

LESSON SIX: FACING THE FACTS

Pessimism and optimism are not fixed personality traits. Rather, behaviorists point out, they are acquired traits that people use to explain to themselves why things happen to them. Since they are acquired traits, pessimists can learn to be optimists. Looking at life optimistically may be more important than people realize. Pessimists have poorer resistance levels to disease, weaker immune systems, are more susceptible to depression, and age physically faster than optimists. Some psychologists even believe that pessimism causes depression. It's in the Christian's best interest to be optimistic. After all, Christians are forgiven. They are loved. They will inherit eternal life. It doesn't get any better than that. Face the facts.

PRAY: Lord God, You have demonstrated Your uncommonly great love to us by sending Your Son, Jesus, into this world. Help us to seek Your face always so that we may live our lives in ways that reflect that love. Teach us, through Your Word, to be optimistic, because we are Your redeemed, restored, and forgiven children. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION: Sean took drugs and sold them to other kids. He befriended an elderly widow near his home, then stole her heirloom jewelry, pawned it and paid cash for a brand-new Porsche. As he'd done countless times before, Sean's dad intervened and fixed his son's problem.

One day at summer camp, Sean asked me if I'd go for a walk with him in the nearby woods. As we walked, he began to pour out his regret for his evil and perverse life. He asked if I'd pray with him. We found a large fallen tree and Sean climbed up, sitting cross-legged on the log. He prayed first, and I heard words of confession and remorse. This wayward and rebellious youngster cried out to God for grace and forgiveness.

I opened my eyes to see if this really was the same young man who hated everyone because they're all so stupid. Here's what I saw. Sean, the bad boy, was sitting in God's awesome presence with his hands and face turned upward. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. "I'm sorry, God, for the terrible things I've done," Sean prayed. "Please forgive me and help me to be new."

—Robert Wolgemuth, He cheated on everything, *Men of Integrity*, July-August, 2000.

BIBLE BASE: Read Luke 11:1-13.

DISCUSS: (The following questions are for discussion. You may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

Why did one of Jesus' disciples ask Him to teach them to pray?

Why did Jesus tell us to pray to the Father?

Why is the Third Petition, "Thy will be done" omitted here?

How is our relationship with God contrasted with the relationship between the friends in the parable?

Verses 9 & 10 are also repeated in Matthew 7:7-8. Why?

There is an obvious answer to the rhetorical question Jesus asks in verses 11 & 12. What is it?

How did Jesus conclude His instruction for praying?

CHALLENGE: Discuss ways to set goals to increase your prayer life during the coming weeks that are both qualitative and quantifiable.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Jim Moore is senior minister at a church in Houston, Texas. A friend told him the following story. The friend, a sales manager, was driving his new boss around town when they happened to pass near the friend's home. The friend asked his boss if he would like to stop by his house and meet his family. His wife was baking an apple pie, and his children would be coming in from school. He asked his boss if he wanted to meet them.

"Let's get one thing straight right now," the manager replied. "I'm not interested in your family. I'm not interested in your wife or your children. I'm not interested in you personally at all or any of the circumstances of your life. All I'm interested in are results. All I'm interested in about you is your sales record!"

The friend told Moore: "That really hurt. I felt as though someone had slapped me across the face, but you know, I realized something. I realized that God is the opposite of that...He is interested in all of the circumstances of my life."

—James W. Moore, *Christmas Gifts That Always Fit* (Nashville: Dimensions for the Living, 1996), 64-65.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord God, thank You for being our Father. You demonstrated Your love to us by sending Jesus into this world. Help us to seek Your face every day of our lives. Remind us to pray to You always, because You know most of all what we need. In Jesus' Name. Amen.