



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL CONTRIBUTING NOTES
For the week of July 26 – August 1, 2014
Lesson #5: **How to be Saved**

The Steps to Conversion

Recognition of Sin

For there to be confession of sin, there must be a recognition of sin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin. In so doing, the Holy Spirit leads us to the need of a Savior.

Sister White wrote, “The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law.’ Romans 13:10. The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: Thy law is the truth:’ ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness.’ Psalm 119:142, 172. And the apostle Paul declares: ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ Romans 7:12. Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.

“It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law. In the beginning, man was created in the image of God. He was in perfect harmony with the nature and the law of God; the principles of righteousness were written upon his heart. But sin alienated him from his Maker. He no longer reflected the divine image. His heart was at war with the principles of God's law. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ Romans 8:7. But ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,’ that man might be reconciled to God. Through the merits of Christ he can be restored to harmony with his Maker. His heart must be renewed by divine grace; he must have a new life from above. This change is the new birth, without which, says Jesus, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

“The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. ‘Sin is the transgression of the law.’ ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin.’ 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own. {GC 467.3}

“The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains ‘remission of sins that are past’ and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: ‘Abba, Father!’



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“Is he now free to transgress God's law? Says Paul: ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’ ‘How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’ And John declares: ‘This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.’ Romans 3:31; 6:2; 1 John 5:3. In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then ‘the righteousness of the law’ will ‘be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:4. And the language of the soul will be: ‘O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.’ Psalm 119:97. {GC 468.1}

“‘The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Psalm 19:7. Without the law, men have no just conception of the purity and holiness of God or of their own guilt and uncleanness. They have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. Not seeing their lost condition as violators of God's law, they do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes are joined to the church who have never been united to Christ.” *Great Controversy*, 467, 468

The law supplies the knowledge concerning sin and righteousness, but it is the Holy Spirit that works upon our hearts and convinces us of both sin and righteousness.

Sister White wrote, “But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. The ‘Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,’ illumines the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest. John 1:9. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.

“The prayer of David after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened, inspired his prayer. 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.” *Steps to Christ*, 24, 25.

Sorrow for Sin

Is it possible to say “I am sorry,” and not really mean it?



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There is a worldly sorrow that is predominantly sorrowful for the results of their wrong doing, but not truly sorrowful for the sin itself.

Paul wrote, “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” 2 Corinthians 7:8-10

Sister White comments, “Filled with joy, the apostle sent another letter to the Corinthian believers, expressing his gladness of heart because of the good work wrought in them: ‘Though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.’ When tortured by the fear that his words would be despised, he had sometimes regretted that he had written so decidedly and severely. ‘Now I rejoice,’ he continued, ‘not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.’ That repentance which is produced by the influence of divine grace upon the heart will lead to confession and forsaking of sin. Such were the fruits which the apostle declared had been seen in the lives of the Corinthian believers. ‘What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal.’” *Acts of the Apostles*, 324, 325

Godly sorrow leads to heartfelt repentance. There is no shielding of self, no intent to hid our sins, and no excuses. We will not chose to find fault with others, but clearly admit that we have done wrong. If we choose to defend sin or make light of it, then there can be no true sorrow for sin.

Confession of Sin

The Bible says, “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. Did you catch that? If we confess our sins, then God will both “forgive us of our sins” and “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” What a wonderful promise! It is God’s part to forgive and cleanse. It is our part to confess our sins.

But what does it mean to confess our sins?

First, there needs to be an acknowledgement of sin. If we do not acknowledge that we have done wrong, then there will be no true confession of sin. Second, with a humble heart we are to confess our sins to God. Never are we to confess our sins in a flippant or irreverent way. We are asking pardon from the Creator of heaven and earth. Third, we are to confess our sins with heartfelt repentance, regretting that we had committed such sins. If we are not truly repentant, have we truly confessed them? The



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psalmist wrote, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Psalm 34:18. And lastly, confession should be specific, acknowledging the very sins we have committed.

Does God want to forgive me of my sins?

The Bible says that God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance....For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” 2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16.

Does God really want me to be cleansed?

The apostle Paul wrote that Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish....This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Ephesians 5:25-27;
1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Jesus “gave Himself” for us that we might be cleansed. We are to be cleansed “by the word” and presented to the heavenly Father as a “glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

In fact, the “will of God” is our “sanctification.” The word “sanctification” means to make holy. It is God’s will that we are both forgiven and cleansed, that we may become that glorious church.

But what if I confess my sins and I keep on committing the same sins?

This is the experience of many professed Christians in both Catholic and Protestant churches. Does this means that there is something wrong with God and His promise? Absolutely not! The problem must lie with my confession. Would you agree?

Is it possible for a person to want to be forgiven but not changed?

Certainly! A person may want to be forgiven for their angry words, but they still want to hang onto their ugly feelings. A person may want to be forgiven for adultery or fornication, but he still wants to hang on to immoral thoughts and practices.



