

The Happiest People in the Word.

Youth's Bible Study Course

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalms 16:11.

Lesson 5: The Sweetest Joy

Memory Verse: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.... Notwithstanding in this rejoice not ... ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Luke 10:17-20.

It was during a Week of Prayer in one of our schools. Talking with a little girl twelve years old who had joined the baptismal class, I asked, "Are your parents Christians?"

"Oh-er-no," she stammered. "I-don't think so."

"Oh, I thought they were," I replied. "I've seen them at church now and then."

"Oh-er-yes, they belong to the church all right," she agreed, "but they go to shows, and read everything, and the horrid way they quarrel and fight

I changed the subject quickly, for I was not desirous of prying into anyone's private life. But as our little interview ended I found my heart stunned. What kind of Christian is one whose own children don't know it? Are we Christians because we belong to the church? Are we Christians because we say we are, or because others say we are?

I want to study this most important question with you now, for we can only truly rejoice if we know our names are written in heaven.

Among the New Testament characters there is one very human disciple whose life has been a great encouragement to me, Peter. You remember on the night of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, Peter followed afar off, but finally came to the courtyard of the palace of the high priest; and while he sat there astonished and discouraged, the servant girl who kept the door looked at him. He did not look like a soldier, or like a servant, or even like a fisherman. He was neat and tidy in dress, and his face was clean. He didn't look like the general run of people who came to places like this. Yes, of course! She had it! "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" she asked, and Peter said, "I am not." John 18:17.

Presently one of the servants of the high priest, who was related to the man whose ear Peter had cut off, came into the courtyard. "I've seen this fellow somewhere before," he said to himself. "I've got it." "Say," he said aloud, "did not I see you in the garden with Him?" And Peter denied again. (Verse 26.)

Then those who stood by listening to all this began to say among themselves, "He doesn't talk like those of Jerusalem; he doesn't curse and swear like a fisherman; he talks just like a follower of the Man of Galilee." Then they said to Peter, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee." Then Peter began to curse and swear saying, "I know not the man." Matthew 26:73.

Three times other people judged him to be a Christian. He looked like one, he went to the same places with Christians, and he spoke like one. Three times Peter said he was not a Christian. Who do you think was right, Peter, or his accusers? Was he a Christian, or was he not?

Let us look at a few verses, and see whether we can find an answer. In Mark 3:14 we find that Peter was an ordained minister, having been called and ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself. As we read on in Luke 10:17-23 it seems very probable that Peter and the twelve were with Jesus when the seventy returned, and were included with those to whom Jesus said, "But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." For three and one-half years Peter had followed the Lord Jesus throughout Judea, and do you know, I think there is no question about it-- Peter was a Christian. But he had sinned, and needed to repent. I have therefore come to the conclusion that our being Christians does not depend so much upon what we say as it does upon what others see in us and know of us.

The Christian life is a subject so deep that it has been the cause of debates and discussions between scholars and philosophers throughout the ages. Yet after telling His disciples to rejoice because their names were written in heaven, Jesus thanked His Father that He had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Luke 10:21. Really the science of the Christian life is so simple that little children can understand it.

In the Word of God many illustrations are used to explain how a person becomes a Christian. It is like a seed being planted that grows up and bears fruit.

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches

thereof." Matthew 13:31-32. It is like being born again and growing up into a new person.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." John 3:3-8.

But there is another parable that I think explains everything connected with the Christian life and makes it so delightfully simple that everybody can understand it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.... Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Matthew 7:21-25.

Now, you have all seen houses built. I have even built one. We are all familiar with what part has to be built first, and just when it should be painted, and what must be done before it can be occupied. Let us give a little study to these steps in building a house upon a rock, and just how they illustrate the Christian life. The procedure is like this: First, laying the foundation; second, building the house; third, painting the house; fourth, moving into the house; fifth, beautifying the house; and sixth, repairing the house.

1. Laying the Foundation. This is the first logical step, for you could not imagine anyone putting a roof up first, or painting the heaps of lumber first. So in the Christian life we must lay the foundation first. We call this step making a decision for Christ.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," cried Paul to the jailer at Philippi, "and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31. The jailer said, "I will believe," and that was the beginning of his Christian life.

