

Secret Life. Here I was, a husband, a teacher, a respected community leader – I had all the things of life: a beautiful home, a cabin in the mountains, an antique car collection – and now it seemed I finally had “religion.” But as I prayed in church each Sunday, I knew I would go out during the coming week and engage in my sexual addiction/sexual offending. The touch I justified as “lovingly helpful” to “encourage” my students to do great things was in fact for my own selfish, deviant sexual pleasure. The more I tried to stop myself – the more I tried to make myself clean – the further down I fell. One day, in tears and on my knees, I truly went to God – differently this time, not demanding “take this from me,” as I had so often in the past but humbly appealing for mercy. “God, show me what to do. I will do anything.” I prayed that same prayer again in church the following day. And as I meant it, I could feel that He had heard – and that He would answer. It was that very day that a victim of my abuse told a family member.

Arrested soon after, utterly disgraced publicly in a high profile “media event,” and only by the grace of God, rescued from suicide and led instead to a treatment center, I was broken. In county jail I was despised by the other inmates, and I truly feared for my safety. Never had I been so low, felt so worthless. Still, I clung to my Bible and went to services daily. But I just knew that God “couldn’t really” forgive me for what I had done.

One night in the very hour of the depth of my despair, I met another inmate named Manuel. Only later did I realize the significance of his name, which comes from Emmanuel, “God with us.” For the next two days, we spent every free moment talking and reading the Bible, walking in the yard. The first time I met him, he said to me, “I don’t know why I am here. They say I violated my probation, but I am not on probation – and the person they say is my probation officer is on vacation.” Well, you hear a lot of stories in jail....

Finally, the man was approached by other inmates and told to stay away from me because of my crime. I didn’t see him for an entire day. He later said he had stayed in his cell and prayed. When he came out the next evening, he came directly to me. Sitting in a corner of the day-room – both of us afraid of the others’ reactions but apparently protected by God – we talked and prayed. It was that night that I knew – really in my heart for the first time – that not only could I be forgiven but Christ had in fact already paid for my sin almost 2000 years before I’d committed it! I had only to

accept His sacrifice.

That night Manuel told me of the sexual abuse he had suffered as a child at the hands of his brother, how he’d denied it all his life and never talked to anyone about it, how it had affected him, and how it had kept a wall between himself and intimacy with God. As we cried and laughed together, we realized that God was changing both of us.

The next morning when I was let out of my cell to the day-room, I went looking for Manuel. He was gone.

“It’s strange,” the sergeant responded to my asking for Manuel, “He wasn’t supposed to be here. Some kind of error. They even released him in the middle of the night last night. I’ve never seen that happen before.”

I knew why he was there, and Who had sent him. And it had nothing to do with the justice system. It had to do with the eternal lives of two of Abba Father’s adopted children. Praise God. That day was July 19th, my daughter’s birthday – and my re-birthday.

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Colossians 2:13. “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” When someone really turns to Christ with all their heart for His forgiveness, how many of their sins are forgiven?
2. Read Romans 2:1. “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” Why should we not judge others?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” What have you become (or been made) in Christ?

4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” What have you become (or been made) according to this verse?
5. Read Romans 5:17. “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” The righteousness of God is a _____.
6. Read Ephesians 2:1-3. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; [2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: [3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” What was our nature before we were saved?
7. Read 2 Peter 1:4. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” And Ephesians 4:24, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” After we are born again, we now have what kind of nature?
8. Read Colossians 1:13. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” You formerly belonged to the kingdom of darkness, you now belong to the _____.
9. Read Romans 13:14. “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” What are we to do about the flesh?

10. Read Romans 8:12. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." Are we obligated to obey the flesh? _____.
11. Read Romans 8:13. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." How are the deeds of the body or the flesh put to death?
12. Read Colossians 2:10. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." In Christ you are _____, having everything you need.
13. Read Romans 1:7. "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." As Christians, we are the _____ of God, that is, the object of His love.
14. Read Psalm 103:12. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." How far did God remove our sins?
15. Read Psalm 103:3. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." How many of our iniquities did God forgive?
16. Read Hebrews 10:14. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." God has perfected His people for how long? _____ How did He perfect His people?
17. Read Romans 8:33-34. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. [34] Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Can you ever be charged or condemned for your sins?

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. [22] But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Colossians 1:21 NIV).

Discipleship Answer Key

1. All of them.
2. Because we that judge others do the same things or same kinds of things.
3. A new creature.
4. The righteousness of God in Christ.
5. gift.
6. We were by nature the children of wrath.
7. A divine nature, a new nature (or new man).
8. kingdom of His dear Son.
9. Make no provision for it by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. No.
11. By you cooperating with the Holy Spirit.
12. complete
13. beloved
14. As far as the east is from the west.
15. All our iniquities.
16. Forever By the one offering of Jesus.
17. No, not in Christ.

God With Us The Alan Temple Story (Discipleship Lesson)

Read the entire lesson and then answer the questions that follow.

All my life I had searched for God, tried to find Him, tried to prove to myself that He was real. I was born of Christian-raised parents but was not taken to church as a child. During my junior high years, I felt something inside calling me to a Christian fellowship. Drifting from a liberal, do-good-feel-good Congregational Church, to a Quaker Silent Meeting, to a high Episcopal Church – I was looking for something outside of me...something I could take to fill the emptiness in me...a place with religious people where I could participate in activities and earn my own salvation. I was content to have the Bible quoted to me and interpreted in the sermon – it was there if I ever needed it. I never did. It was not a book I went to even though I commonly read other philosophical, ideological, or self-help books.

As an adult, I was always too busy to go to church. I thought I could make a commitment on my own to do good in the world. In my career, I was making a difference to people, and I was "making the world a better place." That was enough.

But, of course, it never was. I didn't see that my life was all about me. At one point in my marriage, my wife and I connected briefly with a Presbyterian Church. We felt the loneliness in our very busy lives, the lack of true intimacy between us and, as it turns out, with God. We knew that we lacked something very deeply foundational while trying to raise our children. In fact, it was our daughter at age ten who said to us, "I want to know God better." God led us to join a Christian Church where we discovered the joy of worship and praise, and we began studying the Bible and praying regularly.

The world opened up in a new way, but I still felt such a deep longing, such a wide separation from God. I continued to hold on, not only to a lifetime of sin, but my

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