

LESSON SEVEN: FACING FORWARD

Have you heard about the Australian Aborigine who got a new boomerang and spent the rest of his life trying to throw the old one away? Besides being humorous, this man and his dilemma speak to a familiar problem. How many of us have spiritual boomerangs that keep returning, intruding, on our lives? We fail to terminate bad relationships, and so replay patterns of dependence or self-absorption. We return to bad habits, hurting ourselves and the ones we love. We rely on old reactions in the face of new circumstances, refusing to grow spiritually or emotionally. By ridding yourself of spiritual and emotional boomerangs you will finally be able to face forward.

PRAY: Dear Jesus, in Your Word You have told us that we can look forward to a life that will last forever with You in heaven. Teach us to seek Your face while we live. Send us Your Holy Spirit to empower and equip us to rid ourselves of bad patterns and habits in our lives, so we can live to Your glory. In Your Name we pray, O Lord. Amen.

INTRODUCTION: What's the future look like? I'll tell you: It's about tough choices. For example, this morning I noticed that my electric razor had spilled its entire collection of whiskers all over the inside of my fashionable leather toiletry bag. I had two choices. I could laboriously remove those whiskers individually cleaning each of the other contents of the bag, thus missing at least an hour of useful work, or I could say to myself, "If I didn't mind having those whiskers on my face, why should I mind them in my little traveling aspirin bottle?"

I chose the latter. After all, I already got used to the toothpaste all over everything in the bag. How bad could a few hairs be? That's what the future looks like—a bag filled with toothpaste, whiskers and unidentified containers. We're entering an age when the things we need to do and want to do are absorbed and overwhelmed by other things we need to do and want to do. We'll make random, often stupid choices because we don't have the brains or the time to do better.

—Scott Adams, *The Dilbert Future: Thriving on Business Stupidity in the 21st Century* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1998), 89.

BIBLE BASE: Ask a volunteer to read Luke 21:5-19. Ask the other participants to follow along in their own Bibles.

DISCUSS: (The following questions are for discussion. The answers are to help the leader guide the discussion. Participants may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

1. What did Jesus mean when He said that not one stone of the Temple would be left as they saw it?

Jesus was talking about the destruction of the Temple. This was a remarkable statement for the disciples, because the Temple was already fifty years in the building. In A.D. 70, the Romans would destroy the Temple and all of Jerusalem as well. It would be left desolate.

2. The disciples asked when these destructive events would take place. How did Jesus answer them?

Jesus was concerned for His disciples. He warns them to be alert and not to allow themselves to be deceived. People will use Jesus' own name in an attempt to deceive other people. Some would be small sects. Others would be out for cash. Still others would have great networks. The point is that they would be successful in their deception.

3. Jesus' description of the world sounds like current events. Was He speaking about today?

Yes. The end times began when Jesus ascended into heaven. They will continue until He returns in judgment. Wars and other turmoil are to remind us that the world is not permanent, but they do not signify that the end is near.

4. How did Jesus continue His description of the future?

He went on to present the whole matter in more detail. He spoke of impending natural disasters. They also point to the fragile nature of life on earth, but do not specifically point to Jesus' return. He points to a time of fear and uncertainty.

5. Why did Jesus speak of physical harm to the disciples?

There will be enemies of the Gospel that will be intolerant of the proclamation of that Gospel. In an attempt to silence that Gospel those who proclaimed would be arrested. When the arrests happened, it would give them an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to a different audience.

6. Why wouldn't the disciples have to prepare for their testimony?

Jesus would give them the words to use and the wisdom that would disarm their accusers. They would never have a loss for words. There would not be stuttering or stammering. Thus, they would be acquitted.

7. What protection and assurance did Jesus offer the disciples?

He told them that not even a hair of their head would perish. This must have been a great comfort to the disciples. They may suffer persecution, even death, but they would still be under God's care.

8. What was the final promise Jesus gave them?

He told them that they would be saved if they persevered. This promise is for all Christians in all ages. Salvation is the result of faith. If Christians remain in the faith, their salvation is assured no matter what happens to them in this life.

CHALLENGE: Discuss what spiritual or emotional boomerangs are in the lives of people that they have been unable to throw away, and how recurring actions and attitudes affect their value system.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Charles Lubin enjoyed both eating and making cheesecake. He was pretty good at both, so good that he decided to open a cheesecake store on the north side of Chicago. It flourished, so he opened a second store in South Chicago. That store did not do so well. Eventually, he lost them both.

Discouraged, he sat in his room one night and while eating his cheesecake, thought, "This is pretty good cheesecake!" He opened his original store again. Soon, he opened another store, but it failed and once again he lost both stores. Less than a year later he opened his original store again. After opening a second store, he went bankrupt. He tried and failed to open cheesecake stores a fourth time. Then he had another idea. He wanted to open another store, but this time he named it after his daughter, Sara Lee. It became the largest bakery in the world.

—Source unknown.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Lord, we know that we live in troubled times. Sometimes the future looks dark and scary. Help us to seek Your face so that we may look to the future with confidence that You will protect us and guard us no matter what we may encounter or endure. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.