventh Sign      A disciple of Jesus is called to fellowship with other disciples.**

What does Jesus say about fellowship in verse 12?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Of course, the parable of the vine and the branches teaches us that we must all abide in Christ as individuals. But it also speaks of fellowship with others. When speaking, Jesus was

addressing His disciples as a whole. After all, it would be a very strange vine that has only one branch. The point is that Jesus places His disciples in a fellowship that is called to prepare the world for His second coming. The more we keep the reality of Jesus' second coming before us, the more we will unite and seek to fulfill the work Jesus gave to us as a body. A disciple of Jesus is not alone in this work.



How do the following texts describe the meaning of fellowship for a disciple of Jesus?

John 13:35: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 17:20-23: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Eighth Sign      A disciple of Jesus lives for the glory of God.**

According to Jesus' words, what is a result of our discipleship? (Verse 8)

\_\_\_\_\_

A disciple of Jesus does not live to bring glory to self. From the bottom of their heart, through their life and being, they want to bring glory to God. In the controversy between Christ and Satan, Satan was constantly portraying God's character in a false light in order to make God unattractive. Jesus came to show mankind the true character of God. "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9). As disciples of Christ we are called to continue the work that Jesus started. Through our lives and work we demonstrate who God really is and prove that Satan's accusations are nothing but lies.

**Quote #4**      "God desires to manifest through you the holiness, the benevolence, the compassion of His own character. Yet the Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him....The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 677)

**Ninth Sign      A disciple of Jesus is called to lead a life of joy.**

According to Jesus' words, what is another result of our discipleship? (Verse 11)

\_\_\_\_\_

The lives of Jesus' disciples are not always comfortable. Jesus makes it clear that there will be sacrifice and deprivation. Following Him means giving up many things that the world considers to be fun and exciting because these things damage one's relationship with God. But this does not mean that Jesus wants His disciples to live a gloomy life. The biggest joy that we can and will experience in this world is when we follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Everything else in this world that is considered fun and exciting is only a poor imitation.

**Tenth Sign      A disciple of Jesus has made a clear, 100% decision for discipleship.**

The picture of the vine and the branches makes one thing clear: either the branch is connected to the vine or it is not. That means that we are disciples of Jesus or we are not. Discipleship is a clear, 100% committed, and well thought out decision. Jesus made that clear many times in His word as He explained to people what it meant to be His disciple.

These ten signs show the plan God has for us. Each one of these signs is so important that we will look at them again in a deeper way as we go through this discipleship course. If you take a look at the other lessons from this discipleship course you will see that each topic has something to do with at least one of the ten signs.

**Where do  
you stand?**

On the following pages you will find a list of questions that will help you determine the quality of your relationship with Christ. The intention of this list is not to reduce your faith to a checklist or a catalog of rules. Neither should it be a discouragement to you because you find many areas that you feel a need to change. Please do not compare yourself with others nor their walk in Christ. These questions should help you to reflect on where you stand today and where you need to draw closer to Christ. Go through the questions and mark the areas where you desire a change. This discipleship course will address all these questions and offer you assistance.

	Applies ...	Does not apply
1. I have daily quiet time with God.	O-----O-----O-----O	
2. I have the assurance that my sins are forgiven and that through God's grace I am saved.	O-----O-----O-----O	
3. I try to live a disciplined life.	O-----O-----O-----O	
4. I read the Bible daily.	O-----O-----O-----O	
5. Every week I memorize a new Bible text.	O-----O-----O-----O	
6. I have the habit of taking notes whenever I hear or read God's word.	O-----O-----O-----O	
7. I have a regular prayer time.	O-----O-----O-----O	
8. I have a prayer list and pray regularly for the people and petitions on this list.	O-----O-----O-----O	
9. I have experienced a clear answer to prayer in the last four weeks.	O-----O-----O-----O	
10. My daily prayers include worship, thanksgiving, confession, requests, and supplications.	O-----O-----O-----O	
11. I try to live in peace with fellow believers in Christ.	O-----O-----O-----O	
12. I have forgiven people who hurt me.	O-----O-----O-----O	

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- |                                                                                                         |                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 13. I am prepared to make the first step toward reconciliation.                                         | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 14. I experience, with God's help, the victory over temptations.                                        | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 15. I live in harmony with my family.                                                                   | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 16. I pray regularly for lost people by name.                                                           | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 17. I take an active role in a missionary-oriented Bible study group.                                   | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 18. I know that God has called me to lead others to Christ.                                             | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 19. I share my testimony whenever a fitting opportunity arises.                                         | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 20. I talk about God regularly with people who are open.                                                | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 21. I help people who I have won for Christ, to grow in their faith and to live as disciples for Jesus. | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 22. I train others so that they can train others to live their lives as Jesus' disciples.               | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 23. I know my spiritual gifts and use them in the church.                                               | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 24. I faithfully pay my tithe and give free-will offerings to God.                                      | o-----o-----o-----o |
| 25. I have life goals that I constantly think about and work towards.                                   | o-----o-----o-----o |





This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important to you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is John 15:8. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points in this lesson that personally spoke to you and share with them what you have learned.

## Lesson 2: God's Plan for Your Life

### Intro

When old, many people look back at their lives and soberingly ask: "That was it?" To ask that question at the end of a lifetime is a great tragedy! When you choose a life of discipleship under Jesus Christ you will not ask that question because God has a plan for your life. He will use you in a special way. When we discover and live by this plan, God gives meaning to our lives and makes us happy. Discipleship is all about discovering and living by His plan.



God has a plan for your life because He knows you as no one else. How do the following verses describe how well God knows you?

Psalm 139:1-6: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 1:4-5: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God KNOWS you. He knows your innermost parts. He understands your worries, needs, joys, and hopes. In short, He knows absolutely everything about you! This is good news because God is a good Father and not a strict authoritarian one who is waiting for opportunities to dole out punishment! Even before He created you He had a plan for your life.



What plan does God have for your life?

Jeremiah 29:11-14: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 33:3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Discover God's plan for your life!

God doesn't just pass you by as if you were just one of a million faces in the crowd. He loves you more than you can comprehend and He has a personal plan for your life. To discover and live by His plan is the purpose of our lives. That is why God created us and gave us the gift of life. His plan for us is the greatest discovery we can experience! To live according to

His plan is the greatest success that we could ever have! The following texts should help you discover the plan that God has for you.

**Plan #1: God wants you to find Him.**



**Acts  
17:26-27**

Why did God create humans and give them the gift of life?

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What promise does God give us here?

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God gave us life so that we could find Him. That is the purpose of our lives! When we live selfishly, we live in vain! But God tells us that He is close to us. So close, that every person who earnestly searches can find Him.

**Plan #2: God wishes to have an intimate relationship with you.**



**Hosea  
2:19-20**

What does God use to describe His relationship with His people?

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**Jeremiah  
31:3**

Why does God draw you to Him?

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God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. His desire is that you will answer His call of love. He couldn't have used a more profound example to describe the kind of relationship He wishes to have with us than the marriage covenant. God seeks you out because He loves you. He draws you to Himself so that you can respond to His love.

**Plan #3: God deeply desires to forgive your sins.**



**Isaiah  
44:22**

What does God promise? What invitation does He give us?

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Our sins are like thick clouds that separate us from God! God wants a relationship without obstacles. He wants to remove the guilt and sin that destroys us. So He invites us to come to Him. Oh, how deep is His desire to forgive our sins and to save us!

**Plan #4: God wants to change your character.**



**Ezekiel  
36:26-27**

What gift does God want to give us?

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What kind of person does God want to make us?

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**Romans  
8:29**

How does God want to change us?

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Jesus is not only interested in forgiving your sins. He wants to change you from the inside out. He promises you a new heart that is filled with His Spirit so that you can be in the likeness of His image. God wants to show the whole universe what He can do with people who fully surrender to Him. He wants to make you a living example of His grace.

**Plan #5: God wants to give you a fulfilled life now.**



**John 10:10**

What does Jesus want to give us?

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Jesus promises us an abundant life. This does not mean a life full of riches, power, and honor. That kind of life is only a cheap substitute offered by Satan so that people will pass up the real life that only Jesus gives. Of course, Jesus can bless us with riches, power, and honor if He knows we can use it for His glory. But more important, Jesus wants to fill our lives with things that will prepare us for an eternity with Him. He wants to give us a joy that grows by serving others and can only be found in a relationship with Him .

**Plan #6: God wants to use you to bring others to Him.**



How does Jesus want to use you in this world?

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**Matthew  
5:13-16**



How does Jesus want to influence the lives of others through you?

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**Mark 1:17**

God needs people in this world who point others to Him. People who do not live for themselves but for His glory and for the good of others. Jesus wants you to be salt and a light in this world. He wants to make you into a person who wins others for Him and His kingdom.

**Plan #7: God wants you to grow in your faith.**



How does Paul describe the experience that God wishes for each of His disciples?

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**Philippians  
1:9-11**

God does not want your Christian walk to become stagnant. Life with God means growth that never ends, even into eternity. God wants your love and knowledge to grow more and more. He even has experiences waiting for us that will leave us amazed.

**Plan #8: God wants you to live forever.**



What is Jesus' wish for your future?

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**John  
6:39-40**

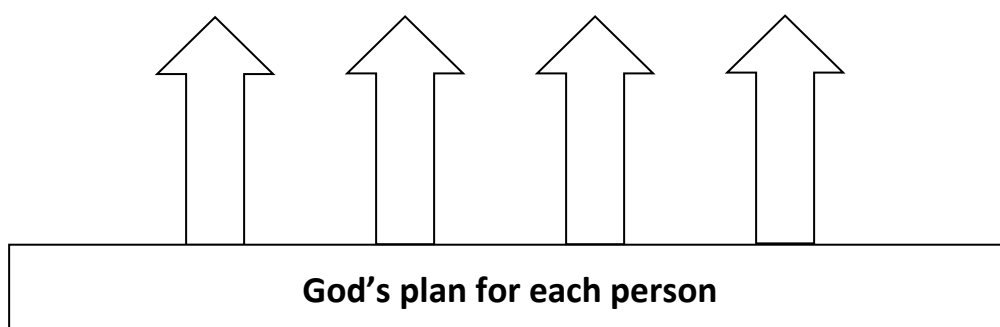
Solomon wrote: "He put eternity in your hearts." God placed the desire for life in each one of us. Obviously, He would not have done that if He did not want to make it a reality. Jesus said that it is God's plan to grant us everlasting life. It doesn't matter if we die or if we are

alive with the blessed multitude when Jesus comes again. He wants us to live with Him forever.



God's plan for our lives is more than we can imagine. These eight points definitely can't describe everything that God has in mind for us because His plan is much greater. Let's just say that these eight points are a general plan that applies to every Christian. But don't forget, God also has a special plan for your life. However, this plan can only become reality when you allow Him to implement His general plan in your life. The general plan is a foundation that God builds every person's life on.

### God's special plan for your life



This idea is very important! When we want to experience God's special plan, we must first ask ourselves to what extent God has been able to lay this foundation in our lives. If the above-mentioned eight points have not become the foundation of our lives, how can we expect God to reveal to each one of us His special plan?

Mankind was created in God's image. Our first parents lived within the plan of God until sin entered and changed the relation between God and us. Sin pulled us out of God's plan.

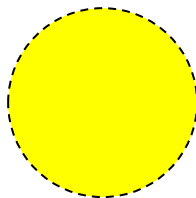
#### Mankind after

##### God's image

God's plan

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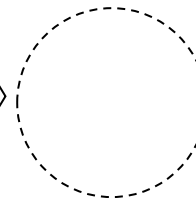
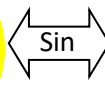
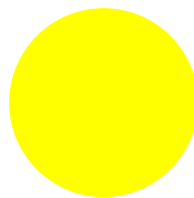
Our lives



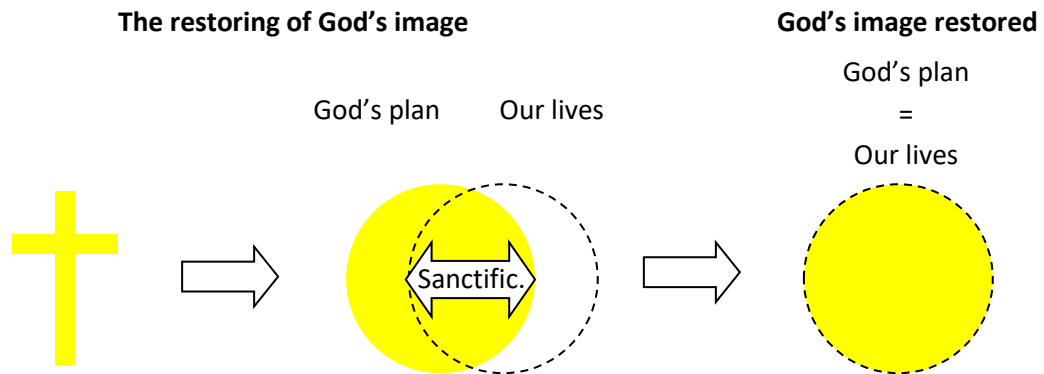
#### God's image distorted in mankind

God's plan

Our lives



Christ came to reach us where we were. He became like us, so that we could become like Him. He wants to change us until His will becomes our will and we are willing to do things that will please Him. This is how He restores God's image in us (Colossians 3:10). The Bible calls this process sanctification. When Jesus comes again, we will be living according to His plan. His image will be perfectly restored in us and we will be able to see Him face to face.



Sanctification is the process of God changing us so that we live according to His plan. When we surrender our lives to Him, He changes our thoughts, desires, plans, and goals. This is exactly what discipleship is all about. We discover God's plan and align our life within its boundaries.

### Quote #1

“And if we consent, He 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.” (*The Desire of Ages*, pg. 668)

God's way is not always the easiest. You will have trials and temptations because you choose to live in God's plan. But the life that God has prepared for you is of an endless worth and He will give you the strength to succeed! His plan is always better than any other plan that you could come up with on your own! Look at life from the perspective of eternity!



How can you respond to God's plan for your life?

Psalm 37:5-7: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A person's response to God's intentions is to have faith. Jesus often said to the people who came and asked Him for help: "Let it be according to your faith!" Only when we trust God and allow Him to lead us step by step, can His plan for our lives become a reality. Trust God! His plan is always the best!

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1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important to you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this lesson is Jeremiah 29:11. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points in this lesson that personally spoke to you and share with them what you have learned!



## Lesson 3: The Cost of Discipleship

### Intro

In the last lesson we learned that God has a plan for our lives. A plan that is bigger and better than anything we could come up with on our own. And yet discipleship does have its price. Jesus during His time on earth made that extremely clear to those who followed Him. His words and deeds left a deep impression on people. Many felt drawn to Him and wanted to follow Him, but many did so for selfish reasons. They wanted healing, a position, or to experience adventure. But Jesus showed them the naked truth and the consequences of being His disciple. These words are still applicable today because we also face a decision: to become a disciple of Jesus or remain as we are. As Jesus made the cost of discipleship clear to the people then, He makes it clear to us now.



Read the story of the rich young ruler and answer the following questions!

### Mark 10:17-22

1. What motivated the rich young ruler to come to Jesus?

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2. How did Jesus receive the rich young ruler? (Verse 21)

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3. What was keeping him from following Jesus?

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4. On the surface, it seems that money was what the young man did not want to give up. But what was the real issue at hand?

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Read the following quote from Ellen White and search for further answers to these questions!

### Quote #1

“Christ read the ruler’s heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would

strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered.

Christ gave this man a test. He called upon him to choose between the heavenly treasure and worldly greatness. The heavenly treasure was assured him if he would follow Christ. But self must yield; his will must be given into Christ's control. The very holiness of God was offered to the young ruler. He had the privilege of becoming a son of God, and a coheir with Christ to the heavenly treasure. But he must take up the cross, and follow the Savior in the path of self-denial." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 519-520)

**Everyone has  
to decide!**

Jesus has not called all of us to sell everything we have and give our money to the poor. And yet we must make the same decision that he laid before the rich young ruler: to give Jesus our whole heart or to love the things of this world. Of course salvation is free for everyone; we cannot earn it through any work of our own. But there is a price to pay. We cannot be disciples of Jesus if we are not willing to pay the cost.



**Luke 14:25-33**

In the following verses, Jesus is speaking to the multitude about the cost of discipleship. He calls them to weigh the cost and to make a sober decision if they really want to follow Him. Three times Jesus says, "You cannot be my disciple". When can someone not be a disciple of Jesus?

Verse 26: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 27: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 33: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Nothing is  
more  
important  
than Jesus!**



These comments sound quite drastic. When He speaks about hating our family, Jesus is exaggerating a little bit to make His point. Jesus loves our family. The point is that **nothing** should be more important than Jesus: no person (verse 26), no goals (verse 27), and no belongings (verse 33).

A disciple of Jesus is told to weigh the cost of following Him and to decide if he/she will put Jesus as the number one priority in his/her life. Think about it for a moment: Are there things in your life that take first place instead of Christ?

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Luke 9:23**

Jesus names 3 steps a disciple needs to take. What are these three steps?

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_  
b.) \_\_\_\_\_  
c.) \_\_\_\_\_

**1st Step:**

**Deny yourself**

In your opinion, what does it mean to deny yourself?

