

## LESSON 1 IT'S TIME...For Spiritual Formation

LESSON AIM: To make pupils aware that of their need for spiritual depth and to be formed in the likeness of Christ.

SCRIPTURE RESOURCE: 2 Cor. 5:17-20

TEACHING AIDS: Yardstick, Unit Poster, Being Missional Cards

CREATING LEARNING READINESS:

Each class will be provided with a yard stick.

COMMENT: The main goal of many churches seems to be to get people to make a profession of faith. Our baptism pool may be three feet deep but it's as if we don't get people more than 1" below the water level. In medieval times many kings and warriors who became Christians would not allow their sword hand to go beneath the water when they were baptized so that they could continue to kill in battle if need be. Baptism doesn't mean much if we keeping part of ourselves out of the water or are just barely under the surface.

Dr Vestal in our pupil's book describes our spiritual life by quoting the cliché "we're a mile wide and an inch deep."

**Hold up yard stick.** Let's pretend this yard stick is a measurement instrument for the depth of our spirituality and commitment to Jesus Christ. How would you measure up? Would you get past the 1" mark?

How do you think people like Billy Graham or Mother Theresa would measure up?

Who is someone else you think would measure very deep in their spiritual life?

In the movie "Mary Poppins", the nanny pulled out a measuring tape to evaluate her two charges. When she measures the girl the tape says the little girl is messy and tends to giggle. It says the little boy is stubborn and suspicious. When the children insist she measure herself, the tape says "Mary Poppins, practically perfect in every way!" I'm afraid when I measure myself it does not say "deeply spiritual and totally committed in every way."

What we need is **spiritual formation**. (Write on the board.)

**ASK: 1. How would you define that term?**

Scriptural definitions

"I will make (form, shape) you to become fishers of men."

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son that he might be firstborn among many brothers.” (Rom 8:28-29)

“And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Cor 3:18

Big problem here: Many of us never have never really grown past our baptism.

**ASK: 2. What does our baptism signify? What did it signify for you?**

Newness in life, rebirth, a new beginning, a new start, washing away of sin,

DISCUSSION: Develop the idea that if it’s a new birth then we have to grow up all over again. Babies grow up. As a Christian I have to “grow up.” The Bible says:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Cor. 5:17

**ASK: 3. What does this newness lead to? What responsibilities come with it?**

**I’m a new Christian/ What responsibilities are I assuming?**

Paul has an answer for us:

READ: 2 Cor. 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

**ASK: 4. When you think of how God deals with the world, do you think in terms of Jesus dealing with church, groups of people, or individuals? Why?**

As Baptist we think more in terms of God dealing with us on an individual basis. That has changed over history. By and large God dealt with the Jewish people as a group. They acted and reacted as God’s people not God’s person. They were judged and punished collectively. The church for the first 1500 years (and still to a large degree in the Catholic church) thinks in terms of God dealing with the church or the Christian body as a whole. With the advent of Protestantism we come to think more in terms of one on

one -- between Jesus and me. It is not a question of the Christian people getting right with God nor is it a question of the Baptist church getting right with God. It is a question of me getting right with God. Then the other two will fall into place.

If our church is to get right with God, accomplish his mission for us, do his work then \_\_\_\_\_ people (plus a lot of folks who attend but are not members) need to get personal with God.

It all boils down to the fact that we as individuals have to have a personal relationship with God. I can not be an ambassador for anything to which I am not dedicated to so if I'm going to be a "reconciliator," I have to first be reconciled myself!

**ASK: 5. What is "performance based religion?"**

- Based on actions not spiritual depth.
- Can be performed without spiritual experience
- My religion is better than your religion
- Perform or else
- Based on abilities
- Can be done for praise

**ASK: 6. What is "spiritually based religion?"**

- Something that comes from the inside out
- It's not God "out there, over there, up there" but rather God at the center of our being

It's so important that we get what Paul says in Eph 3:14-19.  
For this reason I kneel before the father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives it's name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

**ASK: 7. How do we get that depth to our faith?**

- Determining that we really want it-if you don't really want it, you won't get it
- Bible study with done mind and heart
- Spend time in prayer
- Spend time in silence and solitude
- Reading books that give guidance
- Disciplining yourself to make time for study and prayer

Focusing on the things that matter in life instead of on the frivolous things

Dr. Del Tackett in his study **The Truth Project** asks this question:

**Do you really believe--that what you believe is real -- is really real?**

**ASK: 8. If you do, how do we as individuals express that kind of Christianity?**

It flows out of us naturally. If we're full of our faith, it overflows. People will see it without our having to say it.

COMMENT: We will find ways to express it in some missional way. (Distribute cards with missional definition) By missional think in terms of **finding your own way of putting your faith into action with or without necessarily being part of a program or an organized system. It may be something which no one knows about but you. It's expressing your unique faith in a way that is all your own but which shows your faith in action. It's finding our own way to be ambassadors for Christ or being reconciliators for Christ.**

This card also has a definition of the church being missional. We'll talk about that later. Ask them to put this card in Bible as we will refer to it from time to time.

**Hold up yardstick.** If we pull this yardstick out again and attempt to measure the spirituality of our congregation what would the depth be. If our spirituality is shallow, how can we share any of it with others. Behind my house there is a stream from which I pump water to water my lawn and flowers. Sometimes the stream gets so low there is nothing to pump. As individuals and as a church we can be so shallow that we have nothing to pump. We can't be missional if we don't have any spiritual depth. Just think what the implications are for us as individuals and as a church if we built up our spiritual reservoir!