

Disciple of Christ Study: Lesson 14 Faith and Confession

Purpose of study: *Live life as a disciple of Christ and intentionally make disciples for the glory of the triune God. A disciple is a “student” or “follower” who learns, studies, and acts in accordance to the teachings of Christ, the Master.*

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day One) *Strengthening Faith*

Faith is a fruit (product, outcome) of the Holy Spirit. As a result or consequence of having the Holy Spirit guiding us, disciples should be able to entrust (hand over) their lives to God. *Lesson 13: The Holy Spirit* has laid the foundation for a successful faith walk.

Definition: The dictionary defines faith as complete trust or confidence in someone or something. The Bible defines faith as *being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see* (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is the central concept of Christianity and is complete trust and confidence in God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

1. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Is faithfulness a fruit of the Spirit (v. 22)? Yes No (Circle One)

****See end of lesson for repeat of questions and blank spaces for you to write your answers.**

The Greek noun that is translated faithfulness in Galatians 5:22 is *pistis* (πίστις). The noun *pistis* (πίστις) is defined as faith, trust, and belief. It also is defined as conviction, good conscience and the Christian faith or religion.

Faith is the basis of Christianity. It is not only the starting point of salvation but it is also the center of our continuing relationship with God. Recall that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6) and that everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Read Romans 8:6-7 and answer questions 2-4:

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Romans 8:6-7

2. What is the result of having your mind controlled by the Spirit (v. 7)?

3. How can you faithfully submit to God and His law?

Early in Jesus' ministry, He commanded people to have faith in the gospel. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15) The Greek verb

pisteuo (πιστεύω), translated *believe*, means to believe (in), have faith (in), have confidence (in someone) and to entrust (to another). Jesus was commanding a change of direction for people whereby they placed their trust and confidence in God *continually*.

Believing meant accepting the truth of Jesus' message and applying it to one's life. This meant following after the *Message Giver*, Jesus. Disciples, then and now, are to rely and depend on God alone. It is through this reliance and dependence on God that a person is made complete.

4. In your own words, write a one-sentence definition of faith:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10

5. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Why is it important to periodically review this truth?

Faith is the total reliance on God and His ability to work through us. When He does work through us, we remember to give God the credit and glory. Faith is not static (fixed). We continue to grow in our ability to trust God in all aspects of our lives and in helping others.

Mary Slessor (1848-1915) was the second of seven children born in Scotland to poor, working-class parents. Her father was an angry and abusive alcoholic, stealing the rent and food money for his habit. Since he could not keep a job, Mary had to go to work at 11 years old to help support the family.

She and her mother worked as weavers in the local mill company and the family lived in the nearby slums. Four of her siblings died at a young age which was very painful for the remaining family. Although we do not know the exact cause of death, the family was told it was due to a lack of food and sunshine. Mary blamed her father and struggled with forgiving him even into adulthood. By the time Mary was fourteen, she was working from 6 AM to 6 PM six days a week.

Mary is a good example of taking responsibility in one's life. As she grew older, Mary improved her skill at operating her weaving loom so that she was given two 62-inch wide looms to run at the same time. This was the method for making cotton fabric or cloth in this era. Working two looms required extreme concentration, speed and coordination. By end of the day, Mary was exhausted but thankful she could earn extra money for her family.

We all have various duties or tasks that we are required or expected to do. These responsibilities can be spiritual, corporate, professional, social etc. It does not matter what category our obligation falls under, the question is, *how we are accepting this duty?* In some cases, the first step in our faith walk, is to accept a responsibility and then, to call on God to help us with it.

6. Prayerfully review your life and confess any situations or times that you shirked (avoided, neglected) responsibility. Share how God is helping you with your responsibilities now:

One Sunday Mary was outside with three of her friends when an older woman from her church invited them in for tea and scones, fresh from the oven. The woman emphasized the fires of hell with the need to repent of their sins and ask forgiveness in Jesus' name. Mary was moved to pray and commit her life to Jesus. Even though her circumstances had not changed, she felt more peaceful than she ever had before. The next Sunday she began working with the younger children at church and helping teach them.

A few years later, her church decided to go into another area of the city to teach children to read and write and learn the Bible. The area they chose was the worst area of town with gangs and extreme poverty. Mary volunteered immediately, but was turned down because of the danger. One of the gangs had already let the church know *this was their territory*.

Mary did not give up and kept insisting that she could do the job. Finally, they decided to let her try it accompanied by one of the elders. One week she wanted to get an early start and in her excitement forgot to wait for the elder. As she walked up to the classroom, she became aware that she was being followed. When she turned around, four teenage gang members began harassing her.

Although Mary was unaware of it at the time, she was being given an opportunity to stand firm in her faith and what God had called her to do. Later in life, she would be given many opportunities to exercise her faith in even more dangerous situations. Each day is an opportunity to train ourselves in faith responses.

Two of the boys held her arms while another boy took a razor-sharp weapon and tied it to a string. They told her she needed to go home and not come back. Mary said courageously, "Do what you want to me, but you'll not get me to give up my Bible teaching."

The leader of the boys swung the weapon back and forth moving it ever closer to Mary's face. Finally, it slashed across her forehead. Even though blood flowed down her face, she kept her eyes opened and focused on the boy. Suddenly, he stopped and put the weapon in his pocket. The two boys released their grip and prepared to leave.

