

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair. She is wearing a yellow ribbed turtleneck sweater and is looking down at an open book she is holding in her hands. Her eyes are closed, and she appears to be in a state of deep concentration or emotional connection with the text.

December 2025, January, February 2026

Winter Lessons



Pathway

Bible Studies for Adults



SUNDAY SCHOOL
PUBLISHING BOARD

LESSON 5
January 4, 2026

Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation The Wrong Path

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 59:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 3:1-24; 6:5-8; Mark 7:14-23;

Romans 1:18-32; 3:10-18; 1 John 1:5-2:6

PRINT PASSAGES: 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6

KEY VERSES

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:8-9, KJV)

.....

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:8-9, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Summarize the Gospel in terms of the contrasts presented in 1 John 1:5-2:6.
- Confess the lies we tell ourselves and accept God's truth instead.
- Demonstrate gratitude for Christ's pardon from sin by living as Christ lived.

*Key Terms

Cleanses (1:7)—Greek: *katharizó* (kath-ar-id'- zo): to cleanse; make clean, literally, ceremonially, or spiritually; “cleanseth” (KJV).

Darkness (1:5)—Greek: *skotia* (skot-ee'-ah): wickedness; ignorance; moral or spiritual darkness.

Declare (1:5)—Greek: *anaggelló* (an-ang-el'-lo): to speak God's word; announce; disclose; report.

Fellowship (1:6)—Greek: *koinónia* (koy-nohnee'-ah): close association; partnership; communion.

Light (1:5)—Greek: *phós* (foce): brightness; a symbol of the presence of God; radiance; fire.

Truth (2:4)—Greek: *alétheia* (al-ay'-thi-a): verity; true to fact; reality; divine insight revealed to humanity; the Gospel.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



The Biblical Context

First John is the first and longest of a series of three letters attributed to John. The Gospels identify John as one of Jesus' original twelve disciples and one among His three most intimate associates. Biblical scholars agree that John composed this letter during the latter part of the first century from Ephesus to churches in Asia Minor, where he ministered and continued exercising apostolic authority. False teachers had entered some of the early churches in this region and spread wrong ideas about who Jesus really was. They denied that Jesus was fully God and twisted the basic teachings passed down from the apostles. That's why John wrote this letter—to challenge those false teachings and protect the truth. John wrote to correct these beliefs and remind the church of the truth about Jesus' identity.

The main goal of 1 John was to help believers stay grounded in the core truths of the Christian faith and to reassure them that they truly belonged to God. In this part of the letter, John focuses on three key signs of genuine faith: living in obedience to God, showing love for others, and holding on to the truth about who Jesus is (see 1 John 1:7–2:17).

ing evidence that our lives have been transformed by God. However, *when* we sin, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who will intercede for us, forgive us, and cleanse us continually from unrighteousness when we genuinely repent and confess our sin (1 John 1:9).

Introduction

An *enemy* is a person who actively opposes someone or something. Everything has an enemy—someone or something that opposes, threatens, or seeks to harm. Opposing forces producing conflict are realities in many areas of life. For example, the physical body's health is opposed by various debilitating diseases. There is also an opposing force, an enemy, to youth—aging. Current national and world conditions continue revealing that the enemy of peace and order is widespread chaos. Therefore, we might conclude that physical life generally has enemies. Just as these and other unlisted examples show natural opposition, humanity's greatest enemy is sin. Why?

First and foremost, sin separates us from God by creating a barrier between us and Him, ultimately leading to spiritual death. Sin also corrupts, enslaves, and leads to destruction. God, however, provided the remedy for this enemy through His Son, Jesus Christ, who paid sin's price by taking our punishment. By dying on the Cross, God offered salvation to all who believe in Him. Although we cannot defeat sin on our own, we can experience victory over it through the Holy Spirit because of our restored relationship with God. To maintain fellowship with Him who is light (1 John 1:5), we must intentionally “walk in the light.” We can do so by letting our behavior reflect our faith's authenticity, but accepting Christ as Savior does not make us sinless or incapable of sinning. The Word is clear that we cannot claim to have fellowship with Him while still sinning. Therefore, as Christians, we must actually live what we claim to believe—this is the most convincing

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Inconsistent Walk (1 John 1:5-7)

KJV

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:
 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

NIV

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

John begins chapter 1 by affirming that he was writing about what he had personally heard, seen, and touched—namely, the Lord Jesus Christ and His ministry. This firsthand testimony was essential because false teachers had infiltrated the early church, denying the reality of Christ’s incarnation. In response, John contested their deception and reassured his readers that they can have a personal relationship and fellowship with the Christ he saw and heard (verses 1-4). In verse 5, John shares a foundational truth he received directly from Jesus Christ incarnate: God is light—holy, pure, and entirely without sin. This truth establishes the standard for genuine fellowship with the Lord. Since God is light, those who claim to follow Him must reflect His holiness and purity. However, those who claim to be in fellowship with God while living in sin are deceiving themselves and others (verse 6). John specifically addresses self-professed believers who attempt to walk with God while embracing sin. While no Christian is sinless, those who desire to walk in God’s light will make a noticeable effort to align their lives with His truth, demonstrating the evidence of a transformed heart. In verse 7, John calls believers to live according to God’s way by emulating His holiness and truth. He emphasizes that Christ’s shed blood continually cleanses believers from every sin—past, present, and future. John’s message is both an encouragement and a challenge. Fellowship with God is never maintained by words alone, but through a life that demonstrates genuine transformation. As believers walk in the light, they enjoy two profound benefits: intimate fellowship with God and the continual cleansing power of Christ’s sacrifice.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What practical steps can we take to consistently “walk in the light” daily?