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**What it  
(doesn't)  
mean**

When Jesus says that we should deny ourselves, He does not call us to give up our identity, to surrender our individuality, or to ignore our basic needs. We are all individuals created in the likeness of God with the ability to think and to decide for ourselves. The problem is that we often use this ability to go our own way, separated from God. Our pride and ego is the biggest stumbling block that stands between us and the salvation that Jesus completed on the cross. That is why He calls us to give up selfish lifestyles that revolve around our own wants and desires. He wants to rescue us from a life centered on "me, myself and I". A rescue that is only possible when we totally surrender our will to Him. He invites us to trust Him and to lay our goals, plans, needs, and desires at His feet. He will then put them in their rightful place.

**In which solar  
system are  
you living?**

In the past people believed that our solar system, including the Sun, revolved around the Earth (known as geocentrism)! Later, they discovered that the Earth had a more modest role; it is only one of many other planets that revolve around the Sun (known as heliocentrism).

The geocentric belief is an analogy for the person living without Christ. They see themselves as the central focus of their existence. Unfortunately, this illusion leads to an egotistical lifestyle that will only end in disappointment. Whereas heliocentrism is an analogy, and truly the reality, of the person whose life is centered on Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness.



**Galatians  
2:19-20**

How does Paul describe denying self?

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To deny oneself is the beginning of something new. How does he describe the new life?

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**2 Corinthians  
5:15**

Whom should we *no longer* live for?

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Whom should we live for?

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**Matthew  
26:39-42**

How did Jesus deny Himself?

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**For myself or  
for God?**

Every person must ask the question: should I live for myself or for God? Your answer will lead you in a specific direction. It just so happens that the two options are mutually exclusive. The first way is the broad path. There is a lot of fun and partying along the way but in the end it leads to damnation. The second way is the narrow way. It is often thought to be much more difficult, spiritually speaking, with many hardships. But it is the only path that leads to true joy and eternal life. Each person can and must decide which of the two paths they will take.

This world is full of people who live only for themselves. Jesus is calling people to turn their back on that type of existence and to live for Him. He wants His followers to stop worrying about fulfilling their own desires and start serving others. This is the only way that the world can be a better place.

**The denial  
of self and  
the great  
Controversy**

Every person is affected by the great controversy between Christ and Satan. According to the Bible, our fallen nature makes us children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1.3) and an accomplice to God's adversary. There is only one way to be saved and that is by surrendering our old, godless life to death so that Christ can awaken in us a new life centered on Him. Only when we have dethroned our Ego and given Christ first place in our lives can He then work on our behalf, giving us His righteousness so that we can be saved.

**Quote #2**

"The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness." (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 43)

**Quote #3**

"The Life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self;

but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 624)

**Quote #4** "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 11:29; 16:24) let self be dethroned and no longer hold the supremacy of the soul." (*Thoughts From The Mount Of Blessings*, pg. 14-15)

**Quote #5** "Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is represented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained will demoralize the whole being." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 523)

**Quote #6** "It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult." (*Thoughts From The Mount Of Blessing*, pg. 16)

**2nd Step: Take up your cross daily**

The process of denying self means saying no to the old, selfish life. Whereas "take up His cross daily" means saying yes to the new life that Christ has given us and allowing God's will to work in every aspect of it. I take my eyes off of myself and fix them upon Jesus who carried His cross before me. To carry your cross means to imitate Jesus and His life. He has become your role model. Jesus requires us to carry our cross *daily*. This is not a one-time experience but a daily experience.

Jesus took upon himself the cross that we deserved to bear. On this cross He suffered the curse of Sin. This cross would have brought us eternal death. But Jesus offers us another cross. A cross that gives His disciples eternal life.

**Quote #7** "Jesus now explained to His disciples that His own life of self-abnegation was an example of what theirs should be. Calling about Him, with the disciples, the people who had been lingering near, He said, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' The cross was associated with the power of Rome. It was the instrument of the most cruel and humiliating form of death. The lowest criminals were required to bear the cross to the place of execution; and often as it was about to be laid upon their shoulders, they resisted with desperate violence, until they were overpowered, and the instrument of torture was bound upon them. But Jesus bade His followers take up the cross and bear it after Him. To the disciples His words, though dimly comprehended, pointed to their submission to the most bitter humiliation,--submission even unto death for the sake of Christ. No more complete self-surrender could have the Savior's words have pictured. But all this He had accepted for them. Jesus did not count heaven a place to be desired while we were lost. He left the heavenly courts for a life of reproach and insult, and a death of shame. He, who was rich in heaven's priceless treasure, became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich. We are to follow in the path He trod." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 417-418)



**Philippians  
2:5-9**

What did Jesus do as He took the cross upon Himself?

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What does His example mean for us when He calls us to take up our cross?

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**Suffering  
and trials**

When we follow Jesus' example and take up our cross, we are not seeking the easiest and most comfortable way in life anymore. We are prepared to give up our own will. We are prepared to place our needs on the backburner and to endure trials and suffering for the sake of God's will.



What has God promised those who experience trials and suffering?

James 1:2-4: \_\_\_\_\_

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**3rd Step:**

**To follow Jesus**

Jesus does not just tell us what to leave behind and what to carry. He does not just say, "Go!". Instead He invites us to follow Him. Every step He asks us to take, He has already taken Himself. He knows quite well every step along the way.



How does Paul express this idea in the book of Hebrews?

Hebrews 2:17-18: \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 4:15-16: \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>To follow Jesus makes us more like Him</b>	When we spend time with Jesus and contemplate His words and His example; when we take His life as the model for ours, we become changed—step by step, bit by bit. Growing by faith and sanctification occur only when we follow Jesus. See how Ellen White describes this very idea in the following quote!
<b>Quote #8</b>	“God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image.” ( <i>Desire of Ages</i> , pg. 294)
<b>Following Jesus means...</b>	<p>When you decide to follow Jesus, you become His disciple. In the first lesson, we covered what a life of discipleship entails. When you follow Jesus, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a relationship with Him and allow Him to be the Lord of your life.</li><li>• Accept His goal for your life and work to achieve it.</li><li>• Walk in the path of Jesus guided by the word of God.</li><li>• Submit your life to His authority and live a life in obedience to all of His commandments.</li></ul>
<b>Discipleship and Marriage</b>	Many times the Bible compares a person’s relationship with God to marriage. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become <i>one</i> flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) As he thought about these words, Paul said with great awe, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32). When we compare the three steps in marriage to the three steps in discipleship we find a very fascinating parallel.

**Marriage**

Leave  
Be joined to  
One flesh

**Discipleship**

Deny yourself  
Take up your cross  
Follow Jesus / Relationship

Those who marry, forsake the ability to make all the decisions and bind themselves to their partner in order to experience a deep relationship. But neither one can be considered a big sacrifice when compared to the happiness that one can experience in marriage. The same thing happens when God calls us to forsake our own selfish ways and bind ourselves to Him. All because He desires to have a happy and fulfilling relationship with us. Is that too big of a sacrifice? No, not when compared to what comes from a relationship with Jesus in this life and for eternity! The benefits are well worth it!

### The reward of discipleship



Discipleship has a price. Jesus expects us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. But discipleship also has wonderful benefits. How do the following verses describe the benefits of discipleship?

Mark 10:28-31: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus promises us our rewards in eternity. But even more, Jesus promises us benefits today. We can experience, today, the priceless gifts that God gives: inner peace, forgiveness, sense of purpose, brothers and sisters, and much, much more. The whole universe is in awe of what God can do with a person who has completely surrendered to Him.

### Quote #9

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God” (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 250-251).

### The cost is not too steep.

When we keep the rewards in sight, we would never come to the idea that the cost is too steep. Especially when all the things we gave up were only harmful. What was helpful for us was blessed and sanctified by God. Our sacrifices pale in comparison to what Christ gave up for us!

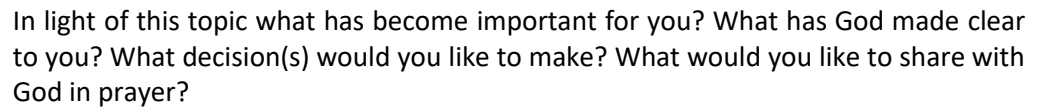
Ellen White in her first vision described the glory of Heaven and the difficulty she had comparing that with the difficulties endured on the way to Heaven. How little seemed the cost of discipleship when compared to the glories of Heaven.

### Quote #10

“We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out, ‘Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!’” (*Early Writings*, pg. 17).

When we are with Jesus in heaven, we will no longer think about what we had to sacrifice for our faith! The communion that we can begin to experience with God today, and continue for eternity, cannot be labeled with a price tag. Keep your eyes fixed on that glorious future!



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- Page 25

## Lesson 4: The Way to Eternal Life

### Intro

In the Bible we see that God desires a deep relationship with us from now through eternity. Contrary to some people's opinions, He cares about the decisions we make. He is concerned about our desire to live with or without Him or if we choose eternal death over eternal life. God pursues each person and tries to persuade them to choose eternal life. The main theme of the Bible is God's pursuit of man and desire for all to be saved. What good does it do us to know the Bible, be members of a church, and be involved in religious activities our whole life if in the end we miss out on the ultimate goal: eternal life with God?!



John 6:40

What does Jesus say about His Father's will for our lives?

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### Life with Jesus begins today!

God placed in every person's heart the desire for eternity so that He could fulfill it (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The purpose of our lives is to discover this truth. Don't be fooled into thinking that this means you cannot attain it until you are in heaven for eternity. Life with Jesus begins now. The Bible says multiple times that eternal life is something you can begin to experience today. For example, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3:36). Right now, in this life Jesus is offering to us real fulfillment through a real relationship with Him. He said, "I have come so that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

The question is: How do we find this life with Jesus that begins today and reaches into eternity? We already read the answer in the text mentioned above. Everyone, who believes in Jesus, will have eternal life. But what is this saving faith that leads us to eternal life?



John and Paul give us the answer we are looking for. According to them, what is the prerequisite for eternal life?

John 17:3: 

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Philippians 3:10-11: 

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The path to eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ. We are not talking about knowing that He existed, when He lived, and what He did. Knowing Jesus means having a deep, personal relationship with Him. How then can we get to know Jesus? The Biblical way

is actually quite simple. So simple that every child can understand it. The Bible describes five steps to eternal life. Let's discover what these steps are!

## 1st Step

### I accept that God loves me!

The first step is to realize that God is a being who loves me. How do the following texts describe God's love for us? What is the outcome of God's love?



1 John 4:8-10 : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

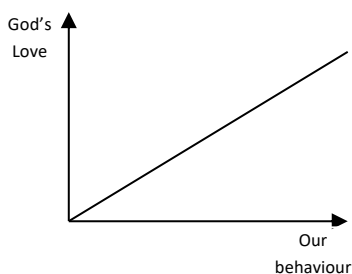
Romans 5:6-8 : \_\_\_\_\_

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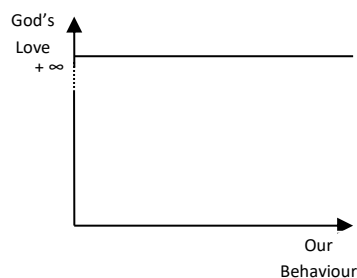
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God's love drove Him to action. He gave His Son so that we might be saved. God's love is unconditional. It was there from the beginning, even before we could attempt to show something in return. Many people believe that God loves us when we are good and His love fades when we are bad. According to these people, God's love is dependent on our behavior.

But that is a lie! God's love is not conditional or based on our behavior. God's love is unending and unchanging. Even when we fall so low, His love is beyond measure and words.



**FALSE!**



**TRUE!**



Have you personally accepted the truth that God unconditionally loves you even though He knows your weaknesses? Write your response to God below!

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 2nd Step



### I confess that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from God.

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve as relational beings in His image. They were also given free-will. Until they sinned, they enjoyed the benefits of a deep relationship with God. But when they chose to be independent from God and to live outside of His will, they lost that intimate relationship. The choice that they made is known in the Bible as “the first sin” and it had a major effect on their descendants’ relationship with God. Therefore today there is no difference between the deliberate turning away from or a passive indifference to God.

How does the Bible describe the state that we are in?

1 John 1:8-10 : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 3:22-23 : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No person is excluded from this fact. We are all sinners! Not because of our sinful acts, but because of our sinful hearts. Sin is deeply ingrained in us. It is part of our nature just like the blood in our veins. We can’t wash it off nor can we take a medicine to cure it. The best upbringing and the strongest will are weak in comparison to its all pervasive power. On our own, we cannot change our hearts. We must admit before God that we are guilty! We are guilty toward ourselves, towards others, and above all before God.



Sin has detrimental results! How does the Bible describe the result of Sin?

Isaiah 59:1-2 : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 6:23 : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sin separates us from God! When we stand alone before God, we are guilty and deserving of death. Through our own strength we cannot bridge the gulf that was made through Sin. An honest or pious life is not sufficient either.



Many people believe that they really aren't that bad and God must accept them the way that they are. Whoever believes, and holds fast to this idea, cannot receive and experience the help that God wants to give them. Just like an alcoholic who wants to be free must first accept and admit that he/she is an alcoholic, we too must accept that we are sinners. We must understand and admit that without Christ we are lost.



**1 John 1:9**

It is also important that we confess the sins in our lives that God has specifically pointed out. According to John, what will God do when we confess our sins?

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How do you view yourself in regard to this 2nd step?

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### 3rd Step



**I personally accept that Jesus died because of my sins.**

What does the Bible say that Jesus accomplished through His death on the cross?

Isaiah 53:4-6,8,10-12: \_\_\_\_\_

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Our sin has not altered God's love. He does not leave us to our own demise, without hope. On the contrary, Jesus (God's Word) became man, lived among us, paid the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross, and by His resurrection became victorious over sin and its consequence: death. Through His death and resurrection a deep and personal relationship with God is possible. Jesus bridged the gap that was caused by sin as symbolized by the tearing of the curtain in the temple.



How many paths of salvation did God make for mankind?

John 14:6 : \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 4:12 : \_\_\_\_\_

There is only one way! Those in the world claim that there are many ways to be saved, but they are wrong. There is no other way except through Jesus Christ! He is the only bridge/path that God has given us.

How does Paul describe salvation?

Ephesians 2:8-9 : \_\_\_\_\_

Paul refers to salvation as a gift that we receive from God. We can either accept or refuse it. But we definitely cannot earn it through good works. Knowing that salvation is a free gift is not enough to save us. We must accept the gift.



Where do you stand in relation to Jesus' sacrifice for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4th Step:

#### I surrender my life to Jesus.

This step works hand in hand with steps 2 and 3. If I have confessed every sin to Jesus but have not surrendered my life to Him, then I still live in Sin. How can I ever receive forgiveness? In short, when we ask Jesus to be the Lord of our lives. Simply knowing that Jesus died for our sins does not get us into Heaven. We are born "children of wrath" with a sinful nature (Ephesians 2:3). Only when we give our life completely to Christ can He change our hearts to the point that we feel perfectly at home in a

community of sinless beings. Jesus did all that He could, but there is one thing He cannot do for us. He cannot make us chose Him as Lord of our lives. Eternal life hangs on this decision to make Him Lord of our life.



**1 John**  
**5:11-13**

How does John express this decision and the consequences?

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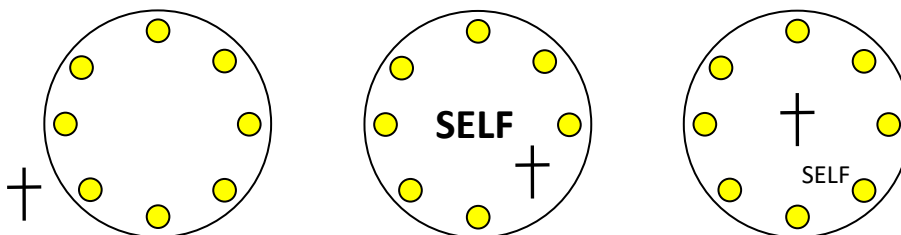
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**3 ways**

John shows us two ways: a life *with* Jesus or *without* Him. The second way can be subdivided into 2 ways. The following diagram makes it quite clear. The circle represents our life. The dots stand for different areas in our life that revolve around a central point – that central point is either Christ or self.




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**1 Corinthians**  
**2:14 – 3:3**

Paul describes three types of people. Read 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 and in the blank space provided write a description of each type that matches the diagram above!

