
Steps to Christ

Steps to Christ was written by Ellen G. White and first printed in 1892 and is now published by the Pacific Press in Boise, Idaho. Since that time it has been recognized as a classic in clearly presenting the wonders of salvation.

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How to Fill Out This Workbook

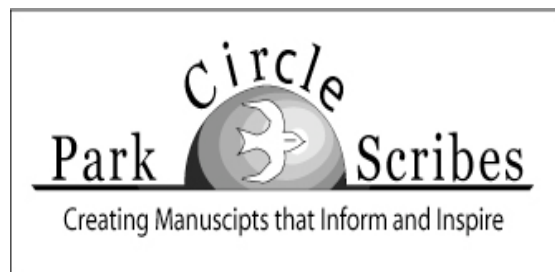
This workbook can be used for individual devotional study or as a small group discussion guide. After each of the paragraphs, there are one or more questions which explore the meaning of the text just read. If the booklet is being used for a weekly study guide, some of the longer chapters might require more than one session to complete.

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The Love of God

Chapter 1

Introduction

This first chapter of *Steps to Christ* beautifully shows how the love of God is revealed in nature, the Bible and Jesus. Without a clear understanding of the love of God, we would never be able to make the first step in coming to Jesus.

Chapter Outline

God's Love is Revealed:

- A. In Nature
- B. In His Word
- C. In Jesus
 - How Jesus Treated People
- D. In Us

Opening Group Discussion Ideas

Begin by sharing a time when you really felt loved and care for by somebody.

Your group could also start by giving each person a paper and pen and have them make a picture of their "family table" with their parents, brothers and sisters and others. In the picture show which people were closer or farther apart and how much care was between them.

1) Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures. In the beautiful words of the psalmist--"The eyes of all wait upon Thee; And Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, And satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Psalm 145:15, 16.

How does the opening sentence summarize this first chapter? _____

If you only had this paragraph to tell someone about God what could you say? _____

A. God's Love is Revealed in Nature

God's love for His children is first revealed in nature. Though shadowed by the curse of sin, it still testifies to the tender, fatherly care of our God.

2) God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator's hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God's law--the law of love--that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man's sake. Genesis 3:17. The thorn and the thistle--the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care--were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God's plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses.

How does Ellen White deal with the problem of suffering in this paragraph. (The problem of suffering is: if God is love then why is there so much misery in the world today?) _____

3) "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green -- all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy.

What is your favorite phrase in this paragraph? _____

B. God's Love is Revealed in His

Word Although the Bible also reveals the infinite love and pity of our heavenly Father, Satan has led men to conceive God as a severe judge.

4) The word of God reveals His character. He Himself has declared His infinite love and pity. When Moses prayed, "Show me Thy glory," the Lord answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." Exodus 33:18,19. This is His glory. The Lord passed before Moses, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Exodus 34:6,7. He is "slow to anger, and of great kindness," "because He delighteth in mercy." Jonah 4:2; Micah 7:18.

Besides nature, what else reveals God's character? _____

5) God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,--one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.

a) *Why are all the evidences in nature and earthly ties, not enough to testify of the love of God?* _____

b) *How did Satan want us to look upon God?* _____

c) *Why did Jesus come to live among us?* _____

C. God's Love is Revealed in Jesus

Jesus who was one with Father, came from heaven to show the loving character of God to us. He went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by Satan.

6) The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matthew 11:27. When one of the disciples made the request,

"Show us the Father," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" John 14:8,9.

What was the primary mission of Jesus when He was on earth? _____

7) In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said, The Lord "hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. This was His work. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.

a) In what ways did Jesus lift the oppression of Satan? _____

b) After reading this paragraph, would you feel comfortable in approaching Jesus about your needs? _____

How Jesus Treated People

Jesus always exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful kind attention. He even regarded those who rejected Him with pitying tenderness and every soul was precious in His eyes.

8) Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief,

and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

What can we learn from this paragraph on how Jesus treated people? _____

9) Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh." 1Timothy 3:16.

Where did the streams of compassion come from that flowed from Jesus' heart? _____

10) It was to redeem us that Jesus lived and suffered and died. He became "a Man of Sorrows," that we might be made partakers of everlasting joy. God permitted His beloved Son, full of grace and truth, to come from a world of indescribable glory, to a world marred and blighted with sin, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. He permitted Him to leave the bosom of His love, the adoration of the angels, to suffer shame, insult, humiliation, hatred, and death. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. Behold Him in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, upon the cross! The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God-- it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God.

How does this paragraph deepen our understanding of God's love for us in Christ? _____

11) But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2Corinthians 5:19. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.

In paganism, the god is offered a sacrifice in order to calm his anger. How does Ellen White counter that idea in this paragraph? _____

12) Jesus said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. That is, "My Father has so loved you that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your Substitute and Surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father; for by My sacrifice, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

Meditate on the second sentence of this paragraph and write your reaction to it: _____

13) None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom

Chapter 13—Rejoicing in the Lord

of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity.

According to this paragraph, why was Christ the only One who could accomplish our redemption? _

14) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is "not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed--the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness.

a) What does it mean when it says God "gave" his only Son? _____

b) Jesus became one with the human family that we might be uplifted from sin and "reflect the love of God." How important therefore is love in the Christian's life? _____

D. God's Love is Revealed in Us

By beholding the love of God in the life and sacrifice of Jesus, the fallen children of Adam are elevated transformed into the sons and daughters of God.

15) The price paid for our redemption, the infinite sacrifice of our heavenly Father in giving His Son to die for us, should give us exalted conceptions of what we may become through Christ. As the inspired apostle John beheld the height, the depth, the breadth of the Father's love toward the perishing race, he

was filled with adoration and reverence; and, failing to find suitable language in which to express the greatness and tenderness of this love, he called upon the world to behold it. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1. What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may indeed become worthy of the name "sons of God."

a) What should God's sacrifice on our behalf tell us about our self-worth? _____

b) How do the sons of Adam become the sons of God? _____

16) Such love is without a parallel. Children of the heavenly King! Precious promise! Theme for the most

profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child.

How can the thought that God loved a world that did not love Him have a “subduing power upon the soul.” _____

Summary Discussion of the Love of God:

Why do you think this was an appropriate opening chapter in a book about salvation and Steps to Christ? _____

Could it be that your personal and family background has had some affect on the way you view God today? _____

What was the most helpful idea of this chapter which might have changed your picture of God and how you relate to Him? _____

Putting the Love of God into Practice:

What is one very practical thing you can do for another person during the next week to show the love of God to them? _____

Prayer About the Love of God:

Dear heavenly Father . . . There are so many things in this world and in my personal life that are not loving and kind. Sometimes I have been tempted to see You as less than the infinitely loving Father that you are. Grant me to see you love in nature, Your Word, Jesus and others that I might be transformed into the same loving person You always are.