Inconsistent Talk (1 John 1:8-10)

KJV

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

NIV

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

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

10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Earlier in chapter 1, John talks about the difference between people who say they know God but keep living in sin, and those who truly follow Jesus. In verse 8, he challenges people who take it even further by claiming they have no sin at all. The first group ignores their sin, thinking it doesn't affect their relationship with God. The second group is in complete denial—they don't believe sin is even a part of their lives, which shows they don't understand how the Holy Spirit works to change us over time.

The Bible makes it clear that everyone sins (see Romans 3:10-12, 23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 64:6). Saying we don't sin means we don't really understand God's truth. It also keeps us from confessing our sins, which blocks our spiritual growth and causes us to miss out on the forgiveness that God freely gives. In contrast, those confessing their sins demonstrate genuine fellowship with God and receive His faithful forgiveness and cleansing (verse 9). Salvation didn't make us sinless; it freed us from sin's condemnation. Denying sin leads to spiritual blindness, but confession leads to restoration of fellowship with God. Verse 10 shifts from present to past sins and confronts those who reject the truth of their sinful history. This denial directly opposes God's Word and exposes a heart that has not internalized His truth. John's message is clear: we must acknowledge sin's presence, agree with God about it through confession, and cling to His Word to maintain authentic fellowship with Him.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do believers today deceive themselves about their fellowship with God, and how can they guard against it?

A Compatible Solution (1 John 2:1-6)

KJV

MY LITTLE children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

NIV

MY DEAR children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:

6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

We all sin . . . no one is exempt. Anyone who claims otherwise is not being honest with themselves or with God. They show a lack of understanding of the Bible and, in effect, call God a liar. John emphasized the reality of sin among believers—not to excuse it, but to warn us to stay alert and guard against it. Even though God desires that we do not sin, John reassures us that if we do, we have someone who speaks to God on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one (verse 1). Jesus doesn’t advocate for us to keep us out of hell; eternal life is already guaranteed to those who trust in Him. Instead, His advocacy is focused on restoring our fellowship with God and keeping us useful for His purposes, even after we’ve fallen short.

Christ is qualified to advocate for us because He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins—the only one whose sacrificial death for the whole world was sufficient payment for the sin debt separating us from God (verse 2). John further explains that our obedience to God’s commands is what determines whether our salvation experience led us to know God intimately (verse 3). Those who claim to know God but fail to obey His commands are liars and out of touch with spiritual reality (verse 4). However, those practicing obedience experience the fullness of God’s love as further proof of fellowship with Him, and those claiming to know Him must model their lives after Christ’s by obeying His Word (verses 5-6). The solution for avoiding getting on the “wrong path” is obeying God’s Word and consistently modeling our lives after Christ’s. Even when we do, though, we have an advocate to plead our case when we confess our sins and trust His finished work on the Cross as full payment for them.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does John’s warning—that claiming to know God while refusing to obey Him makes a person a liar—challenge the way we understand faith and grace?

A Closing Thought

This lesson offers several important, relevant truths. First, genuine believers understand they cannot walk in holiness and truth while following sin and darkness simultaneously. Second, claiming fellowship with God while actively practicing sin is self-deception and makes one a liar who does not live by the truth. Third, maintaining fellowship with God and others requires living according to His ways, which brings continual cleansing because of Christ’s shed blood. Fourth, refusing to admit our sin is a denial of God’s Word and a dangerous form of self-deception. Finally, when we consistently agree with God about our sins, we experience ongoing forgiveness, cleansing, and the assurance of Christ’s advocacy. Obedience to God’s commands and a life that reflects Christ’s character are visible marks of authentic fellowship with Him.

Your Life

God’s Word is clear—no one can honestly claim that they do not commit sin. As believers, we must quickly acknowledge and confess sin to maintain our fellowship with the Lord. When we fall short of God’s commands, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us and the promise of forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness as we mature in Christ.

Your World!

