

STAGES OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Discovering Stage

Age: birth to five years

Key Terms: first impressions, positive feelings, foundation building, sensory motor experiences

Our Role: cultivator (preparing the soil for seeds that will be planted later)

The Discerning Stage

Age: four to eight years

Key Terms: gathering facts, exploring the Bible, curiosity, asking questions

Our Role: planter (planting seeds through teaching, modeling, observing, answering)

The Deciding Stage

Age: seven to twelve years

Key Terms: conviction, struggle, faith, transformation

Our Role: caretaker (providing food for the new plant that it may grow)

The Discipling Stage

Age: ten years and up

Key Terms: establishing habits, consistency, maturity, growing deeper, doctrine

Our Role: pruner (shaping, encouraging, the growing plant)

From: Murphy, Art. *The Faith of a Child*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000) p. 60-64

The Child's Book of Repentance

Thomas H. Gallaudet
Birmingham, Ala: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2005

KEY QUOTES

If the only sorrow which you feel for having done what God forbids you to do, or for not having done what he commands you to do, is because you fear the punishment which he has threatened against those who break his laws, then you have no true repentance for your sins. (p. 86)

True repentance is something more than a strong resolution or purpose that you will leave off sinning, and begin to love and obey God. Such a resolution will be of no use unless it proceeds from a heart-felt sorrow for your sins, as committed against a wise, holy, just and good God. It will be of no use, unless you feel also a sincere reliance on Jesus Christ as your only Savior. It will be of no use, if it is made in your own strength. In making it, you must beseech God, for Christ's sake, to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may be strengthened to keep it, and be renewed in the temper of your mind. (p. 86-87)

You may cease to commit some particular sin against God, and think that you have truly repented of it. This cannot be, if you go on sinning in other respects. It would be only getting tired of one sin, and changing it in for others. Repentance for one sin, if sincere, will be accompanied with repentance for all sins. Forsaking one sin is no proof of its being truly repented of, unless there is a constant effort and prayer to forsake all sins, and to do all that God requires of you. (p. 87)

[The true penitent] feels that he has done wrong in not rendering to God this love and obedience. He feels that he has no excuse to make for not doing it. He feels that his own sinfulness and self-will have led him to refuse to do it. He acknowledges the great guilt of his pride and obstinacy of heart. He is truly and deeply sorry for it. His will, subdued and humbled, bows in submission to the will of God; not as if forced to do it, as when a child yields to the will of the parent from the fear of punishment, but he freely, fully and cheerfully desires and endeavors to do it, and trusts to Christ to aid him in doing it. (p. 90)

The true penitent looks up to God, and thinks of his laws as he never did before. He sees that, like God himself, they are holy, just, and good. He sees that God was very good in making these laws, and that, if all would obey them, all would form one great family of love, happy in loving and serving God, and in loving others, and seeing them good and happy. (p. 92- 93)

The true penitent thinks of sin as he never did before. Formerly, it appeared to him a small evil.. Now he regards sin in a very different light. He sees that it is a very great evil... (p. 94) All this is accompanied with his very strong hatred of sin. (p. 95)

He hates sin also in others. He desires to have them freed from it. (p. 96)

The true penitent does not wish to cover up his sins. He is willing to know how guilty he is. He confesses his sins to God. He does this without keeping any back. He does it with a broken and contrite heart. (p. 96)

There is another thing which always marks the true penitent. He sees that there are sins of thought and feeling, as well as of conversation and conduct. He sees that the laws of God reach the soul, and require that his very thoughts and feelings should be right. (p. 105) His repentance goes to his inmost soul. It reaches his hidden thoughts and feelings, his purposes, his wishes, his desires, his fears, his hopes; all the secret workings and movements of his mind. He longs to be pure in heart. He prays for the Holy Spirit to direct all his thoughts and feelings, and to aid and strengthen him, that he may banish every thing that is unholy from his soul...(p. 106)

Repentance and Faith: Explained to the Understanding of the Young

Charles Walker

Solid Ground Books: Birmingham, Ala., 2006

Repentance: Explained to the Understanding of the Young Second Story – True repentance.

Now for the story about the other boy. His name was Samuel Gale. He had no father or mother; they both died when he was a little child, and he did not remember any thing about them. He lived with Mr. Smith, a very kind gentleman, who had taken the orphan boy, and treated him as a son. Samuel was a modest and sober lad, not much inclined to play, and not very active in his motions. He was not cheerful enough to be a pleasant playmate, and the other boys did not like him very well, for they said he was always sad, and always thinking about something. And it must be owned, that he was rather easy to get offended, and was sometimes peevish and fretful. But with all these faults, Samuel was a very good boy to learn. He loved his studies, and was very fond of reading his Sabbath-school books, and such other books as he could get.

