

no more secrets

Revealing Jesus - Discussion Guide #6



INQUIRY

1. How do people try to justify deception?
2. Is a “white lie” ever acceptable? Why or why not?
3. How can hope be abused?
4. How do you feel about giving someone or something your absolute loyalty?
5. What are the biggest distractions in your life?

INQUEST

Life and death. Good and evil. Right and wrong. They’re nice abstract concepts—until it comes to getting your act together. In our quest for wholeness and direction, we fight no bigger battle than with ourselves.

In Romans 7:14-20, Paul laid out his own spiritual struggle:

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

That’s heavy stuff—and it cuts right to the heart of the human condition.

1. How much do you relate to Paul’s words, such as “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do”?
2. What does this suggest about how much we should judge others?
3. Why is it so hard to change ourselves?

And then verses 21-25: “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

1. Do people seem more inclined to good or to evil, to selfishness or to service?
2. What is the “another law” working inside us, spiritually imprisoning us?
3. How can we reshape ourselves on the inside?
4. How can we feed the constructive, rather than self-destructive, side to ourselves?

Though the Bible is full of encouragement for those who struggle, it has pointed words for the presumptuous. Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:13-23.

1. Can we simply stumble onto the right path in life? Why or why not?
2. How do spiritual predators disguise themselves?
3. Can a spiritually fake person still accomplish good things?
4. Why would Jesus call someone who did good—in His name, no less—an “evildoer”?

CROSS-EXAMINATION

“Popular revivals too often excite the emotions, gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth. Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attraction for them.”

1. Why are so many people only interested in the superficial?
2. How can we communicate truth without trivializing it?

“Without the law, men have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. They do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes join the church who have never been united to Christ.”

1. An old saying describes “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.” How might the law of God and the story of Jesus’ sacrifice do that?
2. If we claim a religion, what should our motivation be for it?
3. What does salvation mean to you?

“There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary’s cross. They feel that it was their sin which caused the agony that broke the heart of the Son of God, and this thought will lead to self-abasement. Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and sinfulness of humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour.”

1. What does it say about someone if they claim personal perfection?
2. How may focusing on Jesus empower us? How may it humble us?

“The claim to be without sin is evidence that he who makes this claim is far from holy. He has no true conception of the infinite purity and holiness of God, and the malignity and evil of sin. The greater the distance between himself and Christ, the more righteous he appears in his own eyes.”

1. What attitude should followers of Jesus have toward others and their struggles with sin?
2. Should we focus more on purity or on wholeness? Why?
3. What temptation may those who focus on avoiding sin fall into?



Chapter 6— *True Peace*

Wherever the Word of God has been faithfully preached, results have followed that attested its divine origin. Sinners felt their consciences quickened. Deep conviction took hold upon their minds and hearts. They had a sense of the righteousness of God, and cried out: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. As the cross was revealed, they saw that nothing but the merits of Christ could atone for their transgressions. Through the blood of Jesus they had "remission of sins that are past." Romans 3:25.

These souls believed and were baptized and rose to walk in newness of life, by the faith of the Son of God to follow in His steps, to reflect His character, and to purify themselves even as He is pure. Things they once hated they now loved, and things they once loved they hated. The proud became meek, the vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The drunken became sober, the profligate pure. Christians sought not the "outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but . . . that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

Revivals were characterized by solemn appeals to the sinner. The fruits were seen in souls who shrank not at self-denial but rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. Men beheld a transformation in those who professed the name of Jesus. Such were the effects that in former years followed seasons of religious awakening.

But many revivals of modern times present a marked contrast. It is true that many profess conversion, and there are large accessions to the churches. Nevertheless the results are not such as to warrant the belief that there has been a corresponding increase of real spiritual life. The light which flames up for a time soon dies out.

Popular revivals too often excite the emotions, gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth. Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attraction for them.

With every truly converted soul the relation to God and to eternal things will be the great topic of life. Where in the popular churches of today is the spirit of consecration to God? Converts do not renounce pride and love of the world. They are no more willing to deny self and follow the meek and lowly Jesus than before their conversion. Godliness has well-nigh departed from many of the churches.