"If you see your sinfulness," says Mrs. E. White, "do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ.... There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger

persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are... .

"Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will.... Go to Him with your soul all stained as it is." Steps to Christ, pp. 35-39.

We are all familiar with the expressions, "coming to Jesus" and "giving our hearts to Jesus." These are just other ways of expressing our decision to belong to Christ. Very often this decision is made when we are little children in Sabbath school or at camp meeting or during a Week of Prayer. Sometimes the minister asks: "Who will stand up for Jesus?" "Who will give his heart to Jesus?" We stand up, we make the decision, and the foundation of our Christian experience is laid.

And now listen to this: "Do not hesitate to work for the Lord because you think you can do but little. Do your little with fidelity; for God will work with your efforts. He will write your name in the book of life as one worthy to enter into the joy of the Lord." Messages to Young People, p. 23.

Just as soon as we make our decision, and begin building our Christian house, begin working for the Lord, our names are written in the book of life. Isn't that wonderful! Doesn't that make you rejoice! We don't have to wait until our Christian house is completed, but just as soon as we begin to build, our names are written in the book of life.

2. Building the House. After the workmen have laid the foundation of a house, next we see them erecting the walls, putting on the roof, laying the floor, and hanging the doors and windows, till at last the piles of lumber and bricks look like the architect's plan.

So in building the Christian house after making a decision, we try to keep the commandments, we learn to pray and to read the Bible, we go to places where Christians go, and we talk like Christians. Soon we look and act so much like Christians that our parents, our children, our neighbors, know and say we are Christians. This step in the Christian life is called conversion. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted," said Peter to the multitude. (Acts 3:19.)

The process of conversion differs with different people. With some people it is quick and sudden, like that of Paul. (Acts 9:3-6.) With others it is so gradual that they can not remember any particular day or time when they were converted, as in the cases of Samuel and Timothy.

Here is comforting assurance in this connection: "A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of

conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted." Steps to Christ, p. 61. I was so happy when I first read that sentence, because, like Samuel, I was born in an Adventist family; and like Timothy, I had known the Scriptures since I was a child, and I couldn't remember a special day when I was converted, as some of my schoolmates could.

But how plain Steps to Christ makes it: "A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.... Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All that we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things." Page 62.

And after talking about young people who are puzzled over the phrase "a new heart" because they have not experienced a rapture of feeling, the author of Messages to Young People says plainly and simply: "To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives... .

"As they cease to do evil and learn to do well, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. . . . The warfare is before them, and they enter it bravely and cheerfully, fighting against their natural inclinations and selfish desires, bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ. Daily they seek the Lord for grace to obey Him, and they are strengthened and helped. This is true conversion." Pages 72-74.

You will notice that conversion does not imply perfection. It does not mean we will never make a mistake or fall again, nor does making a single mistake prove that we have not been converted. Billy Sunday had the simplest rule whereby we can tell positively whether we have been converted or not. He said if a sheep falls into a mud hole, it tries to get out as quickly as possible; but if a pig falls into a mud hole, he's just in his glory, and stays there as long as he can. So when a Christian makes a mistake, if he feels miserable and tries at once to make it right, that person has a changed heart, he has been converted. Only a converted heart hates sin.

3. Painting the House. As soon as the house is built, before anyone moves in, the workmen paint the house. If the house is painted before it is finished, the sawing

and hammering would mar the paint. And if the house was not painted just as soon as it was finished, the rains would make the nail-heads rust, and soon the house would be stained. If the painting were delayed still longer, the wood would turn brown, then black; and if the painting were delayed indefinitely, the whole house would begin to warp and rot. There is clearly a right time for the house to be painted.

In the building of Christian character, the next thing to do after making a decision, and being converted, is to be baptized. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ," said Peter as he preached on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38.) It is not wise to be baptized before we show by our lives that we have been converted, but it is perilous to put off being baptized when the right time has come.

