



GROWING IN GRACE

Wilma Goes for Gold

January 29, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 6:4 (NIV) • “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Galatians 2:20 (NIV) • “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

1 John 1:9 (NIV) • “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “GROWING IN GRACE”

Earliteens often get either discouraged or rebellious at the idea of living the Christian life. It's often presented to them only as a series of rules and restrictions. You have the opportunity to present them with the idea that living the Christian life—growing in Grace—is like being an elite athlete in training for gold-medal competition. (However, everyone can win the gold!)

Many teens who hate the idea of follow-

ing parental, school, or church rules can easily grasp that an athlete needs to accept a strict training regimen—restrictions on diet, leisure activities, even bedtime, and hours of practice—in order to make the team and stay on top. What's the difference? Why is it easier to accept the restrictions that come with sports training than those that come with Christian living? Maybe it's because in sports the emphasis is on the goal. Young athletes and their fans can see that all that hard work pays off.

We need to emphasize the “goal” of living the Christian life, too, not just the eternal reward. Important though that is, it can seem very far away to an earliteen. Besides, it's easy to become confused and think that heaven is something we earn by hard work and effort. We need to emphasize the benefits *in this life* of joining God's team and staying in training—that God wants to help us reach our “personal best,” and His training plan is Creator-designed to help us not only do that but also represent Him accurately to everyone in the bleachers.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH “GROWING IN GRACE”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand that living the Christian life is our loving response to God, not an attempt to earn salvation.
2. Recognize that God offers power, support, and encouragement for living the Christian life.

3. Commit themselves to moving forward on the journey of grace, one step at a time.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) access to a kitchen; ingredients for a simple recipe; (Activity B) If possible, ask students ahead of time to bring pictures of sports heroes and other figures they admire.

Connecting • Bibles; whiteboard or chalkboard; student lessons.

Applying • Copies of “Old Life, New Life” worksheet (p. 56); pens or pencils; metal bowl or bucket, matches, water, or paper shredder and adjust activity as needed.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own pro-

gram with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

NOTE: This activity will take time. Be prepared to spend up to a half hour on it. It can also be very distracting. Your students and situation must be taken into consideration. Be aware of possible allergies and adjust the recipe accordingly.

Get ready • This activity requires access to a kitchen. Assemble the ingredients for a simple recipe—chocolate-chip cookies or something else that requires similar ingredients (flour, sugar, butter, eggs, etc.). If you can find a healthier recipe that will fit this activity, so much the better.

Get set • Have your class meet in the kitchen to begin the lesson study. If you have a small class, you can do this together as a group; otherwise, divide your class into groups of about four and give each group the necessary ingredients to complete the recipe. Do not provide them with a recipe, and do not measure out the correct amount of ingredients; provide more than they need.

Go • Tell them what they are expected to make, but give no instructions about how much of each ingredient to use, what order to combine them in, and so on. (For further variety, you can give them a few things that *don’t* belong in cookies, such as cayenne pepper, and see if anyone’s sharp enough to leave them out.) After group members have combined their ingredients and put their cookies in the oven (allow them to figure out at what temperature and for how long), proceed with the discussion while the cookies bake.

Debriefing • **Ask:** What was easy about this

activity, what was difficult? (It was difficult to figure out how to put the cookies together without a recipe.) **How did you decide what to use, and how much?** (Some in the group may have made cookies before and guided the group on what to use; if so, ask how it would have been different if no one in the group had had any experience. If your class was divided into more than one group, compare the experiences of different groups.) **Why do we need instructions and recipes? In what way is God’s plan for us like a “recipe” for life?** (Note: whether or not you choose to conclude this activity by eating the cookies depends, in part, on how successful your group was at guessing the recipe!)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • If possible, ask students ahead of time to bring pictures of figures they admire. If you can’t arrange this ahead of time, bring a large selection yourself.

Go • Lead them through the debriefing discussion below.

