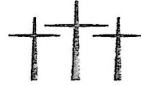


Lesson 1
A Great Decision
The Journey Out of Egypt



Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt by divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

—Numbers 33:1

You have just made a great decision! You may have attended a church service where you responded to a call to come to the altar and receive Christ, or you may have attended a home cell group meeting and met Christ there. Perhaps a friend prayed with you to receive Christ. However you came to this decision, it was the right one! The decision to follow Christ is the greatest and most life-changing decision that you will ever make.

The decision to follow Christ starts you on a journey that lasts a lifetime. But you have taken the first step, and from this point on, you're entering a new way of living and a new way of looking at things. You're leaving the past behind, and you're moving toward a future bright with hope and promise.

Your journey is remarkably similar to another journey spoken of in the Bible: the journey of God's people from Egypt to the Promised Land. For many years, the people of Israel lived in Egypt, having gone there in a time of famine. As time passed, their numbers increased greatly, and the Egyptian rulers became concerned about their loyalty. Thus began a number of years of oppression for God's people in Egypt. Finally, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, free from the terrible oppression of Pharaoh.

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This is a picture of what happened to you when you came to Christ. You left the “Egypt” of sin, oppression, and despair, and you began a journey to the Promised Land. You were delivered and set free from the grasp of sin. No longer were you a slave of “Pharaoh,” but you became a beloved child of God Most High. Just like the Israelites, you will walk through various stages in your journey, but you’ve already taken the most important step. Let’s see what this first step, your decision to come to Christ, means.

What does it all mean?

Do you understand where you stood before you decided to follow Christ and where you stand today after having made this decision? Things have now changed! God sees you differently, and you probably see God differently. Let’s think about what has happened to you: “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

You were a sinner!

Being a sinner means that you had failed to do what God required of you in order to be in right relationship with Him. In other words, you had failed to fulfill God’s law, just like all of us: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Sin includes those things you do that are not acceptable to God, as well as your natural tendency to walk in disobedience to God.

As a sinner, you could not please God.

“As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not one’” (Rom. 3:10). Most of us live our lives without ever considering what God might expect from us. But you probably discovered that even when you tried to live right and please God, you couldn’t. That’s because without Christ it is impossible.

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You see, you were dead in your sin!

Even though God loved you, you were separated from Him. Because God is totally good and perfect, He cannot allow sin in His presence. So until you met Christ, you were not able to enter into God's presence. But now, because of His shed blood, Christ has become your passage to the Father.

Ephesians 2:2 says that you formerly "followed the ways of this world." In the past, you lived for the world and its attractions—under the direct influence of Satan. The spirit of rebellion controlled your life through strong desires of lust and greed. This spirit cannot and will not ever gain God's approval. So every person under this influence must come to Christ. That's where you were, until you met Christ!

Because God loves you so much . . .

He still dealt with your heart through the influence of the Holy Spirit, no matter how hardhearted you became. Something probably happened to you that left you desperate, empty, and in need of God, and He was there to draw you to Himself by inviting you to know His Son, Jesus.

If you had refused God's love . . .

If you had refused to accept God's love and offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ, then you would have remained in your sin and continued to be separated from God. If you had died separated from God, you would have been condemned to an eternity without God in a place the Bible calls "hell."

Ephesians 2:1–3 says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

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What did it mean when you got saved?

Good question! We often see people performing religious duties with the hope of gaining God's approval. We have already discovered, however, that just doing good things cannot please God. By itself, the act of responding to the altar call after a sermon can't save you either.

If you didn't earn it, and the preacher didn't save you, what really happened?

Another great question! Let's look at God's clear answer: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). You were saved by grace—favor that God gave you. It was undeserved, unearned, and given freely. Grace came to you through faith, and faith means being totally convinced that something is true. In this case, it means having the assurance that Christ paid for your sins.

When you firmly believed that it was through Christ alone that you could have salvation (not by anything you could do), you experienced "saving faith." Before you had this faith, you had no grace or favor with God. Ephesians 2:12 says, "Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ . . . without hope and without God in the world."

Because of your faith in Christ, you now have grace and are in God's favor! Now you can enter God's presence boldly, knowing that you have received mercy and forgiveness. God accepts you now through the work of Christ.

Now what is expected of you?

The Bible has a very good answer to that question. Ephesians 4:1-3 says, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be

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patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

With God’s help through the power of the Holy Spirit, you are expected to “live a life worthy” of God’s salvation, reflecting your new relationship with God. Your new life should be different from your old life. As you walk with Christ, you will learn humility, love, patience, and many other virtues (positive Christlike attitudes) that will help you to please God. As you are learning these virtues and walking in unity with other Christians, you will continue to have confidence that you are a child of God.

Discussion Questions

1. How did God see your life before your decision to receive Christ?
2. What did you do to become a Christian?
3. What one thing caused you to see your need for Christ?
4. How has your life changed since receiving Christ?
5. If you died right now, would you go to heaven? Why?

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Lesson 2
The Power of the Cross
The Journey to the Promised Land



Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

—Numbers 33:53

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were headed to a land especially prepared for them. This Promised Land was a wonderful place, full of blessing and prosperity. But in order to enjoy it with all its benefits, the Israelites had to actually walk in and possess it.

It's the same way for you in this new journey you've begun. You've left Egypt, but you're going to have to walk into your Promised Land. God has so much waiting for you and He wants to give it to you, but you're going to have to possess it, just like the Israelites had to do.

