

Discipleship Level II

Vessels of Honor: Growing in Holiness



*Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm,
sealed with the inscription:
"The Lord knows those who are his,"
and "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord
must turn away from wickedness."
In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver,
but also of wood and clay;
some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble.
If a man cleanses himself from the latter,
he will be an instrument of for noble purposes,
made holy,
useful to the Master
and prepared to do any good work.
Flee the evil desires of youth,
and pursue righteousness,
faith, love and peace,
along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."*

(2 Timothy 2:19-22)

Level II
Vessels of Honor
Growing in Holiness

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desires of youth....”

2 Timothy 2:20-21

“Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it!”

1 Thessalonians 5:22-24

Overall Goal: *That we would understand and better cooperate with the process of the Spirit’s sanctifying and transforming work in our lives, helping us become more and more like Jesus.*

Introduction: Vessels of Honor

- *The difference between “justification” and “sanctification.”*

Lesson #1 – The Call to Holiness

- **Part #1: The Importance of Holiness: No Playing with God!** *That we would understand the gravity and urgency of the call of holiness to every believer. Using texts from Paul’s letters to the churches, we show the mortal danger of hypocrisy and double-lives for the professing believer.*
- **Part #2: Called to shine! Holiness is Happiness!** *We balance this challenge with the Biblical view of holiness as a joyful state of life for the believer, making us more winsome, humble and tolerant of others. (vs. the legalistic, Pharisaical model).*
- **Part #3: What would Jesus do?** *Here we present Jesus as the ultimate model of holiness, in all the nitty gritty of daily life.*



Lesson #2 – A New Way of Life – Change by the Power of the Spirit

- **Part #1: True change is impossible by human effort.** Here we attempt to prevent a human-effort, legalistic approach to personal change.
- **Part #2: The Spirit – Flesh Struggle.** We explain the context of sin as stemming from the essentially sinful human nature, and the manner of change as only through the empowering work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.
 - Romans 6-8
 - Galatians 5:16-26
- **Part #3: Renouncing the old man and embracing the new.** We engage in a prophetic exercise of renouncing the sinful qualities of our old way of life and prophetically visualizing ourselves as controlled by the Spirit in these particular areas. Colossians 3:1-17; Ephesians 4:17-5:7

Lesson #3 – A New Way of Thinking – The Renewal of the Mind



- **Part #1: The Mind as a Battlefield.** We seek to show the connection between thoughts and actions.
- **Part #2: Mental Strongholds - Lies we Believe and Embrace.** We seek to show examples of how false thought patterns actually become spiritual “inroads” for demonic influence in our lives.
- **Part #3: Deceitful Desires and Sinful Behaviors.** Most sin is the result of desires (concupiscence), which promise what they cannot fulfill. We seek to show the process of how these desires, based on incorrect beliefs, translate into sinful actions and eventually patterns of behavior.
- **Part #4: We can say “no” to deceitful desires!** Here we affirm the power we have in Christ to identify false beliefs and desires that promise what they cannot fulfill, and renounce them!
- **Part #5: How to demolish a stronghold by correcting false beliefs.** Through specific examples we seek to guide the student in the exercise of identifying false beliefs behind some sinful behavior in his life, and then renouncing these beliefs, visualizing a different course of action

Lesson #4 – Training in Godliness

- **The need for discipline.** While holiness is the work of the Spirit and developed in a context of grace, we are not passive in the process. Paul “beat his body” to “make it his slave.” We must cultivate certain disciplines if we are serious about keeping in step with the Spirit.
- **Human Effort and Divine Power:** We discuss how the two are not mutually contradictory.
- **The importance of mentors, trainers and examples in the Christian life.** We discuss the meaning and importance of mentoring, and seek to help the disciple to identify possible figures of positive influence in his own life.

Lesson #5 – Self Examination

- **The importance of introspection and self awareness,** (without falling into self-absorption!)
- **What does it mean to “walk in the light”?** Based on the call of 1 John 1, we present the concept of transparency and honesty with God, others, and ourselves.
- **The Four quadrants of “light” – or self-awareness. (Adapted from Jihari’s Window)**
 - Our public side
 - Our blind side
 - Our private side
 - Our unknown self
- **Ways of entering into the light**
 - Courageous action instead of procrastination
 - Accepting correction from others
 - Confession to our brothers
 - Revelation of the Holy Spirit
- **How to identify frontier areas of growth**
- **How to make prophetic plans for personal change –** Without encouraging a type of “new year’s resolution” approach, we do seek to help the participant make specific, achievable plans to cooperate with the Spirit in the process of personal change



Lesson #6 – *Overcoming Temptation*

- **Danger Zones:** How to identify “danger zones” in the process of temptation and implement cautionary measures. We all have “triggers” which accompany our besetting sinful behaviors or attitudes. As we identify these contexts for sin, we can go about short-circuiting the process of temptation-desire-sin-bondage.
- **Satanic schemes in temptation.** Looking at various examples of “sins” in the Bible, we seek to become more aware of Satan’s schemes and techniques.
- **Strategies for overcoming** – We suggest concrete ways of cultivating a strong life in the Spirit and dealing with Satan’s lies and overcoming his temptations.

Lesson #7 – *Forgiveness - Freedom from Bitterness*



- **Why forgive?** We show the Biblical teaching about the grave consequences of harboring resentment and unforgiveness in our hearts.
- **Definitions: What Forgiveness is and is not!** Here we try to clear up the misconceptions one could have about forgiveness and present a realistic, Biblical definition.
- **How to forgive?** We offer a prayer to be used as a guide.



Lesson #8 – *Breaking Generational and Spiritual Bondage*

- **What is a “Generational Bondage”?** We present the reality that certain besetting sins or problems can and do pass from generation to generation.
- **How does it happen?** How do problems, sins, and even demons pass from one generation to another? We discuss the mechanisms of this transference.
- **How to identify and break generational bondage?** We guide the participant in the process of personal inventory, considering the positive and negative inheritance they carry. We present a prayer to be used as a model for “confessing the sins of the fathers.”
- **What is “spiritual bondage”?** We present the reality that Christians often carry demonic influences in their lives.