Some believers struggle with guilt because they sin. Others wrestle with assurance of their salvation and feel that their fellowship with God is irreparably damaged. Consider using this lesson’s focus to encourage someone experiencing either of these spiritual battles to rely on Christ’s advocacy on their behalf when they

sin. Remind them of God's promise of forgiveness and continuous cleansing from unrighteousness when they confess their sin.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for Jesus, our advocate, who intercedes for us when we acknowledge and confess our sins and for the promise of forgiveness and continuous cleansing because of Your grace and faithfulness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores the only appropriate way to restore a broken relationship with God. Read Luke 15:11-24; Acts 2:38-39.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 5	“Turn Away from Sin”	(Ezekiel 18:20-23, 27-32)
TUESDAY, January 6	“Turn toward Righteousness”	(Isaiah 1:10-21)
WEDNESDAY, January 7	“Jesus Has Power to Forgive Sins”	(Mark 2:1-12)
THURSDAY, January 8	“Draw Near to God by Faith”	(Hebrews 11:1-10)
FRIDAY, January 9	“Repent and Seek God’s Face”	(2 Chronicles 7:12-16)
SATURDAY, January 10	“Repent and Be Baptized”	(Acts 2:32-39)
SUNDAY, January 11	“The Prodigal Returns”	(Luke 15:11-24)

Notes

LESSON 6

January 11, 2026

Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

A Generous and Forgiving Parent

DEVOTIONAL READING: Mark 1:14-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 1:10-21; Ezekiel 18:20-23, 27-32; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 3:1-14; 15:11-24; Acts 2:32-39; Hebrews 11:1-10

PRINT PASSAGES: Luke 15:11-24; Acts 2:38-39

KEY VERSE

This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.
(Luke 15:24, KJV)

.....

“This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”
(Luke 15:24, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Communicate the role of repentance in your faith journey.
- Identify in yourself (a) the younger son’s repentance; (b) the elder son’s resentment; (c) the father’s generosity.
- Act with generosity toward sinners, including yourself.

*Key Terms

Children (Acts 2:39)—Greek: *teknon* (tek'-non): offspring (by natural descent); in a broader sense, posterity.

Divided (Luke 15:12)—Greek: *diaireó* (dee-ahee-reh'-o): distributed (between); separated.

Famine (Luke 15:14)—Greek: *limos* (lee-mos'): hunger; dearth; a period of food scarcity often resulting from drought.

Had compassion (Luke 15:20)—Greek: *splagchnizomai* (splangkh-nid'-zom-ahee): had an empathetic feeling of pity or consideration for another; felt sympathy; “was filled with compassion” (NIV).

Portion (Luke 15:12)—Greek: *meros* (mer'-os): a piece or division; a part or “share” (NIV).

Prodigally (Luke 15:13)—Greek: *asótós* (as-o'-toce): recklessly; wastefully; “with riotous” (KJV) living; “in wild” (NIV) living.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**

Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are the connections people build with one another, like families, friends, romantic partners, and even coworkers. These relationships play a big role in personal growth and overall



The Biblical Context

Luke, a Gentile physician and Paul's traveling companion, authored the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, providing the biblical context for this lesson's Print Passages. Luke composed this two-part volume for Theophilus, an unidentified person, to provide a chronological and orderly account of Jesus' life and ministry and a reliable historical account of the early church. Luke's gospel was also written to convey the Gospel's significance after Christ's resurrection, and record the church's growth and expansion. The immediate context for Luke 15 is in Luke 9:51–19:27, describing Jesus' journey to Jerusalem for the Passover before His death on the cross. This part of the book primarily consists of Jesus' teachings and parables given on the road to people He encountered. A key theme in this section is Jesus' continuing ministry and compassion for the poor, the outcasts, and sinners. His association with this part of Israel's society fueled debates and criticism from the Pharisees and scribes, prompting Jesus to confront their pride and hypocrisy. One of these confrontations is the setting for this parable regarding the lost son (see Luke 15:11–14).

The context for the lesson's passage from the book of Acts (Acts 2:38–39) is the people's reaction to Peter's sermon following Jesus' ascension to heaven and the Holy Spirit's descent on the disciples. Deeply convicted by the realization that they were guilty of rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, they asked what they needed to do to be saved. Peter explained their need for salvation and how to receive it. Both passages proclaim the good news: repentance leads to conviction, confession leads to forgiveness, and God the Father stands ready to extend grace and reconciliation to the lost.

well-being. When they're healthy, they help meet emotional needs and give a sense of belonging. But, relationships aren't always easy. They can break down, especially when people start focusing only on themselves and what they want. Holding grudges, not communicating well, jealousy, betrayal, or even cultural and political differences can cause tension in relationships. Sadly, these same issues can show up in church too, making it hard for believers to stay united.

Many interpersonal conflicts could be mended through a willingness to apologize, make amends, and extend forgiveness. However, from a spiritual perspective, the most critical relationship a believer must safeguard is their connection with God. While this relationship can never be lost for those in Christ, it can suffer damage through unconfessed sin, neglecting spiritual disciplines, pride, and self-reliance. Yet—in His boundless grace—God, like the father in Jesus' parable of the lost son, is always ready to welcome His children back. Whenever we repent and turn to Christ, He restores and reconciles us, reaffirming His unwavering love for us.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A Son's Rebellion (Luke 15:11-20a)

KJV

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father.