When you made your commitment to Christ, you became the beneficiary of all the rights and privileges that He won for you by His death on the cross. This is the Promised Land of your Christian faith. When you became His child, you became an heir to heaven and all its riches. Romans 8:17 says it like this: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

If you are an heir to an earthly inheritance, your inheritance is spelled out in a will that goes into effect only upon the death of the person who made it. Similarly, when Christ died on the cross, all the riches of heaven were now made available to you as His heir (Heb. 9:15–17). Because He died, you can have eternal

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life. Because He suffered, you can have physical healing. Because He was wounded, you can be made whole. By looking at what happened to Jesus on the cross, you can get a better picture of what He bought for you as an heir of heaven.

When Jesus died on the cross, Hebrews 10:20 says that “a new and living way [was] opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.” In other words, the battered, bruised, and torn flesh of Christ was a door into a breakthrough. Every place where His flesh was “broken through” symbolizes a “new and living way” into the Promised Land of freedom and deliverance never before guaranteed. We can group these breakthroughs that Jesus won for you into four main areas: healing for your body, peace for your mind, cleansing for your conscience, and healing for your heart (spirit).

A breakthrough in your body: the whip

Isaiah 53:5 is perhaps one of the most frequently quoted verses in the Old Testament. The last part of that verse, “By His stripes we are healed” (NKJV), talks of the physical wounds inflicted on Jesus’ body. The first tear in His flesh came with the scourging ordered by Pilate (Matt. 27:26). In scourging, the Roman legionnaire took a whip that had lead balls tied to each strand. The victim was then tied and beaten a maximum of thirty-nine lashes with this horrible instrument. The punishment was so brutal that many people did not survive it.

Because Jesus endured this agonizing flogging, the price was paid for your physical healing. From the back of Christ flowed the blood for the healing of your body from every disease, affliction, or condition. Peter expressed this thought in 1 Peter 2:24: “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.” Sickness was paid for on the cross, and as an heir with Christ, you have the right to walk through that open door and receive the inheritance of healing.

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A breakthrough in your mind: the crown of thorns

In the events leading up to the actual crucifixion, the Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns upon the precious head of Jesus (Matt. 27:29), thrusting it deep into his scalp. This crown of thorns represents the “punishment that brought us peace” (Isa. 53:5).

Christ wore the crown of thorns to bring breakthrough in the area of your mind. Just like thorns are the fruit of a branch, your mind bears the sinful fruit of worry, anxiety, pride, depression, lust, and greed. But when Christ willingly wore that awful crown, He was taking God’s judgment upon every rebellious, renegade thought that you would ever have. Because He bore this judgment, no evil thought can control you, and you don’t have to be the victim of ungodly, sinful thought patterns anymore.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV, the Bible speaks of “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.” In other words, you can “capture” every thought and make it line up with the Word of God, because of what Jesus has already done for you. Every thought has been conquered by the blood that flowed from the head of Christ. As a child of God and a heavenly heir, you can have victory over thoughts of fear, worry, depression, addiction, or any mental struggle.

A breakthrough in your conscience: the nails

Each of us has a long list, or record, of our failures, weaknesses, and shortcomings. These can be called “transgressions.” However, again in Isaiah 53:5, the Bible says that “he was pierced for our transgressions.” Isaiah perceived a connection between Jesus’ being pierced (the opening of the holes where He was nailed) and our transgressions.

Between Christ’s hands and the cross was the list of your sins, symbolically. When the nails went through His hands, they also pierced the list that was between His hands and the wood of the cross. Colossians 2:14

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NLT says, “He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross.” So each and every sin of your past has been paid for. The record of your transgressions has been canceled! Your sins were like a certificate of debt that has now been marked “paid in full” because of what Christ endured on the cross. You don’t have to feel guilty and condemned for your sins, because the nail-scarred hands of Jesus bore your guilt so you could go free. You can lay your head upon your pillow each night and go to sleep with a clear conscience.

A breakthrough in your heart (spirit): the spear

Back in Isaiah 53:5, the Bible says that Jesus was “crushed for our iniquities.” Christ’s heart was crushed and broken by the weight of iniquity that He carried for all humanity.

After Jesus finally succumbed, a soldier pierced His side with a spear, and there was “a sudden flow of blood and water” (John 19:34). From a medical standpoint, this indicates that Jesus’ heart had ruptured and that blood had filled His heart. After He died, the serum separated from the coagulated blood in His heart. As a result, the opening of His side produced a stream of water and an oozing of coagulated blood.

Christ died of a broken heart, literally. His heart was broken that yours might be healed. Inside the broken heart of Christ is a world of freedom, healing, and reconciliation. It is yours as a joint-heir of Christ, if you’ll receive it.

The death of Christ on the hill of Calvary was the pivotal point of all history. It marked the point from which all humanity could receive forgiveness of sins and total healing of body, mind, and spirit. As awful as it seemed at the time, it was yet the most triumphant act of all time. The Son of God defeated death, destruction, and the devil and opened the gates of heaven for all eternity.

As a child of God, you have a wonderful divine inheritance. Physical healing, emotional health, a clear conscience, and a mended heart are all yours as an heir of heaven. Look to the cross each day of your life

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and thank God anew for what Jesus suffered for you. Look to the cross and see the great love He has for you. Look to the cross and be healed—body, mind, and spirit. Look to the cross and be set free!

Discussion Questions

1. In what four areas did Christ win a breakthrough for you when He died on the cross?
2. In which of these areas do you need to see the power of the cross at work in your life?
3. Spend some time discussing the benefits of the cross with your teacher or cell leader.

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