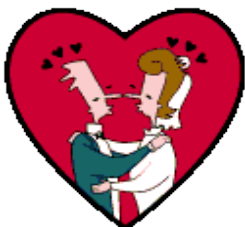


- ***How do we get contaminated?*** *We seek to unmask the ways that involvement in certain activities or attitudes may have allowed demonic contamination in our lives.*
- ***How to get free?*** *We offer a guide for personal inventory, confession, and renunciation of those practices which have led to our contamination.*
- ***Qualifier: We don't live in paranoia or fear!*** *Based on Paul's willingness to eat meat sacrificed to idols, we seek to prevent a hyper-spiritual paranoia and fear of demonic contamination.*



Lesson #9 – A New Way of Speaking

- ***The importance of words as the barometer of our spiritual health and maturity.***
- ***Words of Life*** – *encouragement, thanksgiving, praise, counsel wisdom...etc. .*
- ***Words of Death*** – *Complaining, slander, lies, immorality, gossip...etc.*
- ***No “stuffing”*** -- *How to express complaints to God and others in appropriate ways. We don't advocate suffering in silence, but following Biblical models for expressing complaints and concerns to the appropriate people, in appropriate ways.*
- ***Silence and Discretion:*** *Two disciplines of Spiritual maturity*
- ***The role of “positive confession”:*** *While we do encourage people to use affirmations of faith and avoid negativity, we do not espouse the need to speak in falsely positive ways in the name of “confessions of faith.” Christians can be honest about difficulties and profess faith at the same time.*



Lesson #10 – Sanctified Sexuality

- **God invented sex!** *We seek to establish a Biblical ethic of sexuality as a good creation of God, meant to be used in accordance with his purpose.*
- **The spirituality of sexuality** – *We seek to show the unique way that a sexual relationship affects the spirituality and emotions of people, for good or evil.*
- **Sexual distortions.** *We clearly define areas of sexual sin, including fornication, homosexuality, pornography...etc.*
- **God's mercy on sexual brokenness.** *Mercy is an important theme in this chapter: That the church is meant to be a place of healing and not condemnation for those that seek restoration.*
- **Biblical counsel for singles** – *holy courtship and friendship. Chastity.*
- **Counsel for Married people** – *perhaps in complicated situations (married to an unbeliever...etc.)*
- **Counsel for couples who are co-habiting.**



We can shine as vessels of honor! The Process of Sanctification

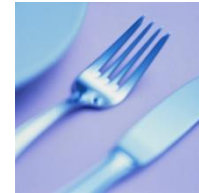
Overall Goal: *That we would understand and better cooperate with the process of the Spirit sanctifying and transforming our lives, helping us to become more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, words and actions.*

We are called to be “Vessels of Honor” in God’s kitchen cabinet!



Read 2 Timothy 2:19-22

Think about your own kitchen. Some cabinets have fine china, while others contain paper plates and styrofoam cups. Likewise in the house of God; our internal condition impacts our degree of usefulness in God’s design. In order to become a useful implement in God’s hand, set aside for honorable and sublime purposes, holiness is not optional.



And us? Have we settled for a sub-standard “brand” of Christianity?

- *Do you behave differently when not in church?*
- *Can your family members see the change God has made in your life?*
- *Can your friends and co-workers tell you are a believer?*
- *What do you do with your free time?*
- *Are there difficult habits you can’t seem to kick?*
- *Do you continue to struggle with destructive emotional patterns, such as depression or anxiety?*
- *How do you speak? Do you find yourself complaining often? Do you gossip? Criticize? Bend the truth?*
- *Do negative family patterns repeat themselves in your life?*
- *Do you tend to hold a grudge or seek to “get even” with those who have done you wrong?*
- *Do you live in purity? Are you honoring God with your body?*

Our Goal: To become more and more like Jesus. o be “Vessels of honor”!

What is “Sanctification”?

Definition – *The process of becoming more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and words, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*



To be more like Jesus – *in my thoughts.*
To be more like Jesus – *in my daily activities*
To be more like Jesus – *in my attitudes.*
To be more like Jesus – *in my words.*
To be more like Jesus – *at work.*
To be more like Jesus – *at home.*
To be more like Jesus – *in traffic.*
To be more like Jesus – *under pressure.*
To be more like Jesus – *in my relationships*
To be more like Jesus – *when no one is watching!*

To think like Jesus!
To speak like Jesus!
To act like Jesus!

A life-long process! Salvation in its fullness!!

There is a difference between “sanctification” and “justification”!

Justification – The beginning of salvation!

Being “justified” means being declared “just” or “innocent” by the Lord as a Sovereign Judge. At the moment we receive Jesus as savior we are forgiven on the basis of his blood, which was shed in our place. Legally, we are reckoned to be “just” or innocent, as if we had never sinned. As such, we are accepted as children of God.

Sanctification – Transformation!

The process whereby the believer becomes more and more holy – more and more like Jesus – by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Example – ***The Thief on the cross*** (Luke 23:39-43) was justified for believing in Jesus, but did not live to be sanctified by the Spirit’s transformative work in his life.

<i>Justification</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>
1. God declares us “not-guilty”	1. God enables us to stop doing that which made us “guilty” in the first place.
2. We are saved from the punishment of sin	2. We are saved from the power of sin
3. An instantaneous, divine declaration that results in a changed eternity	3. An ongoing process that changes our lifestyle on earth
4. Happens in an instant	4. A life-long process
5. Is the same for all who believe	5. Some grow more than others
6. The work of God, appropriated by faith	6. The work of God, appropriated by faith

Review: Justification

Justification – Being declared “innocent” before a Holy God by our faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved from the legal consequences of our sin.

Review of Level I, Lesson #1 – Salvation

The Question!

If you were to die today, and the Lord were to ask you,

“Why should I let you into my heaven?”

What would your answer be?

True Christianity: A personal relationship with Jesus!

Not – merely attending church!

- Praying at night
- Being a “good person”
- Being baptized as a child

Being a Christian means enjoying a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”
John 17:3





***True Christianity: A New Birth
To have New Life – We must be “Born Again”!***

Being religious is not enough!! No one is “born” a Christian!

In John 3:1-6 we read a fascinating dialog between the Lord Jesus Christ and a religious leader named Nicodemus. He was a devoutly religious man who expressed sincere interest in Jesus. But Jesus made it very clear that being “good” or “religious” is not sufficient before God!

What does it mean to be “Born Again”?



1. Receive a New Heart!

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26

2. Experience a spiritual awakening

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” John 1:12-13

3. Experience a total life-transformation!

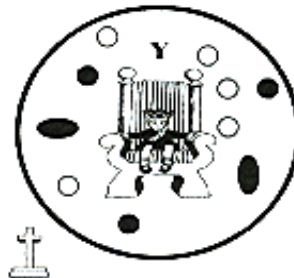
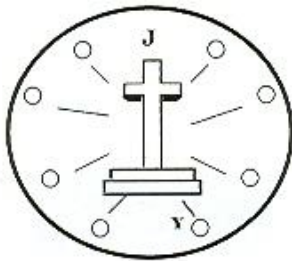
“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

True Christianity: A New King!!

Who is truly on the throne of

of

*our
we*



your life?¹

When Jesus is at the core of our lives, all else falls into place. However, when we try to govern our own lives as we see fit, end up making a mess of things!

¹

¹Material drawn from “The Four Spiritual Laws.” Bill Bright; Campus Crusade for Christ.

Discussion Question: what does it mean, in your opinion, to let Jesus be on the throne of your life instead of yourself?

Salvation from Sin and Death

We all share the same problem!!

There is a basic problem which all humanity shares, which separates us from God and causes destruction and pain in the world. It is a moral problem. We have all failed before God's moral law which determines the essence of right and wrong in the universe. God is the origin of this moral law, and all people in all nations experience its consequences. Violating this moral law is called "sin."

Man is Sinful

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Sin, at its heart, is selfishness – putting ourselves first – before God and others.

But I'm such a "nice" person?!!

What do we say to the one who says, "But I'm a good person. I haven't killed anyone or stolen. Why does the Bible say that I'm a "sinner?"

