

Youth Week 2007
Saturday Morning Lesson

Holy And His - Becoming More Christ-like

LESSON BACKGROUND

If your home is anything like mine, then whenever you sit down to watch television together, there is always a battle over who gets to hold the remote control. Each person in my family has had their turn at holding this little electronic device. It is a classic battle. The reason why it's such a popular item during TV time can be found in it's name - remote control. Whoever holds it

Students Should Learn: 1. The various stages of spiritual growth within the Christian journey 2. Practices and habits that can help them develop a more intimate relationship with God.	What You'll Need: 3x5 cards Personal pictures of you or someone else at different stages of their life from birth to present
Scripture Focus: 2 Peter 3:18	

in their hand gets to control the channel we're watching, the volume we watch it at, and when it's time to flip around.

It wasn't like this when I was a kid. We had a television set that had a dial on it. There was no electronic gizmo where you could sit on the couch and press buttons in order to make the TV run through it's motions. No, growing up in my home, I was the remote control. But I was controlled by my father. He would sit on the couch and tell me to get up and turn the channel or turn down the volume. I can recall having to get up every half hour and turn the knob, going from channel to channel as my father called out, "No, no, no, wait, no, no, yes."

It's funny, I didn't like being the remote control, but I sure like holding (or controlling) the remote control. Perhaps that's why I struggled for a time with the idea of giving all of myself to God. Struggling with God having absolute control over and in my life. I liked to be in control and I liked to control things (even things that were often out of my control...sound confusing?).

Jesus spoke often about being totally sold out to God. He said becoming a Christian is like selling all you have and taking the money to buy a valuable pearl. Or it's like taking all your money to buy a piece of property that has buried treasure on it. Jesus told the rich young ruler that he needed to sell his possessions and follow Him. Jesus did not oppose owning possessions, but He was opposed to them becoming our gods; to them controlling us. Being the person God wants us to be requires a total sell-out.

God wants full control of our entire being. It comes down to a question of who is going to call the shots in life - us or God. If we retain control, we hinder further spiritual growth; the relationship suffers. If we give Him control, we fear He might ask us to do something we don't

want to do, like becoming a missionary to some far off land or shaving our head. Then we wouldn't be happy.

But that is Satan's lie. God's full control is the most liberating way to live. It is a blessed abandonment of self-interest. God always has our best interest in mind, and He seeks to do more in us than we ever dreamed possible. At each step along our spiritual adventure, God is beckoning us to release everything into His hands and to walk in confidence because of His promises and provision.

This lesson will help your students understand the steps that many have taken through their own spiritual growth and progress. These aren't hoops that one jumps through, but rather serve as markers that show up as one draws deeper into an intimate relationship with God through Jesus. The goal of the journey is to become like Christ in all that we do; to have our hearts tuned to the promptings of the Father through the Holy Spirit. As we progress along this path, we continually relinquish the control from our grasp and lay more and more of our life into the hands of God.

One of the ways that this lesson will come to life for your students is through your own reflection of these markers in your own spiritual journey. Reflect back on your salvation experience and what drew you to Christ. Take a moment and think about those times in your journey when you found yourself willing to let God have all of you, when you consecrated yourself completely for His service. Are there things that you still hold on to? It is in your own struggle to let go of the "remote control" of your life that you might be able to offer the most guidance to your students.

At the end of the lesson, there is a list of spiritual practices that have proven to be effective in spiritual growth and discipline. They are helpful ideas that can allow us to move farther along the spiritual journey, but they are not the journey themselves. These tasks are merely a means toward a desired end - an intimate relationship with Jesus that results in a Christ like life. Some of these practices have been in place since the birth of the Church. They have been foundational in the lives of spiritual leaders within the Church.

2 Peter 3:18 is final word that we receive from the apostle Peter in his letter. It is a prayer for the Church - "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" Peter's emphasis was on getting to know Christ so well, because to know Him was to become like Him. As one draws near to Christ, one is transformed more and more into His likeness.