Debriefing • **Ask:** Why do you admire these particular people? What are their accomplishments? What do they have to do to prepare for games, competitions, and so on? Have any of you ever trained for a major sports event? What kinds of things do athletes in training have to do? (Note: be aware that there will be a few students in your group who are not sports fans; include other heroes such as musicians, actors, artists, and others who have to work/practice/prepare to succeed in their chosen field. Let the interests of your group members guide the direction of this part of the discussion.) **How is an athlete’s training regimen, a musician’s practice schedule, and so on, similar to the Christian’s life? How is it different?**

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

Say: God has called us to be agents for His

kingdom in this world. What does that mean? **Many high-end jobs have strict requirements for working for them. Here are some of requirements that are needed:** Post where all can see, or read aloud, the list below.

- >> Be of excellent character and unquestionable loyalty to your country.
- >> Have no record of convictions in court.
- >> Be a high school graduate.
- >> Complete training in your field.
- >> Pass a language test and a physical fitness test.
- >> Have never possessed or sold any illegal drug.
- >> Maintain a strict clean and professional appearance with shined shoes, appropriate attire, and well-maintained haircut.
- >> Be willing to work a lot of overtime and weekends.

Ask: Why do you think the entrance requirements are so tough for some jobs? (Because they want the best employees working for them.) **How do you think those requirements compare to the “entrance requirements” for becoming one of God’s agents?** (In a way, God isn’t as picky. He’ll take anyone. But He has even higher expectations of us. However, He’s willing to work with us to help us meet them.) **In what way might being a child of God be as demanding as a high-end job? In what ways does God require us to be in “top form” to serve Him?**

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: God has a plan for each of our lives. The Bible is our instruction book, our training manual. It’s inspired by the Person who knows more than anyone else about what’s good for us and how we function best—the One who created us.

Ask: Can we trust God with our lives? (That's the big question.) If you think we can, why? (He's already saved us by dying on the cross.)

Say: There's nothing more we can do, or have to do, to earn our way into heaven.

Ask: But if that's true, why does Christianity seem to be so full of rules about what you can or can't do? (Allow some responses to this question; get students thinking.)

Ask for volunteers to read aloud the verses listed in their student lesson or post the references where all can see and have students find and read them from the Bible. **Ask:** What, if anything, do these verses tell us to help us answer the question about rules?

To wrap up the discussion, share the following thoughts in your own words:

Christianity isn't about rules for the sake of rules. It's about growing into the person God wants you to be—the very *best* person you can be. In that way it's really like training for the Olympics, or practicing for your oral report in front of the class, or entering the elite training program for God's representative here on earth. It's challenging. Sometimes it's tough. But it's all about reaching your maximum potential for the glory of God. And God doesn't ask us to go it alone. He's beside us every step of the way.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: What does it take for a person to succeed against the odds the way Wilma did? Is her experience in any way like the Christian's life?

If you have not used "Connecting to the Kingdom" above, distribute the student lessons and discuss the Bible passages in the Wednesday section in light of the question above.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

A group of friends invite you to join them for a party. You hear them talking about it. There will be no adults around; somebody will be bringing some beer. All in all, it sounds like things will be getting pretty wild. Suddenly one of your friends turns to you and says, "You probably won't want to go, since you're a Christian and all. You're probably too holy to hang out with us, aren't you?"

You're on the spot. What do you say?

Ask: Do you want to go to the party? Are you comfortable with being labeled "a Christian"? How will you feel if you tell your friends, "No, I'm not too holy, it doesn't matter"? What impression of Christianity will your friends get if you decide to go to the party? if you decide not to go? How could you decline the invitation in a gracious way?

Invite volunteers to read the following passages: **2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20.** **Ask:** What does it mean to have a "new life"? How do things change when you become a Christian? What happens if you don't always live up to the standard of being a Christian? Ask someone to read **1 John 1:9.** Why is it important to continue to try to live up to God's standard even though we know we'll make mistakes and fail? (Lead the discussion toward the idea that growing in Jesus is a *process*, not an instant change but something He works with us on throughout our lives.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Distribute copies of the "Old Life, New Life" worksheet (p. 56) to each class member. Give them time to work through it individually. Assure them that their responses will be completely private and they won't have to share

them with anyone, so they can be totally honest. Tell the students that they can draw from what they wrote in Friday's section of their lesson.