How can one tell when the right time has come? When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about being born again, He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. It is the Spirit of God that tells a person when he must be baptized. The still small voice guides us into all truth, and as we make decision after decision, willingly following the leading of the Spirit, His convicting power lays hold of our hearts, and we know with definite certainty when we must be baptized.

I remember the night many years ago when Ohn Bwint, one of my big schoolboys, knocked on my door. "Thara," he said softly as he stood beside me, "I want to go home."

"Go home?" I asked quite surprised, "with only three weeks before the close of school?"

"Yes, but, Thara," he replied, "you said there would be a camp meeting after school let out, and you said there would be a baptism at the camp meeting. I've been here at school four years now, and I have given myself to Jesus, and I would like to go home and ask my parents' permission to be baptized."

"Oh, that's different," I said. "Of course you can go, Ohn Bwint. How long do you think it will take you?"

"One day to go, one day to be there, and one day to come back," he said. "I'll be back in time for vespers Friday evening."

I prayed that God would go with him, and with a radiant face and happy heart he turned and left.

Friday evening as the bell rang for vespers I walked over by the boys' hall, but Ohn Bwint hadn't come yet. All day Sabbath and Sunday we waited, and still Ohn Bwint didn't come. As I was just about to retire Sunday night I heard a knock, and in came Ohn Bwint. But the joy had gone from his face. "Thara," he sobbed, "I can't do it; I can't do it. Father says he will disown me if I get baptized, and I can't think of it! My father who has loved me and clothed me and fed me; I can't bear to think of his disowning me. So I can't get baptized now."

There are crosses that each one must carry for himself. There are cups that must be drunk alone. So I patted him on the shoulder and said, "Keep your heart right, my boy, and the time will come." School closed. The camp meeting was held. On the last Sabbath we had our baptism, seven big boys from the school. We sang "Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away." And it was a happy day for every one but Ohn Bwint. He sat alone under a bush, far off where he could just see, weeping his heart out.

Late that night he came again. "Thara," he sobbed, "I'm going home again, and I'm going to tell father that even if he does disown me, I must get baptized. As I saw the boys going into the water today it seemed I could see heaven open, and I could imagine Jesus standing before His Father saying, 'This one is Mine, Father; look at the nailprints. I paid the price for him. And this one too, Father, and this one too. He's not ashamed to confess Me before men; I'm not ashamed to confess him before Thee, and this one too, Father, and this one. But not that one under the bush over yonder; he's afraid of being disowned. Not him, Father.' And, Thara," said Ohn Bwint as he broke down and cried, "I just couldn't stand it. I must be baptized. To think that Christ is ashamed of me! I must go. I must go."

We prayed together, and I decided to go with him. God blessed our visit, the father gave his permission, and Ohn Bwint couldn't get back to the mission station quick enough. I baptized him by himself in the mighty Salween River, and a happier boy you couldn't find in all the world. Oh, there will be no doubt about the proper time to be baptized if we will only keep our hearts in tune with the Holy Spirit.

4. Moving Into the House. Usually just as soon as a house is finished and painted, the people move in with their furniture and their clothes. The rugs are laid, the furniture arranged, the pots and pans and dishes neatly put away, and the pictures hung on the wall. The house has now become a home.

After Jesus was baptized "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Matthew 3:16. When

the disciples preached the gospel and baptized their converts, they laid "their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts 8:17. When Cornelius received the gospel "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Acts 10:44, and immediately they were baptized.

Paul likens our bodies to temples of the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 6:19.) So when we have made our decision, have been converted, and have been baptized, the Holy Spirit moves in and abides in His temple. Before baptism we are led by the Spirit as Jesus was led by the Spirit, but after baptism the Holy Spirit comes in and abides with us.

5. Beautifying the House. As soon as people move in and get settled in a new house, they begin at once to beautify it. A lawn is seeded, a garden laid out, cement paths put down, and ornamental bushes and shrubs planted. Occasionally they even buy a new piece of furniture or a new picture for the wall, and the longer they live in the house, the more beautiful it becomes.

