

THAT ONE LOST SHEEP

The central theme of the Bible, from its first to its last book, is the revelation of how mankind is redeemed, and how they can be restored from the disastrous effects of sin through a healing relationship with Jesus Christ. When God's offered grace and man's outstretched hand of faith (itself a gift from God) clasp, salvation takes place. And when man continues to clasp the hand of God, a relationship matures the result of which man grows into the likeness of his Creator.

We have studied the steps whereby one may come to Christ and receive salvation. In this lesson we want first to look a bit further into how a converted person may grow, mature, and develop in the Christian life. There are "steps" in growth just as there are steps in the initial formation of a relationship with Christ. Second, we want to see the great importance that the Lord places on each and every person. As a song writer has penned, "Oh, how He loves you and me."

1. In order to live, we all must have water and food. A poor diet, too much junk food, an unbalanced choice of food, all yield poor health sooner or later. Good nutrition is in the headlines these days, and for good reasons. To be healthy and growing spiritually, we must have good spiritual food. What do you find in the following passages that show us the need for the very best in spiritual food?
 - (a) John 6:35-40 _____
 - (b) John 17:17 _____
 - (c) What do you understand by the word, "sanctify," in (b)?

2. What is a second, vital ingredient in the spiritual growth process?
 - (a) Old Testament: Psalm 55:16,17 _____
 - (b) New Testament: Philippians 4:6 _____
 - (c) Prayer is a key to growth. But what kind of prayer do these Scriptures teach? _____

3. The devil does not cease to confront a reborn Christian with temptation. The growth process is characterized by victory over temptation. What do these texts say about the nature of temptation and gaining victory over it?
 - (a) James 1:12-15 _____
 - (b) Romans 13:14 _____

4. In order to grow, the Christian must learn to trust in the fulfillment of God's promises for sustaining power. "Feelings" can be very deceptive. God's promises are sure, feelings or no feelings. Among the hundreds of great promises in the Bible, read these two encouraging samples: Isaiah 41:10; Jude 24,25.
5. Many reborn Christians find their growth impaired because they cannot seem to escape feeling guilty, even after claiming God's promise of forgiveness, as in 1 John 1:9. What is the truth taught in Psalms 103:1-5? (Compare Luke 7:47.)
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6. Another important factor in growth is found in our sharing with others, of what we have learned of God, our joy in Christ, the power we receive from the Holy Spirit. We can do this over the telephone, in a letter, over the fence, many ways. A converted life has an influence that affects everyone with whom it comes in contact. How vital is this?
- (a) Matthew 10:32,33 _____
- (b) Matthew 24:14 (28:18-20) _____
7. One of the greatest words in the Bible is found in its greatest text, John 3:16. It says that "WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish." WHOSOEVER. That includes you and me – as individuals. What is the clear emphasis on the individual in these passages?
- (a) Luke 15:3-7 _____
- (b) Luke 19:1-7 _____
- (c) Luke 23:42,43 _____
- (d) Revelation 3:20 _____
8. Jesus died for you, and for me. What a truth! Personalize John 3:16 and always remember it that way.

<p>For God so loved _____, that he gave His only begotten Son, that _____, believing in him, should not perish, but _____ should have everlasting life.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Your Name)</p>

1a. John 6:35-40

³⁵And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Answer: Jesus is the "bread" (that gives nourishment, energy) of life that lasts forever (never hunger or thirst), He is a complete answer to every problem or need we have on this earth and will in fact give us eternal life.

1b. John 17:17

¹⁷Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Answer: What God says or has revealed in the Bible is truth, a fact, and this information allows us to grow in our trust of God and causes us to develop a character like God's (sanctification).

1c. Sanctification definition:

Answer: to grow, mature, become complete or like someone or something, to develop.

2a. Psalm 55:16, 17

¹⁶ As for me, I will call upon God,
And the Lord shall save me.
¹⁷ Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.

Answer: We can call on God and He will hear our voice and understand what we need.

2b. Philippians 4:6

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; . . .

Answer: God knows what we need, we can ask and know He will hear our requests and will give us only what is best for us.

2c. What kind of prayer do these Scriptures teach?

Answer: We must be willing to acknowledge our need for help outside of ourselves and ask God for His help in our lives, and then trust Him to do for us what is in our best interest.

3a. James 1:12-15

¹²Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Answer: We often are our own worst enemies when it comes to temptations – we tend to go after what we want – we need endure (resist, overcome, avoid, stay away) from those things or people who create desires in our minds and thus tempt us to do what is wrong.

3b. Romans 13:14

¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

Answer: God's power in our life allows us to overcome our sinful inclinations.

4. Isaiah 41:10

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you;
Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Jude 24, 25

⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present *you* faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
²⁵ To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.

Thought: Don't be afraid, God is ready and willing to help you resist all temptation.

5. 1 John 1:9

⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 103:1-5

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
³ Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
⁵ Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Luke 7:47

⁴⁷Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same loves little.*"

Answer: Regardless of how we feel (discouraged, depressed, etc.) the fact is, God does forgive us when we confess and repent of our sins and turn away from them. **(FACTS, Faith, feelings)**

6a. Matthew 10:32, 33

³²"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Answer: God wants us to "confess" (witness, acknowledge, state, communicate, share, etc.) what He has done for us in restoring in us the life we had lost through sin.

6b. Matthew 24:14

¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen.

Answer: God has a work for us to do for Him in sharing with others the Good News about how He can restore in them the life which they have lost through sin.

7a. Luke 15:3-7

³So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Answer: We are all “lost sheep” and God is searching for each of us that He might save us and bring us back to safety.

7b. Luke 19:1-7

Then *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. ²Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³And he sought to see who *Jesus* was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. ⁵And when *Jesus* came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” ⁶So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”

Answer: God is ready and willing to accept anyone who wants be saved.

7c. Luke 23: 42, 43

⁴²Then he said to *Jesus*, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

⁴³And *Jesus* said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Answer: God will save a person right up to the last few minutes of their life, regardless of what they have done, as long as they are willing to recognize their need of a Savior and are willing to trust themselves to God.

7d. Revelation 3:20

²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Answer: God is trying to get our attention, become a part of our lives, get into our consciousness, so He can restore in us what we have lost as the result of sin – but He will become a part of our lives only if we are willing to “open the door”.

8. John 3:16

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Lesson 8, Notes

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Notes for the Instructor

Purpose of Lesson 8: To discover that there are "steps" in the Christian growth process, just as there are steps in coming to Christ in making our initial decision to follow Him. Also, to work toward a better handling of guilt, particularly after one has asked for forgiveness of sin. To continue the stress on the personalness of a genuine spiritual experience, this lesson could be given to the student at the close of lesson 7 as a take home lesson. At home the individual would have an opportunity to meditate on his or her own importance to God as an individual. The study could then be briefly reviewed at the beginning of lesson 9.

During the study itself: The points of the questions are clear. You may need to help the student with question 1 (c) and 2 (c). You can do this as you proceed if you personally give the study, or in review if the student does it on his own.

Appeal: Questions 7 and 8 combine to make a strong appeal.

Illustration: As this is a "take home" lesson, and due to the nature of the lesson content, no illustration has been included.