Mary acted as though nothing unusual had happened. She had been afraid, but she stood her ground in faith. Mary then smiled and invited them into her Sunday School class. Before the day ended, the lead boy had accepted Jesus as His Lord and Savior.¹

Notice how quickly Mary forgave the boys in her heart. She did not say, "Goodbye and good riddance." She cared enough to invite them into her class. When the apostles heard Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, they were amazed at the high standard they were expected to follow. Certainly Mary knew this difficulty in forgiving her father. I think we all recognize the difficulty and perhaps the impossibility of forgiving others in our own strength. We need Jesus' help.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Luke 17:5

¹ Bengel, Janet & Geoff (c. 1999) *Mary Slessor: Forward Into Calabar*. YWAM Publishing, pp. 1-36.

7. Pray now for the Lord to increase your faith. Ask Jesus to give you a strong and unwavering (solid, steadfast, firm) faith. After you have prayed, write a short summary of your prayer:

8. Read the following "Faith Statements." How will these four statements alter or change your way of thinking about your faith?

Faith Statements: Clear expressions of trust

- (1. I will grow my faith on the basis of who God is and not who I am.
- (2. I will grow my faith based on what God can do and not what I can do.
- (3. I will grow my faith based on how God wants to change me and not how I want to change.
- (4. I will grow my faith based on the truth of who God is and not on any wrong or negative attitudes from myself or others.

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Two) *Faith and Evil*

Satan wants to keep all people from placing their faith and trust in Jesus. If he and his demon entourage (followers) cannot keep an individual from making a decision for Christ, they will attack his or her daily faith walk. In this way, they try to interrupt a disciple's relationship with God.

The devil is a fierce adversary and trains his army in wicked warfare. His tactics (plans, strategy) are used to try and keep us from growing in our faith. He will look at a variety of ways to keep us from placing our confidence in and reliance on God daily.

He wants us stuck, fixed or static. If we are not progressing in our faith, our personal relationship with God suffers. Others will also suffer because of our ineffectiveness in kingdom matters. Without a strong faith walk, we will be clumsy and useless. We will not be helping others in the way that God desires and in the way He has planned to bless us and others!

There are times we all feel stagnant (inactive). We want to do something more, but not sure how to go about it. Mary Slessor had dreamed of being a missionary, or at least an assistant, from her youth. Her mother was a devout Christian and enjoyed reading to her children from *The Missionary Record*, the missions newsletter of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. One of the areas that fascinated Mary was Calabar, an area in West Africa. God had placed this beautiful city and people in Mary's heart.

But she was responsible for her family, so how could she ever move to Africa? She recalled David Livingstone's words, "I don't care where we go as long as we go forward." Dr. Livingstone (1813-1873) was a Scottish explorer, medical missionary and martyr.

Mary thought, "I'm not going forward. I'm not going anywhere. I'm 27 years old, I work in a cotton mill 12 hours a day, six days a week and the little spare time I have I spend helping out at

church. But that's not enough. There has to be more to life for me." She prayed, "God, I want to go forward like David Livingstone. Send me somewhere, anywhere, just send me out to be a missionary."²

By this time, only two sisters and her mother were still living. Her sisters were now working at the mill and could support the family. With their blessings, she applied to the Foreign Missions Board and was assigned to Calabar, Africa! Mary was thrilled even though it was an area where many missionaries either died or returned home discouraged and disheartened. Disease, wild animals, witchcraft, brutal customs and warring tribes all played a part in the difficulty.

On the ship to Calabar she heard that the natives had been trading with Europeans for four hundred years and yet no one had ever gone more than five miles inland. They feared warring tribes who were known to kill outsiders on sight. Mary's heart ached for these people who needed the gospel and she set her sights on going where no white person had ever been before.³

9. Do you feel you are going forward, backward or standing still? (Circle One)

10. If you are going backward or standing still, what will you do about it?

Satan wants to block your faith by telling you lies. When you believe the lie instead of the truth, there is a disturbance in your walk with God. You are unable to function or perform properly. The opposite of function is dysfunction.

11. Read the following "Faith Blockers." How are these four blockers preventing *you* from growing in your faith?

Faith Blockers: Reduces trust

(1. Personal Satisfaction: How can I be gratified (pleased, loved, accepted)?)

(2. Personal Significance: What do I have (money, family, looks) or do (sports, work, talent)?)

(3. Personal Reputation: What and how do others think of me?)

(4. Personal Reality: Who or what do I identify with from my past? Do other people define me?)

Blockers do not have to be permanent. The common cause of our faith being blocked or not working properly is **us**. We think too much about ourselves and not enough about God. We look at people and circumstances through our own eyes and not through the eyes of our Lord. Basically, we are in bondage to ourselves.

Satan and his demons are pleased when we are centered on ourselves. We think about our agendas, comforts, safety, likes and worldly longings. Keeping the focus on ourselves restricts our service to our King because we are basically serving ourselves.

² Ibid., p. 41.

³ Ibid., pp.37-50.