So when the Holy Spirit moves into our heart temples, He begins a lifelong process of beautifying the life. He plants the beautiful bushes on which grow the fruits of love, joy, and peace; into the life filled with actions and words he brings the beautiful pictures of patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23); and the longer the Holy Spirit lives within us, the more beautiful our lives become.

This lifelong process of beautifying the life is called sanctification. Sanctification is a daily work.... Sanctification is a progressive work. The successive steps are set before us in the words of Peter: 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.' 1 Peter 1:5-7. Here is a course by which we may be assured that we shall never fall.

6. Repairing the House. It is always possible to have minor accidents in a home. Even when moving in we might tear a door from its hinges, or while we are placing a picture on the wall the stepladder might slip and break a window. The weeds will grow in the garden and lawns. Spiders will spin their webs on the windows and on the walls and we must be continually on the alert and busy with our repairs if we would keep our house beautiful.

To a group of little folks I said one day, "What would you think of me if I broke a window, then stood on the sidewalk and cried and said, 'Now look, I've broken a

window, I wish I hadn't built this house! Just look at that window, all broken! I'll have to move out now!"

One little fellow put his hand up and said, "Brother Hare, I'd think you were crazy!"

"Well," I said, "what should I do?"

Quickly came the answer, "Just quit your crying, and go to the hardware store and buy another pane of glass and fix your window."

"Would it be just as good as it was before?" I inquired. "Sure," he said, "No one would ever know it had been broken."

The remedy for sin is just that simple. Even little children can understand it.

As long as we are in the flesh it will be possible to make mistakes, but when we make them we need not weep and wish we had never become Christians or that we never had been baptized.

John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. Thank God that through repentance and confession we can keep our Christian houses in repair, and I can tell you there is no joy in the world like the joy of being forgiven.

Solomon says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always." Proverbs 28:13, 14.

And Sister White says, "The sweetest joy comes to man through his sincere repentance toward God because of the transgression of His law, and faith in Jesus Christ as the sinner's Redeemer and Advocate." The Signs of the Times, March 4, 1880.

One evening during night study period I heard a terrible noise at my back door. I rose quickly from my desk, opened the door, and there saw my headmaster, Thara Chit Maung, doing his best to keep two big boys apart. Though he held them at arm's length they were hitting and kicking at each other.

"What's the matter, Chit Maung?" I inquired quickly.

"The boys were fighting in night study, Thara, and I couldn't make them stop," Chit Maung panted.

I looked, and saw that the boys were Ta Wa and Mg Sein. Ta Wa had been baptized two years before and was a splendid Christian boy. Mg Sein had just

joined the baptismal class. He too was a good steady lad. I was shocked, and said, "Chit Maung, you and Mg Sein wait here till I talk with Ta Wa."

Then I took Ta Wa into my office and said, "What started it, Ta Wa?"

"Mg Sein stood up," he started, "and his shadow fell on my book, and I couldn't see. I had a pin in my hand so I pricked him. Then he hit me on the head. Then I hit him. Then, O Thara, it was the devil, I listened to his urging. And . . ."

"And you're a Christian," I interrupted. "You were baptized two years ago. What an example for Mg Sein who has just joined the baptismal class."

"I know, Thara! I know. I'm so ashamed of myself. If I had only thought, I could have asked him kindly to step out of my light, but I pricked him. I started it, Thara. It's all my fault."

"Since you started it, Ta Wa," I replied, "will you say you're sorry first? And ask forgiveness first?"

"Yes, Thara, I will, I will," he assured me earnestly.

Then I called in Mg Sein while Ta Wa waited with Thara Chit Maung.

"Mg Sein," I began, "you've just joined the baptismal class. You expect to overcome the devil, but you couldn't even overcome a little pin prick."

"I know, Thara," cried Mg Sein, his heart just broken with shame. "It's all my fault. I should have looked where I was standing to begin with. It's all my fault. I started it."

"Then, Mg Sein," I replied, "since you started it, will you say you're sorry first? And ask forgiveness first?"

"Yes, Thara, I will, I will," he answered.