NIV

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

12 "The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

14 "After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

16 "He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

18 "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 servants.'

20 "So he got up and went to his father."

The parable of the prodigal son is the third and final parable Jesus used to respond to the Pharisees' and scribes' criticism of His choice to fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (see Luke 15:1-2). Unlike the previous two parables, the lost sheep and the lost coin, this story depicts a son lost by intentional choice. The younger of a man's two sons deliberately rebels against his father and strays away after selfishly demanding his share of his father's estate before the father's death, possibly implying that he wished his father was dead. Regardless, the father grants his request, dividing his estate and giving the younger son his portion (verses 11-12). The son leaves home, squandering his inheritance on reckless and extravagant living. When a severe famine strikes, he finds himself penniless, desperate, and reduced to lowly labor to survive (verses 13-15). The son of a wealthy Jewish landowner was reduced to feeding pigs, animals considered ceremonially unclean in Jewish culture. Worse still, he was so poor that he longed to eat the pods given to the pigs—yet no one offered him anything (verse 16). Ironically, these pods, the carob tree's fleshy fruit, are fit for human consumption. But in this moment of desperation, the prodigal realized that even these unclean animals were eating better than he was.

Then, in verse 17, he finally comes to his senses. Comparing his miserable condition to that of his father's lowest hired servants, he realized that even they had more than enough to eat while he was starving to death. Recognizing his rebellion, dishonor toward his father, and sin against heaven, he repented, returns home, confessed, and sought his father's forgiveness and restoration (verses 18-20a). Through this parable, Jesus beautifully illustrates the steps of true conversion leading to salvation: acknowledging sin as rebellion against God, confessing it, and repenting by turning from sin to God with a contrite heart and seeking His forgiveness. Jesus also exposes the self-righteous and uncaring attitude of the Pharisees and scribes concerning those they identified as sinners by illustrating that no sinner is beyond redemption if they are convicted to recognize their sin, confess it, and seek God's forgiveness.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How are we guilty of rebelling against God and living recklessly?

A Father's Grace (*Luke 15:20b-24; Acts 2:38-39*)

KJV

20 But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

....

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

NIV

20 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 "Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.'

24 "'For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

....

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

After the conviction of his sin, the prodigal son intended to greet his father and beg for forgiveness. Yet, he did not get the opportunity to do so because when his loving father saw him returning while still at a distance, he ran to meet, embrace, and kiss him (verse 20b). The father's actions reflect God's attitude toward repenting sinners. Because of His profound love, God meets them where they are and saves them by the grace made possible by Jesus' death on the Cross. In this story, Jesus responds to the Pharisees and scribes by showing why He spends time with sinners. He tells about a father who runs to welcome his

rebellious son home. This was surprising because in Jewish culture, older men didn't run, and the son could have been punished harshly for his disrespect, but the father didn't care about any of that. He ignored the rules, hugged his son, didn't even let him finish his apology, and immediately threw a big party to celebrate his return (verses 21-23). The robe, ring, and sandals the prodigal son received signified the restoration of their relationship and position in the family. The feast was his father's way of expressing his joy and inviting others to celebrate with him. Again, Jesus gives a subtle message to His critics: those they rejected are welcomed into God's presence.

Verse 24 provides the reason for this call to celebrate—his spiritually and relationally “dead” son was restored to “life” and fellowship with him. Every lost soul convicted of sin who genuinely acknowledges their rebellion against God, confesses, repents, and comes to God through Jesus Christ is promised this spiritual experience: grace and restoration into God's family. This same message is embedded in Luke's record of Peter's response to the Jews' question about what they needed to do after hearing and being convicted by his sermon in Acts 2:38-39. Peter urged them to repent like the prodigal son did. This active repentance results in the forgiveness of sin and the promise of restoration into God's family for them and their descendants, signified by the Holy Spirit's presence. These passages vividly illustrate the loving heart of the heavenly Father, who gladly extends grace to His lost children and joyously welcomes them into His family. The faith community's challenge today is to avoid being present-day “Pharisees and scribes” and to emulate His love and compassion for the lost.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why does the faith community require an “attitude adjustment” regarding prioritizing evangelizing the lost?

A Closing Thought

The parable of the prodigal son teaches an important lesson for the church: we should welcome and accept anyone who turns back to God through faith in Jesus. Just like the father in the story showed grace and forgiveness to his returning son, we are called to do the same. His act of running to embrace his son reminds us that the church should be a place of love and restoration, not judgment or rejection.

Your Life

Jesus told this parable to critical Pharisees and scribes who looked down on and rejected sinners and tax collectors instead of ministering to them. Their uncaring attitude challenges us to examine our hearts to ensure that we are not guilty of condemning and judging the lost but of embracing those who repent with the same grace that God extends to all who come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ.

Your World!

The church is often surrounded by modern-day “prodigals”—those who've been caught up or overwhelmed by the world's temptations. In this lesson, Jesus challenges us to reevaluate our priorities and attitudes toward lost “prodigals” and prioritize guiding them toward restoration with God through genuine repentance. When they return, we must welcome them with the same grace, love, and acceptance that God offers to all who turn back to Him.



