

# Another Chance

*As you begin this study, remember to emphasize the fact that we need not fail the Lord and backslide. The Lord can and will help us to keep our salvation. When people do backslide, however, we must hold out God's mercy and forgiveness to them.*

*Another point you will want to make is that there are times when we all will feel correction from the Lord. While this necessitates repentance to God and making the matter right, it might not constitute backsliding.*

*Certainly you will want to conclude with a success story of someone who, though he or she failed God, later returned to be an asset to His Kingdom. You can use a Bible character, such as King David or Peter, or perhaps a teacher or one of the students can offer their own testimony on this subject.*

**Response 1** — There are two initial points which need to be brought out in discussion. First, it is possible to backslide, and if that happens, one must repent and return to God. A backslider will never be restored as long as he believes he is eternally secure no matter what his actions. Once a backslider admits he is separated from God, he can begin to turn back to God in repentance for his sins.

Second, the students should recognize that we might make errors that are not sin but which still need to be rectified. God is willing and eager to help those with honest hearts to correct their errors. As Christians, we need to come continually before Him with the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23,24). The distinction between a sin and an error lies in the motive of the heart. We might have used poor judgment, jumped to conclusions, or otherwise stumbled. Your group should see that the only right thing to do under these

## Objective

The students will be able to explain how God will forgive them, if they either backslide (commit sin) or fall short of God's perfect plan for them, and how He will help them to avoid similar actions again.

## Key Texts

Genesis 6:3; 1 Samuel 9:21; 10:9,22; 13:9-13; 15:22-26; 16:14; 1 Chronicles 21; Psalm 51; Ezekiel 33:11-13; Luke 22:32; John 6:44; Galatians 6:7,8; Philippians 3:7-14; 1 Timothy 4:2; Jude 1:24; Revelation 2:4,5; 3:2

## Other Scriptures Used in This Study

Psalm 139:23,24

## Suggested Verse for Memorization

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. — Isaiah 55:7

circumstances is to go to God, identify the problem, and discover the reason and the remedy.

**Response 2** — We will often alter our actions if we know others are affected. Emphasize the fact that our decisions, both positive and negative, almost always affect others. Even if we are not in a position of leadership like King David, very likely someone looks to us as an example. Discussion of the "reaping and sowing" issue should bring out that we shouldn't be discouraged if we begin to reap for our wrongdoings, but that we should flee to the Lord for refuge and begin sowing righteousness. King David was a model for us in his repentance and humbling of himself before the Lord. He exhibited compassion for his subjects and asked for them to be spared, taking responsibility before God for his actions and moving quickly to offer the sacrifice as instructed by Him. A humble spirit should be exhibited to any who have been hurt or wronged. "I'm sorry" should not be foreign words to a Christian.

**Response 3** — The attitude of the heart is the central issue as we deal with mistakes and errors. Bring out in your discussion that God knows the attitudes of our hearts just as He knew Paul's attitude. He often speaks to us about what we should have done. Are we mature enough to learn when He speaks to us in this manner? What are some ways He might bring these matters to our attention? After making this point, discussion should shift to the importance of keeping our eyes on the goal. We must not fall and then stay down. We must get up even if our confidence is shaken. God will help steady us and will help us to "forget those things behind." We have not reached the finish line, and there is still time to get up and run. All who finish this race will hear the words "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

**Response 4** — As the class lists the actions in Saul's life which led to his downfall, have someone write these on a chalkboard or overhead. Make sure discussion centers on the fact that God is not willing that any should perish. It should also be made clear, however, that there is a line that must not be crossed. Consider 1 Timothy 4:2 with your group, discussing what it means to have a conscience that is "seared." They should see that it is just as when our physical body is burned—many nerve endings are destroyed. In the spiritual, our faith "nerves" are destroyed as we continue to reject God's voice. If enough damage is done, we have a major prob-

lem, because Scripture says that "without faith it is impossible to please him."

**Response 5** — Discussion should bring out that, if we fail the Lord, the first step is to turn back to Him and to repent. We need to do everything in our power to make things right with others.

You might wish to draw attention to Jesus' plans for Peter, even though He knew Peter would first need to recover from failure. Peter was not "kept on the bench" because of the past. Instead, on the Day of Pentecost, he became a mighty man of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord wants all of us to be successful in our Christian walk. Discuss the issue of our love for the Lord. The more His love is rooted into our hearts, the better chance we have of withstanding the onslaughts of the devil.

**Response 6** — Your students should see that, as we attempt to guard against subsequent failure, we must resist every temptation to be discouraged or to give up. We must recognize that any growth or progress in the life of holiness will require the utmost honesty with God and with ourselves. We must determine to be attentive to the slightest check of the Spirit. We should choose our close friends from those who are spiritually minded. Faithful study of God's Word and daily communion with the Lord are invaluable. Mention also the importance of drawing near to God and of not following "afar off" as Peter did before his repentance.