As I look at my children wrestling over the remote control, I can see their lives playing like a movie in my mind. I can't believe how big they're getting. I can remember like it was yesterday the moments when I was able to hold them in the palm of my hand. Boy have they grown. But the process has taken years. I'm not as aware of it as I should be, but I can see the dramatic differences when I look through photo albums from years gone by. I can see the stages where they lost their baby teeth and look back at me with toothless grins. I can see their features change throughout the years from toddler to teenager.

More often than not, our spiritual growth is like that as well. We don't feel like we grow much in a day or in a week. But if you look back over the years, you can begin to see more clearly that God has been raising you up to become more and more like Jesus. Help your students to

understand that their spiritual growth doesn't happen in a day either. Help them to look back over their spiritual journeys and see if there's any differences that they notice. Let those points of growth serve as proof that they are spiritually alive. God is with us and He will continue to develop us until the day He calls us home.

(adapted from articles Holy and His and Becoming More Christ like by Frank Moore in the book, Holiness 101, Beacon Hill Press)

THE LESSON

The World According To Me

Divide your class into groups of 5 or 6. Instruct your students that you are going to play a "Survivor-like" game called, "The World According To Me." Each person will have 30 seconds to state why they feel like they should remain in the group. At the end of that time, all group members will vote to see who should leave the group. The only rule is that you can't vote for yourself. Once a person has been voted off, the group should re-gather and take another 30 seconds each to state why they feel like they should remain in the group. Continue this procedure until there are only two people left in the group. At that point, the people who were voted out earlier will take a final vote to see who remains. In the event of a tie, it should be broken by a quick round of rock-paper-scissors between the two people.

At the end, gather the winners of each group and have them share why they think they won.

Debrief the exercise by asking the following questions:

- **Was it difficult to keep having to promote yourself?**
- **Would it have been easier to promote someone else?**
- **Did you ever feel selfish trying to promote yourself above others?**
- **Why did you vote against certain people?**
- **Can you think of any experience in life where we try to promote ourselves above others?**
- **What's the difference between self-confidence and self-centeredness?**

Say something like, **Oftentimes, the biggest struggle in our spiritual lives is in the area of self-centeredness. It may come in the form of being self-seeking, self-sufficient, self-indulgent, or simply putting our self above God or the needs of others. It's not that we don't wish to please God - we do. Our problem involves wanting the best of both worlds: having what God wants and what we want at the same time. We soon realize we can't have it both ways. My hope today is that we will be able to pinpoint the areas of self-centeredness in our lives and replace them with Christ-centeredness.**

Picture The Process

Before the class session, collect some pictures of yourself at different stages of your life. These should include pictures of you as a baby, a child, a teenager, a young adult, and one for each decade of your life after that (if it applies). It may be more meaningful to do this exercise using someone who has reached their 50's or 60's, although your students will probably enjoy seeing

pictures of you. If you can, try putting the pictures in a PowerPoint presentation that can be shown to the whole group.

As you show the pictures, say something like, **We go through a variety of stages as we grow up. Each stage brings a different set of experiences, responsibilities, and difficulties. Some of us can't wait to get out of the current stage that we're in because we're full of anticipation for the next stage. Much like our physical lives, our spiritual lives have different experiences and opportunities for growth. At each point along the way, we must relinquish control and move closer to being Christ-centered. Let's take a look at these stages and how they build upon each other by digging through some Scripture together:**

Have a volunteer read each of the following Scriptures. Then after each Scripture is read, give the explanations associated with each.

1. The Journey Begins - Salvation

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

Explanation: God is constantly pursuing us. At some point in our lives, we are confronted with the Good News of God's love and desire to have a relationship with us. We choose to accept God's grace, forgiveness, and desires for our lives and allow God to begin to change our hearts. We re-align our lives to follow after the priorities of God's Kingdom rather than our own selfish desires.

2. Initial Sanctification

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Explanation: We begin to learn and grow in God's way. The fruit of God's Spirit (things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, etc) in our lives become evidence that a change has taken place.