Closing Prayer

Gracious heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us that no matter how far we stray, You will welcome us back and restore us when we repent and seek Your forgiveness. With the Holy Spirit's help, we pray to extend the same grace to the "prodigals" we encounter for Your glory, honor, and praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson challenges us to explore how to avoid self-righteousness and pride in our relationship with God and others. Read Genesis 18:25-27, 30-32; Luke 18:9-14; 1 John 5:14-15.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 12	“Praying for Wisdom”	(James 1:2-8)
TUESDAY, January 13	“Praying and Seeking God”	(Jeremiah 29:10-14)
WEDNESDAY, January 14	“Praying with Thanksgiving”	(Philippians 4:4-9)
THURSDAY, January 15	“Praying for Protection”	(Psalm 61)
FRIDAY, January 16	“Praying as Jesus Taught”	(Matthew 6:5-15)
SATURDAY, January 17	“Praying for Others”	(Genesis 18:23-33)
SUNDAY, January 18	“Praying for Mercy”	(Luke 18:9-14)

Notes

LESSON 7

January 18, 2026

Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

A Time to Be Bold; a Time to Be Humble

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 141

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 18:23-33; Exodus 32:31-32; Nehemiah 1:4-11; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 18:1-14; John 17:1-26; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 John 5:14-15

PRINT PASSAGES: Genesis 18:25-27, 30-32; Luke 18:9-14; 1 John 5:14-15

KEY VERSE

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:14, KJV)

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“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14, KJV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Contrast boldness in prayer (e.g., Genesis 18 or 1 John) with humility in prayer (e.g., the tax collector in Luke).
- Pray with the confidence that God hears your prayers.
- Boldly share the Gospel while staying humble in your community.

*Key Terms

Be Merciful (Luke 18:13)—**Greek:** *bilaskomai* (hil-as'-kom-ahee): to be propitious; make propitiation for; appease; “have mercy on” (NIV).

Confidence (1 John 5:14)—**Greek:** *parrésia* (par-rhay-see'-ah): boldness in speech; openness; boldness; cheerful courage.

Hear(s) (1 John 5:15)—**Greek:** *akouó* (ak-oo'-o): listen(s); understand(s); come(s) to the ears.

Humble (Luke 18:14)—**Greek:** *tapeinoó* (tap-ino'-o): to make or bring low; abase; figuratively, to humiliate (in condition or heart); “humbleth” (KJV).

Pray (Luke 18:10)—**Greek:** *proseuchomai* (pros-yoo'-khom-ahee): supplicate; communicate with God.

Speak (Genesis 18:27)—**Hebrew:** *dabar* (dawbar'): to declare, converse; command; promise; warn; commune.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



The Biblical Context

The Genesis 18 account of Abraham's confident intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah—trusting God to spare these cities for a minimum number of righteous people—and the tax collector's humble plea for mercy in Luke 18 are strong lessons on the importance of exhibiting confident humility when approaching God. Following their examples helps us guard against the sin of pride, a trait of human nature that God detests. The context and setting of Genesis 18:25-27 occur within the broader narrative of Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah, which appears in Genesis 18:16-33. The immediate context of Luke 18:9-14 is Jesus' teaching ministry, where He addresses self-righteousness and humility in prayer. This parable is part of Jesus' more extensive teachings on humility, faith, and the kingdom of God. Abraham and the tax collector demonstrated a lack of self-righteousness and deep humility. Abraham's humility and unworthiness are evident in how he approached God, without arrogance or entitlement, while openly acknowledging his lowly position before Him, just as the tax collector did (Genesis 18:27; Luke 18:13). Yet, humility and confidence in God coexisted in both men's lives because of their relationship with Him. Abraham's confidence stemmed from years of communing with God, which allowed him to build and maintain an intimate, obedient relationship with Him. Likewise, the tax collector's confidence in God is revealed in his heartfelt plea for mercy, trusting that only God could grant him what he did not deserve.

Introduction

William R. Newell wrote one of the church's powerful hymns, beginning with the line, "Years I spent in vanity and pride, caring not my Lord was crucified."

The key words here are *vanity*, meaning thinking too highly of oneself, and *pride*, which is being overly focused on your own importance. As the verse suggests, pride and self-importance often lead people to ignore or reject God and His grace, taking credit for things that only belong to Him. Pride is the opposite of humility, and it displeases God. Scripture teaches that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (see Proverbs 8:13; 16:5, 18; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

At its core, pride is like worshipping yourself—putting yourself in God's place. But God clearly tells His people not to do this (see Exodus 20:3; Luke 4:8). The problem is that pride blinds people. They either think they don't need God or believe He should accept them just as they are, without true repentance. This leads to spiritual destruction and separation from God.

