

Have You Studied the ABCs?

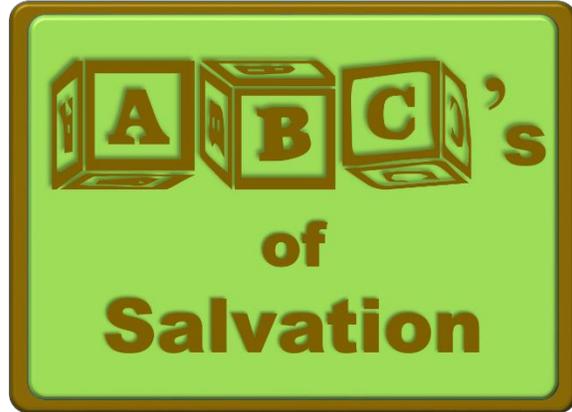
May 20, 2018 | Pastor Dan

PART 3

I am anxious to move on to the B and C of the ABCs of Salvation, but there is still more to be said about the A – Admit.

In Part 1, I mentioned the Lifeway article “The ABCs of Salvation.” I also pointed out that a brief search of the web will prove that this is the most popular outline of the plan of salvation in worldwide use today.

Another ministry that ascribes to the ABCs of salvation is Teen Missions. In an article entitled the [ABCs of Salvation](#) on their website, they say this about repentance:



How can we be led to repentance? The first step toward repentance is true sorrow for what we’ve done wrong. “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” – **2 Corinthians 7:10** NKJV. Worldly sorrow is more like the regret of a criminal who’s just been caught whereas godly sorrow is the deep remorse or conviction that produces a change in direction. Have you ever felt convicted after doing something wrong? The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the one that convicts us of our sin. (**John 16:7-8**)

Teen Missions made the same mistake that Lifeway and others made by identifying our sorrow for sin as the first step in repentance. I remind you that there cannot be sorrow for what one does not know. The knowledge of sin in a biblical sense comes from a personal encounter with the word, or the Word, of God. Thus the first step in repentance is revelation – a decision made, not by man, but by God.

One thing that Teen Missions **did** get right is their use of the phrase “true sorrow,” a phrase they use in parallel to godly sorrow of 2 Cor. 7:10, which they quote in their article.

Paul contrasts godly sorrow with worldly sorrow. The contrast seems directed towards point of origin. The sorrow that leads to death originates in the world – in the heart of man. In contrast, the sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation and ultimately to life originates in eternity – in the heart of God.’

Godly sorrow *worketh* repentance (KJV). The word *worketh* means “to work out, to bring about, to accomplish, to carry out a task until it is finished, to be the cause or author of.” ¹ The sorrow

that finds its origin in the heart of God produces or brings about repentance that leads to salvation. This is in accordance with other scriptures that refer to the origin of repentance.

Rom. 2:4 *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*²

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 11:18 *When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."*

For godly sorrow to be found in the heart of man requires that it be planted there by God the Father himself.

- Alfred Barnes said that godly sorrow was "sorrow according to God...That is, such sorrow as has respect to God, or is according to his will, or as leads the soul to him."
- Ellicott's Commentary says that godly sorrow is "the sorrow which is after the will of God."
- The Lexham English Bible translates godly sorrow as "grief according to [the will of] God."

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The Amplified Version begins the verse, "For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct..." I have some reservations about the word "permitted," but the general idea behind this and the previous commentaries is that they all agree that the source of godly sorrow is not found in man, but with God.

Another idea that Teen Missions gets right concerns the conviction of sin. The quote above adds, "godly sorrow is the deep remorse or conviction that produces a change in direction..." But what is the origin of this "deep remorse and conviction"? Fortunately, the article answers that question. "The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the one that convicts us of our sin. (John 16:7-8)"

Now follow the chronology of this explanation. The Holy Spirit of God brings "deep remorse and conviction" within the heart of a lost person, which is followed by godly sorrow which produces repentance that leads to salvation. Teen Missions seems to agree that repentance cannot take place before a person has a personal encounter with God in the person of the Holy Spirit. Thus sorrow – even godly sorrow – is not the first step in repentance. Revelation and an encounter with God is the first step.

There is another way of contrasting godly sorrow and earthly sorrow. Earthly sorrow may refer to the kind of sorrow we feel when we know that we have been discovered in wrong doing. We are sorry that everyone will come to know that we have done wrong and our reputation is at risk. We may be sorry because, now that the sin is out, serious and unavoidable consequences may follow.

On the other hand, according to *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, godly sorrow is “sorrow for sin as an offence against God.”⁴ In other words, we do not sorrow over the consequences of sin, but over the fact that we have committed an offense against a holy and righteous God.

Yet even using this as the interpretation of the contrast between godly and worldly sorrow, we reach the same conclusion: One cannot sorrow over what one does not know. Before one can sorrow over an offense against God, one must know that there is a God who is holy and righteous and who is capable of being offended.

Once again, the first step in repentance is not sorrow for our sin, but the revelation of God.

Salvation means that we are being saved, but what is it that we are being saved from? Yes, salvation is about the forgiveness of sin, about our being set free from the penalty and the curse of sin. But just what is the penalty and the curse of sin? It is death as a result of the judgment of God. In other words, ultimately, Jesus saves us from the wrath of God.

When we center our evangelistic efforts on sin, the focus is on man. When we center our evangelistic efforts on revelation, then the focus is on God.

That brings us back to the original question asked in Part 2: Why don't we begin our evangelistic presentation with Christ?

Instead of Admit, maybe the A in the ABCs of Salvation should be “Acknowledging One's Relationship with Jesus.”

I had much rather start a spiritual conversation with a lost person with a discussion about the perfect Christ than to begin by trying to convince the lost person that he is an imperfect sinner.

¹ Complete Word Study Bible, Olive Tree Bible Software.

² Unless otherwise designated, all Bible quotes are from the English Standard Version.

³ https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/7-10.htm

⁴ Ibid.