So I called in Ta Wa, and gave them an opportunity each to say, "I'm sorry," first. They stood facing each other. But the words wouldn't come. I saw them swallow hard, clench their hands, and open their mouths, but the words wouldn't come. I looked at Ta Wa, and he half nodded, for he knew what I meant. I looked at Mg Sein, and he nodded, for he also knew what I meant. I saw the perspiration stand out on their foreheads in great round drops as they struggled to say, "I'm sorry." Oh, what a battle was going on. I reached out my hands and took one of Ta Wa's hands and one of Mg Sein's in mine. I felt a shiver of determination go through them:

"I'm. . ." began Ta Wa falteringly.

"No, I'm sorry," blurted out Mg Sein. "It *was* all my fault."

"No, it was my fault, please forgive me."

"No, no! You forgive me!"

"But it was my fault."

"No, it wasn't; it was my fault, please forgive me," said both boys at the same time.

Their hearts were softened, their tears flowed, and their heads nodded the forgiveness they could not speak. We fell on our knees and told the Lord all about it, and asked Him to forgive them too, and make them stronger in the future. In a moment their tears were dry, their faces radiant with the sweetest joy, and with their arms over each other's shoulders they went smiling back to night study. Their Christian houses were repaired so well that you couldn't even tell anything had ever been wrong.

Jesus says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10. If it is the same kind of joy that we mortals know when we repent and are forgiven, it must be the sweetest joy. But that joy usually comes only after a severe struggle.

"The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness." Steps to Christ, p. 47.

But the wonderful thing about this battle is that the only struggle there is to it, is against self. Just as soon as we can get self to humble itself and say, "I will confess," Christ does all the rest. We don't have to worry about what the other person will do or say. Christ takes care of all that for us, and gives us only the joy.

One evening on my mission station, after the lightsout bell had rung, I was going the usual round to see that all was well and ready for the night, when over by the well I came across one of my big boys breaking the school's rules. Never mind what he was doing, but listen to what I did. I took him by the shoulders, shook him till his teeth rattled, and then said angrily, "Fine kind of fellow you are breaking the school's rules like this. Go back to your room at once, and I'll see you about this in the morning."

Without a word he turned and went. But before his footsteps had died away, the still small voice began to trouble me. "What a splendid example of the loving Lord

Jesus you are!" it said. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself for getting so angry and speaking so crossly! Go, and ask his forgiveness!"

Immediately another voice came to my rescue. "Don't you do it," it said. "He was in the wrong."

"But you could have spoken gently," persisted the still small voice.

"Don't you do it," said the other voice. "He'll despise you if you humble yourself. After all, you're the mission director."

"Your life is the only way that lad can understand Christ," persisted the still small voice. "Go on, tell him you're sorry you were so angry."

"Don't you do it," said the other voice.

"Go on, ask him to forgive you for being so angry," persisted the still small voice.

"But he was in the wrong. If . . ."

And so the battle raged within my heart. I went back to my office, but my mind was greatly troubled. I went upstairs to get ready for bed. I got on my knees and tried to pray, but I couldn't. "I'll go," I cried; "I will go."

I hurriedly dressed, walked quietly to the boys' hall and to the boy's room. His candle was still burning. He was not asleep, for he too was angry, making his plans to leave school, I learned afterward. When he saw me in his doorway he thought I had come to berate him some more. I saw him brace himself. But instead of railing at him, I dropped to my knees beside his bed and said, "I'm very sorry I was so angry and didn't even give you a chance to explain. I'm ashamed of myself; please forgive me."

"No, no, please, Thara, don't talk like that," he stammered, when at last he could speak. "I must ask your forgiveness."

"But please forgive me first."

"But, Thara, it was my fault!"

"Your fault that I misrepresented my Master?"

He slipped out of bed onto his knees beside me, we put our arms around each other's shoulders, and wept out our forgiveness each to the other. Then came peace, and the sweetest joy, and we went to sleep till morning.

Do you think that young man despised me because I humbled myself and asked his forgiveness? Quite the contrary, for there was no job that lad wouldn't do for

me after that incident. No distance was too far for him to travel, no burden too hard to lift. When I did my part the Lord Jesus did all the rest.

