

LESSON 12: **KNOWING CHRIST AND MAKING HIM KNOWN**

Confession of Principle 12: "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we will carry this message to others, and practice these principles in all our affairs."

Scriptural support for this principle:

Acts 1:8 (NIV) - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

John 8:31 - (Amplified Bible) *So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples.*

John 15:8 - (CEV) *When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored.*

LET'S GO FISHING

We have reached our final destination in this series. Our journey is coming to a close as we approach the final principle in this workbook. This last session may well be the most important turning point of your walk with Christ. We found out how much our Lord loves us and desires to walk by our side. He comforts, convicts and encourages us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is time now for us to be dependable and trustworthy servants. The same Spirit that bid us closer to the heart of God and challenged us through this series to give Him all the excess baggage of our lives, beckons us to share with others the life-changing gospel message. He has entrusted us with a most honorable position. In *The Great Commission* (Matthew 28:16-20) Jesus invites us to be faithful ambassadors of His Kingdom, holding fast to His Truths, while sharing with others the message that set us free. I can almost hear the Lord saying to us as He did with his early disciples, "***Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.***" Get the fishing poles out and get ready to cast out your line!

CHARACTER SKETCH: Peter

READ: Matthew 4:18-20

Peter, or Simon, as he was sometimes called, was among the first to be called to follow Jesus. He was fishing with his brother, Andrew, when the Lord extended the invitation and the two brothers immediately left their nets to follow Him. Peter's zeal for Christ was evident from the very start. There is no doubt that this man was an ardent and enthusiastic follower!

Is zeal for Christ enough to keep us from falling?

Let's look further at the example of Peter in the Scriptures.

PETER'S REVELATION

READ: Matthew 16:15-17

Peter was commended by Christ himself for this proclamation of Truth. He followed Christ closely and spent time in His presence. LESSON 11 exhorted us to be a faithful student of God's Word and to spend devoted time with Him. There is no doubt that we, too, will receive tremendous revelation when we take the time to abide in Him.

Is a divine revelation enough to keep us from falling?

No amount of yesterday's revelation can carry us through, if we fail to respond to the promptings of the Spirit when He calls us today. Let's take a look at Peter's life a little further on in his walk with the Master. It is important for us to explore the vulnerability of a great leader and apostle of the faith.

PETER: Disciple or Devil?

READ: Matthew 16:21-23

Just a few verses down from the account of Peter's great revelation of the Christ, we see something rather ironic in our character sketch of Peter. Though he emphatically declared Jesus as the Christ, he quickly turns and rebukes the Lord's teaching on how He (the Lord) Himself would suffer and be killed.

Discussion:

- **Why do you think Peter rebuked the Lord for what He said?**
- **How could Peter have responded differently to this difficult message from Christ?**
- **Are there any teachings of Christ that you struggle to embrace?**
- **How can you become more sensitive to the whole counsel of God's Word?**

Read our second supporting Scripture (John 8:31). True disciples abide in Christ, holding fast to His teachings, and showing themselves to be true followers. In this passage, it seems Peter was doing more protesting than following. Have you been guilty of listening to the doctrines of devils rather than the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ? Take a moment now to ask the Lord's forgiveness for any areas of His Word that you have rejected or denied.

PETER'S DENIAL

READ: Luke 22:54-62, Mark 14:69-71

The man who received the revelation of who Christ was, and followed Him closely for the duration of His earthly ministry, turns his back on Him when the heat gets turned up. Like Peter, there may have been times in our own lives when our strength was not matched by the enthusiasm we had to carry out what we wanted most to do. Carrying the message of Christ to others can be a scary proposition. We

can all attest to times when we failed to stand up under trial. We lost our courage to witness to the Truth and missed our opportunity to live up to our belief system. Examining the actions of Peter leading up to his denial of the Lord will help us to see how we can faithfully live out Principle 12 and learn from the weaknesses of this influential man. Before we cast a stone at Peter, let us back up to the place where he took a wrong turn.