We need to be controlled by God and not ourselves. Sometimes the lies go deep because of trauma and suffering. You may have been beaten, raped and abused as a child or an adult. You may have been injured in an accident, caught in a fire, or lived through a dreadful earthquake. There are horrific things that happen because of the fallen world we live in. This is a fact. The reality of evil can be especially distressing when you are experiencing it yourself or someone close to you. This may lead you to questions: *Why would a good God allow such evil and suffering in the world? Where did evil come from? Why doesn't God intervene and stop the evil and suffering?*

Many of the great Christian minds of the last 2,000 years have tried to tackle this subject. No one has come up with answers to satisfy everyone. However, we are going to use Scripture and attempt to reconcile evil with a good God. In the end we must decide and trust that God is good. Even though we may not understand all the pain and suffering that exists, God is in control and working in everyone's best interest.

Existence of Evil Reconciled with a Good God

- (1. God created the world good (Genesis 1:1, 31).
- (2. God created the angels and mankind with the potential to turn away from Him. Opposing God and His plans and purposes is evil. Evil is corrupting, tarnishing and spoiling the good things God has made (Genesis 2:9, 16-17 and 2 Peter 2:4-6).
- (3. Evil, suffering and bad things in general come about because created beings turned away from God. To turn from God is to choose evil. Evil causes problems for all of creation (Genesis 3:6, 16-19 and Romans 8:20-23).
- (4. Mankind has free will to choose God. A choice against God brings condemnation and judgment. The Creator should not be rejected (Ecclesiastes 7:29 and Isaiah 45:7, 66:3-4).
- (5. God is not to be blamed for evil (Job 1:20-22).
- (6. God uses evil that created beings introduced into the world for His purposes and glory. He uses individuals that are bent on wickedness to fulfill His plans even with Jesus (Genesis 50:19-21; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28 and Isaiah 60:21).
- (7. God does not tempt or entice anyone to sin (James 1:13-15).
- (8. God promises to be close to the brokenhearted and those affected by evil (Psalm 34:18, 147:3 and Isaiah 61:1).
- (9. Through pain and suffering, we can grow spiritually and be like Christ (Isaiah 55:6-8; Romans 6:4-8, 8:28-29 and 1 Peter 4:1).
- (10. God is to be trusted with children, even in suffering and death (Matthew 18:6-7; Hebrews 2:13-15).

(11. When the world ends, all will give an account for seeking or turning from God (Romans 2:4-11, Romans 8:17-18 and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12).

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Three) *Living in Faith*

There are times in our lives when we feel anxious. We might be worried or afraid that something bad is going to happen. We may be nervous about a situation that we do not think will turn out the way we desire. Our anxiety may actually manifest (become visible) itself through stomach-aches, headaches, sweating or other bodily signs. We are not talking about the psychological classification of *Anxiety Disorder*.⁴ In this case, God may heal you directly or through medical or therapeutic professionals.

Sometimes we say we trust God in difficult situations, but inwardly we are churning. There may be various reasons for this and different scenarios may cause different kinds of nervousness. You may have experienced some kind of deep trauma that lingers in your subconscious (hidden) mind. Perhaps you were abandoned as a child and now are fearful of being forsaken or neglected in relationships, even with the Lord.

Mary Slessor was raised with an abusive, alcoholic father. It made her feel somewhat self-conscious and inadequate around men. For example, when she returned from Calabar on furlough and was invited to tell of her experiences, she found it difficult to speak if a man were in the audience.⁵

Nevertheless, after a few years in Calabar learning the language, she moved inland where no missionary had gone before. By the way, Mary Slessor was 5 feet tall with red hair. Upon seeing her for the first time, the local people would run away because they thought her head was on fire.

Mary's faith grew steadily as she faced the dangers and diseases of the jungle. God led her safely to a village where the chief allowed her to stay, administer simple medicine and even teach Bible stories. One night she heard a lot of noise and went to investigate.

"The villagers were in a frenzy, yelling and screaming. The beating of drums throbbed in her ears and smoke from reed torches burned her nostrils as Mary stood at the back of the crowd. Suddenly a scream pierced the air. A feeling of dread swept over Mary. Was this another one of their cruel punishments? Mary pushed her way to the front of the crowd, where she saw a young woman lying naked on the ground, her hands and feet tied to stakes. Beside the woman was a large pot of boiling oil, with a warrior in a jaguar costume dancing around it. Mary knew what was about to happen. The woman on the ground was about to have boiling oil ladled over her.

⁴ Anxiety disorders are exaggerations of our normal and adaptive reaction to fearful or stressful events. There are many types of anxiety disorders including panic disorder, agoraphobia, specific phobia, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). When you experience the familiar physical and psychological signs of fear and anxiety such as sweating, racing heart, shortness of breath, trembling, worry, or stress, these are clues that something is happening that could be a threat and that you need to deal with it. This "flight or fight" reaction activates the physical and psychological resources necessary to deal with the potential danger. Although this system works well most of the time, sometimes it can go into overdrive and do more harm than good. When this happens, it might indicate you have an anxiety disorder. About.com website: http://ocd.about.com/od/glossary/g/anxiety_glos.htm

⁵ Wellman, Sam, "Mary Slessor, Queen of Calabar," *Heroes of the Faith Series*, Barbour Publishing, OH, 1998. p. 65.