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It would seem evident that there is a true confession of sin that leads to both forgiveness and cleansing, and there is a confession of sin that leaves us unchanged. Obviously this is a very serious topic. We do not want to lose out on heaven because we have a mistaken concept of confession of sin.

What does it mean to be cleansed?

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3. What does it mean to be “born again”? Does the new birth experience mean more than being forgiven for my past sins?

What does it mean to be “born again”?

The Bible says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [“born again”]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new....But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” 2 Cor. 5:17; Colossians 3:8-10. Emphasis supplied.

It would seem from these verses that the new birth experience is more than being forgiven; it is the beginning of a new life in Christ. In this new life we “put off” the old life of anger, jealousy, and crude jesting. Could we say that to “put off” anger is to be “cleansed” of anger?

If I have confessed my sins, why do I still struggle and fall into sin?

In answering this question, I would like us to look at a few verses in Romans chapter seven. Consider these inspired texts, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do....O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:18, 19, 24.

What a terrible struggle! Here Paul is describing the experience of someone who has confessed his sins, but who has not experienced the cleansing power that God has promised. This struggling man knows what is right, he even wants to do what is right, but he does not know how.

In the following verses, we find that he acknowledges that God’s law is holy, but that he is carnal, sold under sin, saying, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good....For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Romans 7:12, 14.



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It is true that God's ten moral precepts are holy, just, and good. They are absolutely perfect. The problem is not with God's Ten Commandments, the problem is with us. We were born with a carnal or fallen nature with the inclination to sin. It is like we were born into the bondage of sin, or "sold under sin." But there is hope. God has promised, "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.

If God can cleanse us of all unrighteousness, then the cleansing power of God must be more powerful than the sinful nature we were born with. Consider these inspired texts:

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13

So what is the problem?

For many professed Christians, they have only confessed the sins they have committed. But let us ask ourselves another question, "Why did we commit those sins?" We committed them because *we are* sinful. The problem is with our sinful nature. Jesus said, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:17-19.

In these words of Jesus, we see that the real problem is not with the bad fruit, but with the bad tree. We can continue to ask God to forgive us of our bad fruit, but what do we really need to do? We need to ask God to forgive us and cleanse us from the evil inside of us.

For example, if I am dealing with a quick temper, then I need to not only ask God to forgive for my angry words and impatience. But there is more. I need to ask God to forgive me for my quick temper that caused me to speak those unkind words. Otherwise, the quick temper that remains in me will keep producing the bad fruit of angry words and impatience.



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There is more. I need to ask for the love and patience of Jesus. I must be more than cleansed, I must be renewed into the image of Jesus. What do I need? I need the sweet and peaceful spirit of Jesus to replace my quick temper. In this way, I can now produce the good fruit of kind, courteous, and uplifting words.

Here is how true confession works:

1. I confess that I have spoken words that were unkind, and I ask God to forgive me.
2. I then ask God to cleanse me of the evil inside of me that caused me to speak evil words.
3. I then ask God to share with me the kind, courteous, and uplifting words of Jesus.

I remember the time when someone broke into my home and stole three hundred dollars. My neighbor had seen this individual come into my home for a short time and then left. When I got home, my neighbor shared with me what had happened. I knew the man that came into my home uninvited. I also knew that he was capable of stealing my money. So I went to see if my three hundred dollars was still there. Guess what? It was gone!

I knew that this man had stolen my money. But I also noticed that I had some ugly feelings towards this man. I knew that my feelings were wrong, so I prayed that God would forgive me for my ill-feelings. But then, God impressed me that I needed more than forgiveness, I needed cleansing.

There was something inside of me that caused the ill-feelings. So I prayed, "Father, please forgive me for my ill-feelings towards this man. I do not love him. I wasn't even born with this kind of love. But I know that You love him, for You sent Your own Son to die for him. Father, I want to be born-again with Your love in my heart for this man. Father, cleanse me of the evil spirit in me that causes these kind of ill-feelings. May I receive the new spirit that is in Your Son? Thank you Father for forgiving me and cleansing me of the evil within me and for sharing with me the altogether beautiful life of Jesus. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."

When I felt I had been forgiven and cleansed, then I went to this man's home with the love of Jesus in my heart. I knocked at his door and he opened the door. The first thing I said was, "I know that you took my three hundred dollars. But I want you to know that I forgive you. And I want you to know that you are worth a lot more than three hundred dollars."

The Holy Spirit had not only worked on my heart, but He worked on his heart as well. We began to study the Bible together, and he accepted Jesus as His Lord and Savior.



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Now if I had only asked to be forgiven for my ill-feelings, would I have gone to his home with the love of Jesus? No. The evil inside of me that caused the ill-feelings would have still been in me. What I needed was to be cleansed of that sinful nature that caused the sinful feelings. More than this, I needed to ask God to give me the love of Jesus for this man.

This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not only forgiven but changed. This change begins when we give our sins to Christ. As Peter proclaimed, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins [the forgiveness of sins], and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:38. Emphasis supplied.