PETER'S SLUMBER

READ: Luke 22:31- 46

The Lord is a Shepherd who goes before His people to prepare us for the trials we are about to face. He doesn't want His people to fail and does all He can to warn us of the traps that our adversary, Satan, sets for the believer in Christ. As we move along in our character sketch of Peter we observe some difficult times that came upon the followers of Christ. It was one thing to follow Him while he did miracles, healing the sick and multiplying the fishes and the loaves to feed thousands, but it was another thing to follow him to the garden where Jesus sweat great drops of blood before His betrayal and death. Remember, when the Lord tried to prepare the disciples for this moment, Peter was busy rebuking Christ. The story of the slumber in the garden has a slightly different twist in the book of Mark. We are able to see the Lord's specific address to Peter.

Let us look at this passage and see how important it is to heed the warnings of God promptly.

READ: Mark 14:37-38

The following is the definition for the word, "**watch**" in the on-line *Bible Greek Lexicon*.

"Watch": #1127 to watch, metaphor, give strict attention to, be cautious, active, to take heed lest through remission and indolence (laziness) some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one

As we examine these accounts of the garden experience in Luke and Mark, let us see how we can relate them to our own need to prepare for life's future trials.

Group Discussion:

- **What was Jesus encouraging the disciples to do in Mark 14:34?**
- **What do you think that meant in light of the concordance definition?**
- **He specifically warned Peter in Mark 14:37-38. What did he tell him?**
- **According to Luke 22:31-34, do you think Peter realized his vulnerability?**
- **Can you describe a recent time in your own life when your spirit was willing but your flesh was weak?**

Write out Mark 14:38: _____

The Lord emphasized *watching and praying*. Some of us are unaware of our places of vulnerability and so we become indifferent to prayer. Peter's slumber was due to his lack of watchfulness for the hour that was upon him. This amazing disciple, full of zeal, who had received direct revelation from God, was undiscerning about the time of suffering that was to come upon the disciples of Christ, even though Jesus had warned them several times about his impending death. Sometimes we only want to hear the good news.

Homework: THE ENEMY'S SIEVE

READ: Luke 22:31 (Amplified Version)

"Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has asked excessively that [all of] you be given up to him [out of the power and keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain,"

So many of the meanings of Biblical passages are lost to our present culture. When was the last time you saw someone sifting grain? Search out the meaning of this passage by finding out what this sifting process entails. Share your findings with the group on the lines below and be prepared to discuss the relevance of this passage to your own life.

Can you describe a time in your life when you felt sifted by Satan?

What can you do to be more prepared for the sifting that might take place in your own life?

How can watching and praying help us to fulfill Principle 12?

Be prepared to discuss your homework in class.

Discuss homework from previous session.

PETER'S RESTORATION

There is a wonderful ending to this miserable failure. It is one we can learn from as it speaks of the grace of our Lord and His power to restore and redeem. The interesting thing is that in the same passage that the Lord warns Peter of the enemy's sifting and declares that Peter will deny Him, he also has a message of hope.

READ: Luke 22:32 (CEV)

"But Simon, I have prayed that your faith will be strong. And when you have come back to me, help the others."

It is amazing to think that God had already planned a way for Peter to recover from his failure even before he failed! Let's read about Peter's recovery. After the resurrection of the Lord, the disciples who had scattered after the crucifixion gathered in various settings where Jesus would appear to them. In one such encounter, the Lord, in His mercy, gives Peter an opportunity to confirm his love for the Lord 3x - the same amount of times that Peter had denied Him. God's mercy endures forever.

READ: John 21:15-17

Keep your finger on this passage and turn to Luke 22:57-60. Let's take the time to write out Peter's statements of denial alongside of his statements of affirmation:

Denial:

Statement #1 (Luke 22:57)

Statement #2 (Luke 22:58)

Statement #3 (Luke 22:60)

Affirmation:

Statement #1 (John 21:15)

Statement #2 (John 21:16)

Statement #3 (John 21:17)

Can you see times in your own life that God gave you opportunities to succeed at something that previously brought failure?

Yes

No

If you feel comfortable, share this story with the group.

