

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

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Name: _____

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Lesson 20:

This Can Change Your Life

AN INSPIRING picture has been painted on the canvas of my mind. As I share it with you, the readers of this book, I do so with mixed emotions. There is the element of eager certainty, for I am convinced that if I present this picture to you as the Lord has portrayed it to me, it can change any life. There is also the element of fear—a fear lest my inadequacy in using the pen may result in my giving someone the impression that the author of this book thinks he has almost attained unto "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

It should be borne in mind that there is a vast difference between a firm acceptance of a truth and its full and final realization in one's life.

As regards the picture the author cherishes and the truth he shares, he is forced to admit that he is aware that but its first glimmerings have pierced his spiritual senses. Yet having seen the picture, he feels he would be truant to his trust did he not share its thrilling prospect with you in this our final chapter. This is a picture of what happened to eleven men—rough, ill-tempered, self-centered, sinful men—within a matter of three short years! And then what can happen to you and to me in an equally short period of time.

These men, filled with worldly ambition, eager for personal honor, ready to elbow all others to one side that they might become political favorites, began a special course of study—a course that was destined to change, not merely their lives, but the world picture, within a single generation.

Their experience, while enrolled in this course of study, appeared so casual that we doubt that any of them actually realized he was a very definite and intricate part of a study class--at least not until after the three-year course was nearly completed.

The subject material, also almost unrealized by them at first, was not a mere topic, but a Person—an unlettered, unmarried, poverty-stricken young man. But He was different--different from anyone they had ever met; different in what He did; different in what He said--and how He said it; different in the manner in which He handled problems—of which they themselves were eleven!

His grace in the midst of disgrace; His kindness under abuse; His forgiving spirit under the most grueling, torturous, blasphemous insult—all attracted their attention, and sometimes their disapproval. But still they observed eagerly every word, weighed every action, and then talked about the merits, or, as they thought, demerits of all.

Actually, they were non-conformists, so far as their quick, positive approach was concerned. They possibly disapproved, far more than they accepted, most of His methods. It is true that they loved to witness His healings, as well as His victories over spies sent to entrap Him in His speech. They were

thrilled through and through with His tremendous miracles; but they were exceedingly slow to accept His spiritual attitudes and responses.

Then came Gethsemane, judgment, and Calvary in quick succession. Then the resurrection, the forty pre-ascension days, then the upper-room experience and Pentecost! And now for the picture that thrills my soul! It is painted thus by my favorite author: "In mind and character they had become like their Master." Education, page 95. What an almost unbelievable transformation!

Then follows a statement of the fruit of such a training: "Then was there such a revelation of the glory of Christ as had never before been witnessed by mortal man." Ibid. "To every nation under heaven was the gospel carried in a single generation." Ibid., page 96.

This is the picture I wish to share with you; and that, "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!" Ibid., page 271. This training will be one that results in a fulfilled promise: "We shall be like him," too. 1 John 3:2.

Now with the picture before us, our work is cut out—we are to launch out on a "Christ-centered" program of devotion. We are recommending to all our students that regardless of how heavy a daily program is theirs, nothing is so important as daily personal communion with our Lord. No set of ABC's theoretically received by the mind, can substitute for a daily personal encounter with our Lord. Rather, the ABC's of prayer are to be combined with this daily hour with God.

The devotional hour, however, will, from henceforth, be one of personal encounter with a personal Saviour. It will be far more than a mere study of the Bible, even of its great heroes. It will be an hour of fresh personal communings with the Lord; an hour in which the soul cries out repeatedly for more and still more of His likeness. Then throughout the day, before making any decisions, we ask ourselves often, "What would Jesus do?" In other words, our devotion has a double goal: first, that of observing Jesus in His Word, His work and His providence—knowing that by "beholding" we "are changed into the same image." (2 Corinthians 3:18); and secondly, to reveal Him in our lives to a perishing world.

In another work we have given a detailed report of how a "Modern Mary Magdalene" was changed during an eight-day therapy program. During this time we instructed her to fix her gaze on Jesus. She was to spend at least an hour every day in observing His forgiving love as it changed Mary Magdalene of old, Peter, Saul of Tarsus, David, Manasseh, and others. Then she turned to that same loving Saviour with her own need, saying: "I ask, I believe, and I claim for myself Your forgiving love. You loved all these others so much that You forgave them and changed them. I know, according to the promise of 1 John 1:9, You are forgiving me and changing me too!"