That's why the best decision is to let go of pride, recognize God's authority, humble ourselves, and rely on Him. When we do, we open the way for God's healing, favor, and acceptance. A great example of this kind of humility is the tax collector in Jesus' parable in Luke 18—told to people who were confident in their own righteousness.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Confident Boldness in Prayer

(Genesis 18:25-27, 30-32; 1 John 5:14-15)

KJV

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?
26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes:

.....

30 And he said unto him, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

.....

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

NIV

25 “Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

26 The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

27 Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, . . .”

.....

30 Then he said, “May the LORD not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

31 Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the LORD, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

32 Then he said, “May the LORD not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

.....

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Genesis 18 records events that occurred sometime after the Lord renewed His covenant relationship with Abraham in chapter 17. In this chapter, the Lord appeared to Abraham accompanied by two angels in human form—a theophany. During this visit, God revealed His intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their grievous sins (see Genesis 18:20-21), doing so in light of His covenant relationship with Abraham. In response, Abraham began a bold intercessory dialogue with the Lord. Appealing to their shared relationship, he challenged the idea of the righteous perishing alongside the wicked, asserting that such an action would not reflect God's character (Genesis 18:25). While acknowledging God's sovereign moral authority and justice, Abraham humbly confessed his insignificance and unworthiness (Genesis 18:27). Yet he persisted, confidently asking God to spare the cities if a specific number of righteous people could be found among them (Genesis 18:30).

Abraham's appeal reflects not self-righteousness but humility, reverence, and trust in God's mercy and justice. His prayer is bold and selfless, springing from the intimacy of his relationship with God. He models how faithful believers can intercede for others: through prayer that is confident, humble, and bold yet

submitted to God's will. Because Abraham communed with and understood God's character, he recognized that his request aligned with God's nature and will. This echoes the assurance found in 1 John 5:14-15, where John affirms that our confidence in prayer is grounded in an intimate, obedient relationship with God and a commitment to pray according to His will.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does Abraham demonstrate how we can balance boldness and reverence for God's holiness in our prayers?

Confident Humility in Prayer (Luke 18:9-14)

KJV

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

NIV

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.'

12 "I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 18 opens with Jesus' telling two parables about prayer—the first deals with persistence, and the second concerns how God's people should pray. Jesus directed the second one, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, to those in His audience caught up in self-righteousness and viewing others with contempt (verse 9). The most likely but unnamed groups present were Pharisees and scribes who followed Jesus only to find something to discredit Him and His ministry. Ironically, Jesus identifies one of the significant characters in this parable as a Pharisee and the other a despised tax collector. Jesus begins this parable with the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the Temple (verse 10). The emphasis is on their contrasting attitudes in approaching God in prayer. The Pharisee stood at a distance and began his prayer thanking God

by comparing himself to those he assumed he was more righteous than: extortioners, the unjust, adulterers, and the tax collector he observed in the Temple (verse 11). He continued by listing his virtues that exceed the Law's expectations and warrant recognition from God (verse 12). However, Pharisees, though recognized for their piety even by Jesus, were notoriously guilty of sins that this Pharisee accused others of committing.

Tax collectors were hated by the Jews because they collected money for the Roman occupiers and often charged more than they required. In Jesus' parable, the tax collector approached God in prayer humbly and selflessly. He refused to look up and beat his chest, symbolizing his deep grief and repentance of his sin, and pleaded for God's mercy (verse 13). Jesus then declared that the tax collector, not the self-righteous Pharisee, went home justified before God because he humbled himself instead of exalting himself—which is the proper attitude for prayer that Jesus wanted to convey (verse 14). This a crucial lesson for every believer about how to approach God in prayer—humbly acknowledging one's unworthiness, expressing deep remorse for sin, repenting, and seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What attitudes must we avoid to ensure that we approach God with a humble yet confident spirit in prayer?

A Closing Thought

This lesson asks a simple question: How can we avoid pride and self-righteousness? The Bible gives the answer in three places—Abraham's prayer (Genesis 18:25-27), Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), and 1 John 5:14-15. Together, they teach us to admit that we don't deserve God's favor, to stay humble and trust that our salvation rests on Him, and to submit to His will, relying on His mercy and justice. John assures us that when we pray with this humble attitude, God hears us and answers.

Your Life

Because of our inherent sinful nature, it is still possible to get caught up in pride and self-importance, like the Pharisee in Jesus' parable. However, when we deepen our relationship with God through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, studying His Word, meditation, solitude, and submitting to the Holy Spirit, we can develop Abraham's God-centered confidence and the tax collector's selfless humility.

Your World!