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<b>The Natural Man</b>	Paul describes the natural man first. These people want nothing to do with God. The things of God are foolishness to them. Normally they do not go to church services. They are not really Christians even though their name may be listed as a church member somewhere. Their interests and goals are of a worldly nature. Visually, they are represented by the far left diagram above where everything revolves around them and Christ is outside of their life's sphere.
<b>The Spiritual Man</b>	The next description Paul makes is of the spiritual man who is filled with the Holy Spirit. According to the text he has "the mind of Christ" which means he/she has been born again through the Holy Spirit and received a new heart from Christ. Spiritual people fully trust Jesus. They are not sinless, but are prepared to give Jesus full control of every aspect of their life. They have a relationship with God and are guided in all things by His word. As John wrote, only these people can truly know Jesus and experience both joy and salvation. They are represented by the far right diagram above.
<b>The Carnal Man</b>	The third group that Paul describes is referred to as carnal man. They are represented in the middle diagram above. Jesus is important to these people, but they have not surrendered all of their life to Him. They are interested in spiritual things but they don't have, or have a distorted, relationship with Jesus Christ. They are plagued with fear and doubts. They may confess to be Christians, but they are harboring a known sin in their life that they have not yet confessed to Jesus. Consequently this act short-circuits their spiritual life.
<b>Jesus as a Hitch-hiker</b>	<p>Imagine life is like a road and Jesus is hitch-hiking. Some people would just ignore Him and keep on driving. They do not want Jesus in their car. They are the natural man.</p> <p>Then there are those who would gladly stop and invite Jesus into their car. They offer Jesus the passenger seat, but they prefer to sit behind the wheel and have total control over the car. They are the carnal man.</p> <p>What about the third group of people? They are the ones who not only stop to pick up Jesus, but immediately say to Him, "First of all Jesus, you are a much better driver than me. Second, you know the way better than I do. Third, I totally trust you. Would you please sit in the driver's seat?" They are the spiritual man who fully trust Jesus and give Him complete control over their lives.</p>
<b>Total Surrender</b>	<p>When we fully surrender to Christ it does not mean that we will be like robots or puppets on a string. On the contrary, we still have free will. Jesus will not make us do anything. We still have to choose and our total surrender to Jesus is not a onetime deal. It is a daily decision we have to make if we truly want Jesus to be the Lord of our lives and to live according to His will. He wants to transform us to the point that His will and our will are one and the same. Our only desire and delight will be to obey Him.</p> <p>In her books, Ellen White expresses wonderfully what total surrender to Christ means. Read through the following quotes and mark any of them that are important for you.</p>
<b>Quote #1</b>	"God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him." ( <i>Steps to Christ</i> , pg. 43)



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- Quote #2**      “He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 43)
- Quote #3**      “In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him. Hence the Savior says, ‘Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.’ Luke 14:33. Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up. Mammon is the idol of many. The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshiped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idols of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord’s and half the world’s. We are not God’s children unless we are such entirely.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 43-44)
- Quote #4**      “But what do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it. God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 46)
- Quote #5**      “Many are inquiring, ‘How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?’ You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, and your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 47.)
- Quote #6**      “Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 48)

**Quote #7** “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 70)

**Quote #8** “If we do not choose to give ourselves fully to God then we are in darkness. When we make any reserve we are leaving open a door through which Satan can enter to lead us astray by his temptations.” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pg. 92)

**Quote #9** “The battle which we have to fight—the greatest battle that was ever fought by man—is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love.” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pg. 141)

**Quote #10** “Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, ‘What has Christ given for me?’ The Son of God gave all—life and love and suffering—for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him?” (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 45)



Think for a moment about the above mentioned quotes, the example of the hitchhiker, and the 3 diagrams. Then answer the following questions:

What is your relationship with Jesus Christ like? Which of the three diagrams best describes you?

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What place should Jesus have in your life?

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If you find yourself in the left or middle diagrams, then I would like to invite you to trust Jesus with all of your heart and accept the salvation He made available to you when He died on the cross. Jesus loves you and wants to fill your life with meaning and joy. Perhaps you have made this decision before but you feel that your relationship with Jesus has grown cold. You see habits and sins that you have held onto, that were more important than Jesus. You can come back to Jesus now, as you are, and renew your commitment to Him! What are you waiting for?

How can Jesus take first place in your life?



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**Revelation  
3:20**

**Jesus wants  
to be invited  
in.**

Jesus stands before your heart's door and wants to be invited in. He will not break down the door and force Himself in. How can we invite Jesus in? We can invite Jesus in by praying a simple prayer.

*My Lord Jesus Christ,*

*It has become clear to me that You died for me and rose again because you love me. Thank You that You did this just for me. I know that I cannot save myself and that I cannot earn eternal life. I want to trust You 100%. Please take full control of my life. Please free me from the power of the enemy. Give me the strength, day by day, to live with You. Thank You for giving to me the gift of eternal life and for allowing me to belong wholly to you. Amen*

Jesus will never turn away the person who sincerely prays this prayer. Jesus said: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37)

Please read this prayer through! Does it express the desire of your heart? If so, take time to pray this prayer right now. Whether you pray the text above or put it into your own words doesn't matter. What matters is that your prayer comes from the heart.

**5th Step:**



**1 John  
5:14-15**

**I thank Jesus that He has given me the gift of eternal life.**

God is faithful and keeps the promises He has made to us. What assurance is given to us when we confess our sins to Jesus, accept His sacrifice on our behalf, and give our lives completely to Him?

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Jesus keeps His word and gives you everything He promised. He...

- Takes control of your life
- Forgives the sins you have confessed
- Makes you a child of God.
- Fills you with the Holy Spirit.
- Transforms and strengthens you to live according to His commandments.
- Gives you the gift of eternal life.

You can fully and implicitly trust that Jesus has made all of these true in your life!



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is 1 John 5:11-12. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and share what you have learned.

## Lesson 5: Knowing God

### Intro

We can only build a relationship with someone we know. If we have wrong conceptions about a person it will negatively affect our relationship with him or her. Discipleship is, first and foremost, a loving relationship with God. In order to have a good relationship with Him, we need to have a clear picture of who He is. Paul understood this basic principle and how important it was for people to find their way to Christ.

### Quote #1

“Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith.” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273)

### God's character and the Great Controversy

This is the very reason why God's character is at the center of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan is trying his best to tarnish, distort, and downright deceive people about God's true character so that they will not want to have a relationship with Him. However, Christ came to show us who God really is. But He didn't stop there. He also came so that God's character can be formed in us.



Why is it important to know God's character?

John 17:3

### God's image in us.

When God created Adam and Eve in His image, they saw God's character as it truly is. This is why they could reflect His image. But it all changed at the fall. Satan brainwashed mankind with lies about God's character and led them into sin. As a result, their image of God was warped, and their relationship with God was destroyed. In order for mankind to have a relationship with God again, they must see God as He truly is. That is why Jesus came to earth!



How did Satan twist the character of God at the fall? (Verses 1-5)

Genesis

3:1-5, 8

What was the result of sin? (Verse 8)

**Quote #2** “By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, causing Him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God’s unjust restrictions had led to man’s fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 500)

Since then Satan has been diligently at work, deceiving mankind by giving a false picture of God. Deception about God’s real character is the foundation of every false religion. The greatest tragedy of all is that people cannot build a relationship with God because they believe in a god that does not exist.

**Quote #3** “From the beginning it has been Satan’s studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. “ (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 738)

**Quote #4** “Though all these evidences have been given, the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,--one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 10)



**Genesis**

**3:8-21**

After the fall, God didn’t even try to defend Himself against Satan’s accusation. On the contrary, He demonstrated that He was completely different than what Satan had claimed. Read the following text and write down how God reveals His Character!

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**God demonstrates His character.**

In the verses we just read, God's character is plainly revealed in several ways:

1. Instead of speaking to Adam and Eve from the heavenly courtroom, God left Heaven and came to earth. Later Christ did the exact same; He left Heaven and became man.
2. God sought Adam and Eve and asked them questions. Not because He did not know the answers, but to lead them to repentance. The God who asks questions is the God who saves.
3. God's abhorrence of sin is made clear in the declaration given to Satan. It is true that God hates sin, but He loves the sinner.
4. God is also just. Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise and live out the consequences of their sin. But God did not send them out of Paradise without hope. In the sentence given to Satan, lies promise of a coming Saviour who will destroy Satan and save mankind.
5. God revealed Himself as a caring God. He saw mankind with their pitiful leaf garments and knew that they would not be sufficient for the cold world they were about to enter into. So He killed some animals and made coats of skin to clothe them with. God did all of this! **He** killed the animal. **He** made the coats. **He** clothed them. It is important to note that up until that point there was not a single sign of repentance on the part of Adam and Eve. The clothes were not God's reaction to their repentance. They were rather a gift of grace! This is a picture of the salvation He offers us as a gift, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God did not engage in a war of words with Satan and try to refute his accusations. Instead, He showed with His actions: "I am different than what Satan has portrayed Me to be." Throughout mankind's entire history God has continually revealed Himself to us in different ways. Let's see how.

**First way**



**Romans**

**1:19-20**

**God reveals himself through His creation**

How does God reveal Himself to every single person?

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What does nature tell you about His character?

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**Quote #5**

"'God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich

foliage of living green—all testify of the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 10)

**Second way      God reveals himself through His law.**

**They knew  
Him**

God openly reveals Himself to those who seek Him. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew Him as He truly is. By faith they lived in deep communion with God. But it wasn't the same for their descendants.

After living in Egypt as slaves for 400 years, a majority of the children of Israel did not know God or His true character. Therefore God revealed His character to them anew on Mt. Sinai.



**Exodus**

**33:18-34:7**

What did Moses request from God? (Exodus 33:18)

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What does **glory** mean? (Exodus 33:19)

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Moses asked: “Show me your *glory*!” And God answered: “I will make all my *goodness* pass before you, and I will proclaim the *name* of the LORD before you.” God’s *glory* is His **character**! (Note: *Name* is another synonym for *character*.) When Moses asked God to show him His glory, he didn’t want to see a great light with a loud thunder. Moses had a burning desire to see and know who God is.

What assignment did God give Moses? (Exodus 34:1-2)

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This assignment was a direct answer to Moses’ request: “Show me your glory!” By giving Moses His law, God was by default revealing His character. This extremely important to understand! God’s law is not just a list of rules. It is a reflection of His character. This is why God’s law, just like He himself, is unchangeable and perpetual.

In the Ten Commandments, what characteristics of God are on display?

(Exodus 34:6-7)

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**God does not change!**



Often the argument is used that the picture of God in the Old Testament is different than the picture of God in the New Testament. But this is simply not true. God says about Himself "For I am the LORD, I do not change." (Malachi 3:6)

How do the following Bible texts reveal the truth that God's character is the same in the Old and New Testaments?

Psalm 89:14: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 103:8-13: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 30:11: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 31:3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Love and Justice**

There are many passages in the Old Testament that talk about God's love and His justice. God loves the sinner, but He hates sin. He loves to forgive people for their sins, but He is also a just Judge. God's love and justice are not two opposing aspects of His character. They are inseparable and in the end identical. Because with God there is no love without justice and no justice without love.

**Third way**



**God reveals Himself though Jesus Christ**

How did God reveal Himself in times past? (Verse 1)

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Hebrews 1:1-3**

How did God reveal Himself in these last days? (Verse 2)

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How is Christ identified in Verse 3? (Verse 3)

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God revealed Himself through Creation, through His Law, and through the prophets. Jesus Christ is the clearest revelation of God's character. He is the brightness of God's *glory* and the express image of His *person*. He came to show mankind the true character of God. Through His words and His life people can see who God really is.



**John 1:14**

What did the people see according to John's statement?

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John writes about the glory of Jesus that corresponds to the Father's character. The character of Jesus reveals grace and truth.



**John 14:9**

What is Jesus' response to Philip's question "Show us the Father?"

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**Quote #6**

"Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. ...Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God." (*Testimony Treasures, Vol. 2, p. 335-336*)

**Quote #7**

"He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a

sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 11-12)

**Quote #8**

"But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are 'thoughts of peace, and not of evil.' (Jeremiah 29:11). It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 57)



When was God's character most clearly revealed?

**1 John 4:9-10**

**Quote #9**

"The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 15)

**God's  
character  
transforms us**

Understanding God's character is not just an intellectual exercise. When we honestly spend time getting to know Him, our love for Him will awaken. The more we contemplate Him, the more we will be transformed.



What happens to us when we behold His glory (= His character)?

**2 Corinthians  
3:18**

**Quote #10**

"If we have a correct knowledge of the character of God, Satan will not be able to overwhelm our souls with doubt and discouragement." (*Signs of the Times*, April 11, 1892)



**2 Corinthians  
4:6**

God's power to transform the human heart is often compared to His power to create. He said "Let there be light," in a world filled with darkness and it was so. Likewise He "did shine in our hearts" overpowering the darkness that envelops the natural heart of man. God revealed himself to us so that we can appreciate the beauty of His character. But understanding God's character is not the end. What comes after we have understood how God really is?

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Paul says that God wants “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” As disciples of Jesus we are called to spread the knowledge of God’s character as revealed through Jesus Christ through our lives and words.

**Quote #11** “Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ’s character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.” *(Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 67)*

**Quote #12** “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the Character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then he will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.” *(Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 69)*



What a privilege and a responsibility! God reveals Himself so that we can know Him and have a relationship with Him. He shows us who He is through His creation, through His word, and through Jesus Christ. By revealing His character to us, God wants to renew our characters. The image of God that was in us before the fall is to be restored step by step through Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:10) Through this restoration Jesus makes us light-bearers, so that others can see who God is and also have the opportunity to be transformed.

In the last days, Christ’s followers will reflect God’s character so much that they will be sealed. In the Book of Revelation, this is referred to as “having the seal or name of God upon their foreheads.” God, who placed His love and law in their hearts through the Holy Spirit, will develop His character in them to the point that they would rather die than betray God. By sealing them, God promises that He will preserve this beautiful character in them in spite of the trials they face. What a promise! Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is 2 Corinthians 4:6. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 6: What is Sin?

### Introduction

Thus far, we have looked at how much good God wants to do for us. The biggest enemy towards all this good is Sin. Sin destroys everything that God wants to give us, and under our own strength we do not stand a chance against the death grip of Sin. Jesus came to free us from the slavery of Sin. He does this by saving us and making us His disciples. In order to live a victorious life of faith as a disciple, we need a clear understanding of what Sin is. Only then can we understand and value the salvation that Jesus offers us.

### The origin of Sin

In order for us to understand what sin is, we must first know where sin came from. However, it is important to remember that we can never fully understand how sin could develop in the heart of a perfect Angel, who dwelt in a perfect environment with a perfect God. However, one thing is clear: the rise of sin was not the result of failure on God's part.

### Quote #1

"It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 493-494)



Even though we cannot give a full explanation for the origin of sin, the Bible gives us enough information to help us understand its beginnings and its characteristics.

Read the following texts and write down what they tell us about the origin of sin!

Isaiah 14:12-14: \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezekiel 28:11-18: \_\_\_\_\_

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John 8:44: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Ellen White  
on the origin  
and character  
of sin**

Beyond these simple explanations in the Bible, God also gave Ellen White many dreams and visions revealing the origins and character of sin. In her books *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *The Great Controversy*, she describes what God showed her regarding the origin of sin. Please read carefully the following quotations and underline or highlight those parts which clearly explain to you how sin came to be!

**Quote #2**

“There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Lucifer, ‘son of the morning,’ was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. He stood in the presence of the great Creator, and the ceaseless beams of glory enshrouding the eternal God rested upon him. “Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering...Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.’ Ezekiel 28:12-15.” (*Patriarchs and Prophet*, p. 35)

**Quote #3**

“Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35)

**Quote #4**

“The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out, in harmony with the sinless worshippers, in love to the Father and the Son. But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God’s special gift, and therefore, called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host, angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all. Yet the Son of God was exalted above him, as one in power and authority with the Father. He shared the Father’s counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God. ‘Why’ questioned

this mighty angel, 'should Christ have the supremacy? Why is he honored above Lucifer?'

"Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err. The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36-38)

**Quote #5**

"Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God. While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven. While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 38)

**Sin comes to earth**

After Satan was cast down to Earth, he placed all his focus on causing mankind to sin so that they would be drawn to his side. Surely nothing could hold him back if he could get those who were made in God's image to rebel against God!



Read Genesis 3:1-8 and then answer the following questions!

What strategy did Satan use to deceive Eve? (Verses 1-5)

**Genesis 3:1-8**



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What were the steps leading to sin? (Verse 6)

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What were the results of sin? (Verses 7-8)

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### The Definition of Sin



Satan put his plan, the same one he used to deceive a third of the Angels in Heaven, in motion on Earth. He sowed his false ideas of God's character in the minds of men and enticed them into sin. Their sin was not just one act; it was a breach of trust, a disposition that turned their backs on God. What is the exact definition of sin? The Bible gives three.

Read the following texts and write down what the Bible defines as Sin!

1 John 3:4: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

James 4:17: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

John 16:9: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We find here three definitions of sin: lawlessness, to refrain from doing good, and to not believe in Jesus. These are actually not three different definitions of sin, as much as they are three different aspects of it. When I don't believe in Jesus, I turn away from His character. God's law is the expression of His character. That is why unbelief is lawlessness and vice versa.

**Quote #6**

"Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is 'the transgression of the law'; it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 493)

**Sin and the Heart**

The main characteristic of sin is rebellion against God, the demand to live without His authority. The root of sin is not sinful *acts* but a sinful *heart*. That is where it began in Lucifer: "For you have said in your *heart*..." (Isaiah 14:13) "Your *heart* was lifted up because of your beauty..." (Ezekiel 28:17). Sin is much more than just an act. It is a heart condition, a disposition that makes us run away from God's character.



How do the following texts describe the fundamental problem of sin?

Matthew 15:19-20: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 13:23: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 17:9: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 7:14-20: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 3:8,10,12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Our Sinful Nature**

We are not born guilty but we all have a sinful nature. Sin is not something that we just carry on the outside; it is deeply rooted in our hearts. It is like a virus that affects our whole being. This is why good works cannot solve the sin problem. The only solution is to be born again through the Holy Spirit, when God gives us the gift of a new disposition, a new heart.

**Quote #7**

"It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be' (Job 14:4; Romans 8:7). Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 18)

**Quote #8**

"God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God. For they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 30)



Because sin begins in the heart, the solution must also begin in the heart. How do the following texts describe this truth?