We had the blessed privilege of hearing from her own lips the truth: "I've professed Christ for thirty-five years, now I've found Him." Thus in her life there was experienced a partial fulfillment of the statement, "When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center." Education, page 297. She finally found the center, the lovely Jesus.

Part of our personal encounter with Jesus is found in following His example in claiming "exceeding great and precious promises" so we may "be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

In conducting a special Week of Prayer series at a college, we emphasized three outstanding facts:

1. "Satan tempted the first Adam in Eden, and Adam reasoned with the enemy, thus giving him the advantage. Satan exercised his power of hypnotism over Adam and Eve.

2. "And this power he strove to exercise over Christ. But after the word of Scripture was quoted, Satan knew he had no chance of triumphing." E. G. White, (Letter 159, 1903).

3. That we should now become acquainted with, not merely our weaknesses and needs, but also matching Bible promises. Thus Satan's hypnotic power cannot control us.

"None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." The Great Controversy, page 593.

The eleven men failed miserably because: "The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared." Ibid., page 594.

So with us. "Temptations often appear irresistible because through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons." Ibid., page 600.

Therefore, we recommend a daily encounter with God and a working out of a format of listing some of the weak spots in our lives. Then against these weaknesses place one or more "matching Bible promises." We have endeavored to prepare our hearts beforehand to meet these "common-to-man" temptations. And we have found that when we have humbly and prayerfully, through the help of the Holy Spirit, claimed these in a moment of sudden temptation, there is a completely different response on our part to Satan's temptations than there is when we have neglected to use the Bible defenses.

Here are a few of these common human weaknesses with "matching Bible promises," just to illustrate:

Weakness and Matching Bible Promises

1. Retaliatory reaction when criticized.

Romans 12:21. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Psalm 37:5, 6. "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

Psalm 66:12. "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place."

Luke 12:2. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

2. When evil thoughts knock at the mind's door.

Matthew 5:8. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

1 John 3:1-3. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

3. When tempted on the Sabbath to think secular thoughts.

Exodus 20:8. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

2 Corinthians 10:4, 5. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

4. When facing financial worries.

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Matthew 6:33, 34. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Philippians 4:19. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Malachi 3:9-12. "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

Our lists have, of course, been much longer than the one illustrated above. But these are given with the suggestion that you, the reader, study your own life, asking God to show you your weaknesses, and then, without dwelling long on these weaknesses, search His Word for "matching promises" which promise us Christlikeness and victory. Memorize these "Bible defenses." Then practice using them even before temptation strikes. This is something like war maneuvers. Thus the habit will be formed and the defenses of the soul be prepared for the onslaughts of Satan's subtle temptations. This is in harmony with instruction given by our favorite author, who suggests claiming promises when we are, for instance, the victims of "stinging, faultfinding words." In preparation for such a possible occasion, we are to: "Let mind and heart be stored with God's promises." Then, "If you are ill-treated or wrongfully accused, instead of returning an angry answer, repeat to yourself the precious promises:

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." Psalm 37:5, 6.

"There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Luke 12:2.

"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Psalm 66:12." Ministry of Healing, page 486.

A college instructor, listening to our study on "matching promises" to offset our weaknesses, was delighted. He exclaimed that never before had this occurred to him in such a striking manner. "Just to think," he said, "that God has so simplified the solutions to life's problems is indeed most encouraging. I now have really found something the Holy Spirit can use to change my life."

A portion of our morning devotions may be used to practice these "war maneuvers." By this we mean we can anticipate the approach of temptation, and review the matching texts audibly, or in a whisper, or even only in our minds. We can practice "darting" heavenward short promise-filled prayers.

Often I "dart" a prayer which, so far as words are concerned, is limited to the quoting of a Bible promise. But my soul is Asking, Believing and Claiming. The promise often is, "we shall be like him." 1 John 3:2. I find this a powerful weapon of the Holy Spirit in any emergency.

At other times I verbalize on the "C" of the ABC prayer. It, however, encompasses the whole idea of the ABC's in short.

To illustrate: When I was a boy a visitor once came to our home, and by invitation dined with us at our table. He used a sort of ABC request when he smiled and graciously said, "I thank you for the butter."

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That man had actually asked, believed, and claimed all in the one expression, "I thank you for the butter." The butter was then passed to him in response to his asking, believing, and claiming it.

Jesus offered this kind of prayer at the grave of Lazarus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." John 11:41. So we also may use our ABC's in a variety of ways as we "dart" a promise-filled prayer to heaven. In fact, the biggest part is for our faith to actually claim, or receive.