Sin manifests itself in Attitudes, Words and Actions

- Imagine if every word spoken in your life were caught on tape
- Imagine if every action were televised for all to see
- Imagine if every thought were visible on a screen, mounted on your forehead



Who would not be ashamed before others and a perfect God?

Sin has consequences - "We reap what we sow"

How many of us know from personal experience that we suffer the consequences of our actions?

- Broken relationships
- Pain and emotional bitterness
- Loneliness and anguish
- Shame



Sin results in spiritual death

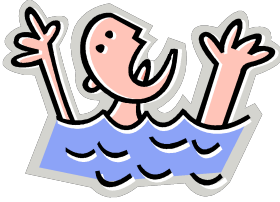
In society, if a person breaks a law, there are legal consequences – judgment and punishment. The moral law is no different. When we break the law of God, we experience separation between God and ourselves. God is a completely holy and just being, and cannot, by nature, be in relationship with people who are contaminated by the stain of sin. As fire and hay cannot coexist, the holy nature of God cannot coexist with sinful humanity. The Bible calls this separation between God and humanity a spiritual "death."

We cannot reach God by our own efforts!

- By being a “good person”
- By doing “nice things”
- By religious activities

We cannot earn our salvation!!

Comparison: It is like trying to swim to Puerto Rico!



Trying to “earn our own salvation” by being a good person or being religious is like trying to swim all the way from Florida to Puerto Rico. Some may swim farther than others, but all end up as “fish food”!

Result: Fear of Death

“For the wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23

We all need a *Savior* to solve our sin-problem and make us acceptable before a Holy and Perfect God.

God Solves our Problem!

Jesus died in our place! He paid the punishment for our Sin!



“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

Jesus is the only way to God

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”* John 14:6

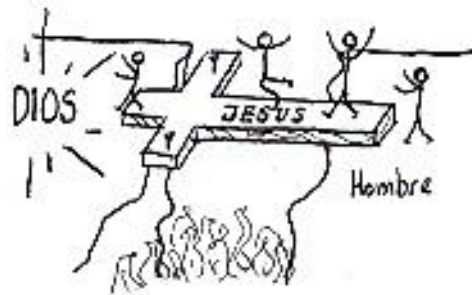




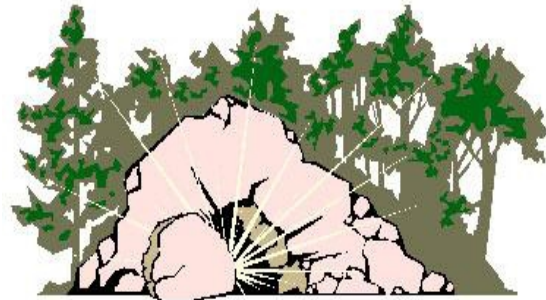
Illustration of the Judge

Imagine that a young man is condemned for committing a certain crime. The judge, being a fair and honest judge, could not overlook this infraction of the law. The punishment required by law is a serious fine - \$100,000. In spite of this young man's being totally repentant for what he had done, he had no money to pay the fine, and stood in danger of being jailed for his failure to pay. Then the judge did something completely unexpected. He removed his judicial robe, came down from his seat of judgment, and stood in the place of the young man, before the court. Taking his checkbook out of his vest pocket, he paid the full amount for the young man. The judge did this because the guilty boy was his own son, and he loved him. Yet it was necessary to condemn the young man and pay the fine in order to fulfill the requirements of the law. Who would not accept that another pay such a penalty in one's place?

That is what our God has done. He is a just judge but at the same time a loving father. As a judge, he sees our sin and says, *"You are guilty. You have sinned against the moral law of the universe and deserve death. But I love you, and therefore, I will pay this punishment in your place."* As a father, he lowered himself, taking off his robe of divine majesty, and became human. He took our place of condemnation and paid for our sins, dying in our place on the cross.²

Jesus conquered death and sin! He rose from the dead!

Wow! Christians believe that...



"Christ died for our sins... was buried, and... rose on the third day... appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve. Afterwards he appeared to more than five hundred..." 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

Jesus is alive! And because of this, we can know him personally! Every other religious leader and philosopher died, but Jesus' tomb is empty! Therefore, he can transmit his life to us. The life of Jesus is contagious! Abundant life!

2

²Paraphrased and adapted from More than a Carpenter. Josh McDowell.

Our part – Receive Jesus by faith

The Bible promises...

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12



The Bible teaches...

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves - it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast.”
Ephesians 2:8-9*

**What does it
“faith”?
trapeze artist)**



**mean to have
(Illustration of the**

It is important to Receive Christ Publicly (get in the wheelbarrow)

“That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” Romans 10:9-10

A Personal Invitation



If you want to accept Jesus as Lord, we invite you to repeat the following simple prayer. The exact words are not as important as the attitude of your heart, but we present this prayer as a model to be followed.

“Dear God, thank you that you love me. I admit that I am a sinner and have failed in so many ways. I ask for your forgiveness today. I believe that Jesus died for me on the cross and rose again. I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. I give you my life today. I want to be your son/daughter, and follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sin. Thank you for entering my life today. Amen.”

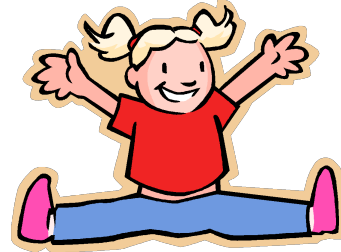
If you have repeated this prayer sincerely, then this verse applies to you, which says...

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Congratulations! You have begun a new life today!

In Christ you have...

- New life
- Eternal life
- Forgiveness of Sin
- A Father-Child relationship with God
- A new heart
- A new name written in heaven
- New spiritual perception



Conclusion: The most important answer in any life

If you were to die today, and the Lord were to ask you,

“Why should I let you into my heaven?”

What would your answer be?

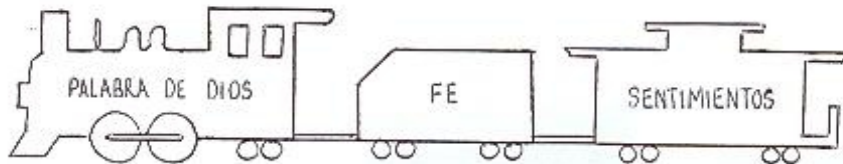
Our Answer: *I have done absolutely nothing to deserve salvation. I know I am a sinner. But I have trusted in Jesus to save me. He died and paid the price for my sin. I have received him as my Lord and Savior, and I know I am forgiven because of what he did for me on the cross!*

Some Questions

What happens if I don't feel so different after accepting Christ?

Our
based

of the
God
our
We
faith
the



faith is
on the
promises
Word of
and not
feelings!
live by
(trust) in

faithfulness of God and his Word, regardless of how we “feel” on a given day!