Ezekiel 36:26-27: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 3:3,5: \_\_\_\_\_

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**The Results of Sin**

The Bible describes the results of sin very drastically. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were able to enjoy the presence of God because their characters were in harmony with His. But after the fall, they ran away from Him. They could no longer endure being in His presence. God's character and sin are like fire and water. They cannot exist together.



How do the following texts describe the results of sin?

Isaiah 59:1,2: \_\_\_\_\_

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John 8:34: \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 5:12; 6:23: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Quote #9**

“In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’ Colossians 2:3. But after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him. The sinner could not be happy in God’s presence; he would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for him. The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there—every heart responding to the heart of Infinite Love—would touch no answering chord in his soul. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there. He would be a discordant note in the melody of heaven. Heaven would be to him a place of torture; he would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, and the center of its joy. It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 17-18)

**Quote #10**

“Adam and Eve persuaded themselves that in so small a matter as eating of the forbidden fruit there could not result such terrible consequences as God had declared. But this small matter was the transgression of God’s immutable and holy law, and it separated man from God and opened the floodgates of death and untold woe upon our world. Age after age there has gone up from our earth a continual cry of mourning, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain as a consequence of man’s obedience. Heaven itself has felt the effects of his rebellion against God. Calvary stands as a memorial of the amazing sacrifice required to atone for the transgression of the divine law. Let us not regard sin as a trivial thing.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 33)

**Quote #11**

“After Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they were filled with a sense of shame and terror. At first their only thought was how to excuse their sin and escape the dreaded sentence of death. When the Lord inquired concerning their sin, Adam replied, laying the guilt partly upon God and partly upon his companion: ‘the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’ The woman put the blame upon the serpent, saying, ‘The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.’ Genesis 3:12, 13. Why did You make the serpent? Why did You suffer him to come

into Eden? These were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin, thus charging God with the responsibility of their fall. The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Confessions of this order are not inspired by the divine Spirit and will not be acceptable to God. True repentance will lead a man to bear his guilt himself and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 40)

**Sin is Never Harmless**

Sin is never harmless. It is not just a small act that God can turn a blind eye to. No, sin is horrific, destructive, and evil. Sin is a malicious cancer that spreads and kills the whole person. Who wants to have a malicious cancer in their body, even if its just a tiny little thing? We see clearly how horrible sin is when we look at the cross, where Jesus took the horrendous weight of sin upon Himself.

**Quote #12**

"Behold Him in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, upon the cross! The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of anguished cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 13)

**Quote #13**

"But let none deceive themselves with the thought that God, in His great love and mercy, will yet save even the rejecters of His grace. The exceeding sinfulness of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too good to cast off the sinner, let them look to Calvary. It was because there was no other way in which man could be saved, because without this sacrifice it was impossible for the human race to escape from the defiling power of sin, and be restored to communion with holy beings,—impossible for them again to become partakers of spiritual life,—it was because of this that Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient and suffered in the sinner's stead. The love and suffering and death of the Son of God all testify to the terrible enormity of sin and declare that there is no escape from its power, no hope of the higher life, but through the submission of the soul to Christ." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 31)

**Christ is Our Only Hope**

By nature, we are fully exposed to the consequences and effects of sin and without the protection of Christ doomed for condemnation. We can try as hard as we want, but we cannot shake sin off. We cannot expel it from our bodies. It is an intricate part of our character just like blood is an intricate part of our body. We need help that we can only get from outside of ourselves. Christ came to offer us this help. He does not abandon us to our sin. He took on man's nature and conquered sin, thus creating a way of escape for us.



How do the following texts describe what Christ did for us?

Psalms 25:8: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 1:21: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 8:3,4: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Quote #14**

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 62)

**Jesus is the Answer!**

When we finally understand the true character of sin, we can better understand how urgently we need Jesus Christ as our Saviour and how thorough His Salvation is. We can be thankful that Jesus created a way of escape from hopelessness and damnation. In the next lesson, we will take a deeper look into the way of escape Jesus created for us.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is Luke 19:10. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 7: Understanding the Cross (Part 1)

### Intro

Through the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan was trying to force God into a dilemma. Satan's accusation was that God is neither fair nor loving. If God destroys the sinner, how could He be love? On the other hand, if God overlooks their sin, how can He be just? The Bible is undeniably clear that God loves the sinner, but hates sin. How can He save the sinner and at the same time condemn sin? God's answer to this dilemma is the Cross.



### Genesis 3:15

Adam and Eve's sin could not be left consequence. Thus, they had to leave paradise. But God did not send them into their harsh new reality without hope. In the middle of His judgment sentence against the serpent, God made a promise to mankind. Can you find the promise in this verse?

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God said to Satan that He would put enmity between the serpent (Satan) and mankind. The fall changed the nature of man. We became naturally sinful and could no longer endure God's presence nor love His character. Sadly, mankind started loving that which pleased the devil. God prophesied that He would destroy this new alliance, allowing mankind to reestablish a relationship with Him. He would accomplish this through a descendant of the woman (Christ) who would crush the head of the serpent (Satan). However, there was a cost; Satan would wound Christ. This is an allusion to the cross on which Jesus would gain the victory for mankind once and for all, and at the same receive a deadly wound from Satan.



### Genesis 3:21

To hide their shame, Adam and Eve made clothes out of fig leaves. What a fitting symbol for every human attempt to solve the sin problem. Unfortunately, the problem is too big for us to be able to solve under our own strength. What does God do about Adam and Eve's meager attempt to cover themselves?

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In order to make clothing for Adam and Eve, two animals had to die. For the first time Adam and Eve saw that their sin was at the expense of an innocent life, a foreshadow of Jesus Christ who sacrificed his sinless life to pay the penalty for our sins. This clothing that God gave to Adam and Eve is a symbol of our salvation (see Isaiah 61:10). Only through Christ can we be free from the sin that holds us down.



When was the plan of salvation for mankind conceived?

Ephesians 1:4: \_\_\_\_\_



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1. Peter 1:20:

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**Quote #1**

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.

The Son of God, heaven’s glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son.

Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race. Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner’s behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing—‘the counsel of peace’ (Zechariah 6:13) for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race. But “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. Oh, the mystery of redemption! The love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which ‘passeth knowledge’? Through endless ages immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63-64)

**Quote #2**

“The plan by which alone man’s salvation could be secured, involved all heaven in its infinite sacrifice. The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption, for they saw that man’s salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. In grief and wonder they listened to His words as He told them how He must descend from heaven’s purity and peace, its joy and glory and immortal life, and come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure its sorrow, shame, and death. He was to stand between the sinner and the penalty of sin; yet few would receive Him as the Son of God. He would leave His high position as the Majesty of heaven, appear upon earth and humble Himself as a man, and by His own experience

become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations which man would have to endure. All this would be necessary in order that He might be able to succor them that should be tempted. Hebrews 2:18. When His mission as a teacher should be ended, He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire them to inflict. He must die the cruelest of deaths, lifted up between the heavens and the earth as a guilty sinner. He must pass long hours of agony so terrible that angels could not look upon it, but would veil their faces from the sight. He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father's face, while the guilt of transgression—the weight of the sins of the whole world—should be upon Him. The angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel's life could not pay the debt; only He who created man had power to redeem him. " (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64-65)

### It Is Finished!

As Jesus was dying on the cross he cried out: "It is finished!" This moment was a climax in world history, in which the destiny of this world was decided. We now want to consider seven things that Jesus finished on the cross, seven victories that He accomplished.

### 1st Victory

**Jesus was an atonement for our guilt.**

Atonement means that Jesus took our guilt upon Himself thus freeing us from it. Where do we find this thought in the following verses from Paul's letters?



Colossians 2:14: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 9:26-27: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Quote #3

"He planted the cross between heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. 'It is enough,' He said. 'The atonement is complete.'"*(The Review and Herald, September 24, 1901)*

### 2nd Victory

**Jesus died in our place.**

As sinners, we deserve eternal death. God cannot give a smaller punishment for sin. The only way to save us from eternal death was for Jesus to go through it for us. Check out this thought in the following texts!



Isaiah 53:4-6,8,10-12: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 5:6,8: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Peter 1:18,19: \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 2:9: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Quote #4**

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ (*Desire of Ages*, p. 25)

**Quote #5**

“The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 755-756)

**3rd Victory**

**Jesus reconciled the World with God.**

Sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God. God loves the sinner but hates sin. Sin brought separation between God and man, it alienated man from God. But through the cross the relationship between God and man is made possible again. The Bible talks about how God reconciled Himself with the world. It is important to remember that it was not the cross that led God to love us. It was God’s love that led to the cross. His love toward us was always there. That’s why He took the first step towards reconciliation with us and He invites us now to accept His offer.



Discover God's reconciliation in the following texts!

Romans 5:10: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 5:19-21: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 1:19-23: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 2:2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4th Victory

#### Jesus opened the the way to the Father.

Reconciliation always leads to relationship. Because of sin, the way to God was closed; however, through Christ it is open again. Through Christ we can approach God and be accepted as His children. Christ, as our intercessor in Heaven, actively works to help us discover and experience God every day as our loving, heavenly Father.



The following texts state the truth that through Jesus' death we have access to the Father again. Write down the parts that are most important to you.

Ephesians 2:13-17: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 10:19-22: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Quote #6

"But through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. With His own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made, so that the ministering angels can hold

communion with man. Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of infinite power.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 20)

### 5th Victory

#### Jesus conquered Satan and death.

While Satan was rebelling against God, he accused God of unfair methods and horrible character traits. Satan did so in such a subtle manner that it affected all the angels of heaven. As a result, a third of them chose to side with Satan. Through His death on the cross, Christ conquered Satan and death once and for all. The New Testament, especially Revelation, clearly proclaims this truth. Through this victory we have life.



How do the following verses describe Jesus' death on the cross as victorious over Satan and death?

John 12:31-32: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 2:15: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Timothy 1:10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 2:14-15: \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 2:14-15: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Quote #7

“At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 57)

### 6th Victory

#### Jesus vindicated God and revealed His character.

Satan accused God of being selfish, loveless, and unjust. On the cross, Jesus showed the entire Universe, for all eternity, that God is love, just, and willing to do all for His creatures. The evidence of the cross is so overwhelming that sin can never rise up again.



Discover the thoughts of God's righteousness in the following texts!

Romans 3:25-26: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 5:11-14: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Quote #8** "But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiations, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption." (*Steps to Christ, p. 13-14*)

**Quote #9** "The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child." (*Steps to Christ, p. 15*)

**Quote #10** "The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, he has poured out to us all heaven in one gift." (*Steps to Christ, p. 21*)

**Quote #11** "But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: 'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.' John 12:31,32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing

with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68,69)

**Quote #12**

“And as Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest that had been so long in progress in this world was now decided, and Christ was conqueror. His death had answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 69,70)

**7th Victory**

**Jesus proved that God’s Law is immutable.**

Points six and seven are interrelated. God’s Law is an expression of His character. Satan accused God’s Law of being unjust and withholding freedom from His created beings so they could not reach their maximum potential. In short, Satan cast false light upon God’s character. Christ came to show mankind that God’s Law is good and just and the best foundation for the entire Universe.



What did Jesus take on Himself for us?

**Galatians 3:13**

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Jesus took the curse of the Law, that is the wages of sin, on Himself. According to Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death—the Law demanded it. The fact that Jesus took upon Himself this punishment that the law demanded proves beyond a shadow of doubt that God’s Law cannot be changed.



What did Jesus condemn? What should be held righteous?

**Romans 8,3.4**

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Jesus condemned sin through his sinless life and death on the cross, so that the righteous requirement of the Law would stand.

**Quote #13**

“If the law could be changed, man might have been saved without the sacrifice of Christ; but the fact that it was necessary for Christ to give His life for the fallen race, proves that the law of God will not release the sinner from its claims upon him. It is demonstrated that the wages of sin is death. When Christ died, the destruction of Satan was made certain. But if the law was abolished at the cross, as many claim, then the agony and death of God’s dear Son were endured only to give to Satan just what he asked; then the prince of evil triumphed, his charges against the divine government

were sustained. The very fact that Christ bore the penalty of man's transgression is a mighty argument to all created intelligences that the law is changeless; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 70)



Contemplate all that Christ accomplished on the cross. How should contemplating about the meaning of the cross transform us?

**John 12:32-33**

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1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is John 12:32. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 8: Understanding the Cross (Part 2)

### Intro

In the previous lesson, we learned what Christ accomplished through His death on the Cross. In this lesson we want to take a closer look at what Jesus really went through by dying on the cross and all that He was willing to take upon Himself. Of course, He died for us. That is easy to say. But what did Jesus really take upon Himself? What did He have to endure when the sins of the world were placed upon Him? We will start by looking at what happened in the garden of Gethsemane.



**Matthew  
26:36-46**

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane with his disciples who he wanted to be alone with, so He could gain strength and encouragement for the unimaginable, horrific hours that lay before Him.

What did Jesus ask of His disciples? (Verse 36, see also Luke 22:40)

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What state do we find Jesus in at this time? (Verses 37 and 38)

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What did Jesus plead three times with God for? (Verses 39-44)

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What did Jesus struggle with in this difficult hour? (Luke 22:44)

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What was going on here? Why did Jesus suffer so much? Of course we read that He was physically suffering. But was this the real reason for His deep anguish? Fear of death is normal, but many martyrs died for their faith—some were even crucified and persecuted worse than Jesus. These martyrs died with courage and suffered with joy for God—many even sang praise songs because they knew that their lives were held in God's hands. They were also sure of the wonderful resurrection that is to come. Did Jesus have less courage than them? Are there differences between Jesus' situation and that of the martyrs? It says that Jesus' struggled with death. Why? No one had

physically abused Him yet. What could it mean? Let us dig deeper to find the answer to this question!



What did Jesus take upon Himself when He hung on the cross?

Isaiah 53:4-6,8,10-12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 5:19-21: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 2:9: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



The Bible repeatedly tells us that Jesus, as God and Creator, became our Savior. He took the punishment that we deserve, and that He could rightfully condemn us to, upon Himself. What was the punishment that we as sinners deserve?

Romans 6:23: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



The Bible clearly says that the wages of sin is death. The question is, which death is it referring to? How does the Bible describe the first resurrection and the second death?

Revelation 20:6: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 20:11-15: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Bible does not explicitly name the first death “the first death.” But when there is a second death, there most certainly must be a first death. The first death is the death we know—believers and unbelievers cannot avoid it. It is described throughout the scriptures as sleep, because one day we will all wake up to a resurrection (John 5:28,29). The believers will be resurrected to life at the second coming of Jesus. The unbelievers will be resurrected to the judgment at the end of the thousand years. Their sentence is described as an eternal death. This death is the final, or second, death, from which there is no resurrection. It is the wrath of God over sin.



Think about it! Which death is the wages of sin? The first or the second death?

Which death did Jesus need to save us from in order to give us eternal life?

Which death did He have to take upon Himself in order to have suffered the punishment in our place?

The wages of sin is the second death. Paul says, “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...” (Romans 6:23). The death in this verse is the direct opposite of eternal life. In other words, eternal death. It is quite clear that Paul was referring to the second, eternal death. It is precisely this death that Jesus had to take upon Himself in order to save us. Otherwise He would not have even come close to paying the penalty for our sins. It is like someone who is 1 million dollars in debt. In order to free someone from this debt you would need to pay the exact and total amount. If you did not pay the full amount, they would still be in debt. In the same manner Jesus had to take upon Himself the full amount of our punishment in order to free us from condemnation.



How does Isaiah describe Jesus’ experience on the Cross? (Isaiah 53:8-12)

Isaiah says that Jesus was “taken from prison and from judgment,” that He “was cut off from the land of the living,” and that He “made His grave with the wicked.” Jesus took God’s judgment of the world upon Himself. When did this take place? (John 12:31-33)

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The judgment of this world was taking place while Jesus hung on the cross. Jesus was lifted up between heaven and earth. He hung on the cross taking the judgment of all humanity upon Himself.

How does Paul describe what Jesus carried with Him on the Cross? (Galatians 3:13)

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On the cross, Jesus bore the curse, or punishment, of the law. The punishment for sin is the second death. The curse of the law is also referred to as the curse of God. What is the curse of God? It definitely does not mean that God had to let out some steam from His wrath. But, it does show us how horrifying sin is from God’s perspective! Sin is more than just an act. It is a principle that seeks to destroy the entire universe. It is the opposite of God’s character. For God to be able to protect the universe, sin must be eradicated like a malignant cancer. As Jesus was dying on the cross, the foundation was laid for the final extermination of sin.

The blessing of God means that He is here. He comforts, leads, strengthens, and gives hope. It is the greatest wish and privilege that we could have as humans. When we wish God’s blessings on another person, we are really saying, “I want God to be with you.” A curse is the opposite of a blessing. The curse of God is when He withdraws and is no longer there to help, comfort, and strengthen us. Separation from God results in a life filled with darkness and hopelessness, because hope and confidence can only be given/received in connection with God.

