

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 16:

"I Found What I Wanted!"

"YOU MAY NOT remember me, but I was attending Milo Academy at the time you were there for a Week of Prayer. That one week meant more to me than any other week of my life. Although I enjoyed the services at the time, I did not realize until much later just how much I would use what I learned during that one week." So wrote Verna Highglow more than two years after the week she referred to.

Her letter of appreciation was brief—only one page—but that one page was packed with a joy that comes from a consciousness of answered prayer.

Verna cited two examples of answered prayer as evidence. One concerned her marriage to a godly young man; the other was that she had found the Lord Jesus in a very personal way. "I claim Him as my very personal Saviour," she testified. "I just had to write to let you know."

That same day we received in the mail another letter of appreciation for the good a lady had received from our book, *The ABC's of Bible Prayer*. This lady said, "I've been a conscientious Seventh-day Adventist all my life, but I had never learned to accept God at His word in a real, practical way until just recently. I have now received an insight into the science of prayer and my faith has grown. I am so thankful that God has revealed this to me. I want to be used of Him to help many others to understand the things that have so thrilled my own heart."

These two letters came in the mail just in time for me to use them in my Sabbath morning sermon the next day. I entitled my sermon, "I Found What I Wanted." I presented principles, on the basis of which the authors of the above letters could write in such glowing terms.

I shared with the congregation what I feel are some of the most thrilling passages of Scripture. The first passage I invited the congregation to read with me is found in Numbers 23:19:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

This text precludes forever any double talk on the part of our heavenly Father. It agrees with the statement of our Lord Jesus Himself that "the scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35. It is also in harmony with the inspired statement of the apostle Paul, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Joshua, the leader of Israel, made a similar statement to the representatives of all the tribes just before he laid his burdens down. He said, "And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Joshua 23:14.

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I like to call these wonderful Scriptures "supporting promises," because they support, or strengthen, our faith. They agree with the inspired Psalmist who quotes the Lord saying, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psalm 89:34.

These "supporting promises" are not like the proverbial "straws" that the drowning man grasps for. They are "anchors" to the soul. As we drift along over life's sea--if we really are drifting--an anchor will change the picture. It is necessary to keep us steady in the battle and storm, in the fury and anger of the sea.

I well remember, early in my ministry, hearing an elderly preacher inviting our attention to a very important verse of Scripture. He said that when God and Abraham were talking together, God first made Abraham a promise. Then God backed up that promise by an oath: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." Hebrews 6:13. (Verse 17, margin, "Interposed himself by an oath.") Then the preacher went on to read the eighteenth verse, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

I can recall as though it were yesterday, the thrill I received when I first took God at His word. The promise I claimed was 1 John 1:9 for forgiveness and cleansing. I repeated this verse over and over. It was not until I had been preaching for many years, however, that I let my faith reach out and do something I had never done before. I read 1 John 2:25 which says, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." Now when I came to the word "us," I substituted my own name. Now it read, "And this is the promise that he hath promised Glenn Coon, even eternal life."

Next I turned in my Bible to John 3:16 and again inserted my name. Now it read, "For God so loved Glenn Coon, that he gave his only begotten Son, that Glenn Coon believing in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Then I went back and read again the promise of 1 John 1:9, this time inserting my own name: "If Glenn Coon confesses his sins, he is faithful and just to forgive Glenn Coon his sins, and to cleanse him, Glenn Coon, from all unrighteousness."

I cannot describe the assurance that inserting my own name in these promises gave to me. It did something for this heart of mine! I would recommend that you try this, too, and see what it will do for you. I now use the ABC's of receptive prayer as I do this. You remember them, don't you:

A-Ask. Matthew 7:7. "For any gift He has promised, we may ask." Education, page 258.

B-Believe. Mark 11:24. "Then we are to believe that we receive." Ibid.

C-Claim, or receive. John 11:41; 1 Corinthians 15:57. "And return thanks to God that we have received." Ibid.

Taking the promise of 1 John 1:9, for example, my prayer would now be something like this:

"Dear Lord, Thou hast promised that if Glenn Coon confesses his sins, Thou art 'faithful and just to forgive' Glenn Coon his 'sins, and to cleanse' me--Glenn Coon 'from all unrighteousness.' So I am Asking Thee to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. And because it is 'impossible for God to lie,' I Believe Thou art forgiving and cleansing me as Thou hast promised. Now I Claim, or Receive, this forgiveness and cleansing through the name of Jesus, Amen."

