

Lesson 4 — The Sinner's Need

The Wheel of Faith

Big Idea

The gospel can only be received where need is recognized. Sin's greatest danger is more than immorality, but self-sufficiency—a condition Christ alone can heal.

Why This Study Matters

Many people assume their greatest problem is behavior, while Scripture reveals a deeper crisis: separation from God masked by independence. This lesson helps awaken awareness of need without guilt or despair, so that grace may be received rather than resisted. When need is rightly understood, repentance becomes relational, not condemning.

Do we have a need?

Introduction:

Discuss a time when you felt like your understanding or knowledge was good enough only later to find out that it was not. This is the idea of our lesson realizing that we have a need of something or someone that we might not be aware of.

1. When Need Is Denied

Read: Revelation 3:17

Group Question:

- Why is self-sufficiency spiritually dangerous?
 - How might confidence prevent us from receiving grace? {Help from God}
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2. Sin as a Universal Condition

Read: Romans 3:9–12; Romans 3:23

Key Truths:

- Sin is universal, not selective.
- Looking at others sins is an attempt not to see our own need.

Group Questions:

- How do these verses place all humanity on the same ground?
- Why is comparison harmful to spiritual growth?

Theological Guardrail:

Paul's intent is not humiliation, but honesty. The gospel begins where self-comparison ends.

3. Sin as Separation, Not Just Behavior

Read: Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23 (first clause) Romans 5:12

Key Truths:

- Sin separates from God, the source of life.
- Death is the inevitable result of separation.
- Adam brought that separation and from that separation we sin

Group Questions:

- Why is separation a more serious problem than isolated failures?
- How does this explain inner emptiness ?

Theological guardrail: Scripture describes sin first as broken relationship. Wrong actions flow from separation, not the other way around. It is easier to try to fix the problem rather than go to Jesus.

4. Human Inability and False Confidence

Read: Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 7:18

Key Truths:

- The issue is not effort, but nature.
- Willpower cannot cure separation.

Group Questions:

- Why does effort fail to resolve our deepest problem?
- How does this protect us from moralism?

Theological Guardrail:

The law can reveal need, but Christ provides power

5. Christ as the Only Remedy

Read: John 15:5; Galatians 2:20, 1 John 3:6

Key Truths:

- Apart from Christ, spiritual life is impossible.
- Christ acts because of our weakness, not after it is resolved.

Group Questions:

- Because we are sinners what do these text reveal about what our real need is?

Theological guardrail: It is true that the bible reveals that we are sinners, but that truth alone is not our need, because we are sinners with corrupt natures; our need is to be in union with Christ.

6. Christ-Centered Reflection — Awakening Need Through Love

Companion Reading — *Steps to Christ*, ch. 2

“It is not enough to perceive the loving-kindness of God, to see the benevolence, the fatherly tenderness, of His character. It is not enough to discern the wisdom and justice of His law, to see that it is founded upon the eternal principle of love. Paul the apostle saw all this when he exclaimed, ‘I consent unto the law that it is good.’ ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ But he added, in the bitterness of his soul-anguish and despair, ‘I am carnal, sold under sin.’ [Romans 7:16, 12, 14](#). He longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and cried out, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?’ [Romans 7:24](#), margin. Such is the cry that has gone up from burdened hearts in all lands and in all ages. To all, there is but one answer, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ [John 1:29](#).”

Group Reflection Questions:

- What did Paul do when he recognized the truth about himself?

Theological guardrail:

God exposes need to save, not to shame. Conviction that drives us from Christ is never from Him.

Closing Emphasis

True awareness of need does not lead to despair—it leads to dependence. Where need is acknowledged, grace is welcomed, and transformation can begin.

Experiential Reality — Becoming Aware of Our Need

The awareness of sin is not produced by accusation, but by **contrast**.

When the life of Christ is placed alongside our own—not to condemn, but to reveal—our need becomes clear. The Holy Spirit uses this contrast to awaken the heart, not to crush it.

The following prompts are designed to help us **see ourselves honestly in the light of Christ**.

Day 1. Reflect on Christ's Life Before Evaluating Your Own

Practice:

Spend time reading one Gospel passage that reveals the *spirit* of Christ—not just His actions.

Suggested passages:

- Matthew 5–7 (the spirit of the kingdom)
- John 13 (Christ's humility and service)
- Luke 15 (Christ's heart toward sinners)
- Philippians 2:5–8 (Christ's mindset)

Reflect quietly:

Notice Christ's:

- patience
- humility
- self-forgetfulness
- trust in the Father
- love toward difficult people

Let His life set the standard. *Conviction begins with contemplation.*

Prayer Time: ask God to help you see Christ through your readings.

Day 2. Compare Your Operating Spirit to Christ's Spirit

Practice:

After reading about Christ, reflect on how you typically **operate** in daily life.

Consider:

- When challenged, do I defend myself or trust God?
- When wronged, do I retaliate internally or release control?
- When inconvenienced, do I become irritated or remain gentle?
- When misunderstood, do I strive to be vindicated or remain silent?

This is not about condemning behavior—it is about revealing **dependence**.

The gap between Christ's spirit and ours reveals our need.

Prayer Time: ask God to reveal the above ideas to you.

Day 3. Observe What Motivates Your Obedience

Practice:

Reflect on what usually motivates your spiritual life.

- fear of consequences?
- desire to be accepted?
- habit or duty?
- love and trust?

Ask honestly:

If fear were removed, would my obedience remain?

Where obedience is driven by fear or pressure, **need is present**.

Prayer Time: ask God to give you spiritual motivation.

Day 4. Pay Attention to Inner Resistance

Practice:

Notice moments when Christ's teachings create resistance in you.

Examples:

- loving enemies
- forgiving repeatedly
- letting go of control
- trusting God in uncertainty
- surrendering reputation

Instead of suppressing resistance, acknowledge it.

Resistance reveals where self still rules.

This is not failure—it is diagnosis.

Prayer Time: acknowledge any resistance you have to God today.

Day 5. Notice What You Rely on When Under Pressure

Practice:

Think about recent moments of stress, conflict, or disappointment.

Ask:

- Where did I instinctively turn?
- Self-effort?
- Control?
- Withdrawal?
- Prayer and trust?

Pressure reveals the true source of dependence.

What we rely on under pressure exposes our need.

Prayer Time: ask God today for spiritual discernment with the above ideas.

Day 6. Contrast Christ's Rest with Your Restlessness

Practice:

Observe the pace of Christ's life in the Gospels.

Despite constant demand, He:

- was unhurried
- rested in the Father
- was not driven by urgency or anxiety

Now reflect:

- Am I often hurried or anxious?
- Do I feel driven rather than led?
- Do I find rest difficult?

Restlessness is often a sign of **unmet need**.

Prayer Time: rest in Jesus today ask him to fill you with his peace.

Day 7. Let Love — Not Guilt — Reveal the Need

Practice:

After reflection, resist the urge to fix yourself.

Instead, sit quietly with this truth:

“Without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Allow the awareness of need to draw you **toward Christ**, not inward toward self-analysis.

True awareness of need produces dependence, not despair.

Prayer Time: confess the above ideas in your prayer today.

Experiential Summary Statement

Our need is most clearly revealed not when we compare ourselves to others, but when we behold the life of Christ. In His presence, self-sufficiency fades, and the heart becomes open to grace.