Confidence in prayer is not rooted in one's worthiness, religious activities, or perceived status but in who God is and alignment with His will. It is essential that we approach God with deep reverence and humility, trust His mercy to forgive and restore, and align our prayer requests with His will instead of establishing our own.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, we approach You humbly, aligning our requests for Your mercy, forgiveness, and restoration of our fellowship with Your will, recognizing that those who humble themselves will be exalted and justified in Your sight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

No one is exempt from making mistakes. When we do, how can we learn and mature through them? Next week's lesson answers this question by exploring Peter's restoration as an example for those desiring to overcome their mistakes, persevere, and mature in the faith. Read Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16-18; John 21:15-18; 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 19	“Grow by Following Jesus”	(Matthew 4:18-22)
TUESDAY, January 20	“Grow in Love for God”	(Deuteronomy 7:7-11)
WEDNESDAY, January 21	“Grow in Spiritual Wisdom”	(Colossians 1:3-6, 11-12)
THURSDAY, January 22	“Grow in the Fear of the Lord”	(Proverbs 1:2-7)
FRIDAY, January 23	“Grow in Discerning Good from Evil”	(Proverbs 1:8-12)
SATURDAY, January 24	“Keep On Growing”	(Philippians 3:10-16)
SUNDAY, January 25	“Grow in Grace and Knowledge”	(2 Peter 3:14-18)

Notes

LESSON 8

January 25, 2026

Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

If at First You Don't Succeed, You're Probably Human

DEVOTIONAL READING: Colossians 2:1-7

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 4:18-20; 16:15-18; Luke 2:40, 52; John 1:40-42; 21:15-19; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:6, 9-11; 3:12-16; Colossians 1:9-11; Hebrews 6:1-3; 2 Peter 3:14-18

PRINT PASSAGES: Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16-18; John 21:15-18; 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18

KEY VERSE

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17, KJV)

.....

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Examine the confidence Jesus continued to express in Peter despite his shortcomings and failures.
- Receive the love and encouragement that Jesus offers in our growing faith.
- Offer patience and encouragement to young disciples who desire to grow in faith.

*Key Terms

Blessed (Matthew 16:17)—Greek: *makarios* (mak-ar'-ee-os): happy; fortunate; favored by God.

Casting (Matthew 4:18)—Greek: *balló* (bal'-lo): throwing; putting; placing; thrusting; sending.

Followed (Matthew 4:20)—Greek: *akoloutheó* (ak-ol-oo-theh'-o): accompanied as a disciple.

Girded (John 21:18)—Greek: *zónnumi* (dzone'- noo-mi): fastened with a belt; get “dressed” (NIV).

Longsuffering (2 Peter 3:15)—Greek: *makrothumia* (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah): forbearance; fortitude; slowness in avenging wrongs; “patience” (NIV).

Rock (Matthew 16:18)—Greek: *petra* (pet'- ra)—large stone; metaphorically, a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



The Biblical Context

Matthew 4:18-20 marks the start of Jesus' public ministry and the moment He calls His first disciples, right after His baptism, His time of testing in the wilderness, and the beginning of His preaching. One of the first men Jesus called was Simon, later known as Peter—the main focus of this lesson. Peter became a key leader among the twelve disciples and in the early church. Peter's life showed both great faith and serious struggles. He was passionate and devoted, but he also had moments of fear, doubt, and impulsive behavior. His lowest moment came when he denied knowing Jesus three times, showing how human weakness and fear can take over.

Later, in John 21:15–18, Jesus appeared to His disciples after rising from the dead. In this moment, He gently restored Peter, forgiving him and calling him back to ministry. Finally, in 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18—part of Peter's last letter before he was killed in Rome—he encouraged believers to stay strong in their faith, keep growing spiritually, and stay prepared for Jesus' return, even in the face of false teaching and hard times.

Introduction

Many people call themselves *perfectionists*—folks who aim high and expect to reach every goal. They demand top results and instantly spot tiny flaws. Yet, these same perfectionists still make mistakes, battle doubts, criticize themselves, feel like failures, and suffer painful emotions. The reality is that no one avoids mistakes, no matter how gifted, skilled, or faithful they might be. Everyone, even committed Christians, stumbles sooner or later in life. The reason goes back to Adam. His choice to disobey God let sin into the world, damaged human nature, and set us all on a broken road. Because of that fall, despite our faith and devotion, we will slip up and disappoint ourselves, others, and God. Failure is certain, but despair is optional. The real issue when we stumble—on purpose or by accident—is how we recover, what we learn, and how we repair our walk with the Lord. God invites us to bring our wounds to Him and start again.

Look at Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and disciples. His story shows many highs and lows. In fear, he even swore that he did not know Jesus. Peter's journey proves that God can use our failures to grow us. After Jesus renewed their friendship, Peter discovered the key: keep moving forward, day by day, in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Stumbling and Rising (Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16-18; John 21:15-18)

KJV

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

.....

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

.....

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

NIV

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

.....

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

18 "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

.....

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

18 "Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

Peter's initial call to discipleship was marked by immediate obedience and a willing heart to participate in Jesus' evangelistic mission (Matthew 4:18-20). He also boldly declared a Spirit-directed confession of Jesus as the Messiah—an acknowledgment that reflected his openness to divine truth and growing faith. In response, Jesus affirmed Peter's role in the church's future, commending his insight and commissioning him with a leading responsibility in the church's formation (Matthew 16:16-18). However, a great beginning does not guarantee a smooth journey; because of our human weakness, struggles and failures often accompany spiritual growth. Though genuinely devoted to Christ and full of impulsive passion, Peter experienced profound lows along the way. His most painful failure came when he publicly denied knowing Jesus three times before the Crucifixion—an act that brought guilt, shame, and heartbreak.