Every now and then people express shock that some apparently very sincere child of God has utterly failed.

The manner in which they express this amazement reveals that they do not realize that unless the human instrument is in daily communion with God, he may be like Elijah; one day on miraculous Mount Carmel, but the next night under a juniper tree wishing he might die.

Writes our favorite author: "To the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, men now and then repair; they abide for a season, and the result is manifest in noble deeds; then their faith fails, the communion is interrupted, and the life-work marred. But the life of Jesus was a life of constant trust, sustained by continual communion; and His service for heaven and earth was without failure or faltering.

"As a man He supplicated the throne of God, till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that connected humanity with divinity. Receiving life from God, He imparted life to men." Education, pages 80, 81.

Now back to our opening picture—a picture of eleven sinful men in a short period of time becoming, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in mind and character like their Master.

I find in my soul a tremendous longing to be like my wonderful Lord. His purity, His peace, His unselfishness, and His forgiving love speak to my heart and soul. We know from our study of sacred history that over a span of six thousand years men have been changed into His likeness. We also know this truth from personal observation.

Even a small eight-year-old lassie tapped me on the shoulder one night. As I turned, I looked into an angel-like countenance. She spoke softly and with sweetness and poise in a delightfully confident, yet humble, manner: "Your meetings have changed my life."

By contrast in age there was the seventy-three-year-old grandmother whose daughter's sarcasm nearly drove her to distraction. I heard her personal testimony of her completely changed response as she claimed Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Then there is the student who declared: "This prayer class has completely rejuvenated my prayer life. It is the best thing that has ever happened to me! Never before have I prayed as I have since I entered this class. Never again will I pray a 'wish-washy-maybe-He-will-answer' type of prayer. I have learned that I—even I—can come boldly to the Throne of Grace, claiming definite promises from the Word of God. In them I find mercy and grace needed for any problem that may come. I now believe that my God will hear and answer."

But, most of all, I know from a very personal experience the change in my own life when I have lighted my taper at the altar of heaven. Now with the song writer I can sing:

"I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today."

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Now stand, if you will, upon spiritual tiptoe. See! See a glorious gathering! Hear the songs of rapture! "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:13, 14.

Once they were thieves, murderers, adulterers, blasphemers, perhaps, with lives vile and sordid with every imaginable defilement of sin. Or perhaps their lives were filled with the so-called "respectable sins" of pharisaism, pride, and secret envy, etc. But now all is changed through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He has testified of Jesus, and they have "feared the Lord," and "thought upon his name." Of them heaven declares: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:16, 17.

Now here they are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Revelation 7:15. The "Father's name"—character—is now stamped "in their foreheads"—minds. "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:1, 5.

Soon from the throne will come the fiat: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:11.

Then in that glad hour, how grateful we shall be that we turned our eyes upon Jesus; for by "beholding" we "are changed into the same image." II Corinthians 3:18.

"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, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen." Jude 24, 25.

Quiz 20

1. True or false: We can be changed as markedly as the disciples were, and in as short a time as they were. _____ .
2. Complete: The subject material of their course of study was not a _____ topic, but _____ .
3. What is the picture the author wishes to share with you? _____
_____ .
4. What is important regardless of how heavy a daily program one may have? _____
_____ .

Note: What is spiritual suicide? You have all heard of physical suicide, but what is spiritual suicide? One minister, at an Oregon camp-meeting, said spiritual suicide is neglecting your personal prayer and Bible study—for it cuts you off from Christ Who is your only source of power.

5. Can the ABC's of prayer, as such, substitute for daily personal communion with God? _____ .
6. What is the main purpose of the devotional hour? _____
_____ .
7. What is the second purpose? _____ .
8. Why do temptations often appear irresistible? _____
_____ .
9. What should we become acquainted with besides our weaknesses and needs? _____
_____ .
10. Make up your own personal list of weaknesses with matching Bible promises. Note: Whether you share any of your list or not is entirely up to you.

11. What are spiritual war maneuvers? _____
_____ .

12. What is a powerful weapon of the Holy Spirit in any emergency? _____
_____ .

13. Why do very sincere children of God sometimes utterly fail? _____
_____ .

14. Two kinds of prayer are described, what are they?

- a.
- b.

15. After the beautiful description of the redeemed in heaven, aren't you thankful for the final statement of the chapter: "Now unto him that is able to keep _____ from falling, and to present _____ faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ... " Repeat this verse to yourself putting your own first and last name right in the text.