

Adult Bible Study
in Practical
Christian Living

Christian Education
Quarterly Lessons
For Church School

OVERCOMING
Inner Problems

Project for CE520
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Note: E. Stanley Jones' book How To Be A Transformed Person (copyright 1951 by Pierce & Smith) was used as a reference book for these lessons. Some of the material and ideas in them are taken from this book.

Lesson 1 and 2

The problem of sin

The biggest problem that anyone has today is the problem of sin. Sin may be defined as breaking God's moral law as contained in the ten commandments or simply as doing wrong in the sight of God by a willful act or attitude of rebellion against him. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This means all of us have the problem of sin. Why is sin a problem? It is a problem because it brings spiritual decay and ruination to our personality and being. Just as God made our bodies to be healthy, so he made our inner self or souls to be healthy. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. 3 John 1:2

But our souls are healthy only as we live in him and are morally upright in our character by being holy as he is holy in deeds and character. "Be ye holy; for I am holy. I Peter 1:16

When man willfully breaks God's moral laws and sins, he brings a spiritual sickness into his soul that causes him great misery and sorrow. Just as the body experiences pain when it is sick, so likewise does the soul when we sin. Also our sin cuts us off from God, who is the only source of life and being cut off from him, we wither and die like a branch that has been cut off from the tree. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15: 6

All of the feelings of emptiness, guilt, apathy and other miseries we experience are symptoms of the sickness of sin. Jesus said in Mark 7:20-23 that sin comes from the heart which is man's center of being. The main reason anyone lives in sin is because he is self centered rather than God centered. Man's whole being is healthy and well only as he lets God rule his life. When he chooses to rule his own life in rebellion, he brings spiritual sickness and decay and eventually death upon himself. The fruits and examples of the suffering decay and ruination of human personality are easily seen in this life and will continue after death with eternal suffering.

Here are some of the elements of ruination that are caused by sin:

- 1) alienation from God
- 2) alienation from your neighbors
- 3) alienation from your loved ones
- 4) many physical diseases
- 5) inner conflicts causing nervous and mental breakdowns
- 6) destruction of personality and emotions
- 7) destruction of potential talents and abilities
- 8) confusion and corruption of minds
- 9) spiritual sickness and death
- 10) everlasting judgement in hell

But there is hope even for the problem of sin. Listen to what the Lord says in Isaiah 1:18. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white like snow; though they red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Lord God almighty has a solution for the problem of sin. We shall study it in the next lesson.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) List the sins given in Mark 7:21,22 and Romans 1:29-32 and Galatians 5:19-21 and make sure you understand their meaning. _____

- 2) What gift has God given us to make us aware of sin? Romans 2:14 and 15 _____

- 3) How does the answer to number 2 make us aware of sin? Romans 3:19 _____

- 4) What is necessary for the pardon of sin? Hebrews 9:22 _____

5) Why does man sin? James 1:13-15 _____

6) Why can't man solve the problem of sin? John 8:33,34
Romans 7:14,23 _____

7) How does God feel about our sin? Ezekiel 18:29-32

Lesson 3 and 4

The solution to sin

Bible verse: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the last lesson we talked about the problem of sin. This lesson we will talk about its solution.

What is the solution to the problem of sin? The solution is the forgiveness from God. There is nothing any of us can do to solve this terrible problem - all men are helpless. We cannot save ourselves. But God has provided the solution through the forgiveness that Jesus Christ offers to all men. Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Christ's death provides the merit by which we can receive God's forgiveness. Receiving God's forgiveness is many times called conversion or the new birth. It is being transformed from all the sins and the decay and ruination sin has brought to us into the life of Christ where spiritual life, health and healing is found for us. Here are four simple steps to follow to overcome the problem of sin and enter into Christ's salvation:

- 1) Change your mind - stop denying or excusing your sin and accept the responsibility for it. Stop denying the truth about Jesus Christ and accept that he is the only one who can save you.
- 2) Self-surrender - surrender yourself and your sin to God through Jesus Christ. Renounce your self-centered life and accept God's rule over your life.
- 3) Acceptance - accept the free gift of forgiveness and salvation found in Christ through faith (faith is the way you receive).
- 4) Obedience - begin to obey the will of God as it unfolds before you.