True Followers of Christ

Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith, there are true followers of Christ in these churches. Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be among the people of the Lord a revival of primitive godliness not witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit of God will be poured out. Many will separate from those churches in which love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word. Many ministers and people will gladly accept those great truths which prepare a people for the Lord's second coming.

The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work, and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In

those churches which he can bring under his power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out. Multitudes will exult, "God is working marvelously," when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world. In such revivals there is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, well adapted to mislead.

Yet in the light of God's Word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world, there we may be sure that God's blessing is not bestowed. And by the rule, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16), it is evident that these movements are not the work of the Spirit of God.

The truths of God's Word are a shield against the deceptions of Satan. Neglect of these truths has opened the door to the evils now widespread in the world. The importance of the law of God has been to a great extent lost sight of. A wrong conception of the divine law has led to errors in conversion and sanctification, lowering the standard of piety. Here is to be found the secret of the lack of the Spirit of God in the revivals of our time.

The Law of Liberty

Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law. Some represent it as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the "bondage" of the law they present the "liberty" to be enjoyed under the gospel.

But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. Said David: "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Psalm 119:45. The apostle James refers to the Decalogue as "the perfect law of liberty." James 1:25. The Revelator pronounces a blessing upon them "that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

Had it been possible for the law to be changed or set aside, Christ need not have died to save man from the penalty of sin. The Son of God came to "magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isaiah 42:21. He said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law"; "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Concerning Himself He declared: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Matthew 5:17, 18; Psalm 40:8.

The law of God is unchangeable, a revelation of the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Says the psalmist: "Thy law is the truth"; "all thy commandments are righteousness." Paul declares: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Romans 13:10; Psalm 119:142, 172; Romans 7:12. Such a law must be as enduring as its Author.

It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law. In the beginning, man was in perfect harmony with the law of God. But sin alienated him from his Maker. His heart was at war with God's law. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," that man might be reconciled to God, restored to harmony with his Maker. This change is the new birth, without which "he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:16, 3.

Conviction of Sin

The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." "By the law is the knowledge of sin." 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own.

The law reveals to man his sin, but provides no remedy. It declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed, and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains "remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25) and becomes a child of God.

Luther Illustrates Finding Forgiveness and Salvation

A desire to find peace with God led Martin Luther to devote himself to a monastic life. Here he was required to perform the lowest drudgery and to beg from house to house. He patiently endured this humiliation, believing it necessary because of his sins.

He led a most rigorous life, endeavoring by fasting, vigils, and scourgings to subdue the evils of his nature. He afterward said, "If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. . . . If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortifications even to death."¹ With all his efforts, his burdened soul found no relief. He was at last driven to the verge of despair.

When it appeared that all was lost, God raised up a friend for him. Staupitz opened the Word of God to Luther's mind and bade him look away from self and look to Jesus. "Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in Him, in the righteousness of His life, in the atonement of His death. . . . The Son of God . . . became man to give you the assurance of divine favor. . . . Love Him who first loved you."² His words made a deep impression on Luther's mind. Peace came to his troubled soul.

Later, Luther's voice was heard from the pulpit in solemn warning. He set before the people the offensive character of sin and taught that it is impossible for man by his own works to lessen its guilt or evade its punishment. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased; it is a free gift. He counseled the people not to buy indulgences, but to look in faith to a crucified Redeemer. He related his own painful experience and assured his hearers that it was by believing in Christ that he found peace and joy.

Does Forgiveness Free Us From Obedience?

Is the forgiven sinner now free to transgress God's law? Says Paul: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" John declares: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, into accord with His law. When this change has taken place in the sinner he has passed from death unto life, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life has ended; the new life of reconciliation, faith, and love has begun. Then "the righteousness of the law" will "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The language of the soul will be: "O

how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Romans 3:31; 6:2; 1 John 5:3; Romans 8:4; Psalm 119:97.