### **Back to Gethsemane**

Now that we have this understanding, let us go back to Gethsemane. Are we seeing more clearly why Jesus was suffering? Why He shrank away from wanting to drink the cup? Jesus was at a major crossroads. He had to choose whether he would take on the sins of the world or not. Praise the Lord, Jesus decided to take the curse of God upon Himself in our stead! The curse of God included the hate that God feels regarding sin and the separation that sin causes in the human-divine relationship. Christ was feeling those very things and the separation was tearing Him apart. Up until this point, Christ had always been with and in the deepest relationship with the Father. Taking the curse of God upon Himself, separated them. The Father was still there, but Christ could not see or feel Him near. It was the pain of separation and the awareness of

God's hate for sin that caused him to despair, to break down in tears, and have His heart broken.

As Jesus chose to accept the cup of suffering, He did not have the hope that He would resurrect victorious anymore. When the martyrs died, they had the bright hope of the resurrection before them. It gave them strength and confidence. Christ had nothing before Him. As the last of the sin was laid upon Him, he had no confidence, no light at the end of the tunnel, no hope of the resurrection. Nevertheless, He chose to take our place. **He chose to relinquish His eternal life, so that we could receive eternal life.** While Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world, God's judgment of mankind was tempered through the person of Jesus Christ. In unfathomable despair, He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Jesus suffered the second death. He experienced the despair, the abandonment, the helplessness, the awareness of eternal condemnation—all of what the godless will experience and endure in the judgment at the end of the thousand years because they did not want to accept Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf. It was this pain that broke His heart.

**Quote #1** "The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 13)

**Quote #2** "And now the Lord of glory was dying, a ransom for the race. In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by the triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom. It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep is the hold of sin upon the human heart, how few would be willing to break from its power. He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing within reach of abundant help.

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that he might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave as a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ

felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God...

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 752-754)

**Quote #3** "Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss. Then we shall cast our crowns at His feet, and raise the song, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' Revelation 5:12" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 131)

**Quote #4** "Remember that Christ risked all; 'tempted like as we are,' He staked even His own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict. Heaven itself was imperiled for our redemption. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Jesus would have yielded up His life, we may estimate the value of a soul." (*General Conference Bulletin, December 1, 1895 par. 22*)

Please re-read through the last two quotes! What did Jesus risk?

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**But...** Perhaps you are asking, "How can it be that Jesus took the second, eternal death upon Himself when He resurrected three days later?" Jesus was sinless. He did not die because of His sins, but because of ours. Peter says that it was impossible for death to hold Him (Acts 2:24). To put it into a picture: Jesus carried the guilt of the world to death. But because He did not partake personally in this guilt, sin could not cling to Him and death could not keep Him. Think about it. Does the punishment exist in the moments before or after the second death? The punishment exists in the time *before* its execution, because the wicked will no longer exist *after* the sentence is passed and they will no longer feel the punishment. It is the moments before the second death

where the awareness of being eternally lost and the weight of the sentence will be felt. This is exactly what Jesus experienced! He felt what it is to be eternally lost! He thought that from then on He would be eternally separated from the Father in death. He experienced the punishment of the second death for us.

We could also say, "But Jesus said many times before that he would resurrect." That is correct! But He said this while He was in connection with the Father. Hope and confidence is only received when in connection with the Father. In separation from the Father there is not even a glimmer of hope. In His separation from the Father, Jesus did not see the light at the end of the tunnel. When the sins of the world, were placed upon Him, they pressed Him down so much that He could no longer see hope.

What about the thief on the cross? Didn't Jesus say that he would be with Him in paradise? At least in the moment Jesus had the assurance that He Himself would be in Paradise again. That's true! I will try to explain it more clearly. There is a prayer that God always answers. It is the prayer of a sinner that is earnestly asking for His help. This thief needed hope and confidence—and at that very moment. So God interrupts the most important event of history to answer that man's prayer. For a moment the light of hope shown through Jesus to this man. But afterwards Jesus was again engulfed in the deepest darkness where He cried in despair: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!"

### A Story

I would like to compare what Jesus did with a story. In his book *Written in Blood*, Robert Coleman tells the story of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion. The doctor explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.

"Would you give your blood to Mary?" the doctor asked. Johnny hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, "Sure, for my sister." Soon the two children were wheeled into the hospital room--Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and healthy. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned. As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube. With the ordeal almost over, his voice, slightly shaky, broke the silence. "Doctor, when do I die?"

Only then did the doctor realize why Johnny had hesitated, why his lip had trembled when he'd agreed to donate his blood. Johnny thought that giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life. In that brief moment, he'd made the great decision to give his life for his sister.

### Jesus could not have given more than he did!

As Jesus was dying for us, the burden of sin was so heavily upon him that He thought He was giving up His eternal life for us. Jesus could not have given more than He did. If during the whole ordeal He had had the hope of the resurrection before His eyes, He would not have experienced the second death. He would have given only forty hours of sleep for our salvation, and that would not have been sufficient to free us from the second death. It would also not have been sufficient to deflate the accusations of Satan that were thrown in Jesus' face that He was not willing to sacrifice Himself for His creatures. But Jesus gave up all, truly and completely all for us!



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When you think about it, how much do you want to give to Jesus? We honestly do not have much to offer. Only a sinful heart, that Jesus wants us to fully and completely give over to Him. Only our feeble wills, that we can place on His side. Are there areas in your life that you have not yet given completely to Christ? Jesus says, “My child. I gave everything for you. I was willing to give up my Eternal Life for you. Are you willing to give your heart fully and unreservedly to me?” Write your response below!

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1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important to you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this lesson is found in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and share with them what you have learned!

## Lesson 9: Repent!

### Intro

In the Bible, there are many references to repentance. Although in everyday language we rarely use this word. A word that might sound similar is *penance*. We know that Martin Luther, like many others of his time, had tried to find peace with God by doing penance. Are penance and repentance the same? What does the Bible say? In this lesson we will explore together the biblical understanding of repentance.



With which message did Jesus begin His ministry?

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### Matthew 4:17

Jesus was proclaiming the message of repentance in connection with the Kingdom of God. Let us not forget that repentance is a precursor to our taking part in God's kingdom and prepares us to meet Jesus at His second coming.



What message did the Apostles proclaim?

Acts 2:38: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### The Apostles and repentance

Acts 3:19: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 17:30: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 26:20: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The disciples of Jesus continued to preach the message of repentance that their Master had declared to them. In fact, it was the center and goal of their preaching.

What message did Jesus direct to the last church?

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### Revelation

#### 3:19

The call to repentance is not directed only to those who don't know Jesus. In the book of Revelation, John was instructed to write seven letters to seven churches in which repentance was clearly emphasized (compare Rev. 2:5,16,21; 3:3). In every generation Jesus called the church to repentance. Apparently we are in dire need of it! Peter writes that Christ delays His coming because He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). It is the lack of repentance that delays the return of Christ!



We now want to look at three different stories that impressively show the character of true repentance.

After David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, Nathan came and made his guilt unmistakably clear. And David repented! Read Psalm 51 and write out the verses that reveal his true repentance!

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“David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness—to be restored to harmony and communion with God. ... A repentance such as this, is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ, who ascended up on high and has given gifts unto men.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 25)



Jesus told a parable in order to show the true character of repentance. In this parable, where do we clearly see that the publican repented and the Pharisee did not?

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**Quote #2**

“The poor publican who prayed, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’ (Luke 18:13), regarded himself as a very wicked man, and others looked upon him in the same light; but he felt his need, and with this burden of guilt and shame he came before God, asking for His mercy. His heart was open for the Spirit of God to do its gracious work and set him free from the power of sin. The Pharisee’s boastful, self-righteous prayer showed that his heart was closed against the influence of the Holy Spirit. Because of his distance from God, he had no sense of his own defilement, in contrast with the perfection of the divine holiness. He felt no need, and he received nothing.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 30-31)

**Quote #3**

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 23)



Paul speaks about two different types of sorrow. What are they? What do they result in?

**2 Corinthians  
7:8-10**

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True repentance is the result of a deep sadness over the sins we have committed, a sadness prompted by the Holy Spirit and essential for us to be free from sin. But interestingly, this sorrow is temporary because being cleansed from sin and forgiven leads us to freedom and joy.

**Quote #4**

“He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person.” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7)



Based on what evidence can we see that the sorrow and repentance of Peter was real?

**Luke 22:54-62**

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Even Judas felt sorry because of what he had done. He also admitted that he had done an injustice (Matthew 27:3-5), but it was not a deep sorrow over the sin itself, as much as it was a fear from the consequences of his sin. Judas wanted to avoid the consequences, but he did not want to give himself completely to Christ.

**Quote #5**

“While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter’s lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned the frowning judges, and look full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter’s eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

The sight of that pale suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. Memory was active. Peter called to mind his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He remembered his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour’s tender mercy, His kindness and long-suffering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples,—all was remembered. He recalled the caution, ‘Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.’ Luke 22:31,32.

He reflected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, and his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall.

He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came vividly to his mind. The suffering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He remembered with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He remembered His solemn charge, ‘Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.’ Matthew 26:41. He witnessed again the scene in the judgment hall. It was torture to his bleeding heart to know that he had added the heaviest burden to the Saviour’s humiliation and grief. On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 712,713)

**Quote #6**

“There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 23)

**Quote #7**

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life

that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 555,556)

**Repentance leads to surrender and reformation**

This quote is very important. True repentance leads to transformation and a total submission of our lives to Christ. It can be no less because repentance is not only the sorrow over a wrong act, but the realization of going our own way and living without Christ. This sorrow is only real when we have a deep desire in our hearts to lead a life in deep fellowship with Christ.

**How do we come to repentance?**

Now we have discovered what repentance is. It is a sincere sorrow over sin that leads to transformation and submission to Christ. The question is: how do we get there? We could not trust our sinful nature in this matter. Our sinful heart cannot produce this kind of repentance.



How is it possible that we can still feel genuine repentance?

Acts 5:31: \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 2:4: \_\_\_\_\_

John 16:8,9: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Timothy 2:25: \_\_\_\_\_

The good news is that forgiveness and salvation aren't the only gifts we receive from God. We must also include the sorrow and repentance that He works in us.

**The two sides of repentance**

We see then that repentance has two sides. On one side it is the call to repent, on the other side the assurance that it is God's goodness that leads us to repentance. Both of these sides belong together. God does for us what we could never do for ourselves. He convicts us of our guilt and shows us how much pain we have caused Him. But we must make a choice. Will we or won't we give the Holy Spirit permission to work in us and ask God to work this repentance in us? Sometimes we don't even feel sorry for a sin. The reason for this is that we don't see this sin as Jesus sees it. At this point we may plead, "Lord, please send me your repentance! Let me truly see the sin as you really see it." But in all of this God is the one who takes the first step! In and of ourselves we could never produce true repentance. Each sorrow over our guilt, every desire for forgiveness and peace with God and those around us clearly shows that God is the one who is at work in our hearts.

**“I will put  
enmity  
between...”**

When God brings about sorrow and repentance in us, then He fulfills what He promised in Eden after the fall. There He said: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15) Man was created in the image of God. He had the law of God in his heart. He loved what God loved and hated what God hated. Through the fall, the nature of man fundamentally changed. He ran from God and no longer found joy in the things that God loved. Thus man lived in fellowship with Satan and loved sin. When God passed judgment on the serpent, saying that He would put enmity between man and him, God was saying: “I will destroy this fellowship between you and man. I will bring man back to loving the things that I love and hating the things that I hate.” That is exactly what repentance is all about. Repentance changes our inclinations, it writes God’s law in our hearts, and re-establishes our fellowship with God. Repentance lets us love what God loves and hate what God hates.

**Come,  
as you are**

God taking the first steps toward us shows us that He does not require prerequisites in order for us to come to Him. He invites us to come just as we are; with our weaknesses, our broken promises, even our unrepentant heart. The greatest argument in our favor is our helplessness.



**Matthew  
11:28-30**

How can we come to Jesus?

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What does Jesus promise when we come to Him?

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**Quote #8**

“Just here is a point on which many may err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares for the forgiveness of their sins. It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Saviour. But must the sinner wait till he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Saviour? The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance.” *(Steps to Christ, p. 26)*

**Quote #9**

“It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended.” *(Steps to Christ, p. 27)*



**Quote #10** “You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in his infinite love, in His perfect purity.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 28)

**Quote #11** “Whom Christ pardons, He first makes penitent, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. Those whose hearts have been moved by the convicting Spirit of God see that there is nothing good in themselves. They see that all they have ever done is mingled with self and sin.” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7,8)

**Quote #12** “If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ Jeremiah 13:23. There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are.” (*Steps to Christ*, S. 31.)

**Quote #13** “As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is ‘reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 35.)

**Quote #14** “Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568)

**Repent...now what?** Repentance is not a onetime act that gives us license to return to our normal lives and continue sinning. Repentance is an internal transformation, a transformation of inclinations that gives us a new direction in life. True repentance leads us to hate the sin that we previously loved. Yes, I can still fall, and sin! Even over the same sin that I have often stumbled over. But when I stand up and come to Christ, when I allow God to lead me to repentance, the repentance will gain more depth and the abhorrence for this sin becomes even greater. And one day, I will stand up from stumbling for the last time and leave this sin forever behind me. That is the victory that Christ has promised us. But in order for this to happen, we must allow the work of repentance and transformation to work deeply and thoroughly!



How do the following verses describe the results of repentance?

Mark 1:15: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Luke 3:8: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Acts 2:37,38: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Acts 26:19-20: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We should be grateful that God is not finished with us when He forgives us of our offenses. Repentance is rooted in the desire to find forgiveness and to uproot the problem of sin. True repentance brings forth good fruit in our lives. In connection with Jesus we have the privilege to experience how He produces this fruit in us.



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is Romans 2:4. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 10: Cleansing the Past

### Intro

In the last lesson we saw that repentance is not just an outward religious exercise but a change of attitude toward sin and God. Instead of justifying our sin we feel a deep sadness and sorrow not just about our sinful deeds but about our sinful hearts. Instead of running away from God, we turn back to Him. Let us not forget that only the Holy Spirit can work this transformation in us. Our part in repentance is keeping our hearts open to His work in us. In this lesson we will explore an important result of genuine repentance, namely confession of our sins.



**Matthew**  
**3:2,6**

John the Baptist called the people to repentance. What was the result of repentance in the lives of those people?

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Here we read something extremely important. True repentance always leads to confession of our sins.



**Leviticus 5:5**

In the Old Testament, when the Israelites realized they had sinned what were they to do?

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It was not only about bringing a sin offering. Without confessing their sin, the offering would have been useless.



**Isaiah**  
**43:24-25**

In order to fully comprehend the importance of confession, it is imperative that we truly understand what sin does. The following verses, found in the book of Isaiah, describe what our sin does to God. What answer do you find in the text?

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God says that our sin causes him to be burdened and wearied. In other words, our sin doesn't just affect us. Our sin also weighs down God! When we confess our sins, we are released from the burden of carrying those sins and more importantly God finds relief. This is why God says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions *for My own sake*..." It is a deep need for God that we confess our sins so that he can take them from us.

How does it make you feel to know that your sins burden God and make Him sad?



**Isaiah 44:22**

What comparison does Isaiah use to describe our sins? What does this comparison bring across?

What must we do in order to experience forgiveness?

What will drive the thick cloud away?

Unconfessed sins are like a thick cloud that block our view of God and of our fellow man. We can no longer see clearly and judge things correctly. We make the wrong decisions and disorientedly head in the wrong direction. Just like thick fog can only be pierced and dissipated by the sun, we receive forgiveness only through Jesus Christ. Trying to eliminate our guilt without Jesus' intervention is like trying to burn off the fog with our own power.

Another important point is made very clear in this passage. Forgiveness of sin brings redemption. God says, "Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." He does not just want to forgive our sins. He wants to restore our relationship to Him. Confessing our sins only makes sense in the context of surrendering our lives to Christ. How could forgiveness of a particular sin help us if we continue to sin and choose to be separated from God? The biggest sin that we can commit is to ignore God and not accept the salvation that Jesus offers us. Jesus could forgive thousands of individual sins, but when the SIN that is the root of all sins is left untouched and unconfessed we continue to live in guilt and condemnation.



**Psalm 32:1-8**

David knew what it was like to live with an unconfessed sin that burdened and sickened his life. He also experienced the freedom and forgiveness that comes from confession. He described this experience very clearly in Psalm 32.

How does David describe what happens to us after we confess our sins? (Verses 1-2)

What happened to David when he tried to cover up his sin? (Verses 3-4)

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Think about a time in your life when you carried the burden of guilt. What did the guilt do to you as long as it was not cleansed?

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What did David do to get rid of his guilt? (Verse 5)

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What did God do as a result? (Verse 5)

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What is the result of forgiveness? (Verses 6-8,11)

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Sometimes situations arise when it is very hard to confess our sins. What consequences do unconfessed sins have on our life (Spiritually, Mentally, Emotionally, and Physically)?

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**1 John 1:8 –  
2:1**

What happens when we don't confess our sins and try to cover them up? (Verses 8 and 10)

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What does God promise to do when we confess our sins? (Verse 9)

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What assurance do we have that our confessed sins are forgiven? (Verse 1)

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It is important to remember that confessing our sins isn't a onetime event that happens when we first come to Jesus. Even in our Christian walk we will fall down and become burdened with sin. We will continue to be in need of forgiveness and have to confess our sins to God. If we don't the guilt will choke our spiritual life. The best time to confess is when the Holy Spirit is prompting us and making us aware of the sin in our lives. The longer we carry around the burden of unforgiven sin the more our relationship to God and others is damaged.