The solution to the sin problem is found by living the life of love found in Jesus Christ. As we love God with our whole being and our neighbor as ourselves, we become free from the problem of sin. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of

of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law (or problems) of sin and death".

Here are several different definitions of conversion found in E. Stanley Jones' book How To Be A Transformed Person that help describe it better.

- 1) Conversion is the invasion of man's life by the Spirit of God who conforms him into the image of Christ.
- 2) Conversion is the adjustment of one's whole self to God.
- 3) Conversion is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- 4) Conversion is a personal faith in and surrender to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, resulting in a changed life and relationship.
- 5) In modern vernacular, God throws us the ball, we reach out and take the ball and begin running to a goal.
- 6) Conversion is a halt, right-about-face quick march.
- 7) Conversion is conversion from perversion. It is the bringing of the natural powers turned toward unnatural uses back to their natural intention. In conversion you become supernaturally natural.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) How is the blood of Jesus important for our forgiveness? Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, I Peter 1:19 and I John 1:7

- 2) Must we do anything before we can receive this forgiveness? Titus 3:5, Romans 11:6 and Ephesians 2:8,9 _____

- 3) Another term for changing your mind is what? Acts 2:37,38

- 4) Other ways to describe self-surrender is? I Peter 5:6, Romans 12:1,2 and James 4:6-10 _____

- 5) What other wonderful things happen to us at conversion?
I John 3:1, Romans 8:15-17, Isaiah 61:1-3, Romans 5:1-5,
II Corinthians 5:17,18. Galatians 5:22,23, John 3:3-8,
John 4:14, John 1:12 13, Romans 14:17, Romans 12:13
and Corinthians 4:6
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Lesson 5

Overcoming through transformation

Bible Verse: But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Peter 3:18

Once you have been converted, you have passed from death to life, from bondage of sin to the freedom of Christ, from the old creation into the new. But conversion isn't the beginning and the end both. It is only the beginning of a new way of life. Christianity isn't just an experience, it is a way of life - the new life of love that is lived by faith in Jesus Christ. When you first get saved from sin, you are like a new baby in God's family and need to learn many things. You will find that although Christ has set you free, you are not perfect but simply forgiven. You have just started to be changed and transformed into the image of Christ. This Christian life is really a whole life of transformation. Just as a baby changes as it grows to adulthood, so do we spiritually change as we grow up in Christ. We are changed from glory to glory. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." II Corinthians 3:18 Even though we have been made new, sometimes it takes a while for the old habits and attitudes to fall off. There are old habits and attitudes that need to be dealt with and transformed one at a time. They are like dead leaves that still must fall off the tree. If you see some problems and bad habits or even bondages in your life, don't be discouraged or doubt your salvation. The core of your being has been changed and you are now really a child of God with his holiness in you. (II Corinthians 5:17) But some of the old sinful habits are still hanging on you like dead leaves on a tree or like the old skin on a snake that is shed. Simply lift yourself and your problem or bondage to the Lord in full surrender then by trust accept God's transforming grace into your life for the area of concern, then begin to walk in obedience and freedom in that area. God will lift you

up and out of that bondage into the new life and freedom of Christ. You must let him do it. You are helpless and can never save or fix up your own life even after you're saved.

Sometimes in the Christian life we do stumble and fall. But that is alright. God still loves you and is with you. Just ask and receive his forgiveness afresh and let him lift you up by his grace anew. Just as a baby who is learning to walk many times stumbles and fall, so likewise do spiritual babies. It's part of growing up. Remember there is no condemnation or criticism in Christ Jesus - just mercy and love. Romans 8:1.

This victory in Christ is found not only in changing us by freeing us from bondage into liberty but also in changing our attitudes to our circumstances and problems by lifting all the problems and trouble we face each day and allow Christ to change them for his glory and our welfare. We will soon find that all things are working for our good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 It isn't our troubles and hard circumstances that defeat us, but rather the way we respond to them. We can either respond in a negative way and let them defeat us by driving us into the old ways, or we can respond positively through faith and let Jesus have and change them for our good as stepping stones up into higher ground. Then we can give thanks for everything. II Thessalonians 5:18

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) Does conversion make a new Christian perfect and sinless?
Romans 8:26-27, I John 2:1,2, I Corinthians 3:1-3 _____

- 2) What should we do to make these old bad habits disappear?
Romans 8:4-6, Romans 6:11-23, and Romans 12:1,2 _____

