

The Pilgrim's Progress: A Study

Week 3: Section 2- The Slough of Despond, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and the Wicket Gate

(Pastor's Notes)

Cover the Narrative

Let's take time to discuss the basic story of pages 11-24, focusing on these key questions:

1. What unexpected hardship befalls Christian and Pliable as our section begins?
They both, being heedless of any danger, fell into the Slough of Despond.
2. Describe the difference in reaction between Christian and Pliable (attitude and action) to this development.
For Pliable, this unexpected hardship is almost unbearable, having set out on this journey only for its attending glories. He is angered and does not want to continue. Thus, he gets out of the slough on the side nearest the City of Destruction and leaves Christian to navigate the dangers on his own.
For Christian, the fall into the Slough is as unfortunate as it is unexpected, yet it ultimately changes nothing regarding his motivation and goal. He struggles through the Slough to the side nearer the shining light, though he is unable to get out, due to the great burden that is upon his back.
3. Who arrives by the slough to offer aid? Why is he surprised that Christian is stuck?
Help arrives by the Slough; he is surprised that Christian is stuck, having not used the steps to get out.
4. Help explains why the Slough exists. What does he say?
It is the place where the scum and filth that attends conviction of sin continually runs and collects. It is made up of many fears, doubts, and discouraging anxieties.
5. What had the King done to address the Slough.
The King has done much to address the Slough, but it cannot be fully mended, given the nature of man's doubts and fears. Even so, He has graciously offered stairs (the hope set out in the promises of Holy Scripture) to aid pilgrims in getting out should they fail to pay attention to the danger and fall in.
6. Having resumed his pilgrimage, who does Christian next encounter?
Mr. Worldly Wiseman, representing the wisdom of the world.
7. What is the advice of Mr. Worldly Wiseman upon seeing Christian's difficulties?
That he should not continue in the way that he is going (which is clearly dangerous), and that he should turn toward another way.

8. How does Mr. Wiseman seek to convince Christian?

Worldly Wiseman attempts of convince Christian through both criticism and false hope. He offers false hope that his burden can be relieved elsewhere and that he can be reconciled to his family by other means. Further, he criticizes the way on which he is journeying, the messenger who sent him on that way, and Christian's ability to understand the book which he has read (an argument of the Anglican church in Bunyan's day).

9. Where is the town of Morality located? What does Wiseman tell him he will find?

Near a hill (representing Sinai). He will find Legality, a man reputed to ease men's guilty burdens. If he is unavailable, his son, Civility, is also known to be helpful.

10. What does Christian find as he comes to the mount near Morality?

Christian finds a frightful scene. A pathway over which the great hill did seem to lean, waiting, it seems, to topple over onto any who would attempt that way. The weight of his burden also increased, along with flashes from the mountain.

11. Who providentially came to Christian's aid? What did they discuss?

Evangelist encounters Christian near the mount, asking him how he came to be so far off the way the in which he was sent.

12. What were the three things in Wiseman's advice that Christian should abhor? P.19

First, his turning Christian away from the way. Second, his work to make the cross an offense to Christian. Third, his sending Christian into the way of an administration of death.

13. At the end of their conversation, what encouragement and warning did Evangelist give?

He offered him the encouragement that though his sin was great, yet shall he be admitted in at the wicket gate (For where sin abounds, grace abounds more greatly). He warned Christian not to turn aside again, seeing grace as an opportunity for sin.

14. What is written above the Wicket Gate? Who is its attendant?

The text of Matthew 7:8 is written above the Wicket Gate: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The gate is watched by Good-Will.

15. How does Christian describe himself?

A poor burdened sinner.

16. Christian was pulled through the gate. What danger had he not noticed? Why was it there?

Christian had not noticed the near-by strong castle erected by Satan. It exists that the Devil might seek to kill all who would enter by the narrow gate.

17. What direction for the pilgrimage is Christian offered at the Wicket Gate?

Christian is told to take the narrow, straight way leading from the gate.

We will read 21-24 to hear the discussion between Good-Will and Christian.

Go over the Worksheets

See if there are any questions or comments related to the worksheets.

Theological Discussion

- Theological significance of the characters- Pliable (again), Help, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Legality, Mr. Civility, Evangelist (again), and Good-Will?
- Theological significance of the Locations: Slough of Despond, Mount Sinai, Town of Morality, Beelzebub's castle, the Wicket Gate.
- Why is the Town of Morality such a threat to the pilgrimage?
- Why does Bunyan associate those three names- Morality, Legality, Civility?
- This section in our study guide is titled Seeking the Savior. Why? How are we to understand where Christian is in His pilgrimage? Has He inherited eternal life at the end of today's section? What did Bunyan later say about this? Why has this very subject caused some theological issues? How should we understand it?

Assignment for next week:

For next Wednesday night, please read pages 25-42 in the supplied book.

- **The House of the Interpreter** (page 25)
- **Christian at the Cross** (Page 34)
- **Simple, Sloth and Presumption** (page 35)
- **Formalist and Hypocrisy** (page 36)
- and **The Hill of Difficulty** (Page 38)

If you can, fill out your worksheets, and look up the Biblical references in your Bible.

-I look forward to seeing you again, then!