

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

Glen A. Coon

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 05

YOUNG DAVE STEWARD IN ACTION

MY, BUT I'm hungry!" exclaimed Dave to no one in particular as he made his way through the line at the cafeteria. This crisp ocean air certainly gives a fellow an appetite."

With a tray loaded with good vegetarian food, he made his way to an empty table, sat down, and after giving thanks for all his blessings, prepared to satisfy his hunger.

As he ate, he glanced around the large dining room, noticing the neat arrangement of things. As his eyes wandered around they suddenly focused on a man sitting alone at one of the tables. He looked so forlorn and unhappy. Before him was a small bowl of cereal and a glass of milk.

"He looks as if he doesn't have a friend in the world, nor a penny to his name," thought Dave. "He looks utterly dejected. I wonder if I could say something to cheer him up."

As Dave ate he wondered about what he might say to this man. He had no idea how to approach him, so he decided to claim the promise of James 1:5 for wisdom. Not knowing anything about the man's circumstances, Dave certainly needed the Lord's help in making the right approach.

Thanking God for answering his prayer, Dave finished his meal and walked over to the table where the man was seated. With a smile he began, "Excuse me, sir, my name is David Steward. I'm a theology student at La Sierra College in Riverside."

The gentleman stood and offered Dave his hand. "I'm happy to meet you, David," he said as the two shook hands warmly. "I've been watching you, and wishing that my life could be as full of ambition as yours seems to be. Won't you sit down, please?"

When they were seated, Dave said, "Well, I've just found a new life in Jesus, which has given me tremendous hope. If you don't mind, I'd like to share some experiences with you."

Not at all," answered Dave's new acquaintance. "In fact, you may be the answer to a problem that needs to be settled in my own life. Go right ahead."

As they talked together, Dave began to notice several interesting things about this man. In spite of the condition of his clothes, and the wan and hopeless expression of his countenance, his respectful conduct and verbal expressions were reflective of a rich cultural background. Further, his conversation revealed the fact that Dave was speaking with a former Harvard University man!

Dave could not help wondering how a successful man like this, could deteriorate to this low level. "There must be a reason," he thought, "and maybe this is what he wants to talk about." Dave realized that this was a great challenge, so again he prayed for wisdom and tact, asking God to give him words to speak, words that would be meat in due season."

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"Your story is very interesting, Dave," the man said. "I wish I had a life with meaning to it," he went on. "I've got a problem. It seems I'm running away from something continually."

Then in a very serious tone he asked, "Could I be running from God?" Before Dave could answer, he continued, shaking his head, "NO, God wouldn't be calling after me. I'm just no good, I'm too rotten."

There was a moment of silence and Dave took advantage of it. "You remind me of one of the great men in the Bible, the Apostle Paul. He called himself the 'chief of sinners'. He wanted to do right, but in his own strength and without God, he could not. But in the very next chapter, in the book of Romans, he speaks of finding a new life—life with the Spirit of God in control."

The man said nothing. He was trying to grasp what Dave had just said. Dave continued, "In the Bible, in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, God says to you and me, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . . and cause you to walk in my statutes.'

"In other words, there is nothing we can do but submit to God, knowing that He will accept us as we are. Then we will be renewed and do the things we should, not in our own strength but by the miracle of God's grace and power."

Very thoughtfully the man said, "You know, God has approached me twice before, and both times I have refused Him."

With that the man stood to his feet, extended his hand and said, "Young man, you'll never know what you've done for me. Thanks a lot. This has been another encounter with God!"

Ellen G. White has recorded this statement: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.' Such a promise is of more value than gold or silver. If with a humble heart you seek divine guidance in every trouble and perplexity, his word is pledged that a gracious answer will be given you. And his word can never fail. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word will never pass away. Trust in the Lord, and you will never be confounded or ashamed. 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.'" Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 427.

Dave and his friend made their way to the door, Dave was thinking furiously how he might enhance the visit he had just had. Suddenly he said, "Would you like a little book I have which has helped me to find the way of hope?"

"Why, yes," the man replied, "I would appreciate anything that might help me."

"Good. If you'll give me your address I'll bring it over tonight, Dave said.

With that the man gave him an address of a hotel and told him he would look for him that night.

Dave made his way back to his hotel room, and since the convention he was attending was about over, and the rest of the conventioners were going to a dance that night, he decided that he would enjoy visiting the old man again. So tucking his personal copy of "Steps to Christ" under his arm, he made his way to the address he had been given.

It was a dingy hotel, not at all a pleasant place to live. He climbed the stairs and found the room that was indicated on his slip of paper. He knocked, but to his sorrow, there was no answer. "I don't blame him for not staying in here," Dave thought to himself.

Taking out a piece of paper and his pen, Dave wrote his new friend a note, wishing him God's blessing and inviting him to keep the book.

Dave probably will never know in this life what effect his testimony has had on the man. But one thing Dave does know: without having learned how to claim Bible Promises he would never have dared approach this man and share his experience.

Dave made his way back to his hotel, and having nothing else of any importance to do, he turned on the TV and found a special CBS report on UFOs. It was not long before his roommate returned. Noticing what was on TV, the roommate said, "I've studied quite a bit about UFO's. There sure are a lot of theories about what they are and where they come from, aren't there?"