**Jesus our  
Advocate**

Just like the sinner in the Old Testament, whose sin was confessed onto the sacrificial animal and in turn symbolically transferred by the priest onto the Sanctuary, so it is when Jesus takes on our sin burden and intercedes on our behalf for our forgiveness before the Father in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Forgiveness is only made possible because Jesus is our High Priest in Heaven.



**Proverbs  
28:13**

What does Solomon say about the importance of confessing our sins?

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What goes hand in hand with confessing our sins?

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Solomon talks about confession and forsaking our sins. So we see that confessing our sins is not just saying we are sorry, taking advantage of God's mercy, and then continuing to do the same thing as before. Unfortunately, some think it's quite that simple. Just do a quick confession and then you are guilt-free. Those who abuse God's goodness and mercy by looking lightly upon their sin, have much more to confess than just their acts of sin. They need to repent and confess their false and fatal attitude toward sin.

**Quote #1**

"Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 39)



**James 5:16**

According to James, to whom should we confess our sins?

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The Bible tells us in many passages that we should confess our sins to God. But when we have sinned against our fellow man, it is just as important to confess our sin to them and ask for their forgiveness. Our confession reveals how real our sorrow is and becomes the new foundation for a better relationship with them.

**Quote #2**

"Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 37)



**What happens when the other person does not want to forgive?**

When you have confessed your sin to someone but they do not want to forgive you, you still stand justified before God. However, the other person is accountable to God for his unforgiving spirit. Jesus said in the sermon on the mount that people who are unforgiving will not have their sins forgiven. (Matthew 6:15)

**Quote #3**

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 38)



Think about it: Why is it important that we specifically confess our sins to God and to the person you sinned against?

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Re-read the last quote from “Steps to Christ”. What do we learn from it about whom we should confess our sins to?

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**Quote #4**      “Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. “  
*(Steps to Christ, p. 38)*

[illegible]

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<b>The attitude of the heart is important!</b>	If we confess our sins with the right attitude then we will not belittle, excuse, or justify them. We will not try to make our sin look better by pointing to other people's faults. Rather, we will honestly admit where we have sinned.
<b>Why is confession so important?</b>	<p>Think about it! Why is it so important to confess our sins specifically? Isn't it enough to just ask in general for forgiveness without worrying about the details? After all, God does not need us to confess each sin to know the wrong we have done. Maybe not, but we do! Here is why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Greek word for <i>confess</i> means <i>to be in agreement with someone</i>. When we confess our sins to God we are agreeing that He is just and that we have been unjust. We acknowledge His righteous judgment over our sin. We are thus declaring bankruptcy and asking God for His help.</li><li>• When we confess we place in the hand of Christ strong arguments against Satan who is accusing us before God (Revelation 12:10b). The accusations of Satan stand therefore without weight because a guilty person who confesses his sin can justly receive justification and mercy from God (Psalm 51:3).</li><li>• It is only when we specifically confess our sins that God can forgive us and give us victory over these sins.</li><li>• Confession of sins brings healing. Just like sin can burden us spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally, confessing our sins takes that burden of guilt from us and gives us a clear conscience.</li></ul>
<b>Confession means...</b>	<p>Let us review what all is entailed in confessing our sins!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We clearly call out sin by name without making excuses.</li><li>• We not only admit what we have done, but accept the sinful nature of our heart that makes the new birth a necessity.</li><li>• We show our willingness to truly give up the sin and ask Jesus to free us from our sinful habits.</li><li>• We surrender our lives to Jesus.</li></ul>
<b>To make amends</b>	In addition to confessing, we often have things to make right again. For example, we should return stolen things with interest (Leviticus 5:21-24; Numbers 5:5-8, Lukas 19:8) and try to make amends for the damage that we have caused.
<b>Cleansing the past</b>	It is helpful to take time and ask God to show us where we have sinned. We can then write down all the unconfessed sins that God brings to our attention. We can consider prayerfully which sins we should confess to others and in which cases we need to make amends. We can ask God for His strength to follow through. This will be a very freeing experience because we can have the assurance that these sins are forgiven and that we do not need to confess them a second time.
<b>Questions...</b>	The following questions are not by any means a complete list of all possible sins. There are many ways that we sin against God and others. So, it isn't possible to create a "sin catalog". However, these questions can help us remember the sins that we have committed. Maybe we can discover sins that still have their grasp on us today. With God's help you can have forgiveness and experience freedom from these sins!

**A. Sins against God**

- (1) Other things or persons are/were more important to me than God. ( )
- (2) I used God's name disrespectfully. ( )
- (3) I swore falsely in God's name. ( )
- (4) I did not keep God's Sabbath day holy. ( )

**B. Sins against other people**

- (1) I have not shown my parents the honor they deserve. ( )
- (2) I have neglected my parents. ( )
- (3) I do not make sufficient time for my family. ( )
- (4) I have treated my children unjustly or even abused them. ( )
- (5) I have treated my siblings, relatives, or friends unjustly. ( )
- (6) I have killed or injured someone. ( )
- (7) I harbored feelings of hatred or revenge towards someone. ( )
- (8) I have not forgiven someone. ( )
- (9) I have/have had extramarital sexual affairs. ( )
- (10) I have/have had premarital sexual affairs. ( )
- (11) I do not give the proper attention to my marriage as I should. ( )
- (12) I dwell on thoughts of other men or women. ( )
- (13) I have molested or sexually abused a child, man, or woman. ( )
- (14) I had an abortion. ( )
- (15) I made or encouraged a woman to have an abortion. ( )
- (16) I stole something. ( )
- (17) I lied or deceived someone. ( )
- (18) I took advantage of someone in a business transaction. ( )
- (19) I lied or was deceptive regarding my taxes to the government. ( )
- (20) I have unlawfully or deceptively received grants or tax breaks from the state, government, or an institution. ( )
- (21) I willfully lied to others. ( )
- (22) I twist, spin, overdramatize, or downplay the truth. ( )
- (23) I slandered someone else's character. ( )

**C. Sins against myself**

- (1) I damage my health. ( )
- (2) I masturbate. ( )
- (3) I look at pornographic literature or movies or similar things. ( )
- (4) I invest too much time in my hobbies. ( )
- (5) I watch too much television or movies. ( )
- (6) I read worthless literature (novels, science fiction, etc.). ( )

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**NO FISHING  
ALLOWED!**

When we repent and confess our sins, we can be assured that God forgives us, because He promised us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). It is important to understand that forgiveness is not dependent on our feelings. Even when we do not feel forgiven, this does not change the fact that God has forgiven us. God's forgiveness is something you can depend upon: "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression...He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18-19)

**God's  
promise to  
you!**

Please once again write out the promise found in 1 John 1: 9!

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**Quote #6**

"As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 55)

**Don't Forget!**

God longs to forgive your sins and to take the burden of sin from your heart that keeps you from living the life that God has prepared for you. Do not allow unforgiven sin to stand between you and the awesome plan that God has for your life! God's forgiveness sets you free to experience the wonderful life that He has in store for you!



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important for you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is 1 John 1:9. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 11: Christ Our Righteousness (Part 1)

### Intro

We live in an achievement-driven society, where our worth is measured by what we are able to accomplish. Even children are confronted with this expectation. In fact, it is so pervasive that we assume God is the same way. Sometimes we believe that God can only accept us when we are good enough. The result is an achievement-driven faith that leads to frustration and despair because we think that we are simply not good enough for God to love us.

### Martin Luther and his search for freedom

In no other age was this false teaching more prevalent than during the Dark Ages. At that time, people lived under the heavy yoke of the Roman Church and were never sure of their salvation. They constantly tried to fulfill the requirements of the Church, never finding peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Did you know that Martin Luther experienced this? Every time he heard about the righteousness of God, he trembled in fear of this dreadful God. It was fear that compelled him to become a monk. In 1505 AD, Luther was a young law student, making his way home on a beautiful sunny day in July. As he came near the village of Stotternheim in Thuringia, he was suddenly caught in a horrific thunderstorm. He was scared for his life and was convinced that God had sent this storm as a warning message to him. In fear he prayed to St. Anna and promised: "If you help me, then I will become a monk!" When the thunderstorm passed over, Martin Luther took his promise seriously. He entered a monastery and subsequently became one of the most earnest and zealous monks. But even as a monk, he lived in terrible fear of God. He did his best, but even through his most arduous and strenuous works he did not find peace with God. Luther said, "I was indeed a pious monk and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. . . . If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortifications even to death."

Unsatisfied and shaken to his core, Luther travelled to Rome to find answers. He entered the city, visited the churches, listened to the marvelous tales repeated by priests and monks, and performed all the ceremonies required. One day he crawled on his knees up "Pilate's staircase," which were claimed to have been the original stairs in front of the Roman judgment hall that Jesus descended after being condemned. In case you were wondering, they were miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome. As he was devoutly climbing these steps, he suddenly heard a voice saying to him: "The just shall live by faith." He sprang to his feet and hastened from the place in shame and horror. But that text never lost its power upon his soul. From that time on, he saw more clearly than ever the fallacy of trusting in human works for salvation and the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ. (*see The Great Controversy, p. 125*)

Back in the monastery he studied the book of Romans and discovered the wonderful truth of "righteousness by faith". He saw that the right to stand before God could never be earned through good works, pilgrimages, blaming oneself or suffering. It became clear to him that he didn't have to earn God's mercy, because mercy is the very essence of God's character. Luther realized that he could only stand justified

before God through faith in Jesus Christ as his savior. When he discovered this news, he finally met Jesus and became a new person. Of course, he could not keep this to himself. He preached the good news whenever an opportunity arose and his preaching became the tipping point that began the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, which forever changed the world.

**Even today...**

We need this message today just as much as the people of Luther's day. The fact is that without this Biblical understanding of justification, we can not have peace with God and experience the assurance of salvation. Our religion would only be characterized by uncertainty, fear, and a pressure to perform. A fulfilling relationship with Jesus would not be possible.

**The  
fundamental  
problem**

God created Adam and Eve in His image. They lived in harmony with God and reflected His righteousness. However when they sinned, they lost this righteousness and hid themselves from the face of God. As a direct result, we too lack righteousness. This is our fundamental problem. Without righteousness in our hearts, the kind that reflects the character of God, we can no longer see and interact with God face to face. No strenuous attempts on our part can free us from the problem of sin and prepare us for such an intimate communion with God. Adam and Eve tried to hide their nakedness, which was one result of their sin, when they made clothes out of fig leaves. But their fig-leaf outfit (a symbol for man's attempt to overcome the sin problem by their own works) was not suitable for the cold world in which they had to make their new home. In His mercy, God gave them something else.



What did God give Adam and Eve to prepare them for the cold world they now had to enter?

**Genesis 3:21**

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This article of clothing was completely undeserved and cost the life of an innocent animal. But it served as an excellent symbol for the righteousness that God gives us as a gift through the death and resurrection of Jesus.



How does Isaiah describe the righteousness of natural man?

**Isaiah 64:6**

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Just like the fig leaves could not solve the problem of sin, there is nothing that we can add to the gift of righteousness that cleanses us and allows us to stand before God.



What does God's solution look like? What consequences does this solution have on our lives?



**Isaiah 61:10**

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**Zechariah  
3:1-5**

We find this symbol again in the impressive vision that God gave to Zechariah. How did Joshua, who represented the people of God, stand before God? (Verse 3)

Satan accused Joshua (and thus the whole people of God) of being sinful. And in truth, Satan was right. Joshua wore filthy clothing that represented the sins of God's people. But because he accepted his condition and confessed his sins to the Messiah, Jesus Christ could do something for him. What did Christ do for him? (Verse 4)

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Because of the new clothes, Joshua (and all the people of God) could stand justified before God and rejoice in their salvation!

**Quote #1**

"The high priest cannot defend himself or his people from Satan's accusations. He does not claim that Israel is free from fault. In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the people, which he bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God... His own sins and those of his people were pardoned. Israel was clothed with 'change of raiment'—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them... It was by faith in the coming Saviour that Joshua and his people had received pardon. Through faith in Christ they had been restored to God's favor." (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 583-585 )

**Quote #2**

"We are not worthy of God's love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness. He presents us to the Father clothed in the white raiment of His own character. He pleads before God in our behalf, saying: 'I have taken the sinner's place. Look not upon this wayward child, but look on Me. Does Satan plead loudly against our souls, accusing of sin, and claiming us as his prey, the blood of Christ pleads with greater power.'" (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, p. 8-9)



What is Jesus Christ called in this messianic prophesy?

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**Jeremiah**  
**23:5,6**



**Revelation**  
**7:14; 19:8;**  
**22:4**

Righteousness is not just some abstract thought. First of all righteousness is a person: Jesus Christ. His name is "Yahweh, our Righteousness". Righteousness is a description of God's perfect character.

What are the redeemed clothed with at the end of time?

What does the clothing symbolize?

How did the redeemed obtain these clothes'? How are they washed clean?

How are they going to interact with God?

It is through Christ's righteousness alone, which He gives to us as a free gift, that we are able to access Heaven. It is His righteousness that allows us to come into God's presence. His righteousness is the express image of God and is restored in us when we confess our sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and are baptized. Through the Holy Spirit, God's Law (God's character) is written on our hearts. As a result, God seals us and writes His name, which also represents His character, on our foreheads (this stands for the exactly the same thing as the attitude of the heart). The name on our foreheads, mentioned in Revelation 22:4, is none other than "Christ, Our Righteousness". This is the seal of God that we read about in the Book for Revelation at the end of time. The Sabbath is an outward sign of this righteousness by faith. When asked about the context of the 3 Angels' Messages and their connection with the seal of God, mark of the beast, and righteousness by faith, Ellen White wrote:

**Quote #3**

"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'" (*Last Day Events*, p. 199-200.)

**Not only ONE  
element in  
our message**



The message of justification by faith is not just ONE element in the Advent message. It is the root and the foundation of our message. How could it be anything else? Our message is the "everlasting gospel". It is the same gospel that Christ and His apostles preached. They placed justification by faith in the center of their preaching. We can also find this teaching very clearly in the writings of Paul.

How does Paul describe his life before he met Jesus? (Verses 5,6)

**Philippians  
3:5-11**

How did his values change after meeting Jesus and being transformed? (Verses 7,8)

Whose righteousness was then important to Paul?

**Paul and  
justification**



Paul learned that it is not his righteousness by keeping the Law, but justification by faith through Christ alone that prepares and enables him to be with God in eternity. This knowledge became the foundation of his message. He never tired of putting in the spotlight Christ's Righteousness as our only hope of salvation.

Please read the following texts from Paul and search for the answers to the following questions! (Romans 3:19-31; 4:5, 25; 5:1,18-21; Galatians 2:16,20,21; 5:4-6)

By what means could we never stand justified before God?

By what means is our righteousness before God made possible again?

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By what means are we justified before God?

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What are the consequences when we by faith are justified?

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Think about it: Why is it impossible to add to our salvation through our own works?  
Think about yourself! Are you tempted to keep tabs on your good works to show God?

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**Christ      our  
Righteousness**

The Bible describes with unmistakable clarity the condition under which we are born. We are all sinners and unrighteous. We cannot achieve through our own efforts the righteousness demanded by the Law. But Christ made possible what was impossible for us to do. He became man and lived a life in full obedience to God. He alone lived the righteous life the Law demands. He took death upon himself—the death that we deserved—in order to give us the gift of righteousness—which only He deserved. The

Bible calls this gift, grace, and it is all God's doing. However, we must decide if we will accept the gift of Christ's righteousness.

The term *justification* is the opposite of condemnation. When a repentant sinner is justified it means that God has declared him/her not guilty. The foundation of this justification is not *our* obedience, but Jesus' obedience alone. When we accept this gift by faith, we put on Christ's righteousness, have peace with God, and begin a new life in Jesus Christ.



**2 Corinthians  
5:19-21**

How did Paul describe justification to the Corinthian church?

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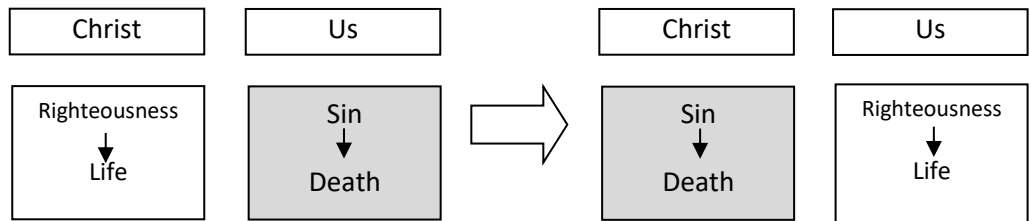
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**The greatest  
exchange of  
all times**

What we see here is the greatest transaction of all time. Christ was the perfect living example of God's righteousness. In Him, no sin was found. He deserved life. We deserve death because of our sinfulness. Jesus took on the death we deserved and gave us, as a gift, the righteousness He deserved.



**Colossians  
1:21-23**

What does God see in us when we have accepted Jesus' righteousness by faith? What conditions does Paul name here?