3) How does God feel toward us when we sin and come to him for mercy? I John 1:9, Romans 8:1, John 6:37 and Jeremiah 29:11-13 _____

4) How should we believe and respond to all the trouble; problems and sufferings of life? Romans 8:28, II Cor. 8-10 Philipians 4:6&7, Philipians 4:13, Ephesians 4:20, II Thessalonians 5:18 _____

Lesson 6

Overcoming our thinking problems

Bible Verse: And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may be able to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2

The way we think has a profound effect on the way we live. All of our successes and failures directly are related to our thought life. When we changed our minds about Jesus and received his word, we were born again. When we listen to temptation and think and believe in the false charms of sin, we wind up sinning. The Bible says, "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

Jesus said that "the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye is single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Matthew 6:22,23. The eye is our outlook on life or the way we see things. When our thoughts are self-centered or evil, we live in darkness but if our thoughts are single or God-centered, our outlook is full of light. When our thoughts are God-centered, we view life through God's view. We put on the mind of Christ and our whole personality lights up and it brings freedom. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus". Philippians 2:5

When we let our minds be filled with negative, doubtful or weak thoughts, they begin to make us into a weak, negative person. When you habitually think thoughts of such: I'm afraid, I'm sick, I can't do this, I'm not well, I may fail or similar thoughts, they eventually make us sick. They take us out of God's creative life stream into the stream of decay, sickness and death. The Lord wants us to say yes to life by affirming God is with us and will give us his help to face and overcome everything. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold

thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41:10 We should say like Paul "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Just take responsibility for your thoughts because you can think any way you choose. Lift and surrender your negative thoughts to the Lord and trust him to give you grace to fill your mind with good thoughts of faith. Spend a quiet time with God to expose yourself to his influence. Push all negative thoughts or words out of your mind. Then obey the command in Philippians 4:8, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true,...honest,...just,...lovely,...of good report,... if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things and the God of peace will be with you." God will fill your heart and mind with peace as you think on good things. As we stop thinking as the world does and allow God to renew our minds through his spirit and word, we will see more clearly the blessedness of God's will and way. This in itself will bring healing to us.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) What can cause our being or personality to be full of darkness? Matthew 6:22 & 23 _____

- 2) What did Paul say we should do with negative fearful thoughts? II Corinthians 10:4-5 _____

- 3) What does God promise to do with those whose minds are Christ centered? Isaiah 26:3 _____

- 4) How do we allow God to renew our minds so we think like Christ and are spiritually minded? Ephesians 5:18-20, Ephesians 6:17-18, Colossians 3:1-3,16, Galatians 5:24-25, Ephesians 4:22-24 and II Timothy 2:15 _____

Lesson 7

The healing of the subconscious

Bible verse: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. I Corinthians 10:5

There is another part of the mind that had a profound influence on the way we live. This is the subconscious and it too needs to come under the rule of Jesus Christ if we are to be whole. Dr. Charles Mayo declared that 75% of human action is controlled by the subconscious mind while only 25% is controlled by the conscious mind. Hence a good deal of the way we act is being controlled by a part of us we do not consciously control. Sometimes when our conscious mind becomes converted, our subconscious lags behind and is still under the sway of the drives of the old nature such as self, sex or manpleasing. The two opposite drives cancel each other out and the Christian life comes to a standstill resulting in confusion and conflict. Only as both conscious and subconsciousness are both brought in harmony under Jesus' control, can we find real peace of mind. Many times traumatic experiences of life that cause fear, grief and pain are stored in our subconscious causing us to act strangely or irrationally and abnormal. Seabury tells of a story of a woman named Miss Landon who at the age of 3 was closed up in a closet by a nurse which produced an unconscious fear of the dark. Tunnels, dark streets or subways all produced terrors within her. When she rode a train through a tunnel, her teeth would chatter for hours for fear and she had to restrain screams of terror. Her intellect told her there was nothing to fear but the fears of her childhood had dropped into her subconscious and worked havoc.