Without stopping to think it through, Mary ran and stood between the warrior and the woman. Instantly, the drumming stopped, and the laughter and cheering subsided. All eyes were focused on the petite redhead who was interfering in a matter of tribal justice.

Mary glared at the warrior holding a ladle filled with hot oil. For a moment, the warrior stood with a look of confusion on his face. Then with a warlike yell, he began dancing menacingly toward Mary. For an instant, Mary was again the young woman in the back streets of Dundee with the bully swinging his sharpened piece of metal at her. Just as she had then, she knew she could not back down; the warrior must not see any fear in her face. Mary prayed silently as the warrior came closer, the hot oil gleaming ominously in the bowl of the ladle. Except for the shuffling of the warrior's feet and the swish of the ladle, everything was totally quiet.

Finally, the moment came when Mary and the warrior stood face to face. They could not get any closer to each other. Either the warrior would hit Mary with the ladle of oil, or he would have to back away. He stared at Mary, and Mary stared back at him. Then, with a cry of disgust, the warrior threw the ladle on the ground and stepped away from Mary."⁶

Mary then turned to the chief and pleaded for the woman's life. When she received no answer, she quickly untied the woman and took her back to her mud hut. The whole village remained in shock for days. They wondered if Mary's God was more powerful than theirs. They were also captivated with the thought of an all-powerful God, like Mary described, who was also good and kind. They believed their god wanted them to do cruel things as well as practice magic and superstitious rituals.⁷

12. The woman was going to be punished because she had committed a crime by giving a chunk of yam to a man who was not her husband. What are some similarities between this story and the biblical account of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)?

13. If the warrior had hurt or even killed Mary, would her faith have been any less valuable in the eyes of God? Yes No (Circle One) Explain your answer:

If the warrior had struck Mary or injured her, she would still have had the opportunity to live out her faith in love and humility among the people. If she had died, she would have died for serving Christ. The *outcome* of our faith is God's sovereign choice. We are to be obedient and place our faith and trust in God no matter what happens. Remember, Jesus was mocked and crucified by the "religious establishment" and is praised for His love and humility. He is our model.

Recall the *Faith Blockers* on page 5 of this lesson. There are practical ways to remove these obstacles to our faith. First and foremost, we must retrain our minds with the truth of Scripture. In overcoming *Faith Blockers*, we replace the barrier with God's word. Depending on how tough the obstacle, you might ponder, meditate on and even memorize the relevant Bible verses.

⁶ Ibid., Bengé, Janet & Geoff, pp.153-155.

⁷ Ibid. p. 155.

Overcoming Faith Blockers: Removing personal barriers and growing in trust.

(1. **God Satisfaction:** I will grow my faith on the basis of who God is and not who I am. I will not be blocked by seeking my personal satisfaction and thinking about how I can be gratified (pleased, loved, accepted).

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, 17:15; 1 Chronicles 16:10; Matthew 20:26-28; Luke 9:23-25, 10:21; Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6; James 4:8; 1 John 4:10 and Revelation 4:11, 5:12.

(2. **God Significance:** I will grow my faith based on what God can do and not what I can do. I will not be blocked by seeking my personal significance and being concerned with what I have (money, family, looks) or what I do (sports, work, talent).

Scripture: Job 36:26; Psalm 33:11, 90:2, 102:25-27, 147:10-11; Isaiah 46:9-11; Matthew 5:6, 7:7, 8:26, 17:20; Romans 15:2-3; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 13:5 and James 3:14-16.

(3. **God Reputation:** I will grow my faith based on how God wants to change me and not on an unhealthy concern for my personal reputation. I will not obsess over how others view me but only how my actions reflect the holy character of God.

Scripture: Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 20:3, 22:2,32; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:7; James 2:1-26; 2 Peter 1:3 and Revelation 15:4.

(4. **God Reality:** I will grow my faith based on the truth of who God is and not on any wrong or negative attitudes from myself or others. I will not be blocked by an unhealthy interest in the personal reality of my past or what others say about me.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:31; 1 Samuel 30:6; Daniel 9:9; Psalm 147:3; Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 2:4; James 1:6 and 1 John 2:27, 3:1, 4:8-9.

14. In overcoming *Faith Blockers*, which of the four truths about God will help you the most and why?

No matter what area of our faith needs shoring up, it is our inner being that needs to be altered or changed. We need to allow God the Holy Spirit to reach our conscious (aware, alert) as well as our subconscious (unaware, hidden) mind with the truth. For godly adjustments in our thoughts and actions, *we must always begin with prayer.*

In addition to prayer and scripture, here are a few practical points to prepare and expect God's positive action in your life: (1. Force your body into a positive position. If you are slumped, sit or stand up straight. If you face is downcast, smile, open eyes and force a twinkle. Feeling tense, stretch purposefully. Sluggish (slow), move, bounce or dance a little. (2. Sing or listen to hymns and praise music. (3. If you have negative (harmful) thoughts, write down positive (helpful) ones. Count your blessings. Consider all that the Lord has done and will do for you.

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Four) *Faith as a Gift*

In addition to saving faith, there is another kind of faith. This is the faith or confidence that God will empower you to work mightily on His behalf. You believe God's promises and live your life accordingly. You are radically obedient because you place your faith in God and all that He has revealed. You accept circumstances and situations in your life because you trust that God will work it out for good. Faith is not only a fruit, but also a gift of the Spirit.