3. The Yearning for More

Read Galatians 5:16-26

Explanation: The process of spiritual growth may continue for months or even years before we sense a need for something more in our Christian journey. The common experience of saints down through the ages has been an awareness of a remaining hindrance to further spiritual progress. This awareness usually takes the form of an internal battle with the self.

4. Complete Consecration

Read Romans 12:1-2

Explanation: At this point, we confess our need for God's complete control in our lives and surrender ourselves completely to His will. We place our faith in God to change us. We trust God to accept our consecration and fill us completely with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit entered our life when we accepted Christ; now we are inviting Him to take charge of our control center.

5. Entire Sanctification

Read Romans 6:22

Explanation: Entire Sanctification is God's gift. We do not earn or deserve it any more than we earned or deserved our salvation. We consecrate; God sanctifies. Our spiritual progress is no longer hindered by our self-sovereignty. Through God's work we now have a new openness to God's direction in our lives.

6. Christian Perfection

Read Matthew 5:8

Explanation: Many people don't like the term "perfection" because they misunderstand it to mean that someone can become entirely perfect. This is not the case. We are still human and continue to make mistakes and fall short of a perfect standard of conduct. What we mean here is a "perfecting" of motive and desire to please God. Our actions may not be flawless but our intentions are pure. We want to please God more than anything else in the world. It is a process that will continue through work of God's spirit until the end of our lives.

Be Like Christ

Have everyone in your group stand up and form a circle. Send four to five students out of the room where they cannot hear the instructions. Once they have left, explain this exercise to the rest of the group. Say something like, We're going to bring each person back into the room and have them stand in the middle of the circle. The object of this exercise is for them to make us clap for them. Our job is to imitate everything that they do when while they are standing in the middle of the circle. Say the same things that they say; do the things that they do. When they catch on, they will clap which will be imitated by us. Thus, they've made us clap for them.

- **Bring your students in one at a time and have them try to get the group to clap for them. Once you've brought them all in, then have the group sit down and ask the following questions:**
- **What made those of you in the middle think about clapping in order to make the rest of us clap?**
- **Did you think you had to do something different at first, like perform or something to get an applause?**
- **How difficult was it to imitate the people in the middle?**
- **What did you have to do in order to be able to do all of the things that the person in the middle did?**

Read 2 Peter 3:18

Say something like, **At the heart of spiritual growth is a desire to become more Christ-like. Each of the stages that we talked about earlier lead us toward a deeper understanding of what it means to live as Christ lived. In fact, as Christians, we are called to be imitators of Christ. For many of us, we have put other people or other things in the middle of our circles and tried to imitate those things. But are they leading us closer to or farther away from Christ? It is important to keep Christ in the center of our lives so that we can grow and mature in our Christian faith.**

Divide into six different groups or divide each of the following suggestions evenly between those in your group. Have each suggestion written on a 3x5 card. Give each person or group about 3 minutes to come up with two or three practical ways to implement the following suggestions. Each of these suggestions is a Biblical method for becoming more and more like Christ in our daily lives. At the end of the three minutes, have each group or person stand and share with the rest of the group what they came up with.

Suggestions:

1. Participate in all the means of grace, such as prayer, Bible Reading, meditation, corporate worship, the Lord's Supper, Christian fellowship, and fasting.
2. Practice the presence of God in your life everyday.
3. Discipline your life to make it consistent with your commitment to Christ.
4. Learn to cope with life's daily circumstances.
5. Commit to the Lord your past failures, your appetites, weaknesses, temptations, the failures of others, and situations you cannot change.
6. Open all of your life to Kingdom priorities.

Closing

Say something like, **Throughout this week, our focus has been on what it means to be holy. While we may have talked about some words and ideas that you don't fully understand, the bottom line is that holiness is really about becoming more and more like Christ. My hope is that you don't get hung up on steps and processes, but rather, that you seek after Christ everyday. Let me pray for you.**

Close the class in prayer.