Dave recognized the possibility of sharing his faith again, but realized that he needed wisdom to know just what to say, so as not to antagonize his new friend. Once again he claimed the promise of James 1:5 and asked God to give him words to speak.

"Yes, there sure are," Dave said. "In fact, this report indicated that these objects are not only scientific, but have a religious overtone."

"A Religious overtone, eh?" the roommate mused. "Say, Dave, you're a Christian. You know quite a bit about the Bible. What's your philosophy on this?"

"Well, from what I have studied, I feel if there is anything to it, it must be the forces of evil using science to try to undermine the forces of good."

"I believe you may have something there, Dave. I've been doing a lot of thinking lately, and I've been of somewhat the same opinion." Commented Dave's roommate.

He took off his shoes and stretched out on the bed. "I've had many questions and have come to just a few conclusions," he continued. "One of the conclusions I've come to, is that the only way to find fulfillment in life is to be of service to someone else. That's why I am so deeply involved in this Red Cross convention. You must have a similar purpose or you would not have taken off time from your busy college studies to come as a delegate."

Dave nodded, but before he could say anything, his roommate continued. "But the one thing that bugs me is: why are we here anyway? What are we doing? And where are we headed? What's the purpose of life?"

"Well, that's a pretty big order. I don't know whether I can completely answer your questions or not, but I do know the Bible has some pretty definite things to say about these questions. Would you like for me to share them with you?"

"Sure thing; I wish you would."

And so with the roommate comfortably perched on his bed, relaxing his head on his hand, Dave began to share again his faith.

Dave reached for his Bible and opened it. "When God created the universe and this world, He had a definite purpose in mind. The Bible tells us that 'He formed it to be inhabited.' Isaiah 45:18. Genesis 1:27 says that man was made, 'in the image of God.' Man was a happy creature, the masterpiece of God's handiwork.

"So long as he kept in close communion with his Maker, man continued to live in this happy and holy state. But when he began to serve himself, and when he became the center of all his ideas and plans, he soon reached the place where it was natural for him to do evil and not good. If he were to remain in this condition forever, then, as you have asked, what is the purpose of humanity in this world?"

"But," Dave continued, "Since God created man for a purpose, it was still His plan to fulfill that purpose and to bring humanity back from the ruin and degradation in which we find it today. You see, when God

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is again the center of each life, and every action and thought deals with serving others, then, and only then, can humanity have fulfilled its own, and God's purpose for it, in this world. "

Dave's roommate had a thoughtful expression on his face. "Dave," he exclaimed, "I believe you've got something there! But tell me, how does man go about fulfilling this purpose? It's a natural thing for us to want our own way. In my work I see it every day. And it seems to be getting worse instead of better."

"Yes, I think you're right," agreed Dave, "Here's a verse that says much the same thing." Turning to Jeremiah 13:23 he read, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

"God knew that man, in his sinful state, was incapable of choosing God as the center of his life in order to think and do good to others, so He had the prophet Ezekiel pen this promise over here in the 36th chapter: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: . . . and a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . . and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.'

"But, Dave added, "God gave man the freedom of choice. He compels no one to have this new heart against his will. As the apostle Paul stated in his second letter to the Corinthian church, 'If there be first a willing mind' (II Corinthians 8:12). You see, it becomes a personal decision. No one is forced. Each man must decide for himself.

"You've probably heard the expression 'new birth experience'. This is the point at which a change takes place. The 'old man', or the natural man who tends to do evil, now changes as a result of having the 'new heart'. He now becomes a 'new man' whose thoughts and actions tend to serve God and his fellow man. He becomes a happy, obedient Christian and thus fulfills the purpose God originally intended him to."

Dave closed the Bible and put it back on the bedside table. His roommate straightened up and said, "Yes, I do believe you've got something there. I've tried to forget the entire problem because I could never come up with a reasonable solution, nor could I find anyone else who could. But you've given me something to think about. You've supplied a few of the missing pieces. Thanks so much."

They both climbed into bed and turned out the lights. Just as Dave was about to fall asleep, his roommate said, "Say, Dave, do you have any reading matter on this subject? I'd like to go over this again."

"Sure. Yes, I can send you something as soon as I get back to college. I'll get your address in the morning and send it to you just as soon as I can."

"Good, I'll look forward to getting it. Goodnight."

Dave felt good inside. He had been able to share his faith in Jesus with two individuals that day, it seemed that the Holy Spirit had somehow given him words to speak.

"Thank You, Lord. Thank You," Dave prayed as he was about to drop off to sleep. There was no question in Dave's mind that the prayer of reception was a powerful tool, in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It worked, and he was thankful for it.

Quiz 05

1. True or false: Occasionally in our own strength we can do what is right. _____ . (Read page 18 in Steps to Christ.)
2. Complete: "There is nothing we can do but submit to God, knowing that He will accept us _____"
3. What is of more value than silver or gold? _____ .
4. Dave would never have dared approach this man and share his experience except for what?
_____ .
5. "When _____ is again the _____ of each life, and every action and thought deals with _____, then, and only then, can humanity have fulfilled its own, and God's purpose for it, in this world."
6. What is a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit? _____ .