Without the law, men have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. They do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes join the church who have never been united to Christ.

What Is Sanctification?

Erroneous theories of sanctification also spring from neglect or rejection of the divine law. These theories, false in doctrine and dangerous in practical results, are generally finding favor.

Paul declares, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for His disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." And Paul teaches that believers are to be "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." 1 Thessalonians 4:3; John 17:17; Romans 15:16.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told His disciples: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13. And the psalmist says: "Thy law is the truth." Since the law of God is "holy and just and good," a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says: "I have kept my Father's commandments." "I do always those things that please him." John 15:10; 8:29. The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification.

Only Through Faith

This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will maintain a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

The work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God, the Christian life has just begun. Now he is to "go on unto perfection," to grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Hebrews 6:1; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:14.

Those who experience Bible sanctification will manifest humility. They see their own unworthiness in contrast with the perfection of the Infinite One. The prophet Daniel was an example of true sanctification. Instead of claiming to be pure and holy, this honored prophet identified himself with the really sinful of Israel as he pleaded before God in behalf of his people. Daniel 10:11; 9:15, 18, 20; 10:8, 11.

There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary's cross. They feel that it was their sin which caused the agony that broke the heart of the Son of God, and this thought will lead to self-abasement. Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and

sinfulness of humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour.

The sanctification now gaining prominence in the religious world carries a spirit of self-exaltation and disregard for the law of God that mark it as foreign to the Bible. Its advocates teach that sanctification is an instantaneous work, by which, through "faith alone," they attain perfect holiness. "Only believe," say they, "and the blessing is yours." No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required. At the same time they deny the authority of the law of God, urging that they are released from obligation to keep the commandments. But is it possible to be holy without coming into harmony with the principles which express God's nature and will?

The testimony of the Word of God is against this ensnaring doctrine of faith without works. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions upon which mercy is to be granted. It is presumption. See James 2:14-24.

Let none deceive themselves that they can become holy while willfully violating one of God's requirements. Known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God. Though John dwells so fully upon love, he does not hesitate to reveal the true character of that class who claim to be sanctified while living in transgression of the law of God. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." 1 John 2:4, 5. Here is the test of every man's profession. If men belittle and make light of God's precepts, if they "break one of the least of these commandments and teach men so" (Matthew 5:18, 19), we may know that their claims are without foundation.

The claim to be without sin is evidence that he who makes this claim is far from holy. He has no true conception of the infinite purity and holiness of God, and the malignity and evil of sin. The greater the distance between himself and Christ, the more righteous he appears in his own eyes.

Biblical Sanctification

Sanctification embraces the entire being—spirit, soul, and body. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Christians are bidden to present their bodies, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Romans 12:1. Every practice that weakens physical or mental strength unfits man for the service of his Creator. Those who love God with all their heart will constantly seek to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that promote their ability to do His will. They will not by indulgence of appetite or passion enfeeble or defile the offering they present to their heavenly Father.

Every sinful gratification tends to benumb and deaden the mental and spiritual perceptions; the Word or Spirit of God can make but a feeble impression on the heart. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1.

How many professed Christians are debasing their godlike manhood by gluttony, by wine drinking, by forbidden pleasure. And the church too often encourages the evil, to replenish her treasury which love for Christ is too feeble to supply. Were Jesus to enter the churches of today and behold the feasting there conducted in the name of religion, would He not drive out those desecrators, as He banished the moneychangers from the temple?

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. He whose body is the temple of the Holy Spirit will not be enslaved by a pernicious habit. His powers belong to Christ. His property is the Lord's. How could he squander this entrusted capital?

Professed Christians yearly expend an immense sum on pernicious indulgences. God is robbed in tithes and offerings, while they consume on the altar of destroying lust more than they give to relieve the poor or support the gospel. If all who profess Christ were truly sanctified, their means, instead of being spent for needless and hurtful indulgences, would be turned into the Lord's treasury. Christians would set an example of temperance and self-sacrifice. Then they would be the light of the world.