Jesus can set us free from the conflicts of a subconscious mind that needs to be healed and made whole. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from

the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2 Jesus promises include setting us free and not just repressing the conflicts. We cannot heal our subconscious but the Holy Spirit can. To be healed we must surrender our subconscious to the Holy Spirit who is able to reach into the depths of our subconscious bringing to it cleansing and deliverance and transforming it into wholeness and health. As we commit our minds to him and simply trust him and accept his gift of healing freely, then we will begin to store up in our subconscious good things and attitudes that we will draw from in times of trials. You can make your subconscious a storehouse for good by dropping into it good deeds, good words and good attitudes. Jesus said a good man brings good out of his storehouse. Matthew 12:35 When you let Christ transform and heal your mind, your whole life will change for good. You help make a good subconscious and it turns around and helps make a good you. The subconscious then can be helpful to produce good attitudes and feelings within you.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you see any evidence in your life that you might need your subconscious healed? Psalm 139:2, 23, 24 _____

- 2) What does Paul say God gives us concerning the mind in II Timothy 1:17 _____
- 3) By what merit do you receive God's healing for your subconscious mind? Isaiah 53:5, I Peter 2:24 _____

Lesson 8

The healing of emotions

Bible Verse: A broken spirit drieth the bones. Proverbs 17:22
The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity,
but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Many Christians have been converted in their minds and their wills but their emotions still need to be transformed. They are still filled with fears, griefs, resentments, jealousies, guilt, self-pity, worry and other feelings of the old life. Hence their Christian lives are stopped short of success and harmony in their spiritual life by their emotions. Emotions are a very important part of us that drives our personality. They can drive us for good or for evil. They need to be under the reign of Jesus Christ so they are filled with his goodness and love to drive us for good. Bad emotions effect our entire being. They can hinder and twist our thinking to think wrong, and also make our bodies sick. They need to be converted if we desire true health.

Jesus came to heal us and set us free from all spiritual bondages and sickness. In Luke 4:18 he says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised. The Lord is able to deliver and heal us from our bad emotions and replace them with the good emotion found in him. Here are some simple steps suggested by E. Stanley Jones to take to allow Jesus to heal your emotions:

- 1) Reject the negative statement, "you cannot straighten out twisted and broken emotions". God is able and desires you to be healed.
- 2) Don't fight against your emotions - it will only make them worse by tensing you up.
- 3) Don't defend or deny your emotions. It will only suppress and drive them into the subconscious where they will affect you worse.
- 4) Surrender them to God - put them in his hands and really part with them. He has them.

- 5) Now relax - because God has your emotions. Stop fighting and being tense. Just open and receive his grace to overcome these hurtful emotions. Let your emotions be God-centered and no longer fear them. Let them be transformed and used to drive you for good.

- 6) Cultivate good wholesome emotions. If they were negative now cultivate positive emotions. If there was fear, cultivate faith if hate or unforgiveness - cultivate love. Use your emotions now for your good and God's glory.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) What does God want to replace depression with in Isaiah 61:3?

- 2) Should we feel condemned because our emotions need healing?
Romans 8:1 _____

- 3) What are the fruits of the Spirit that can replace our
our twisted emotions? _____

- 4) Is it all right to get emotional when you worship and
serve God? Matthew 22:37, Colossians 3:23,24 _____

Lesson 9

Overcoming fear

Bible Verse: I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4

First of all it is important to distinguish between wholesome fear and destructive fear. Wholesome fear is a gift from God and has no torment to it. It is a warning valve God has given us to prevent us from harming ourselves or others physically, morally or spiritually. It keeps us from driving ourselves off the road near a cliff, the mother from feeding her family the wrong foods, or a good man from transgressing a moral law of God. Wholesome fear is God's preventive medicine.

But when fear runs wild and uncontrolled, it becomes probably the most destructive force of the emotions. It can totally destroy a human personality. Obsessive fear is man's worst enemy. One form of fear that destroys is chronic anxiety or worry. It actually chokes our very freedom away and robs us of the joy and success in living. Fear can show itself in many ways. Some of the symptoms of fear are apprehension, restlessness, shuddering at real danger, boredom, silence, turning away from things or people, and depression or discouragement. Resentment can hide it and timid submission can cover it.

The Bible says, "There is no fear in love but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment." I John 4:18 The torment is a bondage that freezes our whole being and keeps us from really living the Christian life. The fear of men keep us from witnessing and sharing the Good News about our Savior. The fear of the future keeps us from rising up to change our circumstances for the glory of God and robs us of a healthy expectancy about tomorrow. The fear of death brings a hopelessness about life and keeps us from rejoicing in our eternal life we have in Christ. If fear has control of us, we are its captive. But Jesus said he came to set the captives free. Romans 8:2 says, "the law of the Spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death."

