

BACK TO THE ALTAR – PRINCIPLE 1

Every Day...

Come to Jesus as You Are

Do you sometimes feel that you need to be in a certain condition before you can come to Jesus? Maybe you think you must be positive, happy, responsible, or all clean physically and mentally. Maybe you think you must be feeling spiritual and have your life in order before He will accept you.

In the words of Inspiration, we read:

If you come to Jesus now, with contrition of soul, He will take you just as you are, sinful and polluted. He will take away your sins, He will give to you His own righteousness. You are to look to Him, and believe in Him as your personal Saviour, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Come to Jesus in faith, with the simplicity of a child. Make an entire surrender, and you have His words, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. In accepting Christ by genuine faith, you gain all heaven with this precious gift (*Letters and Manuscripts*, Letter 29, 1893, vol. 8, par. 5).

In this lesson we will explore what it truly means to come to Jesus just as we are, without changing anything first.

Pray: As you begin to read and study (or prepare to teach) this first Back to the Altar principle, ask God to send the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word of God in a fresh and meaningful way! And ask Him to take the message from His Word deep into your heart and soul — so deep that you will no longer be the same.

Small Group Leader's Guide

CARE

1. Go around the group circle and have members take turns sharing one word that best describes their day so far. Be attentive: celebrate the good things and have compassion for the not-so-good.
2. Say: *At the end of this lesson, we will give you a challenge to do daily. When we meet again, we will share what God helped us do with the challenge from this lesson. Each lesson will have a fresh challenge.*

CONNECT

1. Everyone turn to someone in the group and share two things you do when you know guests or visitors are coming to your house.
2. Ask if 2-3 people would be willing to share with the group what they do to prepare for company. (Allow for open dialogue.)
3. Imagine that Jesus is coming to your home. Do you feel you need to be in a certain condition before you open the door or before you spend time with Him? (Be attentive and validate participation.)
4. Sometimes we think we need to be in a certain condition or frame of mind before we can meet with Jesus or allow Him into our home/heart.

Today we will explore what it means to come to Jesus just as we are, without changing anything first.

DISCOVER

Pray with the group, asking the Holy Spirit to teach the Word.

Keep Coming to Jesus As You Are Every Moment!

Read: Matthew 11:28-30.

Ask: *When do we come to Jesus?* (Answer from the Bible text only.)

Ask for group feedback. Allow dialogue. (He says when we are weary and burdened, that's when we come to Him.)

Read: Luke 5:30-32.

Ask: *According to Jesus, what qualifies us to come to Him?* (If we are sick/if we are sinners!)

Jesus invites you to come to Him at the altar each day, just as you are. When you are sick and wonder why He does not intervene, when you are exhausted and don't feel like caring about anything or anybody, when you have sinned against God or people and feel too ashamed to approach the spotless Son of God — come to Him anyway! Come to Him when you are discouraged and feel alone. Come to Him when darkness presses around you and you feel overwhelmed with depression. Come to Him when you are angry that He did not show up or did not protect you and when your requests seem to be met with silence.

Come to Him in every and all circumstances. He will not turn you away.

Author's Testimony

When I was a teenager, I had an accident while racing on horseback with my friend. We were racing bareback (without saddles) across a plowed field. As my horse lunged forward across a rough stretch of field, I lost my grip and slipped under her pounding hooves! She

trampled my right leg very badly. My friend took me home, where I tried to take care of my leg while my parents were out of town. A day later, my parents returned. My mother looked at my injured leg and noticed that my foot was swollen and had a strange color.

She took me to see the doctor — just as I was. The doctor examined my leg and my foot and asked me seriously, “Son, do you want to keep your foot?” “Yes, sir!” I said. “Then you need to go immediately to the hospital so they can work to save your foot before it has to be amputated.”

I am thankful for my doctor, who saw me just as I was, but I am also thankful he did not leave me that way. I still have my leg and foot and joyfully walk or hike almost every day! Thank God for doctors who take us as we are! Thank God for Jesus who does the same!

Jesus said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17).

Jesus takes you just as you are. You do not need to try to heal yourself before coming to Him. He alone is the Healer. He offers to heal you inside and out! He is the Doctor who stays with you throughout your healing process and forever. He promises that “...I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Ellen G. White writes:

If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Jeremiah 13:23. There is help for us only in God.