“Word of God”

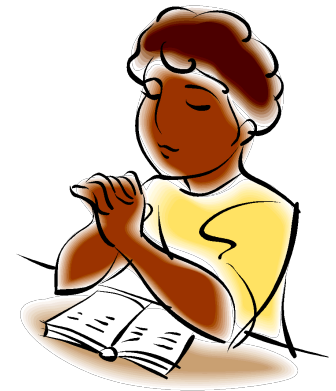
“Faith”

“Feelings”

The train can operate with or without the caboose. It would be useless to attempt to push a train with the caboose. In the same way, as Christians we do not depend on emotions or feelings, but rather we put our faith in the faithfulness of God and the promises of his word.

Now what? What do I do after accepting Christ?

- 1. Participate in Church!***
- 2. Pray and Read the Bible***
 - Find a quiet place without interruptions to be alone for a few minutes every day
- 3. Share what has happened to you!***
 - You don't have to be an “expert” to share your experiences!
 - Friends and family will be curious!



Review

Jesus said, “I have it



Questions

have come that they might _____, and have

_____.

True Christianity is not being religious or merely a “nice person” but rather it is

_____.

What does it mean to be “born again”?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the problem which we all share? _____.

How do we answer the person who says the following?

“But I’m a nice person. I don’t kill anyone. I’m good to all. Why does the Bible say that I’m a “sinner?”

What is the primary result of human sin? _____

_____.

What are the mistaken ways that people use to earn their salvation?

1. _____
2. _____

How did God solve the human problem? _____

_____.

“Jesus said, I am the _____, and the _____, and the _____;
No one comes to the Father except through me.” - Juan 14:6

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners...
_____.” Romans 5:8

Summarize the story of the judge and his son _____

_____.

What is *our part* in the salvation process? _____
_____.

What does it mean to have faith? _____

_____.

Without copying word for word the prayer in the lesson, write your own prayer to accept Jesus and be saved. _____

_____.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a _____;
the old has gone, the new has come! - 2 Corinthians 5:17

If we compare the Christian life to a train, which car represents our “feelings”?

If you were to die today and God were to ask you, “Why should I allow you to enter my heaven?” What would you say?

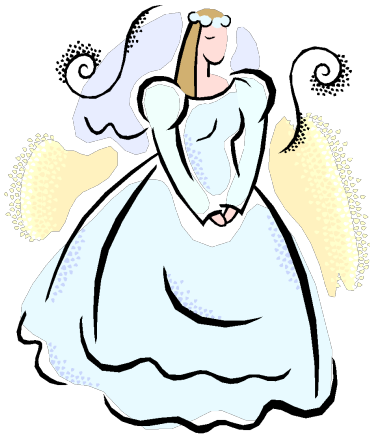
_____.

After accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, what do we do next in order to grow?

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____

Called to be Holy: God Prepares a Bride



“Be Holy, for I am holy.” **1 Peter 1:16**

“My dear children, for whom I suffer again the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...” **Galatians 4:19**

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24



Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Definition of Sanctification – *The process of becoming more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and words, through the work of the Holy Spirit.*

Lesson #1 – The Call to Holiness

- ***Part #1: The Importance of Holiness: No Playing with God!*** *That we would understand the gravity and urgency of the call of holiness to every believer. Using texts from Paul’s letters to the churches, we show the mortal danger of hypocrisy and double-lives for the professing believer.*
- ***Part #2: Called to shine! Holiness is Happiness!*** *We balance this challenge with the Biblical view of holiness as a joyful state of life for the believer, making us more winsome, humble and tolerant of others. (vs. the legalistic, Pharisaical model).*
- ***Part #3: What would Jesus do?*** *Here we present Jesus as the ultimate model of holiness, in all the nitty gritty of daily life.*

Part #1: The Importance of Holiness: No playing with God!

*“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord.”*

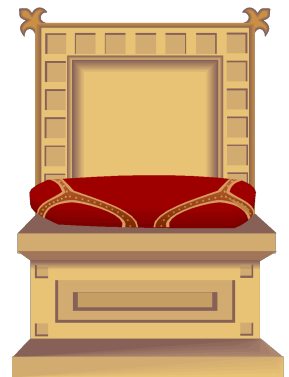
Hebrews 12:14

Our goal in this section is to illustrate the gravity and non-negotiable nature of the call to holiness for a true believer.

- *The final Judgment – Our lives will one day be evaluated!*
- *The Danger of a “double life” which provokes the anger of God*
- *“License” – abusing the grace of God*
- *The church as hospital – but not a hide-out!*

Final Judgment – Our lives will one day be evaluated!

The Bible teaches that each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. Thank God, we are under the blood of Jesus and thus forgiven, but there is a very stern warning to those who continue to “practice” such sins as a lifestyle.



Key Verses about God’s basis for evaluating our lives:

2 Corinthians 5:10

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 12:36-37



Based on these verses above, what are three specific ways in which our lives will one day be evaluated?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

No “Double Life”!

Here we reflect upon the concept of “hypocrisy” and consider examples. We also discuss the “cure” for our own areas of hypocrisy: Truth!



Key verses warning us against abusing God’s grace:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Galatians 5:19-21

1 Corinthians 6:18-20



Many sins are specified in these texts; some scandalous and others more commonplace. Mention some of the more “common” sins mentioned in these texts.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

According to these texts, why is it so dangerous to “practice such things?”

_____.

According to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, why ought we to “glorify God with our bodies?”

_____.

Hypocrisy: Wearing a religious mask

The word “hypocrite” derives from the Greek word for stage-actor – literally: “behind a mask.” A hypocrite is a person who in some way hides behind a false appearance: A “religious actor or pretender.”



Gross examples of hypocrisy abound in our day

- Priests caught in pedophilia
- Televangelists guilty of fraud and immorality
- Etc.

Most hypocrisy is more subtle: Like leaven - imperceptible but ever present!

Hypocrisy is far more insidious and common than we might think, and not limited to the more obvious cases. Jesus compared hypocrisy to leaven which gradually works its way through a whole lump of dough. Who among us is entirely consistent and transparent?! We all wear masks before others, God, and even ourselves. God calls us to dare to lower these defensive layers of falsehood, one at a time!

Our goal is to be a “child of light,” like Nathaniel.

Jesus said the following about this disciple when he met him:

“Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” John 1:47

What a beautiful description of an honest, transparent believer!



Key verse: 1 John 1:5-10



According to this verse, what do you think it means to “walk in the light?”

What are some of the benefits mentioned of living in this fashion?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“License” – Abusing the grace of God

Here we discuss the difference between “freedom” based on grace, and “license,” based on rebellion and rationalization of sin.

Key verse: Romans 6:1



“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”



Illustration: Church is Hospital – not Hide-out!



- *The Church is like a Hospital – A safe place for recovering sinners to open themselves up to the Spirit’s healing and transformation, even when the process is lengthy and filled with setbacks. Jesus said that it is the sick, not the healthy, who need a doctor!*
- *The Church is not a “Hide-out” or a “den of thieves” – for us to use as a justification for ongoing hypocrisy and a double life.*



Key text: Jeremiah 7:1-11 – When Jesus cast out the money-changers from the Temple (Luke 19:45-46), he accused them of changing the temple from a “house of prayer” into a “den of thieves.” This phrase originally comes from Jeremiah 7:1-11.

According to Jeremiah 7:1-11, how were people misusing the temple?