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**Quote #4**

"It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give

yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of our character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 62)

**Quote #5** "When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness." (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 389)

**Quote #6** "Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and 'God is love.' 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for 'all Thy commandments are righteousness' (Psalm 119:172), and 'love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him. Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it." (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18)

**Quote #7** "Forgiveness, reconciliation with God, comes to us, not as a reward for our works, it is not bestowed because of the merit of sinful men, but it is a gift unto us, having in the spotless righteousness of Christ its foundation for bestowal." (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, p. 115-116)

**Quote #8** "In the prophecy of Daniel it was recorded of Christ that He shall 'make reconciliation for iniquity, and...bring in everlasting righteousness' (Daniel 9:24). Every soul may say: 'By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent.'" (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 396)

**What is faith?** The Bible is very clear. The righteousness that we need for salvation can never be earned through our own good works—not even partially. We can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. But what is this faith? It is not just an intellectual belief in something. In this sense even the Devil believes in the gospel. True, biblical faith that leads to justification is much more. This kind of faith requires that...

- I admit that I am a sinner and that I can never satisfy the righteousness required by the Law. (Luke 19:13-14)
- I fully trust God's word.
- I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour, put him ahead of myself, and give him control of my life. (1 John 5:11-12)
- I trust solely in His righteousness and do not try to earn God's favor through my own works. (Romans 4:5)
- I put all of my trust in Jesus and organize my life according to His commandments, because faith without works is dead. (James 2:17)

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**Quote #9** “Where there is not only a belief in God’s word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 65)

**Quote #10** “Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 175)

**Quote #11** “The faith that is unto salvation is not a casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour, assured that He can save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” (*Selected Messages, Vol. 1*, p. 391)

God is intimately acquainted with our weaknesses and our failures. He knows that all of our strenuous attempts of making it into Heaven is just as impossible as us trying to jump to the moon on our own strength. Through the gift of righteousness, He invites us to trust Him completely and implicitly. Are you ready to implicitly and completely place your trust in God?

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**The next lesson** Grace and our faith, through the righteousness of Christ that God gives us, is not without consequences. God has just begun His work in us when He has justified us. God transforms us step by step and molds His righteousness into our character. We will look at this more in-depth in the next lesson.

[illegible]

1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important to you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is Romans 5:1. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!



## Lesson 12: Christ Our Righteousness (Part 2)

### Intro

In our last lesson we discussed how God justifies us by not looking at *our* righteousness but by giving us the righteousness of Christ. When we accept this righteousness by faith, God sees and treats us as if we were living the sinless life of Christ.

We receive this righteousness because of two things: (1) by grace and (2) by faith. (See Romans 3:24,28). How do you explain the difference between grace and faith?

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Grace is a gift that God gives us. But even the best gift is worthless if we do not accept it. Through faith we accept the gift of justification.

### Something new begins

But justification is not all that God wants to give us. Once we are justified God begins to change us. It is true that He accepts us just as we are. But His love for us is so strong that He can't leave us as we are. In short, God's grace combined with faith change who we are and how choose to live.



Read the following texts and write down what kind of work grace and faith do in us!

Galatians 2:20: \_\_\_\_\_

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Titus 2:11-14: \_\_\_\_\_

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Titus 3:4-8: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Peter 1:5: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Peter 1:13-15: \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 13:9: \_\_\_\_\_

James 2:17-20:

The Gospel is much bigger than many realize! It is not only there to pardon us. The Gospel is strong enough to free us from the slavery of sin and to transform our character! What a mighty God! When you are suffering under sinful habits or character weaknesses, you may have the assurance that God has the answer and wants to help you. God does not abandon us to the grip of sin. When we surrender our lives completely to him, He can and will give us the victory. "But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)



Think about your life, your character, and the habits that you would like to change. Write these things down and talk about them with God in prayer. Don't forget to thank Him for promising you the victory.



**Ephesians**  
**2:8-10**

How does Paul describe the connection between faith and works?

Paul makes it very clear that we cannot be saved by our own works. It is solely through grace and faith. We can accept this gift of salvation, but we have nothing to boast about from our good works.

**Quote #1** “There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy. The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 60)

**Quote #2** “Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, ‘This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.’ ‘He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.

We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. ‘Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.’ 1 John 3:5,6. Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law. ‘Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.’ 1 John 3:7. Righteousness is defined by the standard of God’s holy law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 60-61)

**Quote #3** “More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, ‘The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.’ Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience. So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in us and through us.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 62-63.)

**Justification and Sanctification** The Bible calls our acceptance by God *justification*. When we by faith accept salvation through Jesus Christ, we are *in Christ* and God imputes the righteousness of Jesus onto us. This is why justification is also called *imputed righteousness*. God treats and sees us as if we have lived the righteous life of Jesus. But this is just the beginning of God’s

work in us. When we are *in Christ*, God molds our character until it is like the character of Jesus. The Bible calls this experience, *Christ in us, sanctification*. This process of character transformation is often described as *imparted righteousness*. Paul calls this experience: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). In summary, we can say that justification happens when God sees in us the righteousness of Christ, even though we are sinners. Whereas sanctification is the process of God transforming our characters step by step into the likeness of Christ's. Here's an example: An artist projects a picture of Jesus onto a white canvass and, according to the pattern, paints the picture of Jesus using pencils and color paints. Through justification, God projects the picture of Jesus (His righteousness and sinless life) onto us. Through sanctification, He paints the picture of Jesus in us. The following table summarizes again the different aspects of justification and sanctification.

Justification	We are in Christ	Imputed righteousness	God's work <i>for</i> me	<b>By grace through faith</b>
Sanctification	Christ in us	Imparted righteousness	God's work <i>in</i> me	<b>By grace through faith</b>

These two phases of our salvation are distinct and yet inseparable and intertwined with one another. Justification is the prerequisite for sanctification just like birth is the prerequisite for life. There is no sanctification without justification and justification always leads to sanctification. Just like justification is a gift from God so is sanctification. God gives them through grace and we accept them by faith.

#### Quote #4

"The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven." (*Review and Herald, June 4, 1895*)



Read the following Bible passages and write down what it says about sanctification!

2 Corinthians 7:1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 4:3: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: \_\_\_\_\_

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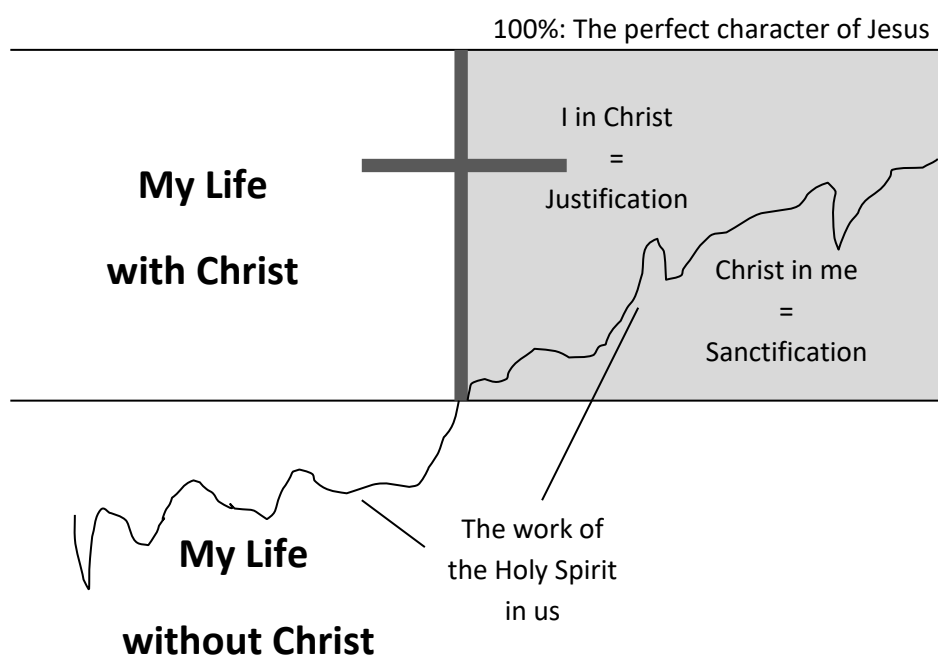
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Hebrews 12:14: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Bible does not consistently use the word “sanctification” or “sanctify”. In many places it is used as a synonym for “justification” or “justify”. This underscores the truth that justification and sanctification are not two fully separated activities but rather inseparable parts in the *one* plan of salvation.

The following illustration should show more clearly the roles of justification and sanctification in our salvation experience.



#### Explanation

When a person lives separated from Jesus, they live under condemnation. When they, through the work of the Holy Spirit, come to know Jesus and accept Him by faith, they are justified. God no longer sees their sinfulness; He sees in them the righteousness of Christ. He treats them as if they had not sinned and gives them the gift of eternal life. This is the essence of justification. In every point in the timeline it is only through this imputed righteousness that they are saved. Justification is not just a point in time; rather it is a continuous state, represented by the grey area in the background.

Justification always leads to change that Jesus works in the life. Step by step He transforms our characters so that they will be more like His. It does not happen in an instant. It is a life-long process. Sanctification does not mean that a person can no longer fall. But when he falls, he stands up again and keeps going with Jesus.

At any time, justification alone is the foundation for our salvation. Sanctification is a result of our salvation, but not the prerequisite for our salvation. Salvation does not depend on how sanctified we are. Our salvation is the result of our justification. We

need this assurance of salvation in order to grow at all in our faith. In the next lesson we will look more closely at the assurance of salvation.



In the parable of the vine and the branches, where do we find the concept that justification and sanctification belong together?

**John 15:3-5**

In verse 3, Jesus talks about justification: "You are already clean." He says, "Abide in Me (justification), and I in you (sanctification)." Whoever remains connected will bear much fruit! Bearing fruit is a natural consequence of surrendering our lives to Jesus. Without a connection to Jesus we can do nothing. The experience of "We in Christ" and "Christ in us" comes as a package. You cannot have one without the other. Justification as well as sanctification happens only by God's grace and through faith.

**Quote #5**

"You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, 'I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' Psalm 16:8." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 69)

**Quote #6**

"Sanctification means habitual communion with God." (*SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 908)

**Quote #7**

"Do you ask, 'How am I to abide in Christ?' In the same way as you received Him at first. 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.' 'The just shall live by faith.' Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ's sake did all this for you. By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to *give* all,—your heart, your will, your service,—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must *take* all,—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper,—to give you power to obey." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 69-70)

## Sanctification and God's Law

God's Law is not just a set of rules, but rather the expression of His character that He desires to restore in us. When a person gives his life to Him, God implants in him new thoughts, attitudes, and aspirations. He writes His law in his heart. (Hebrews 8:10) This is just another picture that the Bible uses to describe sanctification. Thus biblical sanctification always leads us to obey God's Law.



By what means does God make us holy?

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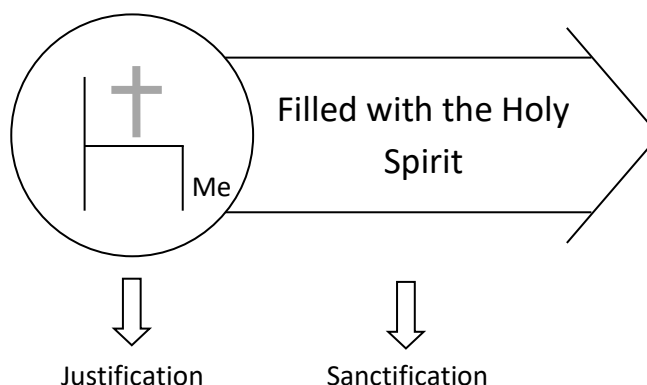
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**John 16:13;  
17:17-19**

In this passage Jesus explains that sanctification occurs through truth and that His word is truth. God sanctifies us as we spend time in His word, submit ourselves to it, and allow the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Next to the word of God, Jesus himself (John 14:6) and the Law of God (Psalm 119:142) are identified as Truth. Just like a doctor prescribes fresh air and sunshine for his patients to help them get better, God places us under the influence of truth in order to transform us.

The Holy Spirit leads us in our relationship with Jesus, brings us closer to God's Word, and enables us to keep the commandments of God. It is the Holy Spirit that grows the fruit of the Spirit, which describes the character of Jesus (Galatians 5:22,23) in us. Only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit can experience sanctification. We will explore what that exactly means in another lesson.



## Quote #8

"Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then cooperate with the three

great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf." (*SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 908*)

**Quote #9**

"True sanctification is a Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonian church, declares: 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' And he prays: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23. The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for His disciples: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' John 17:17. And Paul teaches that believers are to be 'sanctified by the Holy Ghost.' Romans 15:16. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told His disciples: 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' John 16:13. And the psalmist says: 'Thy law is the truth.' By the word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in His law. And since the law of God is 'holy, and just, and good,' a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says: 'I have kept My Father's commandments.' 'I do always those things that please Him.' John 15:10; 8:29. The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification. This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God." (*The Great Controversy, p. 469*)

**What now?**

Now you understand more clearly what sanctification means. But perhaps you ask yourself: How can I experience this transformation in a practical way? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can my relationship with Jesus be so deep that He can do all these things through me? We will answer these questions in module 2 (With Jesus Ahead).





This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



1. Work through this lesson carefully and prayerfully. Mark the statements that are important to you and write your answers in the spaces given.
2. The memory verse for this topic is John 17:17. Write it word for word on an index card and learn it by heart.
3. In the next couple of days, speak with someone about one of the points from this lesson that personally spoke to you and tell them what you have learned!

## Lesson 13: Are you sure?

### Intro

Believing in Jesus Christ means you have a living, personal relationship with Him. Jesus truly desires to have a deep, trusting relationship with us. One in which He can give us the assurance and the security that we need. He wants us to trust Him fully with our lives and in his promises. In the context of a trusting relationship with Him we can have the assurance that we are saved through Him. This assurance alone gives us peace, security, joy, and strength in our faith. Only those who know that they are accepted by Jesus Christ can look forward with joy to His second coming. Whereas doubts and insecurity lead to fear and will only cause us to dread His return. The biblical assurance of salvation is an indispensable part of the Advent message because we are to warn people to be prepared for the second coming of Christ and to look forward with joy to this day. Only those who know they are saved by faith in Jesus Christ can pray, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

### Many Christians do not have assurance of salvation

Unfortunately, in regards to their salvation, many Christians do not have this assurance. Although they try their hardest to please God, they are not sure if they are accepted. There are many causes for this insecurity. For example:

- They have not fully given their life over to Christ.
- They have not understood the message of justification by faith and try to earn God's favor through their own strength and works.
- They are afraid of having a false self-assurance of salvation without truly being saved.
- They have a known sin that they cling to in their life.
- They base their faith on changing emotions.
- They are discouraged by their weaknesses and their mistakes and believe that God cannot accept them as they are.

### And you?

What about you? Do you have the assurance that you are accepted by God and have been saved? If you were to die today or if Jesus were to come again today, would you have the assurance that you would be saved? Is your answer clearly "Yes"? If yes, then on what basis do you claim your assurance? Is your answer "Maybe" or "No"? If that is the case, can you explain why you do not have an assurance of salvation?

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**It is possible!**

The Bible is very clear! It is possible to know that we have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ. It isn't a hope or an idea. Those who have given their life to Jesus Christ can know that they have eternal life.



What did John write about the assurance of salvation? Under what condition can we have it?

**1 John 5:11-13**

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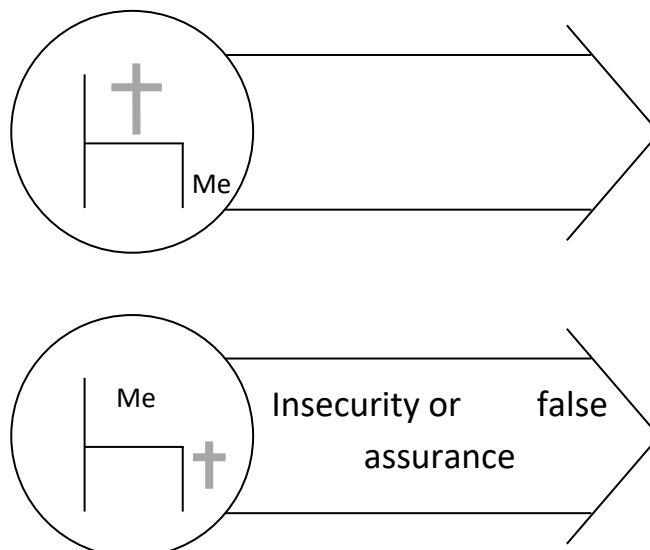
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John writes: "He who has the Son has life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." John also adds: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." Our assurance of eternal life is based upon our clear decision to follow Jesus Christ. When I surrender control to Him, He fulfills His promise in me and gives me the assurance of salvation. Without complete surrender there is only insecurity and false assurance. The assurance of salvation is not dependent upon whether we are good enough. It is rooted in a genuine, heartfelt approach to Jesus, placing complete trust in Him, and relinquishing every right to live our lives the way we want to live the way that He wants. The foundation of our salvation is justification by faith in the grace of God and not because of how much progress we have made towards perfection.



An attractive, joyous, fruit bearing Christian life is impossible without the assurance of salvation. The agonizing thoughts of doubt that God has accepted us, robs us of joy and keeps us from sharing our faith. Just like a marriage can only blossom when both partners feel they have been accepted by one another, our faith can only grow when we know that we have been accepted by God. The assurance of salvation is not a “once saved always saved” kind of guarantee because it is possible to turn our back on God and thus lose our salvation. Salvation is not just a decision for tomorrow and eternity, but for here and now.



How do the following texts describe the assurance that believers may have in their faith?