There is freedom from fear in the new life in Christ. You don't have to be a slave to fear and its torment. You can be a slave to perfect love that will drive out your fears as you make Christ the Lord of your fears. He will drive them out. You can face life in the confidence of his love that all will work out well. Here are some simple concrete steps out of fear that E. Stanley Jones shares.

- 1) Realize that to attempt to escape from anything feared means worse bondage.
- 2) Give up desires for the impossible and confine yourself to the possible.
- 3) Separate the imaginary fears from the real ones.
- 4) Now face those real fears head on.
- 5) Surrender each fear to God and look to God trusting him to give you the grace and power to overcome them. Let Jesus capture the imagination.
- 6) Now begin to do those things you're afraid in God's new strength.

Now we can take the same stand as David: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) Does God ever want us to be afraid? II Timothy 1:7, Romans 8:15, Mark 6:50 _____

- 2) Why don't we have to be afraid of anything? Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:5,6, John 16:33 and Joshua 1:9 _____

- 3) What does God give us instead of fear? Romans 8:15, Acts 1:8, II Tim 1:7, John 14:27 _____

- 4) What should we do instead of worry? Matthew 6:31-34
Philippians 4:4-8 _____

Lesson 10
Overcoming Resentment

Bible Verse: And when ye stand praying forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
Mark 11:25

Resentment is another name for unforgiveness, hate, grudges and anger. There are three directions one can hold resentments: towards others, towards yourself and towards God. But no one can afford to hold resentment. The terrible price one pays is too high. Resentment puts one's whole mental and physical system on the war path. It takes away one's peace of mind and heart and brings mental stress, physical sickness and sometimes even death. There are many cases of people who have wound up in the hospital sick especially in the stomach areas because they wouldn't forgive. E. Stanley Jones tells of a man who although once was very healthy, became very enraged at his sister who took him to court to sue him. He nursed that anger, dwelt constantly on his anger through word and thought. He lost his appetite and sleep, developed poor indigestion, and soon his heart and kidneys failed and he died. His resentful feelings so affected his body they killed him.

When we don't forgive, we shut ourselves off from the grace of God we all need in order to live healthy, happy lives. Jesus said if you don't forgive yourself or others, neither can God forgive you. Mark 11:26. That simply means that God cannot pour his grace on your life anymore to help you live. You cut yourself off from God's unseen help. All of us have sinned and all of us need forgiveness. God who is perfect had mercy on us when we were constantly sinning against him and sent his Son to die (Romans 5:8). So God expects us to forgive those around us, including ourselves, even when they don't deserve it or ask for it. It's as much for ourselves as we give it to others. Only as we forgive others can God continually forgive us.

Here are some concrete steps to take out of resentments that E. Stanely Jones shares with us:

- 1) Fix in your mind as a basic principle that all hate, resentments, are wrong no matter how justified.
- 2) Realize that all resentments are wrong not only because of the natural destructive effects on people but also they are wrong according to Christ.
- 3) Surrender your resentments to God and agree for him to them away.
- 4) Now actively forgive those against whom you hold the resentments. Let God help you by thinking how much he loves you to send Jesus to die for you.
- 5) Next try to do good for anyone against whom you held resentments including yourself. Allow God's love to fill your heart for them and love them.

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you have any hidden resentments against others, yourself, or God? Sometimes you may even suppress them into your subconscious. Allow God to show you. Jude 20,21, Hebrews 12:14,15, Ephesians 4:31,32, Psalm 139:23,24
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- 2) Does the Bible say that everyone should and will treat us right? Psalm 34:19, I Peter 2:19,20, Romans 12:17-21, I John 3:13
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- 3) Can we continue to love God if we hold resentments and hate others? I John 4:20, 21
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Lesson 11

Overcoming Excessive Grief

Bible Verse: Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing.

Psalm 30:11 I (the Lord) will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." Jeremiah 31:13

Grief comes to us all. It is an unavoidable part of mortal existence that all of us will experience because of the natural order of things. Nobody can escape it. Even Jesus wept by the side of his friend's Lazarus' grave.