Imagine a well intentioned believer who feels so guilty as he struggles with sin that he feels he should stop coming to church until he has achieved victory in a certain area of his life. Knowing that the church is a hospital, how could you counsel such a brother or sister?

Part #2: *Holiness is Happiness! We can shine!*



A saint? Me?!

The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians in the following manner...

“... Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ...” 1 Corinthians 1:2 (KJV)

According to commonly held ideas, what is a “saint?” _____

_____.

How does this verse correct such misunderstandings? _____

_____.

If they are already “sanctified,” then how can Paul also write that they are “called to be saints?” _____

_____.

“The Beauty of Holiness” – We are meant to be Works of art to reflect his glory!

“Holiness adorns your house for endless days...” Psalm 93:5

*Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand...”
Jeremiah 8:6*



God takes you as you are – but does not leave you that way!

God has a wonderful project for your life! He wants his love and character to shine through your personality and temperament. He passionately desires that we might become more loving, more honest, more patient, more strong, more gentle, more humble, more joyful, more courageous, more solid and trustworthy! He desires that we become more and more like Jesus; that people might say, *“There is something different about this person.”* This has nothing to do with changing our personalities to conform to the style of other believers. Through your unique personality, gender, cultural identity, talents and interests – yes, even through your scars and wounds – The very character of God himself can shine! What a wonder! We are vessels of soft clay upon the potter’s wheel, being molded into beautiful vessels to be used for sublime ends!

God uses anything – and everything – to make us holy!



Key verse: Rom 8:28-9 – *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers....”*

“All things work together for good”???

Have you ever heard this phrase, drawn from Romans 8:28? In its context, this verse does not guarantee that everything will work out “nicely” for a believer in life, but that everything serves to help us to *become more and more like Jesus!!* That we might be like brothers of Jesus – bearing an unmistakable family resemblance! *God is absolutely committed to this process in our lives, and will use everything to help get us there!*

Personal Reflection: Think about the experiences in your life which have helped you grow and change the most. Isn’t it usually the hard things that help us grow the most? Can you mention an example from your own life?

We can shine!

Our goal is not to be “holier than thou.” Pharisaical holiness is unattractive and even repulsive. Rather, we are transformed into the likeness of God’s glory, which makes us more winsome and beautiful. Holiness “adorns” God’s house... because *holiness is beautiful!*



Key verse: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

“Now the Lord is the spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

According to this text (above), what happens when we “contemplate” the Lord’s glory?

Good news - It doesn’t depend on you!!



Thankfully, the process of sanctification is *God's process*, and not ours! The Spirit is the one who transforms us, and not our own resolutions or will-power! God is committed to this process, and He can see it through!



*"... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." **Philippians 1:6***

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

According to these verses, when will this process be completed? _____

Part #3 – Be Holy – Walk as Jesus walked!

"The one who says he is in Christ must walk as Jesus walked." 1 Jn 4:2

Here we define our "walk" in the

- *Our life-style*
- *Our daily behavior*
- *Our words*
- *Our actions*
- *Our attitudes*



Lord

Talk the talk – and walk the walk!

How many of us know that it is quite possible to "accept Jesus" and continue to be the same "jerk" we always were!! Our spirit is transformed the instant we receive salvation, but our *walk* – that is to say – *our lifestyle and daily behavior* – tend to lag behind. But according to 1 John, a genuine believer cannot help but to change. It is our part simply to keep in step with the Spirit as he teaches us to walk anew!



*"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." **1 John 2:6***

*"I therefore, as a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." **Ephesians 4:1** (KJV)*

*"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind..." **Ephesians 4:17** (KJV)*

How did Jesus walk? - ¿WWJD? What would Jesus do?

We remember that Jesus was a son, a friend, and a carpenter. He lived a *completely human* life – though without sin. What would happen if we asked the famous question throughout the moments of our day:

“*What would Jesus do?*” Let’s consider the following scenarios.

- How would Jesus treat a disgruntled customer in his carpentry shop?
- What was Jesus like when he woke up in the morning?
- What type of friends would Jesus have chosen?
- How would Jesus have driven the streets of Boston?
- How would Jesus have dealt with a difficult boss or an annoying assignment?
- What would Jesus say when a co-worker shared a juicy piece of gossip?
- How would Jesus paint a wall? Fix a car? Prepare a lesson? Care for a child in a daycare?
- What type of movies would Jesus watch? Which books would he read? What types of food would he eat? What music would he listen to? What jokes would he tell? How would he dress?
- If married, what type of husband would Jesus be? How would he treat his wife and kids after a long day in the shop?
- What would Jesus do, when coming home exhausted from work, when his wife wanted to discuss something? When the dirty dishes were piled up in the sink?
- What type of father would he be? How would he organize his time for family life? How would he implement discipline?



Jesus was human – just like we are!

As we try to visualize Christ-like behavior in the real-life situations we face daily, it helps to have Christian friends and role models. Thus, we invite you in the next section to think of certain individuals who model some aspect of Christ-like behavior.

Exercise: Think of “Models” - People as Examples

Question:

Is that Biblical? I thought we were only supposed to look to Jesus as an example?

Of course it can be dangerous to put any person on a pedestal, forgetting their natural and inevitable human imperfections. But the Apostle Paul said the following....

“Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 11:1

It is healthy and important to seek and observe positive examples as we evaluate and adjust our own “walk” with the Lord in daily life. So think of a person you know who lives the Christian life with sincerity and integrity. Of course the person is not perfect, but simply an example or model in some way of what it means to live out Christian beliefs with integrity. Describe this person. What are the qualities you admire in his or her behavior that reflect the character of Jesus? How would you like to imitate his example?

The name of someone you can see as an example (not a pastor).

Specific character or lifestyle qualities you would like to emulate:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise: Self – Examination – We must look within!

Introspection can be counter-productive if we become self absorbed. However, some self examination is Biblical and important.

“A man ought to examine himself ... if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31-32

Some questions for self-examination

- *Do you behave differently when not in church?*
- *Can your family members see the change God has made in your life?*
- *Can your friends and co-workers tell you are a believer?*
- *What do you do with your free time?*
- *Are there difficult habits you can't seem to kick?*
- *Do you continue to struggle with destructive emotional patterns, such as depression or anxiety?*
- *How do you speak? Do you find yourself complaining often? Do you gossip? Criticize? Bend the truth?*
- *Are there family patterns which you can't seem to change in your life?*
- *Do you tend to hold a grudge or seek to "get even" with those who have done you wrong?*
- *Do you live in purity? Are you honoring God with your body?*



Personal Reflection Questions:

Briefly describe at least one way in which your character and lifestyle have changed since coming to know Christ.

Mention three areas of life in which you hope God will bring change. (Please be specific)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

A new way of life by the power of the Spirit Learning to walk all over again!



“As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you walk in a way worthy of the calling you have received.”

Ephesians 4:1

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Galatians 5:16

“And we pray this in order that you may walk worthy of the Lord and may please him in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...”

Colossians 1:10

Our Walk = *Our life-style in daily affairs.*

In this lesson we learn about the dynamics of personal change by the power of the Spirit

- ***Part #1: True change is impossible by human effort***

Here we attempt to prevent a legalistic, will-power approach to personal change.