When everyone has had time to do the worksheet, invite everyone to fold it in half down the center. With the sheets folded, ask everyone to bow their heads. Lead the group in a prayer that God will work in each person's life to take away the things that need to be changed and help them grow more like Him.

After prayer, ask each person to tear their paper in half along the fold in the middle so that "Old Life" is on one half and "New Life" is on the other. Ahead of time, prepare a metal bowl or bucket, matches, and some water. Ask class members to fold up or tear up their "Old Life" pages and place them in the bowl, then set fire to them. Keep water handy to douse the fire.

WARNING: This may not be appropriate for your setting. Make sure that you are aware of fire codes and other regulations in your church. You want to illustrate that our old lives can be completely gone when we accept Jesus, but you want to illustrate this without burning down the church!

When the fire is finished, **say: God wants all the bad things in your life—past and present—to be nothing more than a pile of ashes. He can forgive your sins *and* change your life, if you'll let Him. Remember, God sends other people into our lives to help us; if there's anything you wrote on that sheet that you really feel you need outside help dealing with, you can come talk to me after class, or talk to another adult you trust—a parent, a teacher, the pastor. God *can* change things for you.** Ask them to fold up the "New Life" part of the page, take it home, and keep it in their Bible or another safe place.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What's the easiest thing about being a Christian?
2. What's the most difficult thing about being a Christian?
3. Why do you think some people seem to struggle with the same problems all through their Christian life and never get any better?
4. Do you think God will forgive you for the same sin again and again?
5. What's the best thing to do when you feel tempted to do something you know is wrong as a Christian?
6. How can we stay close to God even when things get really difficult for us?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Being in training for a special job, a big competition, an important report—it's not always easy. But it's exciting and rewarding. Being in God's kingdom-training program isn't always easy either. It requires you to fight your natural sinful tendencies. It also requires you to choose to stay close to Jesus no matter what's going on in your life. But He promised to coach you through every step of your training, so that as you win one prize after another, your life will become closer and closer to His perfect plan for you. The ultimate prize is still up ahead, when Jesus returns—but day by day, it's the most exciting journey you'll ever take!

FOR LESSON FIVE:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE APPLICATION ACTIVITY.

Old Life

1. The thing I'm most ashamed of having ever done is:

2. Something I got away with, but hope no one ever finds out about, is:

3. One bad habit I'd really like to get rid of is:

4. Something in my life right now that's coming between God and me is:

New Life

1. One good thing I'd really like to start doing is:

2. A goal I've set for myself this year is:

3. One person I'd like to be nicer to is:

4. One way I want to get closer to God is:



STUDENT LESSON

GROWING IN GRACE

Wilma Goes for Gold

January 29, 2022

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** “Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us. . . . Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 98-100

WILMA GOES FOR GOLD

“I’m sorry, but your daughter will never walk again.” The words sounded like a final sentence to the little girl and her mother. But they weren’t. Wilma’s left leg was twisted and weakened by polio. But her mother was determined Wilma would someday walk.

Week after week Wilma’s mother brought her 50 miles from home to do physical therapy. At home her mother, brothers, and sisters helped her exercise her leg. Throughout her

childhood Wilma went to school with a heavy metal brace on her left leg. She used the brace, crutches, and a corrective shoe. And despite the doctor’s prediction, she walked.

When she was 12, Wilma was finally able to walk without any assistance at all. That was when she made an important decision. She had already overcome tremendous odds. She was walking, even though doctors had told her she never would. But Wilma wanted to do more than walk. She wanted to run. She wanted to become a world-class athlete.

It might have seemed like a crazy dream for a poor African-American girl in the southern United States in the 1950s. Poverty, racial discrimination, and physical disability were all stacked against Wilma Rudolph, saying she’d never become a success.

But a strong will, a supportive family, and determination were on Wilma’s side. Day after day she hit the track running, training to make her left leg as strong as her right. She ran until she could run as well as any other teenage girl, and then she ran until she was a lot better.

When she was 16 years old, Wilma went to her first Olympic Games and came home with a bronze medal. Four years later, in Rome in 1960, she became the first American woman ever to win three Olympic gold medals.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 5:48.