John 6:47: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 5:1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:1,14: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 2:12: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 2:12: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 3:1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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1 John 3:14: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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1 John 4:17,18: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 5:14,15: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Quote #1**

“It is our privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame or remorse. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:1” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 51)

**False  
assurance of  
salvation**

Satan does not want us to have true, biblical assurance of salvation because we can gain strength for our faith from it. So he attempts to do two things. He causes us to doubt God’s promises or gets us to believe in a false type of assurance in which we assume that we are saved when in reality we are not.



How do the following texts describe a false assurance of salvation?

Matthew 7:21-23: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 18:9-14: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 2:4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 6:13,14,16: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons for a  
false  
assurance of  
salvation**

The Bible gives two reasons for a false assurance of salvation. Firstly, the Bible describes people who rely on their own works and on their own righteousness. People who think that they are good enough for heaven. In other words their faith is founded upon their own righteousness. Paul describes very clearly the consequences of self-righteousness: “for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse...” (Galatians 3:10) “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be

justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Write the consequences of trying to justify yourself by keeping the law in the space below!

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Secondly, the Bible describes people who are quite sure that they are saved but consciously and willfully break God's commandments. Conscious, willing disobedience is nothing other than breaking trust with God. It eats away our relationship with Jesus, which is the foundation of our salvation and is nothing more than a spiritual short-circuit. Of course, neither one of these will give us assurance of salvation.

#### Assurance and Feelings

Many people are plagued with doubts about their salvation because they do not *feel* saved. Their feelings are the measuring stick to determine if they have been saved. We must remember that our feelings can be deceptive. Feelings have their place in the life of a Christian, but they should not be in first place.



#### 1 John 3:19-24

John, who speaks so much about the assurance of salvation, knew about the deceptive role that feelings can and do play. What advice does he give in regard to this? What is a sure sign for John that we are accepted by God?

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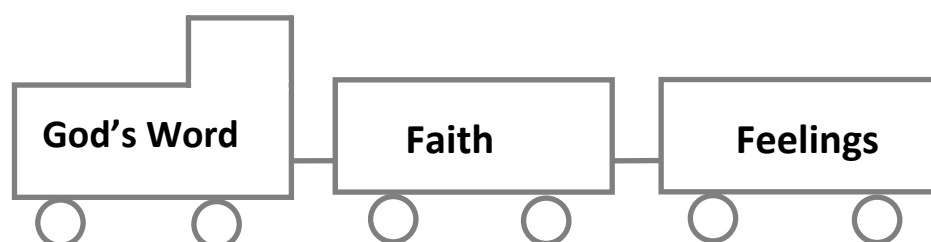
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#### The Faith train

John describes the role of God's word with His promises that target our faith and our feelings. When our heart (our feelings) condemns us after we have surrendered our lives to Jesus, we should ignore it. Our faith is based on God's word and not on our feelings. How we feel should not be the determining factor in how we view our salvation. The picture below should underscore this thought.



The train begins with God's word, which promises us eternal life. Of course, we could never earn this through our own strength. God invites us to trust His word and by faith accept eternal life. Our faith is driven by God's word and not by our feelings. Our feelings are not the measuring stick for our salvation. They follow our faith. If we make our feelings the head of the train, our spiritual lives will constantly be in roller coaster mode. Our assurance of salvation would be as unpredictable as the weather. The foundation for our assurance of salvation remains: grace and faith. They are not dependent on our feelings. God is faithful regardless of how we feel.

**Quote #2** "You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart. Then believe that He does this because He has promised." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 49,50)

**Quote #3** "Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, 'I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.'" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 51)

**Quote #4** "With rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to express His love toward us? He declares, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' Isaiah 49:15" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 54)

**Quote #5** "You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise,--believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,--God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It is so if you believe it." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 51.)

**Assurance and Weakness** What about when I feel weak and am sad and discouraged about my weakness? Is my weakness a clear sign that I am not saved? This may seem to be humble thinking but it is nothing more than a form of righteousness by works. Whomever says: "Although I have accepted Jesus in my life, I cannot have an assurance of salvation by faith because I am not good enough" is really saying, "God accepts me only when I am first good enough." The truth is that we can never be good enough, that is why God graciously offers us salvation through faith. John writes very clearly about the assurance of salvation not to Christians who have overcome every sin and every failure (compare 1 John 1:8, 10), but "So that we might know"). Besides, the closer I come to Jesus, the more clearly I see my own faults and weaknesses. This is proof that God's Spirit is working in me, because without Him we can not see our faults and will never show true remorse for them.



Jesus always had words of encouragement for people, especially those who were fully aware of their weaknesses. Read the following texts and ask yourself, “How can we come to Jesus? What is God’s will? What is Jesus’ reaction when we come to Him?”

John 6:37-40: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 11:28-30: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My salvation is not based on my good works or my character strengths. When I give my life completely and honestly over to Jesus, then I may know that He has accepted me. God is faithful to His promises! He does not leave me alone in my weakness! Read the wonderful quotes below from Ellen White that brings this message home!

**Quote #6**

“There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, ‘These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ 1 John 2:1” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 64)

**Quote #7**

“When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan’s constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life’s cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices. Many who are really conscientious, and who desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ he hope to gain the victory. We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 71,72)

**Quote #8**

“Some seem to feel that they must be on probation, and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed, before they can claim His blessing. But they may claim the blessing of God even now. They must have His grace, the Spirit of Christ, to help their infirmities, or they cannot resist evil. Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of



**We have an Advocate!**



His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 52)

About 2000 years ago, Jesus returned to Heaven to intercede for us. His heavenly ministry is the guarantee for our salvation. What Jesus completed on the cross for all mankind was for all time, and He applies it for us personally in the Heavenly Sanctuary. From there He answers our prayers, forgives us our sins, sends out help, and all other necessary functions so that we can grow in our sanctification. The source of our confidence is found in Jesus as our Advocate in the Heavenly Sanctuary!

How do Paul and John describe this confidence?

Hebrews 4:14-16: \_\_\_\_\_

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Ephesians 3:11,12: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 John 2:1: \_\_\_\_\_

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**God is our Confidence**

We may know that we are God’s children and that he gives us confidence through faith! The Bible is full of this truth. David rejoiced in this confidence: “In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us” (Psalm 62:7,8). Paul encouraged the believers with these words: “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

This confidence will never lead us to carelessly relax as if we had no more room for growth. Rightly understood, it leads us to quite the opposite, not to trust ourselves but to fully rely on Christ and to follow Him “till we all come ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13). He did not accept us because we were perfect, but so that he can restore His image in our hearts and thus make us more and more like him. This confidence will also not lead us to treat sin as a trifling matter or to justify it. The security and assurance in Christ that we are accepted by Him helps us that much more to hate sin. This security and assurance will give us the strength to overcome bad habits and character weaknesses and make us more like Jesus.

Ellen White often wrote letters to people who loved Jesus but were struggling with doubts and lacked faith that Jesus had truly accepted them. So in 1887 she wrote a

letter to a sister in Christ, who suffered under this weakness and was plagued by doubts regarding her salvation. Ellen White wrote her words of hope, encouragement, and confidence. We need those words just as much today as the sister struggling back then. Please read carefully the letter she wrote!

**A Letter from  
Ellen White**

My dear sister,

I have evidence that God loves you, and that precious Saviour who gave Himself for you that you might be saved will not thrust you from Him because you are tempted, and in your weakness may have been overcome...

Now do not worry yourself out of the arms of the dear Jesus, but lie trustingly in faith. He loves you, He cares for you, He is blessing you, and He will give you His peace and grace. He is saying to you, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' (Luke 5:23)...I tell you Jesus loves us although we err and are betrayed into sin. He will forgive us, He will pardon and that abundantly. Gather to your soul the sweet promises of God...

Look away from your wretchedness to the perfection of Christ. We cannot manufacture a righteousness for ourselves. Christ has in His hands the pure robes of righteousness and He will put it upon us. He will speak sweet words of forgiveness and promises. And He presents to the thirsty soul fountains of living waters, whereby we may be refreshed. He bids us to come unto Him with all our burdens, all our griefs, and He says we shall find rest. We must therefore believe that He speaks pardon, and we must show our faith by resting in His love...

This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and true happiness. Now Jesus says, 'Lay it all on Me; I will take your sin, I will give you peace. Destroy no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine, your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin, I will remove.' Then turn your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, and lay hold upon the hope set before you. God accepts your broken contrite heart. He offers you free pardon. He offers to adopt you into His family with His grace to help your weakness, and the dear Jesus will lead you on step by step, if you will only put your hand in His and let Him guide you.

Search for the precious promises of God. If Satan thrusts threatenings before your mind, turn from them and cling to the promises." (*Letter 38, February 24, 1887, to "My dear Sister."*)



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## Lesson 14: As Disciples through the End Times

### Intro

Welcome to the last lesson of module 1. In the last 14 lessons we have studied the topic of discipleship and personal salvation from different angles. We have seen that discipleship is not just one of many topics in the Bible, but *the central* topic of the Holy Scriptures.

### Definition of "Disciple"

Write below a short summary of how you would define a disciple of Jesus!

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A disciple is a person who has made a clear, wholehearted decision to follow Jesus. He/she has personally accepted the salvation through Jesus Christ and lives in an intimate connection with Jesus Christ. He/she bases his/her faith and life on God's word and allows God to change them. Furthermore, a disciple has personally accepted the Great Commission and makes disciples of others.



**Matthew  
28:19**

What did Jesus commission his disciples to do before He returned to Heaven?

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### More than preaching

Jesus gave a clear command to His disciples: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations!" With the understanding of discipleship that we have gained thus far, we know that this commission encompasses much more than just preaching the message. We need to help others to become followers of Jesus, to live their faith practically on a day to day basis, and to equip them in sharing their faith with others and discipling others to do the same. The Great Commission is not just about converting people, but about training workers! Jesus' plan is for disciples to make other disciples and for those disciples to make other disciples and so on...



**Matthew  
24:14**

What does Jesus predict would happen before the end of the world?

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Only a disciple of Jesus can share the Gospel in such a way that it makes disciples of others. Discipleship is the key element in the end times. In short, everything we know about the end times only makes sense when we live as disciples of Jesus. When we read Daniel and Revelation carefully we can see clearly that discipleship is the central theme.



**Revelation  
1:1,3**

What is the title of the book of Revelation?

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This title can be understood in two ways: 1) It is Jesus that reveals something here. 2) Jesus is the main theme of Revelation. Both meanings are true and applicable.

Who will receive the blessing mentioned in verse 3?

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**Quote #1**

“The book of Revelation opens with an injunction to us to understand the instruction that it contains. ‘Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy’ God declares, ‘and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.’ When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival. ...When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience.”  
(*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* p. 113, 114)



Write it down again! What will happen when we study deeply the book of Revelation?

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Ellen White prophesied that there will be a great revival among us when we study the book of Revelation. This revival will be a deeper commitment to discipleship, which is exactly what the book of Revelation describes. Everything that we learned in module 1 about discipleship we also find in the book of Revelation.



The key statement that best describes what discipleship is all about can be found in Revelation 14:4. How is discipleship portrayed in this verse?

**Revelation  
14:4**

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“They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” This is a precise definition of discipleship in the introduction to the Three Angels Messages where our identity and mission is described. So let’s discover what the book of Revelation has to say about discipleship in the endtimes.

**1st Sign**

**In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ and thus justification by faith.**

This is and will always be a prerequisite to becoming a disciple of Jesus. This was the central theme of the messages of both Jesus and the Apostles. It isn’t any different in our time.

Only those who have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ can proclaim this end time message with conviction and power. And only in the context of righteousness by faith can this message be understood at all. Whether we talk about judgment, the Second Coming, sanctification, resurrection, or the great controversy between Christ and Satan, these topics make sense only when preached and understood with Christ at the center.



How do the following verses in Revelation describe salvation through Christ and justification by faith?

1:5: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3:5; 7:14; 19:8: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Note: White clothing in the Bible is a symbol for those who are saved through Jesus (compare Isaiah 61:10)*

5:9: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12:11: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14:4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal and core of our prophetic message** God also showed very clearly, through the writings of Ellen White, that the message of righteousness by faith should never be separated from our prophetic message. Moreover, it is the very core and goal of our message. The message of righteousness by faith describes what God wants to do *for* and *in* us when we give ourselves wholly to Him in these last days. The context of the end times only gives more urgency to the message of righteousness by faith.

**Quote #2** “Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’” (*Last Day Events*, p. 199,200.)

**Quote #3** “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which was made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.

Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gifts of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” (*Last Day Events*, p. 200)

**Quote #4** “The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.” (*Last Day Events*, p. 200)

**2nd Sign** **In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus strive to bring their lives into harmony with God’s will.**



Which message is repeated in the following verses in Revelation?

2:5,16; 3:3,19: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The message “Repent!” is not only directed toward unbelievers. It is also for the followers of Jesus who have gone astray and need to bring their lives back into harmony with God. John the Baptist’s message to the people to “repent and be baptized” pierced their prideful hearts because they thought repentance was only necessary for the heathens. But John was speaking to Jews who were supposed to automatically be believers. So it is today. We are comfortable with the idea that only unbelievers need to repent. But in reality those who claim to follow Jesus also need to repent. It is God’s goodness that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Lovingly, He invites us to repent, so that our lives are in harmony with His will.

### 3rd Sign



**In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus are filled with and led by the Holy Spirit.**

What does John write about the leading of the Holy Spirit?

2:7,11,17, 29; 3:6,13,22: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In what special way does the Holy Spirit lead the followers of Jesus.

19:10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 4th Sign



**In the end times, disciples of Jesus unreservedly hold fast onto the Word of God.**

How do the following texts describe the attitude of Jesus' followers about His Word?

1:3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3:8,10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20:4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22:7: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22:18,19: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 5th Sign



**In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus are people of prayer.**

How do the following two texts describe the prayers of Jesus' disciples?

5:8; 8:3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These two verses clearly show how the prayers of the followers of Jesus ( the "saints") reach Heaven. It is Jesus who brings our prayers before the Father as our Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary.

Also the book of Daniel (the twin book of Revelation) describes in a very impressive way the significance of prayer. (see Daniel 2:17,18; 6:11; 9:4,18, 23; 10:12, 14) The



stories that we read in the book of Daniel foreshadow the experiences the disciples of Jesus will have at the end of time.

#### 6th Sign



**In the endtimes, disciples are obedient to God's Commandments.**

What role do God's Commandments play in God's last Church?

12:17: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14:12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 7th Sign



**In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus are overcomers.**

What phrase is repeated in the following verses?

2:7,11,17, 26; 3:5,12, 21;

21:7. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23). In Revelation this thought is expressed by the word *overcome*. Often this expression is followed by the admonition "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!" Overcoming is only possible as we open our heart to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

#### 8th Sign



**Disciples of Jesus experience a change of character.**

How does Revelation describe the character of the last generation?

14,1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14,4.5: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God's name symbolizes His character, which He desires to restore in every believer. When God created mankind in the beginning, they were created in His likeness. But because of sin, the image of God in mankind was marred, but not completely destroyed. Through the new birth and sanctification God step by step restores His image in the believer (Colossians 3:10). In other passages this process of restoration is also described as God writing His law on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). God's law is a reflection of His character. The last generation will reflect His character and will show the whole universe that God's law is just and that through God's grace the saved are able to keep His law.

#### Quote #5

"The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them." (*Last Day Events*, p. 200)

### 9th Sign



#### In the endtimes, disciples of Jesus proclaim the Gospel.

What role do the disciples of Jesus play in the proclamation of the Gospel?

12:11: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14:6: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22:17: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all mankind. Every generation since then, the followers of Jesus have taken this commission seriously and it is still valid for the endtime generation.

### Quote #6

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69)

### 10th Attribute



#### In the end times, disciples of Jesus have made a clear decision to follow Jesus 100%.

In Revelation it is made very clear that a half-hearted commitment to Jesus is invalid. Revelation calls us to make a clear-cut decision! How clear is this call in the message to the Laodiceans?

3:14-22: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is unmistakably clear in Revelation chapters 13 and 14 that we must make a decision whose side we are on because there is no more room for fence-sitters. Either you follow Jesus and receive the seal of God or you worship the beast and receive his mark. There is no third option.



As Seventh-day Adventists, God gave us a special message to give to the world to help people prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus. But everything that we proclaim will only be believed when we ourselves are living every aspect of the message in the light of Jesus Christ. This is why discipleship can’t be separated from the message of Revelation.

**Quote #7**

“Many remarks have been made to the effect that in their discourses our speakers have dwelt upon the law, and not upon Jesus. This statement is not strictly true, but is there not some reason for it? Have there not stood in the desk men who have not had a genuine experience in the things of God, men who have not received the righteousness of Christ? Many of our ministers have merely sermonized, presenting subjects in an argumentative way, and scarcely mentioning the saving power of the Redeemer. ...By them men are not pricked to the heart; they are not led to inquire, what must I do to be saved? Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy.” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 156, [1915])

**The Most  
Important  
Question**

It is so important that we not let the messages of Daniel and Revelation fall to the wayside. We must always view them in a Christ-centered way. Only as disciples of Jesus, living in a dynamic relationship with Him, can we understand and proclaim these messages properly. The endtime prophecies show us the urgency of the time we are living in. If there ever was a time that we should make a clear, consistent decision to be disciples of Jesus, the time would be now. Today, God invites us to belong to those who are referred to as “following the Lamb wherever He goes.”



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