Definition: Spiritual gifts are abilities, skills or talents that God gives through His Holy Spirit to enable all believers to serve Him and equip others. The apostle Paul listed about 20 spiritual gifts but that does not mean the lists are exclusive (limited).

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 and answer questions 15-17:

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 (Also Romans 12:6-8)

15. Who gives the gift of faith (vs. 9, 11)?

16. How do you believe the Holy Spirit has gifted you?

17. Do you ever thank the Holy Spirit for His good gifts? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One)

Read Matthew 17:20 and 1 Corinthians 13:2 answer questions 22-25:

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:2

18. What image (figure of speech) does both Jesus and Paul use in describing a strong faith?

19. How do you know that Jesus and Paul did not mean for believing saints to go around moving mountains of dirt and rock?

20. What did Jesus and Paul mean by using this phrase, "move mountains"?

Definition: Presuming is to think something is true without really knowing that it is true. Presume also means to do something that you do not have the right or permission to do.

Presuming on God is not Faith

False prophets presume to speak for God. They presume to know what God desires of His people in a particular situation. Even though they have no evidence or clear direction from the Lord, they speak and act as though they do. They are arrogant and overconfident of their position and authority before God. They fail to remember that their position is one of humble servanthood and their authority rests in God's pleasure.

There were false prophets in the past, at present and there will be false prophets in the future. Of course a person does not have to be labeled a prophet, true or false, to presume on God. If I jumped off a cliff and expected God or His angels to rescue me, I would be presuming on God's mercy and goodness. I would be trying to force God's hand to save me when it was not His will for me to jump. Recall how Satan tried to lure Jesus to jump off the temple (Matthew 4:5-7).

Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies,⁴³ for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp.⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah. Numbers 14:42-45

21. Reading Numbers 14:42-45, what do you learn about the sin and danger of presumption?

22. How would you determine whether you are acting in faith or presuming on God?

God does not have to respond or act when He gives us an assignment and we do not complete it in a timely manner. The Israelites failed to proceed into the promised land when they were given the assignment. God's door of opportunity closed and when they finally went forward, they were not in God's will. They were not acting in faith but in sin. They were not paying attention to God or His prophet Moses. They were heedless, reckless and rash!

God wants you to know His will. Pray and ask Him each day what he would like for you to do. Read and meditate on His Word. Do not lose heart when God does not act in the way you hoped or desired. Be still and know that God always acts properly and timely. Also recognize that your knowledge and understanding of God's ways may be flawed.

Faith waits in great anticipation of God's timing. Be encouraged during difficult times. The Lord will provide all your needs. He will provide strength to stand firm. (See 1 Samuel 30:6 and 2 Timothy 4:16-18)

Mary Slessor lived a life of faith in a dangerous place and time. Armed with a relentless faith, she worked with the inland tribes teaching them the Bible and changing cruel practices among them. Anyone else might have been killed for challenging tribal customs and the authority of the chiefs, but God rewarded her faith and commitment to Him.

Little by little, the raiding on other villages to capture slaves had stopped, there were no more human sacrifices at funerals, sobriety was more common and twins were not automatically killed. When she died at age 66, her funeral was packed with people from three tribal regions of

Calabar. These were the people Mary had served for 39 years. It was a tribute to the woman they called *Mother of Us All* that these tribes could gather together in one place without attacking and killing each other.⁸

Faith is believing Jesus has the power to save (rescue), transform (change), and empower (use mightily). Faith is not a one-time event; it is a way of life. Mary Slessor's example of discipleship, bravery and courage motivates us to seek and dwell in the power of Christ.

23. Why do you think faith needs to be a continual (ongoing) part of your Christian life?

Life is not always easy. We face small and large challenges almost daily. In fact Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow because each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34).

Perhaps your faith is being tested at this very moment. You might be in a situation that presents physical danger, financial ruin or painful disease. Or you might be faced with an addiction for pleasing yourself instead of God.

No matter what you are facing, you might be tempted to choose a *fix-it-yourself* scheme, rather than relying on God to rescue, provide, or heal. Those *quick-fixes* usually avoid God and His help. When we avoid God, even if it is for a few minutes, we are not living in faith but in faithlessness. Faithlessness is unrighteousness in the eyes of God.

Read Romans 1:17 and answer questions 24-25:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:17

24. Why is your response to life and its challenges so important in your relationship with God?

25. Define righteousness based on Romans 1:17:

If the righteous live by faith, then the unrighteous do not live by faith. However, sometimes the righteous slip up and do not respond correctly in faith. When this happens, we must *come clean* with God.

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Five) *Coming Clean*

Coming clean is an idiom⁹ that means to confess all. It is critical to confess all of your sins with the intention of not repeating them. "Coming clean" means that you are not seeking a partial change of heart but a complete one. You want to live by faith; you want to trust and obey God in every aspect of your life.

⁸ Ibid., pp.189-203.

⁹ An idiom is an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own.

26. Does your desire to know and please God outdistance (leave behind) your desire to sin?
Yes No Sometimes (Circle One) Explain your answer:

The *prodigal son* gave into his desire to please himself and disrespect his earthly father. In so doing, he also disrespected God the Father. He asked for his inheritance early and then wasted it for his own satisfaction. The story reveals a sinner who avoided responsibility and holy living but eventually repented and set things right. This prodigal made a decision to *come clean*.