Mr. Smith had a peach-tree in his garden, and one summer it was loaded with very fine fruit. Wishing to have the peaches get fully ripe, he gave strict orders to all his family not to pluck any of them from the tree, till he should tell them they might. Samuel, who was often in the garden, watched the peaches as they were getting ripe, and changing their color. When they began to put on their yellow coat, they looked very beautiful, and Samuel longed to get a taste of them. One day he found that one had fallen from the tree. It was a very large and fair one. Taking it up in his hand, he thought it would not be wrong to eat it, as he did not pick it from the tree. So he ate it, and it was so exceedingly good, that he had a strong desire to get some more of them. However, he restrained himself at that time from taking any. But he kept thinking all the afternoon how good the peach tasted, and how many other good ones there were on the tree. In the evening, when it began to grow dark, he went into the garden again, and thought to himself that he might get a few of the peaches, and nobody would know it. He knew it would be wrong, and sometimes he determined that he would not do it. But as he stayed about the tree, he felt his appetite grow keener, and at length he gave way to the temptation, and said he would have some of the fruit. As he could not reach the peaches while standing on the ground, he climbed up into the tree. The shaking of the tree made some of the fruit fall to the ground, and as it was now dark, and he could not see the peaches, but was obliged to feel about with his hand to find them, he knocked off a good many. And now he began to be sorry that he had climbed the tree. He had knocked off so many, that he feared Mr. Smith would find out that somebody had been there. But, poor boy, a worse thing still was about to happen to him. In his haste to get down, he stepped with his whole weight on a large limb, already loaded with fruit, and the limb broke, and he fell to the ground. The fall hurt him some, but he did not care for that. What troubled him then, was, that he had left so many marks of what he had done, that he feared he should be found out as the rogue. He was so sorry that he had meddled with the tree, that he could not eat a single peach; so he took out all that he had put into his pockets and threw them on the ground. He went into the house, and soon after went to bed.

This was a sad night for Samuel. He could not sleep. He lay uneasy in his bed, and blamed himself for his folly. As he lay thinking what he should do, he sometimes almost concluded that he would get up in the morning, and go directly to Mr. Smith, tell him what he had done, confess his faults, and beg forgiveness. This would have been right, but he was not penitent enough to do it. At other times, he thought it might not be known that he did it, and so he might save himself the disgrace of confessing. There was a hard struggle in his mind. He wept much, and sleep departed from his eyes.

When the morning came, and Samuel arose from his restless bed, if he had gone at once to Mr. Smith, and confessed his faults, and become a good boy, and obeyed his master, and served God ever afterwards, that would have been repentance. But though he thought some of doing this, yet he was not humble enough to be willing to do it. He felt that he should be ashamed if he confessed his fault. So he did not then repent, though he was very sorry that he had done the wicked deed, and shed a great many tears about it.

Soon after breakfast, Mr. Smith went into the garden, and saw one of the large limbs of his peach-tree broken off, and many of the peaches scattered about on the ground. The sight made him sad, and almost angry. He went into the house, and said that some one had been stealing the peaches, and had nearly spoiled the tree. Samuel dreaded to hear him speak, and thought if Mr. Smith should ask him if he did it, he would say that he did not. Ah, this was a bad thought; he did not at that moment consider, that telling a lie about it would be as bad as getting the peaches, and even worse. Samuel was not apt to tell lies, but he had done it a few times, and now concluded to do it again. So, when Mr. Smith asked his family if any one had been getting the peaches, they all said they had not; and Samuel, too, said he had not. If Mr. Smith had observed closely when Samuel spoke, he would have seen a blush of shame, and the marks of guilt in his face. But as he had always been a pretty good boy, and had seldom been caught in a lie, Mr. Smith concluded that somebody else had done it. He asked his family who they thought it might be. They all guessed that it was Thomas Reed, a boy in the neighborhood, who had often been guilty of such deeds.

Samuel felt glad for a moment, that he had not been found out. He soon left the room; but when he was alone, his mind was much troubled. His lie now gave him as much pain as the other trespass. All the forenoon his feelings were very painful. Sometimes he tried to excuse himself, but he knew there was no excuse, and his trying to do it made him appear worse in his own sight. Once he thought to excuse his lie in this way. He said, "Mr. Smith asked if I had been getting the peaches. I told him, no; and I did not get any of them, for I left them all under the tree." But this plan quieted his mind only for a moment; for he knew that he did get his pockets full of the peaches, and only left those under the tree because the limb broke. He knew himself, he felt himself guilty. No excuses could satisfy his mind. He was uneasy and wretched.