- ***Part #2: The Spirit – Flesh Struggle.***

We explain that sin stems from our essentially sinful human nature, and thus, change must come through the empowering work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

- ***Part #3: Renouncing the old man and embracing the new.***

We close with a prophetic exercise in which we renounce the sinful qualities of our old way of life and prophetically visualize ourselves as controlled by the Spirit in these particular areas.

Basic Texts about Personal Change:

(Read through these chapters quickly as a basis for this lesson)

- Romans 6,7 and 8
- Galatians 5
- Ephesians 4 and 5
- Colossians 2 and 3



Part #1 – Change is not easy!

True sanctification does not happen through human efforts

Ever try to kick a tough habit?

- Quitting smoking
- Losing weight
- “Keeping your cool” and holding your tongue when frustrated or angry
- Resisting the blues during the winter months
- Stopping gossip and criticism
- Planning ahead rather than procrastinating
- Budgeting money



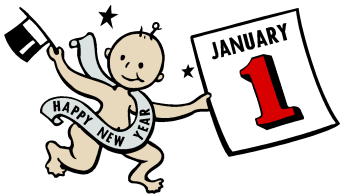
Exercise: Share an example in your own life of a futile attempt to change by your own will-power.

Growing in holiness - like learning to walk all over again!

Learning new habits is like being a child, learning to walk for the first time. How often does that determined toddler start out with cackles of excitement, only to fall flat on his or her little face! Likewise in the Christian life! We are called to “*Walk as Jesus did.*” (1 John 2:4). Our walk – that is to say, our lifestyle – ought to reflect the values and character of Jesus himself. But how difficult it is to learn to walk all over again! Throughout a lifetime we have developed deeply ingrained sinful patterns of thought and behavior, and these habits do not die easily. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we begin with the understanding and expectation *that it is impossible to walk like Jesus in our own strength!* We need “Daddy’s” help – (and lots of band-aids for when we scrape our knees!) We need the Spirit’s power within us to produce the change we desire.



New Years’ Resolutions



It’s January 1 – the beginning of the New Year - and resolutions abound: losing 10 pounds... eating more vegetables... calling Mom more often...etc. etc. We start strong of course, but after a month or so, we find ourselves back where we began; more lazy and fat than ever! Take heart, friend! You are not alone. None of us can change by his or her own efforts – by the force of our will – or by simply trying harder. We come up short every time.



Romans 7:14-25 -- Paul's struggle – all too familiar

The Apostle Paul shares his own flesh-and-blood struggle to break sinful patterns in his life. The more he tried, the more mired he became in sin. As we read these words, can we identify in any way?

What is Paul's conclusion? (v.21) Why is it impossible for him to "kick the habit" of sin?

Galatians 3:1-5 -- Galatians try to finish the work of the Spirit by their own efforts



After accepting Christ, the Christians in Galatia set about to implement and observe the Old Testament ceremonial law – circumcision, dietary rules...etc. They hoped to perfect personal holiness by observing these laws. Predictably, their experiment failed miserably! The Apostle Paul warns them in the strongest terms that this attempt at self-made righteousness can cost them their souls!

According to Paul (clearly angry), why are the Galatians behaving foolishly?

Legalism simply does not work!

How we love rules. They give us something to do which is specific and under our control. However, true Christian change must be *spiritual* in nature. Our little rules simply do not work because they leave the core illness of sin untouched – the fallen nature that controls us.

Imagine a child, hungry before dinner. Mother warns: "*Whatever you do, don't even think about opening up that cookie jar!*" Can we confidently predict the scene that follows? Likewise with our little rules – They have a way of backfiring.

Don't touch! – Colossians 2:20-23



"Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?' These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."



According to this text, how does Paul describe the false wisdom in these rules?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why do these rules not help in “restraining sensual indulgence?”

Part #2: The Flesh-Spirit struggle: Breaking the Slavery

“Flesh” = Sinful Human Nature (Not the human body)



The Monkey on Your Back – The Flesh

Imagine you had a little monkey as a pet. This little creature likes nothing more than to cuddle up on your shoulder and keep you company through the events of your day. Such a cute and playful monkey; how can you resist when he asks for a banana? He smiles sweetly. You feed him again. As the days go by, one banana becomes two, then three...etc. The little monkey begins *to grow*.



Eventually, after weeks of feeding, your little pet requests a banana once again, as he is now in the habit of doing. Yet the voice seems to have changed. No longer sweet and cute, a hoarse, rasping, demanding voice barks: “*Gimmie Banana!*” A bit unnerved, you try to put him off. “*I...I don’t think we’ll have any bananas today, myer... little monkey.*” The muscular arms tighten their grip around your neck with asphyxiating persuasion, and the now sinister voice demands: “*Gimmie banana – now!*” That panicky feeling of being unable to breathe begins to send a chill down your spine and you feel the oppressive weight of what was before such a cute little pet. The tables seem to have turned and you wonder “*now who is the pet, and who is the owner?*” Who is truly calling the shots? Through much feeding, you have now become a type of slave to the cravings of the “monkey.”

Such is the process of our sinful human nature – our flesh. We feed the many little pet sins, as if they were harmless. But as our flesh grows and grows, it demands more and more. We sin more frequently and intensely, and still feel a craving for more. Sin comes to control our lives and we are enslaved. Our flesh is the monkey on our back -- now grown into a gorilla.



Romans 6:1-14 – The Flesh must be crucified

According to the text, what does baptism symbolize? (v.3-5) _____.

What is our part? What must we do to keep sin from continuing to reign in our mortal bodies?

_____.

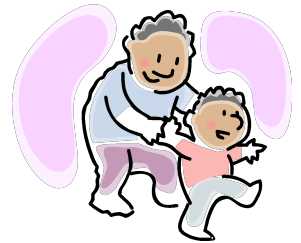
And what is the promise that inspires us to live “according to the Spirit?” (v.14)

_____.

Walking like Jesus means walking according to the Spirit and not the Flesh

Walking in the Spirit – Following the impulses and directives of the Spirit

After accepting Jesus as Lord, we have two forces dwelling within – *the Flesh and the Spirit*. If we follow the guidance of the Spirit, more and more we will deny the impulses of the flesh. In order to do this, however, we must *feed the Holy Spirit and starve the flesh* within us. As a spiritual baby, we learn to walk all over again, but now the Spirit teaches us! *Do we trust our “Daddy” enough to walk with him, rather than in our own way?*



***Saying “yes” to the Spirit trumps saying “no” to sin!
Which will it be – pop-corn now.... Or prime rib later?!***

It is much easier to say “no” to a temptation when we know that God offers something much better in its place. Satan tempts us to satisfy our hunger with pop-corn, while God offers the true “Prime Rib” of Spirit-birthered holiness! Satan tempted Jesus to change a stone to bread in order to satisfy his physical hunger. Jesus was able to resist, knowing that *“man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*



We can choose to follow the lead of the Spirit...

- Knowing that God loves us and desires our happiness...
- Knowing that blessing and joy comes with serving God
- Knowing God will help us in the process...