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'
Luke 15:18-19 (Prodigal is defined as spending money or resources freely and recklessly)

27. Read Luke 15:18-19. Why do you think this prodigal was sincere in his desire to *come clean*?

Hopefully, you confessed all your known sins when you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. If you have never taken an inventory (record) of your sins, please take time to do so now. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the evil you have done so that you may agree with Him and ask God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Name your wrong and envision it in Christ's body on the cross. *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.* 1 Peter 2:24

Our sins were not nailed to the cross; Jesus was nailed to the cross. Our sins were inside of Him and caused His horrible death. Jesus was in agony. He took the sins of the world into His undefiled (sacred) flesh. Our sins polluted and destroyed His body.

Read Isaiah 53:3-6 and answer questions 28-30:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:3-6

28. The prophet Isaiah foretold of Jesus, the Messiah, and how He would be treated when He was on earth in a physical body. List some of Jesus' experiences with us (humanity) (v. 3):

29. What happened to Jesus because of your sins (transgressions, iniquities) (v. 5)?

30. Ask God to open your heart to understand the meaning of Christ's death and how to respond to the truth He reveals. Please share one truth God revealed about Christ's death:

Crucifixion was a ghastly (gruesome) and humiliating way to die. The horrors are documented in ancient history. Jesus suffered immeasurable physical and mental pain for you and me on the cross. But if that were not enough, He accepted all of mankind's iniquity.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Hebrews 12:3-4

31. Read Hebrews 12:3-4. How intense should our fight against sin and thus, our struggle to keep our heart pure be?

“Hollywood” has done much harm in validating (rationalizing, justifying) sin. Most secular (worldly, not religious) filmmakers criticize Christian values and portray us as arrogant and unsympathetic morons. They promote sinful and evil lifestyles that pollute (contaminate) U.S. citizens. Also, think of the moral damage these films do as they are viewed in other countries. Viewing such filth would certainly give the impression the U.S. is in Satan's pocket.

The majority of movies, television shows and music have their characters engaging in all kinds of sinful behaviors, including homosexuality. Even if it is not explicit, the audience is lulled (quieted) by the entertainment value into accepting this behavior as a way of life. Everyone is doing it, so it must be all right. Everyone may be doing it...everyone not of Christ, that is. Those not of Christ are of the world. Unless they repent, you will not be seeing them in heaven.

Repent means to change your worldly direction to a godly direction. All of us, bar none, were going down Satan's roadway until we accepted Jesus' sacrifice in payment for our sins. His death and resurrection allows us to make that U-turn from the devil's path to God's.

The U-turn represents a complete heart change. God is not interested in just a part of your heart, He wants it all. He wants the *total* you for Himself. So be careful not to set up any kind of idols in your heart. An idol is anything that separates you from God (Ezekiel 14:6-8).

Therefore, do not watch shows that glorify sex or misuse God's name. Your heart will become hardened to holy living and God's purpose for you. You need to also think of the example that you are setting for others.

Sex outside of marriage is a sin (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). God only sanctions (approves) marriage between one man and one woman (Romans 1:26-27). Love, passion, lust or any other emotion that a person may have does not give credence (acceptance) to any kind of sexual activity outside of the blessed sacrament of matrimony.

Planning on marriage is not marriage; using your intention to marry as an excuse to have early sexual relations is sin. You are opposing the Lord Jesus. If you are married and separated by work, war, imprisonment, health or for any other reason, that still does not give you the right to indulge the flesh. Emotions and the pull towards sinful living may be intense, but Jesus *will* enable you to win the struggle (Philippians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 10:13).

The apostle Peter had to deal with false teachers who were leading the people astray. These men were engaging in sexual and other kinds of sin and encouraging others to follow their ways. They were saying it was okay to throw off any kind of moral restraint (control). Similar to the film industry, they openly lived a sinful lifestyle and made it seem like everyone was living that

way. They had no shame and were causing many to stumble in their faith. Unlike “Hollywood” these men were included in the fellowship of the early church. This was a bad situation.

Read 2 Peter 2:19-22 and answer questions 32-34:

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.²⁰ If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.²² Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud." 2 Peter 2:19-22

32. What were the false teachers promising (v.19a)?

33. How were these false teachers slaves? (v. 19b)

34. What did the false teachers turn their back on (v. 21)?

The "sacred command" is another way of describing the teachings of Christ. They were instructed how to live a holy life, a life set apart to God. They knew the truth of living morally pure lives in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they preferred to take back their dirty lifestyle and eat their vomit like a dog and wallow in the mud like a pig.

These false teachers and those who followed them were in bondage to sin. They were serving Satan and their fleshly lusts; their old sinful nature. They decided that giving in to their sinful desires would make them free. Instead, it made them servants to sin and Satan rather than to righteousness and Christ.

Biblical scholars disagree on whether these false teachers were truly saved to begin with. I suggest that you study Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you. But in the meantime, make sure you are not acting or following in the way of these false teachers. Do not make a mockery (ridicule, contempt) of Jesus and the death He suffered for you. Pray that you and your CLI Discipled will never be accused or found guilty of crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Christians are true sons of God just like the prodigal was a true son of his earthly father. True sons never have the right to disrespect or dishonor their fathers. We never have an excuse for treating God and His Word with disdain or contempt.

