

LESSON 3: FORGIVENESS

As you continue to develop your relationship with God, you will see gradual change in your attitudes toward others and toward life itself. However, there might also be times when you fall into old habits, attitudes, and patterns of life that you know are not pleasing to God. Just because you have begun to grow in your relationship with God does not mean that you have suddenly become perfect. The question is, “What should you do when you sin, when you do the wrong thing or fail to do the right thing, or act in a way that does not please God?”

Review and reflection:

- How can you grow in your relationship with God?
- How does God speak to us? How can we speak to God?
- Were you able to spend some time reading the book of John this week?
- Do you have any questions about what you read?
- Do you have any questions about your personal relationship with God?
- What changes have you seen in your life since you received Christ?

WHAT DID JESUS DO FOR US ON THE CROSS?

Read **Matthew 1:20–21**; the name “Jesus” means “God saves”

- What was Jesus’ mission, declared even before He was born?

Read **John 8:34–36**

- From what does Jesus free us?

Read **1 Peter 2:24**

- What did it cost Jesus to set us free?
- Do you value that freedom from sin? Should you choose to return to serve sin again?

BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS DID FOR YOU, HOW CAN YOU NOW LIVE YOUR LIFE?

Read **2 Corinthians 5:17, 21**

- What old attitudes and actions in your former life are now things of the past?
- What new things are now in your new life in Christ?

Read **Romans 6:1–2, 6–7, 11–13**

- If you are no longer a slave of sin, what kinds of things should you be doing?
- The instruction to “consider yourself to be dead to sin” means that this is how you are to think in your mind. Can a dead person in a coffin be tempted? No! So one way you can have victory over sin is to think of yourself as a dead person whenever you are tempted. In your mind, say, “I will not listen to you or look at you, Temptation. I am dead to you.”

Read **1 John 1:5–7**

- How is our fellowship with God illustrated in verses 5 and 7?
- What does it mean to walk in the light?
- What is the problem with the person described in verse 6?
- What does it mean to walk in the darkness?

Read **1 John 2:1**

- What was John’s purpose in writing these things to Christians?
- Do you believe that this is possible for someone who has been set free from sin?
- What does Jesus continue to do for us today?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU, AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SIN NOW?

Read **Psalms 32:3–5** and **Isaiah 59:2**

- What are some of the consequences of sin in your life?

When we sin, we do not feel as close to God. That is because we moved away from Him. Sometimes we choose to sin, even though sin's power has been broken in our lives. When this happens, our fellowship with God is hindered because we have chosen to move away from Him in order to pursue sinful desires which are contrary to His perfect will and righteousness.

DID JESUS' PAYMENT ON THE CROSS APPLY TO YOUR SINS NOT YET COMMITTED?

Read **Romans 6:10**

- What does "once for all" mean? Does this include all the sins we will ever commit?
- When Christ died on the cross for you, how many of your sins were in the future?
- **Conclusion:** When Christ died on the cross, He paid the penalty for all of our sins—those we committed in our past, and those still in our future.

WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN YOU SIN?

If all of your sins are forgiven, how can you experience that forgiveness in your life after you have sinned again?

Read **1 John 1:9**

- According to this verse, how can you restore your fellowship with God?

Confession involves at least three factors:

1. Agree with God that you have sinned.
2. Thank God that He has already forgiven you.
3. Turn away from sin and trust God to enable you to change your wrong attitudes and actions. If your sin affected another person, as far as it is possible you should make things right with that person. (Read **Matthew 5:23–24**).

When confessing, be sure to deal honestly with God. Here's an exercise to help you practice confessing sin:

- Ask God to show you any sins that are a part of your life.
- Make a list of these sins on a piece of paper. Be totally honest with God.
- When you have finished your list, write **1 John 1:9** across this page.
- Thank God for forgiving all your sins—past, present, and future. Thank Him that this includes the things you have listed.
- Tear up the sheet and throw it away as a reminder that God has completely forgiven you.

WE CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS ON A CONTINUAL BASIS

God desires that we keep growing in our relationship with Him. If we confess our sins and remain in communication with Him through reading His Word and praying, we can continually experience His unconditional love and forgiveness.

Spiritual breathing

The physical act of breathing (exhaling and inhaling) is necessary for us to sustain our physical life. In a similar way, "spiritual breathing" is a helpful way to understand how we can grow and thrive in our spiritual lives:

- **Exhale:** As exhaling involves getting rid of impure air, confession involves getting rid of anything which hinders us from fully following Christ.
- **Inhale:** Physical inhaling involves receiving fresh air to nourish our bodies. In spiritual inhaling, we again surrender ourselves to God and trust Him to live in and through us.

LEARNING AND GROWING IN THE WEEK AHEAD

- Try to spend at least 10 to 15 minutes a day in a personal time with God, reading His Word and talking to Him in prayer.
- Continue reading a chapter of John daily, writing down questions and whatever God is saying to you through His Word.
- Confess any sins as you become aware of them, and thank God for His forgiveness.