READ: Luke 24:49, Acts 1

There are times, throughout the gospel narratives, that we see individuals departing from following the

Lord. With all the multitudes that were reached by the teachings and miracles of Christ it is interesting to note that only about 120 were reported to be in the upper room according to Acts 1:15. Thankfully, Peter is now part of this group of obedient followers and will be given an opportunity to match his actions with his belief system. His restoration continues as he begins his address to his brethen.

Group Discussion:

- **What instruction did Jesus give his disciples in Luke 24:49?**
- **How are the apostles and the disciples of Jesus promptly obeying this instruction (Acts 1:12-14)?**
- **How does obedience to this instruction relate to the "watching and praying" Jesus asked the disciples to do in the garden?**
- **How do we see the prophecy given to Peter by Christ in Luke 22:32 come to pass in Acts 1:15-26?**

PETER'S AWAKENING

The storyline gets better! Peter casts his net out again, only this time he gathers a great multitude of souls on the day of Pentecost. His restoration leads to a great awakening and Peter's enthusiasm is now matched with the ability to carry out his desire to stand for Christ no matter the cost. His obedience, as well as the obedience of the others that had scattered at the crucifixion, brings forth fruit: a mighty harvest of souls that become the foundation for the early church.

READ: Acts 2:1-41

Before this event, these cowardly apostles all scattered before the people. They are now all together, with the exception of Judas. Standing with Peter as he is testifying of Christ's resurrection, they now become a witness before the very people that they feared before (vs.23). Peter's testimony brings 3,000 people to Christ. His awakening is the catalyst for the first evangelical revival in the Church's history.

Write out Luke 24:49. _____

Group Discussion:

- **What converted Peter from coward to hero?**
- **Comparing Luke 24:49 with Acts 1:8, what is the promise Jesus is referring to?**
- **Who is this promise for according to Acts 2:38-39?**
- **How can this promise encourage us as we press on to obey Principle 12?**

Peter and the disciples obey God's instructions to tarry in Jerusalem. They wait for the empowerment promised by God. This lengthy character sketch culminates in a most amazing victory.

Let's briefly review what we learned in the following illustration:

Ignored promptings -----> Spiritual slumber -----> Fallen condition (denial)

Obedience to promptings -----> Spiritual awakening -----> Faith and Action (revival)

READ: John 15:8 (our third supporting Scripture). As we follow Christ in our walk of obedience, we bear fruit for Him. This fruit honors our Father. What a precious privilege we have to now become honorable vessels for His glory. Peter, once ashamed of Christ, now gives Him great pleasure and honor on the day of Pentecost.

Are you experiencing a lack of fruit in your life? Are you attempting to be a witness without the power spoken of in our first supporting Scripture Acts 1:8? You might be surprised to know what God had in mind when He said that we would be witnesses for Him. The greek word for *witness* is "*martus*" and relates to our English word, *martyr*. The Lord knew that His disciples would suffer for His namesake. He paved the way of suffering for us and sent the Holy Spirit to empower us in the same way that a mother delivering a baby is able to bear the pain of childbirth. As these lessons come to a close, you might be closer to experiencing the real joy of fruit bearing.

Beloved, we have been through a long journey together. As we close up Principle 12, we also close up many weeks of study and self examination. Peter's story can be ours. His victory stands as a testimony for every person who has failed to deliver on their promises and vows to God. His example of failure and denial is one we can all understand, but we must press in and relate to his triumph! Let us end our journey with a promise to God. A promise to surrender to this gift of the Holy Spirit that we, too, will be empowered.

Lord, I thank You for always being faithful to prepare me for life's trials. Please help me to respond to Your promptings. Forgive me for the times I have denied You before those I have feared. Forgive me for denying You when it was more comfortable to yield to other voices urging me to disobey. I have been naked and ashamed, but I long to be clothed with Your Holy Spirit. I desire to yield to the gift of the Holy Spirit and to trust Your power and not my own. May I bring You honor as I hold fast to Your teachings and obey Your Word. I desire to be a witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. May I testify of my risen Savior through my words and actions in every place where You bid me to go. In Jesus Name. Amen

Closing Scripture:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20

What an amazing promise! What an amazing God!

Let us go forth knowing Christ and making Him known!