Note: We are not talking about fathers or mothers who use their parental authority to sin against their children. If you, or someone you know, is in an abusive or dangerous situation, seek help. Sometimes separation is necessary.

When we use earthly analogies (comparisons) about God, they are bound to fail at some point because there is no one perfect and good like God. The point is that we need to continually ask the Holy Spirit to check our hearts for sin or any kind of opposition to God. Perhaps you are

overweight because you either eat too much or are making unhealthy eating choices. You might think, "I do everything that the Lord asks me to do. What's wrong with enjoying the food that He has given me?"

Proverbs 23:2 tells us to put a knife to our throat if we are given to gluttony (excessive eating). God wants us to take care of our bodies. For a believer, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Carrying extra weight is detrimental to your health, both physically and emotionally. You probably know the physical liability (danger) of eating too much, but did you know that food and mood are connected? Eating healthy with proper portions helps keep your mood stable and balanced.

How will we be able to make disciples of all nations if we are not physically fit for the trip? God has a dynamic plan for you therefore: Be the healthiest you can be for the mission ahead. God glorifies Himself through illness and disease but He also glorifies himself through healthy individuals like Moses (Deuteronomy 34:7). So as much as it is up to you, stay fit.

If you have an eating disorder, all the more reason to come clean about it. You might hate your body, feel empty, stressed or worthless. Only God can help you overcome your emotional need for food. He is always available to fill every one of your needs with Himself. No appointment necessary. God has a free walk-in clinic; the door is right before you.

Weight control is just one example of how something seemingly insignificant can keep you from being the man or woman that God intends you to be. Only you and the Holy Spirit knows what sins you and I must come clean about. The following exercise will help you.

35-37. Practical Application on Coming Clean

****See answer sheet to record your responses to these exercises.**

If you are seriously seeking healing and forgiveness in your life, be encouraged. Jesus has more patience towards sinners who acknowledge their need than for those who do not. God will work in each of our lives a little differently. He may immediately heal one person of a sinful addiction and not another. For example, some of you may never have a desire for another alcoholic drink, drug, illicit affair, fattening food, etc. after determining to abstain from them. However, others of us may have to work hard, in Jesus, to overcome our sinful patterns. And we may fail on occasion. God will use our trials to build character and endurance within us and help others in similar situations. Just do not quit.

Don't Quit

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow--
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than,
It seems to a faint and faltering man,
Often the struggler has given up,
When he might have captured the victor's cup,
And he learned too late when the night slipped down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out--
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far,
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit--
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit. (Author Unknown)

Read Hebrews 12:2-6 and answer questions 38-41:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.⁵ And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,⁶ because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."
Hebrews 12:2-6 (Endurance: patience and scorn: despise; think worthless.)

- 38.** Who is the perfecter of our faith and the one we fix our eyes upon (v. 2)?
- 39.** What were two kinds of emotions Jesus experienced during his crucifixion (v. 2)?
- 40.** What should we consider when we are opposed in ministry (v. 3)?
- 41.** What happens when Christians sin (vs. 5-6)?

Memorize Galatians 2:20 and answer questions 41-42:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

- 42.** How are you to obey God and live the life God desires of you?

43. Write Galatians 2:20 from memory:

As you walk in faith you will find no greater joy and peace than in fulfilling the will of God. Depend and trust God for holy and righteous living. Submit to Him. Seek to glorify Him. He will keep you from falling into sin and protect you from the traps of the devil.

In closing this lesson, remember that your faith in Christ has changed you and the standards in your life. The disciple seeks purity and knows how to be cleansed from immoral attitudes and deeds. She knows how to live in the light and not the darkness. She does not repay evil with evil. She keeps her lips from deceitful speech. The disciple glows with the *Light* of the world.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech."¹¹ He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 1 Peter 3:9-11

---End Lesson 14---

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Lesson 14

CLI Disciple of Christ Study: Faith and Confession

Return your answers to your Discipler for discussion and review. Include a personal letter with your answers. This study is designed to forge a close, yet professional, friendship between you and your Discipler. Even short notes help bridge the distance and connect hearts in Christ.

Name: _____ Number: _____ Date: _____

Name of Institution: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day One) *Strengthening Faith*

1. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Is faithfulness a fruit of the Spirit (v. 22)? Yes No (Circle One)
2. What is the result of having your mind controlled by the Spirit (v. 7)? _____
3. How can you faithfully submit to God and His law? _____
4. In your own words, write a one-sentence definition of faith: _____

5. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Why is it important to periodically review this truth?

6. Prayerfully review your life and confess any situations or times that you shirked (avoided, neglected) responsibility. Share how God is helping you with your responsibilities now:

7. Pray now for the Lord to increase your faith. Ask Jesus to give you a strong and unwavering (solid, steadfast, firm) faith. After you have prayed, write a short summary of your prayer:

8. Read the following "Faith Statements." How will these four statements alter or change your way of thinking about your faith?