When we give our sins to Christ it is His glory to take them. In return He gives us the Holy Spirit to live the new life. As we daily walk in the power of the Holy Spirit we are being cleansed from all unrighteousness. This is what true confession is all about.

This earnest desire to be both forgiven and cleansed is what led the psalmist to write, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23, 24. This must be our prayer, that God would search our hearts and reveal any wickedness that remains in us.

In His mercy, God will allow certain tests and trials to come our way that we might see things about ourselves that we have not seen. This must take place because we cannot confess sins that we are still ignorant of. So we pray, “O God, show me where I still fall short of Thy glory. Reveal to me where I am still unlike your altogether beautiful Son.” The Holy Spirit will not show us all our faults at once, but will with each conviction of sin impress us that we can be both forgiven and cleansed.

We should have no fear of allowing the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin in our life. No matter what we have done and no matter how many times we have done it, God will forgive us and cleanse us. What we should fear is our unwillingness to be cleansed of sin.

If the Holy Spirit reveals some new sin in my life, then does that mean that I have never been converted?

If the Holy Spirit has revealed to me a sin that I was not aware of before, then it tells me that God is proceeding with His glorious work of cleansing me from all unrighteousness. When the Holy Spirit does reveal that wickedness in me, I do need to make a choice. I need to choose to follow God’s perfect will as was perfectly demonstrated in the life of Jesus.

The choice to obey will always be ours. God will never force us to obey. He gives us the power of choice. While the power to overcome sin belongs to God, the choice will always be ours.



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We see this lesson taught throughout the healing ministry of Jesus. Do you remember when Jesus healed the man who had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years? Jesus said to the paralytic, “Wilt thou be made whole?” The impotent man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.’ Jesus saith unto him, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’ And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.” John 5:6-9.

As soon as the man obeyed the words of Jesus he was healed. He did not say to Jesus, “Heal me first and then I will get up.” Oh no! He believed the words of Jesus, and as he rose he was healed.

How can I discover my hidden sins that I might be both forgiven and cleansed?

The Bible says, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalm 119:9-11

In this Bible text, we see that “a young man” may “cleanse his way” by reading and applying God’s Word to his life. In this way, he will not wander from God’s commandments.

The apostle Paul would have us focus on the precious promises of God to experience the cleansing power of His Word, saying, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1

When we study the Bible, we must mesh our study with this prayer of the psalmist, saying, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” Psalm 51:2

I would encourage everyone to read through the Bible. Take it one verse at a time and own each verse. In other words, take the time to understand what you are reading, that you might receive the rich blessing that God has for you in that verse.

We should spend time each day studying the life and teachings of Christ. As we behold His perfection, we will see our own imperfections. But this is a blessing. Now that I know that I can be forgiven and cleansed, I want the Holy Spirit to show me my sins that I might give them up. More than this, the more sins that I give up, the more I can receive of the righteousness of Christ.

In addition, we should also study God’s Ten Commandments. Did you know that the definition of sin in the Bible is the transgression of God’s law? The Bible says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4.



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So if I want to discover my hidden sins, then I should study God's Word. Especially, I should study the life of Christ and His Ten Commandments.

The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. We cannot see everything that is within our own hearts, however, God knows us perfectly. We need to take advantage of our loving God who knows all things. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, He will perfectly guide us to be "cleansed of all unrighteousness."

Restoration

Some are willing to confess their sins, but are not willing to make restitution to those they have wronged. Every reasonable attempt should be made to give back that which we have stolen from another. Confession does not remove punishment or consequences.

The Bible says, "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.... Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering." Ezekiel 33:15, 16; Leviticus 6:4, 5

Faith in God

Can a person ask for forgiveness and still not be at peace with God? Some ask for forgiveness, but do not believe they are truly forgiven. They know that they should believe in God's promise, but they do not FEEL forgiven. We should probably feel forgiven, but we must exercise our faith in God's promise to forgive us when we repent. To ask God to forgive and then not believe that He will forgive us, is saying that God does not keep His promise. The reason we confess our sins is that we need forgiveness. Confession is not a test of God's love. God has already shown that He loves us in the sacrifice of His Son. Paul wrote, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Public Acknowledgment of Sin

We are to confess all of our sins to God, but not all sins are to be publicly confessed. However, if we have committed public sins, then they should be publicly confessed. For example, if I was part of spreading false rumors about a brother to fellow church members, then I should publicly confess that I had committed such a sin. With heartfelt repentance I should ask for forgiveness.



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At the same time, we are to praise God publicly for His mercy, as Jesus said, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” Mark 5:19, 20

This does not mean that we are to give a list of all the sins we committed, but we are to uplift the Lord for forgiving us of all our sins.

Victory Over Sin

Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” John 8:11

Christ not only to forgive us of our sins, but to free us from sin. Conversion includes both forgiveness and cleansing. We will study more on this topic in our upcoming Sabbath School lessons on “Growing in Christ” and “Living in Christ.”

May the Lord continue to bless you this week as you prepare to be a blessing in your Sabbath School class.

Notes prepared by Pastor Jeff Wehr.