

Lesson Two
Our Christian Response to Blessings and Challenges

When We Recover from a Serious Illness

Goals

- To learn to thank God when we receive special blessings.
- To learn how to encourage others to thank God for the gift of health.

Introduction

1. List the most serious illnesses that you have had. (You won't have to share this information if you prefer not to do so.)

2. You may have recovered from some or all of these illnesses. Record an example of how you thanked God for your recovery from each serious illness.

Life example

John contracted pneumonia while serving in the Korean War. Because the Americans were in full retreat at the time, he did not receive immediate care. By the time his platoon finally reached safety, his fever was raging, and he was barely conscious. He remembers being afraid that he was going to die and promising that if God healed him, he would always go to church and support the work of the church. He was evacuated to Japan, where he received massive doses of medication. In time John recovered and was able to return home.

Since then, John has gotten a job, married, raised his children, and retired. Now he is working on his last will and testament. He wants to thank God for sparing his life so long ago. He is torn between the desire to leave everything to his church as a thank offering to God and the desire to leave his wealth to his children. He comes to you for advice.

Reflections of faith

1. What are some of the issues John is considering as he tries to make his decision?

2. What questions might you ask John?

Light from the Word

Read Luke 17:11-19.

1. What words tell you that Jesus desired and expected all the recipients of his healing gift to thank him?
2. It is likely that the other nine lepers were Jewish. Why do you think a Samaritan would offer thanks but the Jews would not?
3. The Samaritan expressed his thanks in a number of ways. Identify several.
4. What counsel and advice can John apply to himself from this section of Scripture?

Breakout/discussion

1. Evaluate the promise John made that he would attend church faithfully and support the church well if God healed him.
2. Imagine that John admitted his promise had been an attempt to bribe God. What impact did those promises have on the fact that he was healed?
3. Does God expect John to keep those promises?

Life example

Judy had destroyed her liver through alcohol abuse. She was very near death when she was finally able to receive a transplant. Although a member of a church, Judy rarely attended worship, either prior to the onset of the disease or after the transplant, though her pastor visited her faithfully. She continued to abuse alcohol, however, and refused to talk to friends and relatives who spoke judgmentally to her. Though she appreciated her pastor's private visits, she has not listened to his counsel about her alcohol abuse or about her need to hear God's Word in public worship.

Reflections of faith

Imagine that you are Judy's cousin, who, because you are a Christian, is concerned about her. What would you say to her?

Light from the Word

1. Because Judy is giving in to sin, you need to confront her with God's law. How might you use the ten lepers from Luke chapter 17, as an example to point to her sin?
2. If the law you have spoken leads Judy to repent, you would assure her that her sins are forgiven. Then you could use the Samaritan leper as a model to show how Judy could thank Jesus for restoring her health. Explain how you would do that.

Life example

Patrick, an 82-year-old nursing home resident, almost died from a bacterial infection that was resistant to most antibiotics. After struggling for months, he recovered. He wondered about God's purpose for sparing his life. He has always believed that God has a good purpose for everything, but he cannot see what the good purpose for sparing his life might be.

Reflections of faith

If you were a member of Patrick's family, you would want to confirm Patrick's observation that God is still in control and he still has a purpose for preserving Patrick's life. Suggest some ways that Patrick can show thanks for God's gift of life.

Light from the Word

1. Sometimes Christians acknowledge that God has a purpose for their lives, but they seem to look at the things that happen to them as severe burdens they must bear. Compare the message of **Romans 8:28** with that view.
2. In the Reflections of faith section above, you agreed with Patrick that God is in control. You showed him how he could express his thanks. Imagine that the infection left Patrick feeling weak or partially paralyzed. How would your counsel differ in that case?

Read Philippians 1:18-26.

3. By the time the apostle Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he had suffered bitter persecution. In fact, he wrote the letter to the Philippians from prison. How would you describe the attitude Paul expresses in these words?
4. It is difficult to express in English what Paul meant by the words "will turn out for my deliverance" (verse 19). Perhaps a more clear translation would be "will turn out victoriously for me." Paul didn't know what was going to happen to him. How could he be confident that it would turn out victoriously?

5. Paul would have preferred to die and be with Christ in heaven. Obviously that would be good. However, if God preserved his life, that would be good too. What would be Paul's foremost Goal if God preserved his life?

6. Imagine that Patrick has confided in you that he is not sure if it is right to pray for God to end his life soon and take him to heaven. What counsel could you give him as you study Philippians 1:18-26 with him?

Let's think about the lesson

Choose one of the following scenarios that best describes your life.

- God is preserving my life by richly and daily providing for me as he has throughout my life.
- God has preserved my life by intervening in a special way when I was sick or injured.
- It appears that God is getting ready to take me to be with him in heaven.

Think of specific ways you can thank God for the marvelous grace he has shown in your life.