(1. Who God is: _____

(2. What God can do: _____

(3. How God wants to change me: _____

(4. Not believing wrong or negative attitudes about God: _____

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Two) *Faith and Evil*

9. Do you feel you are going forward, backward or standing still? (Circle One)

10. If you are going backward or standing still, what will you do about it?

11. Read the following "Faith Blockers." How are these four blockers preventing *you* from growing in your faith?

(1. Personal Satisfaction: _____

(2. Personal Significance: _____

(3. Personal Reputation: _____

(4. Personal Reality: _____

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Three) *Living in Faith*

12. The woman was going to be punished because she had committed a crime by giving a chunk of yam to a man who was not her husband. What are some similarities between this story and the biblical account of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)?

13. If the warrior had hurt or even killed Mary, would her faith been any less valuable in the eyes of God? Yes No (Circle One) Explain your answer: _____

14. In overcoming *Faith Blockers*, which of the four truths about God will help you the most and why?_____

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Four) *Faith as a Gift*

15. Who gives the gift of faith (vs. 9, 11)?_____

16. How do you believe the Holy Spirit has gifted you?_____

17. Do you ever thank the Holy Spirit for His good gifts? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One)

18. What image (figure of speech) does both Jesus and Paul use in describing a strong faith?

19. How do you know that Jesus and Paul did not mean for believing saints to go around moving mountains of dirt and rock?_____

20. What did Jesus and Paul mean by using this phrase, "move mountains"?

21. Reading Numbers 14:42-45, what do you learn about the sin and danger of presumption?

22. How would you determine whether you are acting in faith or presuming on God?

23. Why do you think faith needs to be a continual (ongoing) part of your Christian life?

24. Why is your response to life and its challenges so important in your relationship with God?

25. Define righteousness based on Romans 1:17:_____

Lesson 14: Faith and Confession (Day Five) *Coming Clean*

26. Does your desire to know and please God outdistance (leave behind) your desire to sin?

Yes No Sometimes (Circle One) Explain your answer:_____

27. Read Luke 15:18-19. Why do you think this prodigal was sincere in his desire to *come clean*?

28. The prophet Isaiah foretold of Jesus, the Messiah, and how He would be treated when He was on earth in a physical body. List some of Jesus' experiences with us (humanity) (v. 3):

29. What happened to Jesus because of your sins (transgressions, iniquities) (v. 5)?

30. Ask God to open your heart to understand the meaning of Christ's death and how to respond to the truth He reveals. Please share one truth God revealed about Christ's death:

31. Read Hebrews 12:3-4. How intense should our fight against sin and thus, our struggle to keep our heart pure be? _____

32. What were the false teachers promising (v.19a)? _____

33. How were these false teachers slaves (v. 19b)? _____

34. What did the false teachers turn their back on (v. 21)? _____

35. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict (find guilty) you of any sins you have not previously confessed. Write down the sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind. As you write each sin, tell God you take responsibility for sinning against Him and you are truly sorry. Tell God you regret having done the actions or having thought about evil things. Accept your full forgiveness and pardon in the blood of Christ. Then tear up the paper into tiny pieces and discard. (Just write a one or two word description of the sin. You do not want to dwell on the details of the sin and be tempted to sin again). **Your comments as the Lord leads:**

36. Ask God to bring to mind anyone past or present that He desires you make restitution (compensation, amends, restoration). In other words, is there anyone you have hurt physically or emotionally? Write down who and what God brings to mind. Ask God what kind of action you need to take in each case and do what the Lord puts on your heart. **Note:** *First*, make sure that you have the victim of your actions and his interests foremost in your mind. In other words, consider what is best for him or her and not what makes you feel good or eases your conscience. For example, if you had an affair years ago and your spouse did not know about, would it cause the spouse undue pain and headache to learn of it now? *Second*, do not discount prayer as a viable (possible) act on the person's behalf. *Third*, the Lord will not ask you to do anything that will hurt or harm yourself or another person (Romans 12:21). Jesus is about restoration and healing – first with our relationship to God and second with our relationship to others. **Share one thing that the Lord asked you to do and how you will go about fulfilling His request?**

37. Carefully consider with the Holy Spirit's guidance, sins that seem to have a grip (hold) on you. You find yourself confessing the same ones over and over again. You are stuck. Admit to God that you have a problem and need extra grace to succeed. You need all the power of heaven. You need the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Put your mind in a position that you are willing to do anything that God requires of you in order to be healed of your sin and addiction. Prayerfully consider God's plan for you. Does he want you to share with someone who will commit to fervently praying? Do you need an accountability partner, another Christian of the

same sex that will help you remain true and responsible? Do you need counseling? Does God want you to seek a physician or psychiatrist for prescribed medication? **Are you having difficulty with a certain kind of sin? If yes, how has the Lord asked you to proceed?**

38. Who is the perfecter of our faith and the one we fix our eyes upon (v. 2)?_____

39. What were two kinds of emotions Jesus experienced during his crucifixion (v. 2)?

(1. _____) (2. _____)

40. What should we consider when we are opposed in ministry (v. 3)?_____

41. What happens when Christians sin (vs. 5-6)?_____

42. How are you to obey God and live the life God desires of you?_____

43. Write Galatians 2:20 from memory:_____

Next and Final DOC Lesson 15: Love

Rev 8/3/2016