But how grief affects us determines how we respond to it. Some of us take it in stride and do well. Some of us take it badly and it crushes the life out of us.

Jesus came to save us from not only our sins but from all the harmful woes of a fallen order. He is it that said "Be of good cheer I have overcome the world." The cross has obtained for us all the grace we need in this life to meet every sorrow and disappointment in such a way we come out rejoicing. Jesus cares and can really help us. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities... let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15 & 16 The Lord can give you victory over grief and turn your sorrow and morning into the oil of gladness, take your spirit of heaviness and give your the garment of praise.

Here are some helpful concrete steps E. Stanley Jones shares on how to deal with grief:

- 1) Make up your mind calmly that grief is bound to come to you. This will help you avoid the martyr complex of being picked on. Grief is something all must experience including me. This will prepare you for grief so you don't react with self-pity.
- 2) Don't try to escape grief and sorrow by any illusions or denials. This will be worse in the end than the actual grief.

- 3) Face your grief in quietness before God and surrender it into his hands.
- 4) Now go out and find someone with grief and sorrow and try to comfort and help them. You are the most fit to comfort others with the comfort God has given you. your own grief has made you fit to ministers.
- 5) Don't bear your grief; but rather let it be transformed by God for a strengthening of your character and contribution. Use it as a driving force for good to inspire you to help others.
- 6) Remember if you have a loved one in Christ, he is not lost. Jesus said he was the resurrection and the life and anyone who believes in him even though he is dead, he will live and anyone living who believes shall never die. John 11:25,26. You will see your loved one again. He is happy and alive with Christ in heaven.

Let us all rejoice for Christ has conquered death for us and has given us eternal life so we can all say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? I Corinthians 15:55

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) How should we prepare ourselves for grief? Ecclesiastes 3:1-12, 18-22 Hebrews 9:27 _____

- 2) What is it about grief that can make us withdraw and pamper ourselves? _____

- 3) Think of some good things God desires to replace our grief with. I Peter 1:3, Isaiah 61:2,3 _____

Overcoming Suffering and Tragedy

Bible Verse: What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Romans 8:28

Many of us are cast down and discouraged with the pains that come from the sufferings of this life. What does the Christian faith give us in regards to suffering? First of all it does not promise us exemption from suffering, especially when the author of our faith suffered so for us on the cross. Jesus does not protect us from all the sufferings of this world but he does give us the grace to transform that suffering into something good and profitable for us. The cross was transformed by him into a thing of salvation and beauty.

Remember it is not the suffering or tragedy itself that hurts you but how you respond to it. If you respond negatively, it is your negative response that hurts you much more than the trial. How does the Christian faith teach us to respond? We should respond positively with thanksgiving. The Bible teaches "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I Thessalonians 5:18 The Christian philosophy is to take everything that happens to us good bad or indifferent hand it up to God and then by his grace make something good out of it for ourselves and his glory. We know God has allowed these trials for our good. Now all we have to do is by his grace take the suffering and make something good out of it. See it as a step to draw you closer to God and to higher ground.

Paul the Apostle tells us in the Bible of a thorn of suffering he had and how he besought the Lord to take it from him. But the Lord did not but simply said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." II Corth. 12:9 Paul learned that our sufferings allow the power and spirit of Chirst to work in a great way in us thus helping us experience him more and learn to know him and his love more. So Paul

rejoiced in his infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses realizing they made him strong in Christ. As we respond to suffering and tragedy with faith in Christ, he gives us the strength and grace to turn that suffering into something good for us. Death itself becomes for us a step into heaven. So we should look every closed door as an opening to a better door, and every tragedy as a step up from a dull life of ease into the exciting creative life of Christ. God is using your sufferings to make his grace to abound more fully to you so you can experience more of his grace and love. God is making sure all these trials our working for our good and profit. If we really believe it, we will receive his grace daily and rejoice always because we can only win in every situation. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..." II Cor. 12:14

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) What should we believe concerning our sufferings and tragedies? Romans 8:28, Gen. 50:20 _____

- 2) How should we respond to everything including our sufferings and trials. I Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20 and James 1:2 _____

- 3) Is it possible we may need these tiral to live a fuller happier life and to be faithful Christians? II Corinthians 12: 7-11, James 1:2-4, Hebrews 5:7-8, II Corinthian 4:16-18 and Romans 8:18 _____