- » "I don't want to be a Christian," your friend at school says. "It's too difficult, and it's no fun. Following all those stupid rules, and never getting away with anything!"
- » You're about to open your mouth when a friend who attends a different church says, "You're nuts! Being a Christian is not hard; it's easy! Jesus saves us. I got saved in church when I was 10, and I don't have to do anything else about it. What's so difficult about that?"
- » What do you think? Which friend do you agree with—or do you have another opinion? Is being a Christian hard, easy, or would you explain it some other way?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read Romans 8:38, 39; Ephesians 6:12-18; 2 Peter 3:18.
- » How wonderful that God has made a way for us to live and grow in His will. When we accept Him as our Savior, He sends the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sin. The Holy Spirit also works in us to transform us into God's image so we can live the lives God intended for us.
- » List the ways you have seen the Holy Spirit work in your life.

- » Put the words of this verse back in their proper order.

me	is	with	longer	NKJV
it	for	no	crucified	I
flesh	Christ	Himself	who	been
I	the	live	gave	have
2:	live		live	and
Christ	but	by	20	me
in	lives	loved	faith	In
Galatians	who	In	the	I

God	I	Son	which	and
now	of	life	the	me

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
- » Is being a Christian difficult or easy? On the one hand, it's easy. Accept Jesus and you're saved. God does all the work.
- » On the other hand, sometimes it seems as if there are so many rules and expectations. Go to church. Follow the rules. Set a good example.
- » If it's so easy, why is it so difficult? The secret is that being a Christian is both the easiest and the most difficult thing you'll ever do. Getting right with God is easy. Just let Him know you want your sins forgiven. He does all the rest.
- » But then God begins the work of shaping you into the person you were created to be. He takes you just as you are. But He loves you too much to let you stay in your sinful state. And just like an Olympic athlete in training, you put in the effort to run the race, keep your rebellious muscles surrendered to the program, stay in top form. Not because you want to earn God's approval or buy your way into heaven, but because you're starting to catch His vision of the kind of person He wants you to be—a gold-medal Christian, someone transformed into His image.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the text with the phrase that has been taken from the corresponding verse. You can find the different versions of the Bible at Biblegateway.com.

- A. 2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)
- B. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NCV)
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
- D. 2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)
- E. Matthew 5:48 (NLT)
- F. Hebrews 12:1 (CEV)

- _____ "But grow in the grace and knowledge . . ."
- _____ "But you are to be perfect even as your Father . . ."
- _____ "Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us!"
- _____ "I have fought the good fight . . ."
- _____ "You know that in a race all the runners run . . ."
- _____ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ . . ."

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Maybe sometimes you're the one who says, "Christianity's too difficult." You may look at the kind of life adults in church expect you to lead, and feel judged or criticized.
- » That's not God's attitude. God has high expectations for us, but He's pleased with every step we take toward Him. Remember Wilma Rudolph's story? When she first began to walk with her crutches and brace, do you think her mom said, "Pick it up, Wilma! You're not as fast as the other kids! And lose that limp!"?

- » Of course not. A loving parent wants their child to become the best they can be. But that same parent stands beside you, supporting you at every step, helping you overcome difficulties, cheering you on.

- » That's the kind of parent that God is. He won't rest until you're the best you can be. But He doesn't expect you to do it alone. He gives you His Holy Spirit power every step of the way. And He doesn't criticize or judge you when you slip and fall. He's right there, helping you up again, cheering you on.

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Hebrews 12:1.
- » It's not New Year's Eve, but it's time to set some goals. This is a little different from making "resolutions," things you're determined you'll try to do even if it kills you! That's relying on your own strength. Growing as a Christian is different—you rely on God's power to get you there, even though you have to constantly choose to stay in touch with Him.
- » Take a few minutes to make a list of five things you'd like to change, accomplish, or improve in your life over the next six months. When you've finished making your list, go to a quiet place and pray out loud, telling God what you'd like Him to change in your life and asking for His strength to do it. To finish your prayer time, read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and claim God's promise to make you a new person.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

