

A Deeper Experience

DAY 2—FROM THE INSIDE OUT

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

I was a pretty good child growing up. I wasn't rebellious toward my mother; I was attentive in school and respectful to my teachers. I didn't participate in wild parties, drink alcohol, or experiment with drugs like other youth in my high school.

After I became a Christian, I prided myself that I was a good person. I ate the right foods, replaced my rock music with Christian music, dressed modestly, taught the Sabbath School lesson, organized evangelistic events and outreach, and even shared my personal testimony. I had given my heart to Jesus, was baptized, truly believed in His Word, and looked forward to living eternally in His kingdom. My whole world revolved around the church and its activities and doing good things. By outward appearances, I was living a righteous life. I soon learned, however, how shallow my Christian experience really was—and how much I needed Jesus.

One evening I attended a seminar at my church on Christian living. The speaker said that unless a person is born again, he is not in a saving relationship with Christ. She quoted this statement from Ellen G. White: “The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172). The stark reality hit me: there is more to the Christian life than I thought! It was true, my life *was* different than before I received Christ, but it was improved, modified. I *was* a Christian, but self was still alive. I still had a temper and was easily wounded. I was proud and demanded that things be done my way. I had not yielded myself to Christ. I thought my salvation was secure through all the things I was doing, but I was missing the *joy* of my salvation! I had made a profession of Christ but did not have the *love* of Christ; I had not surrendered to Him. I needed Jesus to be formed within.

How does a person surrender to Christ? First, it is imperative to recognize the need for a Savior—to choose Him.

“Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. . . . unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 18). I could not change my heart, but I could choose to give Him my will. I responded to the gift of repentance and confessed my sin of self-righteousness, self-importance, self-indulgence, and self-pity, and then placed my will on the side of Christ, for Him to control.

Second, spend quality time getting to know Him who is Life Eternal. “And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). As I spent time in Scripture and prayer, becoming intimately acquainted with my Savior, my life began to take on new meaning. Jesus began the process of making something beautiful out of my life. My mind was being renewed—new attitudes and new affections were being developed. My desire to serve God deepened.

You may say, “I was born into this church. I've been a Christian all my life!” “I've never been out in the world!” “I've worked for the Master for as long as I can remember.” These things might be true, and praise the Lord for that! However, you can have all this and still not have the Son.

Perhaps you, too, have been impressed by the Holy Spirit that your Christian experience is shallow. What can you do? You can pray this prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23, 24). Surrender your heart and life to Him and, one by one, He will reveal areas of your life that need to be changed. As you cooperate with Him, your life will never be the same!

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR THE PRAYER TIME

Praise

- Father, we praise You that You have cleansed us from all sin and unrighteousness.
- Lord, we praise You that You are able to keep us from falling and that You present us to the Father with great joy (Jude 24).
- We praise You for convicting us of sin and extending mercy.

Confession

- Lord, please show us areas in our lives where self is still alive.
- Please forgive us when we have been self-righteous and self-indulgent, practicing self-pity.
- Please reveal areas in our lives that need to be transformed [take few moments of silence].

Supplication and Intercession

- Lord, please fill us with the knowledge of Your will, and may we walk worthy of You.
- We pray for those in spiritual and mental prisons to be set free from their guilt.
- We ask You to fill us with the fruit of righteousness.
- Lord, we pray for a mighty surge of Adventists who will serve God by loving others and by sharing with people from other cultures and religions.
- Please raise up modern-day Waldensian students who are willing to serve you in difficult places.
- We pray for the 62 million people in the 28 least-reached cities of the former Soviet Union (Euro-Asia Division).
- We pray for God to raise up brave missionaries willing to work among the 746 people groups in the 20 countries of the Middle East.
- We pray for the 1,000 Missionary Movement in Northern Asia-Pacific Division and Southern Asia-Pacific Division. As these young people serve in countries such as Taiwan, China, Russia, and Burma, may they be baptized with the Holy Spirit and empowered to do God's work.
- We also pray for our list of seven or more people [name the names if appropriate].

Thanksgiving

- Lord, thank You for individuals who have guided us to make a decision for You.
- Thank You for not abandoning us to our past failures and mistakes.
- Thank You for the gift of repentance and for revealing our need of You.
- Thank You for knowing the end from the beginning and for answering our prayers in Your time and way.

SUGGESTED SONGS TO SING

"Lord, I Want to be a Christian" (SDA Hymnal #319); "Be Thou My Vision" (SDA Hymnal #547); "Give Me Jesus" (SDA Hymnal #305); "I Would Be Like Jesus" (SDA Hymnal #311); "Nearer, Still Nearer" (SDA Hymnal #301)

PROMISES TO CLAIM AS YOU PRAY

- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).
- "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23).
- "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:4-6).
- "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

- “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).