To make the promise still more personal, we recommend to our students that they do as did Augustine's mother. "She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting before God His own words, and pleaded as only a mother can.... and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart." Testimonies, Vol. 5, pages 322, 323.

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The books, *The Desire of Ages*, and *Steps to Christ* give us the same simple formula for prayer. To help emphasize the importance of the "C," to claim or receive, I read from the book *The Desire of Ages*, page 200:

"When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it."

After reading that sentence, I turned to the pastor, who was seated behind me, saying, "Would you please come to the desk?"

So he came up beside me, wondering, I suppose, what was coming next.

"Pastor," I said, "would you look at this sentence and tell us if you notice anything different about the way the word 'have' is printed?"

"The word 'have' is printed in italics," he responded.

"Why is this word printed in italics, Pastor?" I inquired further.

"To lend emphasis to the word," was his quick response.

It is so easy for us often to overlook a most important word in a sentence. This word "have" is italicized so as to give it more weight in its meaning, and to help us comprehend its great importance in the mind of the author.

Then I read this passage from *Steps to Christ*, page 51: "So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them."

Again, the word "have" is italicized. There must be, therefore, a very special reason for our not merely asking, and believing, but also claiming by returning thanks that we have received. "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.

The basis of the Prayer of Reception is found in Mark 11:24: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

There is only one way by which we can actually believe, and claim that we have received the answers to our prayers, and that is by asking for the things God has promised. The reason is more, however, than God's truthfulness. It is that: "As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise." *Education*, page 253.

"The gift is in the promise." *Ibid.*, page 258. As surely as every normal apple seed contains an apple tree trunk, two leaves and roots, so surely does God's Word, which is seed, Luke 8:11, contain the gift. "If we receive the promise, we have the gift." *Ibid.*, page 253.

So "we must ask for the things that He has promised." *Ibid.*, page 258. Then all the supporting promises can be presented to our Father in the fullest assurance of faith that we have received. Isn't that wonderful? But the most wonderful thing about it all is that it is available to each of us. These promises are given for you and me—and the fulfillment is for us, too! All we have to do is to fulfill the simple conditions to the promises.

Speaking of 1 John 1:9, our favorite author says, "There is a condition to this promise—that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life." *Steps to Christ*, page 51.

Notice with me three facts in this quotation which constitute, in part, God's will:

1. It is God's will to cleanse us from sin.

2. It is God's will to make us His children.

3. It is God's will to enable us to live a holy life.

As I have re-read this three-fold statement, I have wondered if, perhaps, I have in the past sometimes complicated the simple act of faith required of us by our Lord for cleansing, acceptance, and a holy life. Notice the emphasis placed on the simplicity of faith: "Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son." Ibid., page 52.

Now here is a very precious quotation that many have thrilled to when some minister or friend has shared it:

"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.'" Ibid., page 51. Isn't that wonderful! How much comfort and assurance that should give us! Repeatedly we have used this thought as we have risen from prayer with some tempted, tried, afflicted but vanquished soul. We have said, "Not because you feel it, but because God has promised, do you believe He has delivered you?" Some clear their throats. Some hesitate. And a few sheepishly say, "I hope so."

Just recently I visited a lady who sorely needed the Lord. I suggested that we pray the prayer of reception. We reviewed the ABC's of Bible prayer. Then we knelt. When it came time for her to pray, instead of praying, "Dear Lord, I believe," she prayed, "Dear Lord, I hope so."

After we rose from our knees, I explained that the word "hope" is a wonderful word in its place, but when it is used as a substitute for faith, it is out of place; for it strikes a note of uncertainty.

The following day I returned and again knelt in prayer with her. This time she started to say, "I hope so," and caught herself mid-sentence. Under her breath I heard her saying to herself, "That's the way I used to say it." She corrected herself and exclaimed, "Lord, I believe it!"

Oh, how happy heaven must have been when she expressed her faith! The difference was in the simple act of believing. By this sincere act--the act of believing--we, too, may be forgiven, cleansed, and become the children of God. He will give us the power to live radiant Christian lives. Isn't this a thrilling prospect!

In the same city lived Jack Brown, a man who very much desired to become a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. It was thought there was just one thing that prevented his realizing this desire. He was addicted to the cigarette. The pastor invited me to go with him to visit Jack and assist him as he had previously requested.

When we arrived in his home, however, we discovered Jack's problem was more than the cigarette. As we sat in his living room, Jack frankly confessed that he did not even profess to be a Christian. Now what would you do in this case? Would you talk about tobacco? or would you show him a better way of life and lead him to Jesus?