In the afternoon, while Mr. Smith and some of his neighbors were looking at the broken peach-tree, Thomas Reed and his father came along. They called Mr. Reed and his son into the garden, and charged the boy with robbing the tree. Thomas denied it, as well he might. But one of the men said he saw Thomas looking through the fence at the tree the day before. This statement, and the fact that he had often been guilty of theft and other bad conduct, made them all think that Thomas was the rogue. So Thomas' father took a large rod, and gave him a severe whipping. Samuel saw the blows, and feeling that he deserved them himself, he was more unhappy than ever. He almost concluded, when he saw Thomas smarting under the rod, to run to them and confess that he was the guilty boy, and so save Thomas. But he was not yet humble enough to do it. So he ran away by himself alone, and cried much about his own guilt and Thomas' suffering. But still, this was not repenting, for he did not do what he knew he ought to do. This was proof that he did not yet repent; for you must remember that every true penitent will do what he knows he ought to do.

Samuel did not sleep much more this night than he did the night before. He felt that he was more guilty now than he was the last night. He went to his bed with a sad heart.

As he lay there, uneasy and weeping, he thought of a great many things that he had done in his past life, which were wrong. He seemed to remember all his wicked feelings and conduct. Before this time, he used to think himself a very good boy, and did not feel that he was a great sinner. But now it seemed to him that his whole life had been wicked. He felt that his heart was full of evil. While he lay restless and unhappy on his bed, he remembered what the Bible says: "The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Samuel felt that all this is true. He thought how often he had been disobedient, and fretful and angry. He remembered that he had been guilty of lying before. He found that he had been disobeying God all his days. These thoughts troubled him much. "How foolish and wicked I have been," he said. "I never considered that I was such a sinner before." Again he considered his late bad conduct. He thought of the peach-tree, and his disobedience and theft. He thought, too, of Thomas Reed, and seemed almost to hear him cry again, while suffering the stripes which he ought to have borne himself. His heart was full of anguish. He could endure it no longer. "I will confess," said he; "I will tell Mr. Smith it was I that got the peaches, and broke the tree. I will tell him that I told a wicked lie about it. And I will go to Thomas Reed and beg his pardon."

Now Samuel was humble. Now he truly began his repentance. He was honest in what he said, and was resolved to do it as soon as the morning light should come. Now his mind was more at peace. Though his conduct seemed to him as bad as ever, yet he now resolved to do what he knew he ought to do. He did not think so much, at this time, whether Mr. Smith would forgive him, or whether God would forgive him; he resolved to confess and forsake his sins. This brought some quiet to his mind, and it being almost morning, he got a little sleep.

Early in the morning, he arose and kneeled down by his bedside, and confessed his sins, and prayed to God for some time. Samuel never prayed in such a manner before. There, on his knees before God, he resolved to do all that he knew he ought to do, and he prayed God to help him to keep this resolution as long as he lived. This was repenting. He went down to Mr. Smith's room, and as soon as Mr. Smith came in, he went and kneeled down at his feet, and said, "It was I that got the peaches. It was I that broke the tree. I told a very wicked lie about it. Thomas Reed was not to blame." Mr. Smith was very much surprised; and as Samuel seemed very humble and penitent, he said, "I will forgive you, my boy." As Samuel felt that he was almost too wicked to be forgiven, he hardly thought Mr. Smith would pardon him so soon. He felt that he deserved punishment, and was willing to be punished. But he was glad to hear the words of pardon, and he thought he should love Mr. Smith better than he ever did, and should not disobey him again. All the family were glad to see Samuel so penitent, and they all most fully forgave him.

He then asked Mr. Smith if he might go before breakfast and see Thomas Reed. Mr. Smith gave him leave, and he ran with great haste over to Mr. Reed's. As soon as he found Thomas, he said to him, "I knew you did not get the peaches. I was sorry to see you punished yesterday. I was the one to blame." Thomas was rather cross, but Samuel asked his pardon a good many times, and told him that he would always do him all the good in his power. He then went home, praying to God as he walked along, that, for Christ's sake, he would forgive him, and make him ever after a good and pious boy.

We have reason to believe that God heard the prayers of Samuel, and granted his request; for he was very much changed, and was in all respects a much better boy afterwards. He remembered his promise, to do every thing which he knew he ought to do. He read his Bible much more than he used to do, and the more he read that holy book, the better he loved it. He spent a short season two or three times a day, in earnest prayer to God. His temper was better

than it was before. He was more cheerful and happy, and his schoolmates, and all who knew him, loved him better. After a few months, he thought that he ought to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, in making a public profession of religion, and confess him before men. So he was united with the church, and he lived ever afterwards such a blameless and pious life, that every body believed he was a Christian. (p. 27–38)

EXTRA QUOTES:

And you see, also, that when a person is in a state of mind to repent of one sin, he will repent of all sin. (p. 38)

Another thing, which I want all my young readers to remember, is, that when any one repents, he will be ready to do his duty. (p. 39)

His repentance did not consist merely of weeping; he changed his conduct. (p. 50)

Leading Children to A Solid Faith: Preparing Children For the Gospel Seminar

Presented at the Children Desiring God conference April, 2007

Presenter: Sally Michael, Minister for Training & Resources, Bethlehem Baptist Church

www.childrendesiringgod.org