Yet, after the Resurrection, Jesus graciously confronted Peter's denial, not with condemnation but with restoration. In a threefold question, "Do you love me?"—mirroring Peter's threefold denial—Jesus forgave, restored, and recommissioned him. He charged Peter to feed and tend His sheep, revealing that true love for Christ is expressed in caring for others actively and compassionately (John 21:15-17). With that recommissioning came a sobering truth: Jesus revealed that Peter's love and obedience would one day cost him his life—death by crucifixion, just as his Master had endured (John 21:18). From Peter's calling to his stumbling, and ultimately to his restoration, we learn a powerful truth: our failures do not disqualify us from fulfilling the unique purpose that God has for our lives. Because of His grace, God still uses imperfect people to serve as His faithful disciples.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do Jesus' words to Peter help shape our understanding of forgiveness and restoration when we fail as believers?

The Remedy for Stumbling (2 Peter 3:14-15, 18)

KJV

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

.....

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

NIV

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

.....

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Peter's spiritual journey as a disciple of Christ is a powerful model of perseverance and growth. His life illustrates that mistakes and failures do not disqualify us from being valuable to God. Peter's final epistle, 2 Peter, reveals how seriously he embraced his grace-filled restoration. He didn't waste the mercy he received; instead, Peter learned from his mistakes and matured spiritually. In chapter 3 of his letter, Peter confronts false teachings meant to mislead believers, particularly about Christ's return. He urges Christians to remain grounded in their faith and to live in anticipation of Jesus' promised return. Drawing from personal experience, Peter reassures his readers that what seems like a delay in Christ's return is actually a demonstration of God's patient mercy—giving more people time to receive salvation. Peter knew this mercy firsthand. After denying Christ three times, he was restored and reinstated as a disciple and became a testimony of God's grace.

Once impulsive and unstable in his spiritual walk, Peter explains how believers can persevere and grow spiritually, even after failure. He encourages them in verse 14 to be “found spotless, blameless, and at peace with God.” Though our salvation is secure, Peter calls believers to intentionally pursue peace with God and a lifestyle that reflects increasing spiritual maturity. In verse 15, Peter reminds his audience again that the delay of Christ’s return is not divine neglect but divine patience rooted in love. It’s the same message Paul preached; both men deeply understood the long, suffering grace of God in their own lives. Peter closes his letter by urging believers to keep growing in two vital areas: grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—essential disciplines for learning and growing from mistakes. He ends with a fitting doxology, giving Christ the glory due to Him, now and forever (verse 18).

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some practical ways to “grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ” to enhance spiritual maturity?

A Closing Thought

No Christian will live a perfect life without mistakes—spiritually or otherwise. We still struggle with our human nature, and even with good intentions, we will sometimes fail. Peter’s highs and lows as a disciple show this clearly. His life also proves that we can grow, mature, and still be used by God, even after we mess up. In 2 Peter 3:18, Peter gives us the answer: keep growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. That’s how we become strong enough to do what Jesus told Peter to do—take care of and help other believers grow in their faith (John 21:17).

Your Life

This lesson challenges us with the reality that because we are human, we will inevitably make mistakes, stumble, and fail (as Peter did) at some point in our spiritual journey. However, like him, we must continue to return to and grow in our knowledge of Christ, learn from our struggles, and rely on the Holy Spirit for strength, direction, discernment, guidance, and wisdom.

Your World!

Peter went from a strong faith to failure—but after repenting, he was restored. Over time, he grew in maturity and was able to help others keep going amid hard times. Many believers struggle with guilt and shame from past mistakes. Peter’s story shows us that failure isn’t the end . . . God can still use us. Let Peter’s example remind you and others that it’s possible to learn from mistakes, rely on God’s patience and mercy, and keep growing in faith no matter what you’ve been through. There’s always hope and a path forward with God.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for providing Peter’s life as an example for us to follow when we experience shortcomings and failure. You extend patient grace to us through Jesus Christ. In gratitude, we commit to offering patience and encouragement to young and new disciples who desire to learn from their mistakes and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores addressing and resisting threats to the spiritual unity that God expects to characterize the faith community. Read Mark 4:26-32; Ephesians 4:4-6, 11-16.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 26	“A Community of Testimony and Praise”	(Psalm 22:22-28)
TUESDAY, January 27	“A Community of Hope-filled Heirs”	(Ephesians 1:15-23)
WEDNESDAY, January 28	“A Community with Divine Authority”	(Matthew 16:13-20)
THURSDAY, January 29	“A Community Made Strong Together”	(Ecclesiastes 4:7-12)
FRIDAY, January 30	“A Community United in Worship”	(Psalm 150)
SATURDAY, January 31	“A Community Silently Growing”	(Mark 4:26-32)
SUNDAY, February 1	“A Community of Oneness”	(Ephesians 4:4-16)

Notes