We would all agree that Jack needed an encounter with Jesus. So we presented to Jack, God's plan of saving us all through Jesus Christ. Did not our Lord say: "And I, if I be lifted up.... will draw all men unto me"? John 12:32.

I explained to Jack that we "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23); and that "the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23, first part. But the fact is that Jesus died in our stead and paid the penalty of our sins; and now offers us the "gift" of "eternal life." Romans 6:23, last part. Now He invites us to come to Him, confessing our sins, and receiving Him as our Saviour. We opened our Bibles to 1 John 1:9: "If we confess

our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Also to John 1:12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." We then explained the ABC's of the Prayer of Reception. As Jack comprehended the simplicity of this truth, we knelt in prayer.

After the pastor prayed, I led Jack in a prayer of reception by saying a sentence ahead of him, and letting him repeat it after me, as he admitted he did not know how to pray. We Asked; we Believed; and we Claimed and received forgiveness, cleansing, and fellowship. He was now a child of God.

The pastor and Jack made a gesture as though they were going to rise from their knees. I deterred them.

"Now Jack," I began, "you have just been forgiven, cleansed, and have become a child of God, haven't you?"

Jack nodded his head in assent.

"You are now a Christian," I added. "Now then, we can ask God to completely deliver you from the tobacco habit before we rise from our knees. We shall claim the promise of John 1:12 for 'power' that God, through Christ, will give you complete and instantaneous victory over the tobacco habit."

After we had prayed, Asking, Believing, and Claiming by receiving, we rose to our feet. Jack was radiant with victory. He knew that God had given him the victory.

We visited Jack three times a day for an entire week. We did this to encourage him to continue the "simple act of believing." Jack was completely delivered, and in just two weeks' time he was baptized!

Oh, the power in the simple act of believing and receiving! It is so often neglected and we stand powerless against the onslaughts of the enemy. "Faith is trusting God." Education, page 253. It's just that simple. But oh, the rewards for placing our trust and faith in the God of heaven!

It is not enough for us to believe doctrines. It is not sufficient to accept the Sabbath truth, as important as it is. What we want is not merely to be able to trace the events at the beginning and close of the millennium, as satisfying as that is. Even to be able to give a profound study on the twenty-three-hundred-day-prophecy, as commendable as this is, is not, in the fullest sense, bringing the human soul what it wants and needs. I found what I wanted only when I found Jesus. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.

"Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin." Steps to Christ, page 52.

What a joy it is to hear the testimonies of those who have taken the Lord at His word and gone on to victory!

I suppose it is the greatest joy that can come to a pastor. To see an individual grasp the promises through the power of Jesus; then observe him living a triumphant life by the grace of Christ, becoming a dynamic witness, constitutes a "crown of rejoicing" to any minister or youth worker.

"Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:7.

What a wonderful day it will be, when in heaven we can recount the experiences of life and realize how God has led us. Perhaps our guardian angel will reveal to us how circumstances were shaped so we could understand the miracle of faith. I hope this chapter has been a link in the chain.

May God bless you as you, "Let go, and let God!"

Quiz 16

1. What text precludes forever any double talk on the part of our heavenly Father? _____.
2. What are "supporting promises"? _____.
3. How do we take God at His word? _____.
4. Is it correct, according to God's Word, that we can insert our own name in a promise? _____.
5. True or false: Only after we receive the thing we asked for do we thank God that we have received it. _____.
6. What is the only way by which we can actually believe and claim that we have received the answers to our prayers? _____.
7. True or false: To you who are taking this quiz, the promises are available. _____.
8. True or false: We are to believe God has fulfilled His word when we feel the evidence. _____.
9. How do we express faith? _____.

Note: "It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. If we would give more expression to our faith ... we should have more faith and greater joy." The Ministry of Healing, pages 251-253.

10. Multiple choice: Suppose a man wanted victory over the cigarette habit, but he is conscious of the fact that he is not a Christian, what is the first step to take to help him?
 - a. Help him claim a promise for the cigarettes.
 - b. Help him to an encounter with Jesus.
 - c. Ask him why he hasn't joined a stop-smoking class.
11. After Jack had the victory, what did they do to encourage him to continue the simple act of believing? _____.
12. Why do we often "stand powerless against the onslaughts of the enemy"? _____.
13. Complete: It is not sufficient to accept the theory of the Sabbath, important as it is, because _____.
14. Why do thousands fail?