We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are (*Steps to Christ*, p. 31).

You can trust Jesus right now and throughout eternity. He is looking forward to coming to take you to heaven to be with Him. He says, “I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). But you may be wondering: Am I ready to meet Jesus?

Discover How You Can *Be Sure* of Your Salvation!

If Jesus came back tonight, would you go to heaven? Why or why not?

Come to the altar — **come to Jesus just as you are** — and know that you can be sure about your salvation. When you come to Jesus, remember that you are coming also to God the Father who gives you salvation in Jesus!

Leader’s Tip

- Become familiar with these steps so you can use your own words rather than the script. It would be good to read the Bible verse with the group and ask the question before you state the step. In this way, you will lead the group to hear God’s Word first and to think about its meaning before you give the answer and state the conclusion of the step.
- Add Bible promises that are meaningful to you as a leader.

Now we are going to study seven simple steps that show us how we can have the assurance of salvation.

Seven Steps – Being Sure of Your Salvation!

Read: Romans 5:8.

Ask: *How do you know that God loves you?*

Read: Romans 8:38, 39.

Ask: *Can anything separate you from His love?*

STEP #1: You can *be sure* that *nothing* will separate you from God's love.

Read: Romans 3:23.

Ask: *What problem do we all have?*

Read: Romans 6:23 (first part).

Ask: *What is the result of our sin?*

STEP #2: You can *be sure* that, as a sinner, you *need* the Savior.

Read: Romans 6:23 (last part) and Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Ask: *What free gift does God offer you?*

STEP #3: You can *be sure* that salvation is God's *free gift* to you.

Read: John 3:16.

Ask: *How does this gift of eternal life become yours?*

STEP #4: You can *be sure* that Jesus is your Savior when you *believe* in Him.

Read: Revelation 3:20.

Ask: *What is your answer to Jesus' request?*

STEP #5: You can *be sure* that Jesus wants to make His *home* in your heart by faith.

Read: 1 John 1:9.

Share: When you confess your sins and invite Jesus to be your personal Savior, He comes into your heart immediately by faith via the Holy Spirit. He comes in His righteousness, purity, and perfection. You realize like never before how much you need Jesus to clean your heart.

Ask: *What does Jesus do for you when you confess your sins?*

STEP #6: You can *be sure* that Jesus completely *cleans* your heart.

Read: 1 John 5:13.

Ask: *What does this verse tell you that you can know for sure?*

STEP #7: You can *be sure* that Jesus gives you *eternal life*.

God tells us in Revelation 7:9 that there will be a countless multitude of those who are saved. God has planned for you to be one of them!

Coming to Jesus as we are leads us to live in His peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27).

Coming to Jesus as our Savior leads us to live in His joy! “And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8, 9).

Our Father God is the Giver of all good gifts to you (James 1:17). These endless gifts include salvation, eternal life, a new heart, peace, and joy.

PRACTICE

1. Read Revelation 3:20 again privately and invite Jesus into your heart as your Savior.
2. Are you ready to come to Jesus as you are and entrust your life to your Savior?
3. Pray the following:

Dear Father in Heaven, You are the Giver of the gift of salvation. We are sinners in need of Jesus as our Savior. We thank You for sending Jesus to die so we can have eternal life and be covered by His perfect righteousness. We choose to believe that this gift of salvation and righteousness is ours now. We ask Your Son, Jesus, to come into our hearts by faith and be our Friend, Savior, and Lord. We confess our sins and claim His forgiveness and cleansing from all of our unrighteousness. Thank you that we can be sure about our eternal life with Jesus our Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.

This passage from *Steps to Christ* is so encouraging:

With the rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to

express His love toward us? He declares, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” Isaiah 49:15 (Ellen G. White, p. 54).

BACK TO THE ALTAR CHALLENGE – Principle 1

Every moment, practice coming to Jesus as you are: happy, sad, worried, peaceful, defeated, or victorious. Having the assurance of our salvation in Jesus gives us the freedom to run to Him always.

Go home and review the seven steps of assurance of salvation and then share them with someone else.