"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) control the masses. But Christ's followers have a holier calling. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean." To those who comply with the conditions, God's promise is, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

Direct Access to God

Every step of faith and obedience brings the soul into closer connection with the Light of the World. The bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon the servants of God, and they are to reflect His rays. The stars tell us that there is a light in heaven with whose glory they are made bright; so Christians make it manifest that there is a God on the throne whose character is worthy of praise and imitation. The holiness of His character will be manifest in His witnesses.

Through the merits of Christ we have access to the throne of Infinite Power. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Jesus says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Romans 8:32; Luke 11:13; John 14:14; 16:24.

It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed and stand before the law without shame and remorse.

Through Jesus the fallen sons of Adam become "sons of God." "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Christian's life should be one of faith, victory, and joy in God. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Hebrews 2:11; Nehemiah 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Such are the fruits of Bible conversion and sanctification; and it is because the great principles of righteousness set forth in the law are so indifferently regarded that these fruits are so rarely witnessed. This is why there is manifest so little of that deep, abiding work of the Spirit which marked former revivals.

It is by beholding that we become changed. As those sacred precepts in which God has opened to men the perfection and holiness of His character are neglected, and the minds of the people are attracted to human teachings and theories, there has followed a decline of piety in the church. It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people.

¹ J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, bk. 2, ch. 3.

² *Ibid.*, bk. 2, ch. 4.

Sources

In the list below, under each chapter in the current work are listed the source chapters in *The Great Controversy* that correspond to it:

Chapter 1, “Why Is There Suffering?”

The Great Controversy, chapter 29

Chapter 2, “Hope for Triumph Over Evil”

The Great Controversy, chapters 30, 31

Chapter 3, “Dangerous Seductions”

The Great Controversy, chapter 32

Chapter 4, “Everlasting Life”

The Great Controversy, chapter 33

Chapter 5, “False Hope”

The Great Controversy, chapter 34

Chapter 6, “True Peace”

The Great Controversy, chapters 7, 27

Chapter 7, “Our Only Safeguard”

The Great Controversy, chapter 37

Chapter 8, “In Defense of the Truth”

The Great Controversy, chapters 3, 25, 26

Chapter 9, “Real Hope”

The Great Controversy, chapters 1, 17, 36, 38, 39

Chapter 10, “The Great Rescue”

The Great Controversy, chapter 40

Chapter 11, “Victory of Love”

The Great Controversy, chapter 42

A revealing
look at the
battle between
good and
evil — and
who wins.

The

Great

Hope





Younger Generation Church

YG is the vibrant young adult ministry of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our mission is to deepen our devotion to Christ Jesus by pursuing INTIMACY with GOD, experiencing COMMUNITY with each other, and inspiring those around us with the HOPE of GRACE. www.YGchurch.com



How it all began

YG began just after the turn of the century as a high-energy, contemporary worship service highlighting multimedia, upbeat music, and timely, creative messages – all focused on reaching young adults. Today, YG transcends age and program boundaries, making authentic efforts to foster the great commandment and great commission in new generations. www.vimeo.com/channels/ygchurch



Intimacy

We are wholeheartedly pursuing a 24/7 experience of the living GOD. Our worship is for His fame. Each week Younger Generation Church offers a powerful worship experience, Saturday mornings, 10:15 am [Central], where we authentically gather to focus our attention and adoration on Christ Jesus. www.YGchurch.com



Community

We express best who GOD is by doing life together well. Our relationships express His love. Younger Generation Church enjoys LIFEgroups affording our members an opportunity to build inspiring community and foster healthy relationships. We love having fun and taking time to enjoy each other's company. www.facebook.com/ygchurch



Grace

We are compelled to share the hope we have with others. Our compassionate witness reveals His Good News as real. Younger Generation Church generously shares the grace of Jesus Christ with whomever we might serve. Feeding the hungry, encouraging the orphan, consoling the widow—being grace dispensers to the least of these bring us joy. @YGChurch