Romans 8:1-17 – Portrait of a Victorious Life!

What promise awaits us, if we walk according to the spirit and not according to the desires of the flesh? (v.1)



What are some consequences of following the lead of the flesh?
What are some of the results of following the Spirit? *Romans 8:5-8 y 8:12-17*

Consequences of following the flesh _____

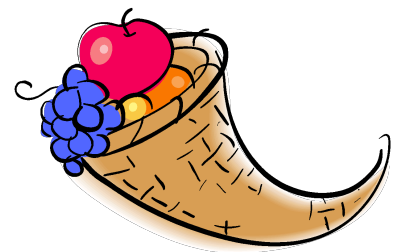
Consequences of following the Spirit _____

Galatians 5:16-26 – Fruit of the Spirit v. Fruit of the Flesh

List some of the “Works of the flesh.”

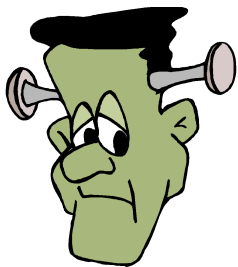


1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



List some of the “fruit of the Spirit.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

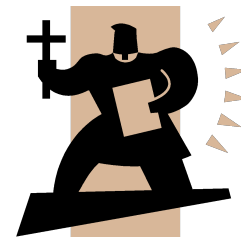


Part #3: Renounce the Old; Embrace the new!

The Old “Man” (the flesh) and the New “Man” (The Spirit)

Inside each Christian has “two selves:” The old and the new.

The new “Greg” and the old “Greg”



Colossians 3:1-17 – Putting the Flesh to Death

List some of the manifestations of the flesh which we seek to “kill.” (v.5-9)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____.

“... and put on the new self...” List some qualities of the “new you.” (Col. 3:10-17)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Comparison: Changing our lifestyle = Changing our clothing



“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature..” Romans 13:14

Why, do you suppose, the Bible compares personal change to the daily activity of changing our clothing? Use your imagination a bit. What do the two processes have in common?



Ephesians 4:17 – 5:7 - Shedding the old ... putting on the new!

According to this text, what are some “corrupting” practices of our old self?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

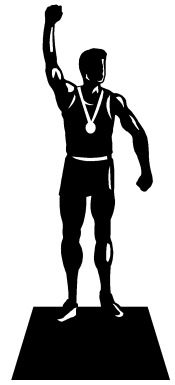
List some characteristics of the “new self.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



The “new you” – A prophetic declaration

As a prophetic exercise, jot down five negative qualities of the “old you,” and, by faith, note down the opposite of each. Then, prophetically, we renounce the old and embrace the new!



Example

The Old Greg – (Flesh)

- 1. Short Tempered
- 2. Blabbermouth
- 3. Depressed
- 4. Grumpy
- 5. Lazy

The New Greg (Spirit)

- 1. Patient
- 2. Discreet
- 3. Joyful
- 4. Cheerful
- 5. Diligent

..... Etc. etc.

The Old You

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

The New You

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Prayer of Faith

Lord, thank you that you have put a new spirit within me. I declare that I am a new creation in Christ. I declare by faith that I can live a new life. I receive your power to change, in the name of Jesus!

New Thinking – Destroying Mental Strongholds and Cultivating the mind of Christ



*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Then you will be able to test and approve what
God’s will is –
his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*
Romans 12:2

*“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord,
that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,
in the futility of their thinking.”*
Ephesians 4:17

“... But we have the mind of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 2:16b

Our Goal: *To become aware of our internal conversation,
learning to replace un-Godly thoughts with the truth of the Word of God.*

- **Part #1: The Mind as a Battlefield.** *We seek to show the connection between thoughts and actions.*
- **Part #2: Mental Strongholds - Lies we Believe and Embrace.** *We seek to show examples of how false thought patterns actually become spiritual “inroads” for demonic influence in our lives.*
- **Part #3: Deceitful Desires and Sinful Behaviors.** *Most sin is the result of desires (concupiscence), which promise what they cannot fulfill. We seek to show how these desires, based on incorrect beliefs, result in sinful actions and patterns of behavior.*
- **Part #4: We can say “no” to deceitful desires!** *Here we affirm the power we have in Christ to identify and renounce deceptive beliefs and desires.*
- **Part #5: How to demolish a stronghold by correcting false beliefs.** *We break down the internal process of replacing ungodly thoughts, using a specific personal struggle as a model.*



Part #1 – The Battlefield of the Mind



Our thoughts drive our feelings and behavior, much like the programming of a computer. Although computer “software” is not outwardly visible, it forms an internal design and system which directs every aspect of the functioning of the hardware. Our thoughts have a similar influence upon us. Our thinking and our behavior (our “walk”) go together like hand and glove. Therefore, the mind is the principal battlefield for personal change.

Our “internal conversation” – What are you saying to yourself?

We all host an ongoing mental conversation. This conversation with our selves provides a constant internal narrative of analysis, reactions, evaluations and observations.

Normally this conversation remains beneath the surface, often escaping our full awareness. Conscious or not, however, these messages affect us profoundly and inform our attitudes, words and actions. Certain beliefs, repeated often enough, can become the structure for attitudes that drive our behavior, and can even provide access for spiritual influences in our lives.



Thoughts provoke feelings



Imagine the following thought flashes through your mind during this very class: *“The teacher has a pistol under the table and is waiting for the opportunity to attack me!”* What feelings are aroused? What physiological changes may take place? What action might we take?

In contrast, imagine the following thought:

“The teacher has \$100 under the table and will give it to me at the end of the class.” What feelings and actions might be aroused?

Listen to yourself: What are you saying?

Generally we remain unaware of the underlying thoughts that provoke our feelings and actions.

- *Our muscles are tense, and we feel anxious and we do not know why?*
- *We feel sad or depressed, and we do not know why?*
- *We feel the urge to buy too much or eat too much, and again, we do not know why?*



As we become more aware of our internal conversation which provokes certain feelings, we are better able to evaluate these thoughts and set about to change them.



Viviendo la Vida Loca – Crazy thoughts – Crazy actions

You're nuts!! Along with everyone who reads, (and the one who *writes*), these words. Sin is insanity! In our distorted reasoning, clouded and twisted by the power of sin, we actually believe that rebelling against God and his words will produce happiness!! Otherwise, we would never sin! Enough of these crazy thoughts produce internal structures, or highways, through which Satan has access to us. We will call these inroads "Strongholds" and analyze them in the next section.

Part #2: Strongholds – Structures of lies we believe

These ungodly thoughts...

- *Provoke negative feelings*
- *Inspire sinful actions*
- *Form destructive patterns and habits of life*



A Stronghold = *"Stinkin' Thinkin'"*

Spiritual Warfare of the Mind: Satan has access to us through our thoughts!



Consider the following text, observing all the references to the mind in the context of spiritual warfare.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.

In olden times, what was the function of a "stronghold" or castle?

What does it mean to "take every thought captive" and make it "obedient to Christ," in your opinion?