Now, just one more thought before we close this study on the Christian life. Quite frequently when young people become discouraged and realize their characters are so imperfect and their lives so faulty, they ask, "Shouldn't I start all over, and be baptized again?"

I think you can tell with definite certainty whether you should ever consider rebaptism or not. Think back to the illustration of the house. You certainly would not have to build a new house just for a broken window or a broken door would you? But sometimes the floods come, and carry the house away. Sometimes the hurricane blows, and the house collapses. Sometimes the fire burns, and the house is left in ashes. Then it takes more than a repair job. Then it is that you have to start all over again, and build another house. So when discouragement, sin, or temptation has caused you to turn your back on the Lord Jesus, till your friends no longer know you are a Christian, then seek rebaptism and start all over again. But first read this:

"There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ, and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes; but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.... The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature." Steps to Christ, pp. 69, 70.

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isaiah 57:20, 21.

But "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35:10.

FATHER

By Roger Altman

The glare of the day had softened. In the west
A crimson glory lingered, where the sun
Short time before had slipped behind the hill.
The warm and winelike air of early spring
Caressed the buds of resurrected green
And fondled them with sighs of ecstasy.

The nobleman of Israel paced his roof
And pondered on the past.
His steady gaze
Turned always toward the south. In fancy's eye
He pictured Egypt's banquet halls of mirth,
Her gay festivity and empty joy.
"My son," he murmured, "O my well-beloved,
Hast thou forgot the shelter of thy sire?
Doth not thy Jewish heart at times grow soft
And yearn for glimpses of thy father's face?
The fig tree close beside the southern wall
Is green again. The vines around the door
Put forth their baby leaves.
Would thou wert here!

How well do I recall the day you left.
In hot blood, and with boastful word you cast
Your boyhood home away, forsook my board,
And with your patrimony bolstered, girt
A gaudy mantle round thy goodly form,
And took the Egypt road."

And saying thus
He raised his eyes
And gazed far down the white and winding trail.
How often had this younger son of his
Climbed to the roof and watched the caravans
That tinkled down to Egypt; counting too

The camels as they labored up the hill,
And, by the huge red stone, turned out of sight.
The father looked there now, and strained his eyes
Of threescore years to see that rugged stone
Behind which he had seen his best-loved son,
The idol of his being, disappear.

The sunset glory in the western sky
Was slowly fading.
Still the father gazed, His heart athrong with sacred memories
And yearnings, his old eyes bedimmed with tears.
"My boy, my boy, where is he? . . . Who is that
Rounding the corner by the landmark stone?
Some wanderer indeed. See how he limps
Upon his weary feet, and mark the droop
Of shoulder, the exhausted, listless way
He plods along. I'll ask him in. See now
He straightens up in pride and dignity,
Half hesitating. Nay, I know that form,
That graceful carriage, that familiar pose:
Surely it is not he--look at those rags!
It must be he! Mark ye that comely head?
Father of Abraham, it is my son!
Make haste, my withered bones, leap down these stairs,
And carry me in haste to meet my boy.
My son was dead. He is alive again.
My heart's delight was lost, but now he's found."

The twilight folds were deepening into gloom,
The saffron in the western sky had gone.
No more the breezes sighed among the trees,
And over all brooded tranquillity.
Upon the shoulder of the nobleman
The prodigal had faltered out with tears,
Repentance, Folded in his father's robe,
Together they went home, beneath the Syrian stars.

Lesson 5 Quiz:

Write True or False [T or F]:

1. _____ When we do wrong to someone, it is not important to ask their forgiveness.
2. _____ There is a certain order that a house needs to be built.
3. _____ Peter was a Christian, but he sinned and had to repent.
4. _____ The Holy Spirit guides us as to when to be baptized.
5. _____ There are times when people need to be re-baptized.
6. _____ Once we are baptized we will never sin again.
7. _____ Our struggles in the Christian life are against self.
8. _____ People should be able to see a difference when we are truly converted.
9. _____ We all need to be able to tell the exact day when we were converted.
10. _____ We are to rejoice to know our names are written in heaven.