Steps to Demolish a Mental Stronghold

1. ***“I feel....” Recognize the attitude*** which does not conform to the truth of God
(be specific: Discouragement; resentment; pessimism...etc.)
2. ***“I said to myself...” I was thinking...” Identify the underlying thoughts***
that provoke this attitude or action
3. A new ***“camera angle”*** – ***“I could have thought....”***
Visualize an alternative way of viewing the situation
4. ***Confess and renounce this thought and sinful belief***
5. ***Affirm the truth of the word of God in a verse and memorable phrase.***



Example: Paco and the Pornography

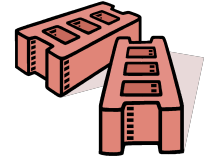
As we read this case study, try to identify the false beliefs that underlie Paco’s addiction to pornography.

Paco struggles with an addiction to internet pornography. He tends to internalize anxiety from the workplace and difficulties at home. When he feels pressure from his boss; has an argument with his wife, or worries about paying the bills, it seems that the stress is impossible to manage. Usually at those moments he steals away to indulge in his habit, and, at least temporarily, seems to forget his problems. *“I’m a man and I just can’t help it,”* he tells himself. Of course, after the initial rush of adrenaline, feelings of shame flood his heart. His wife feels hurt and rejected. Paco would like to serve God, but the shame of this secret addiction keeps him from stepping up to serve more actively in the church. This habit has become a stronghold in his life.

Can you identify some thoughts that underlie this habit in Paco’s life?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

These thoughts are “bricks” in his mental/spiritual stronghold.



Part #3: Deceitful Desires – the “bricks” of the Stronghold

A deceitful desire promises what it cannot deliver



“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” **Ephesians 4:22**

Examples of “Deceitful Desires”

“If I have a new car – I’ll have more friends.”

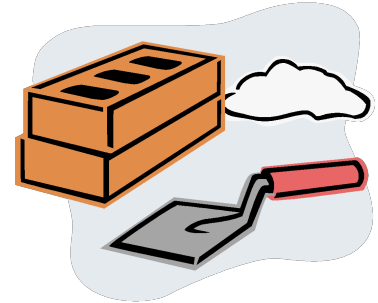
“If I eat this whole pizza – I won’t feel so depressed.”

“If I take this drug – I’ll forget my problems.”

“If I sleep with this man – I won’t feel alone any more.”

“If I had more money – my worries would be over.”

“If I look at pornography – I’ll feel relaxed.”



Note: Advertising specializes in planting such desires!!

Of course, what makes a lie believable is the grain of truth usually contained therein. Can you find the “truth” in each lie mentioned above?



Deceitful desires and the internal process of sin

“... but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows...”
James 1:14-17



Can you identify the steps in the process of seduction and sin?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Part #4: Good news – We don't have to buy the lie!

Temptation is a process which can be interrupted!

Consider these following “steps” in the progression of sin in our lives.

1. *Attraction to the sin* - Deceitful desire
2. *Seduction* - The process of persuasion
3. *Conception of sin* – A plan for the sin is visualized
4. *The sin* – The action is committed
5. *Consummation* – The individual sin becomes a pattern of bondage
6. *Death* – This stronghold destroys the person spiritually

Our goal is to recognize this internal process in ourselves, and drawing on the Spirit's power and the truth of the word of God, to interrupt the process.

We can say “NO” - Interrupt the process!

In Christ we no longer need be slaves.



“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...” Titus 2:11-12



By the power of the Spirit we can choose to believe the truth of God rather than be driven by deceitful feelings.



Circumstances no longer need control us!

We no longer need be enslaved by our circumstances! By the power of the Spirit, we can live by faith, and not by the feelings of the moment. Many times we cannot control our situation, but we can control our reaction and our attitude.

We all face unpleasant circumstances....Illnesses

- Financial problems
- Unpleasant people
- The cold of Winter and heat of Summer
- Mistakes from the past
- Our family background

The key question: How will you respond?

Paul chooses joy: Philippians 1:12-18



Happiness is a feeling. Joy is a decision by faith!

Paul writes from a dingy jail cell, suffering terribly on account of his faithfulness to the Lord. To make matters worse, his enemies seize the opportunity and begin to preach in the streets – insincerely - out of sheer malice, hoping to aggravate the anger of the jailers against Paul.

How would you respond in such circumstances?

Observe the difficulties Paul faces in this text. In each case, how does he respond? How does Paul handle the fact of his imprisonment? (Philippians 1:12-14)

How does Paul choose to respond to the fact that some enemies preach in the streets, intentionally to cause him more pain in jail? (Philippians 1:15-18)

Personal Exercise: Think about a particular circumstance or feeling that provokes a negative behavior in your life. Later we will consider alternative reactions to the same circumstance to interrupt the process.

Example: *Circumstance:* Stress
 Undesireable reaction: Smoke

Example: *Circumstance:* Exhaustion
 Undesireable reaction Impatient with wife and kids

Your circumstance: _____.

Your undesirable reaction: _____.

Part #5: A format for destroying a mental stronghold



“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

New thoughts – aligned with the perfectly true Word of God – produce freedom in Christ. In Him, we have power to recognize and reject the lies we believe!



The Word of God has power to destroy the lies of a Mental Stronghold – Memorization is powerful.



“How can a Young man keep his way pure; by living according to your Word... I have hidden your word in my heart so that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9 & 11)

Jesus overcame lies by using the power of the Word of God memorized. (See *Matt 4:3-4*)

Steps in the destruction of a mental stronghold

1. “I feel...”

Recognize the attitude which does not conform to the truth of God. (be specific)

2. “I say to myself...”

Identify the underlying thoughts that provoke this attitude or action

3. “Let’s try another camera angle!” “I could have thought...”

Just like in the filming of a movie, move the “camera” to a different place to have a new perspective on the same situation. Try to visualize an alternative way of viewing and interpreting the situation

4. I confess and renounce this thought and sinful belief.

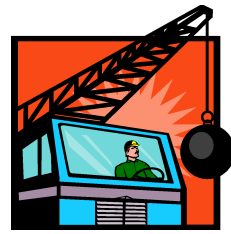
5. I affirm the truth of the word of God, using a specific verse from the Bible.

Pick a verse to memorize and an easy phrase to repeat, which serves as a corrective to your previous thoughts and “self-talk.”

Example: The Grumpy Hubby!

Billy Joe comes home at the end of long day, snapping at his wife and kid for every little thing.

He goes through the following process to try to break this pattern.

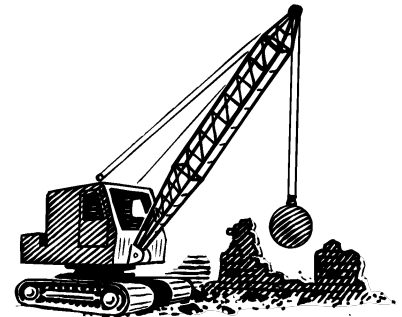


1. **I feel** so annoyed with my wife and kids at the end of a long day. When my wife asks me to do something, like take out the garbage, I often respond by snapping or even yelling.
2. **I say to myself...** “I am a man and she doesn’t have the right to ask me to do something when I’m tired. I guess I think I need to shout to assert my authority.”
3. **Another camera angle...** “**I could think...**” about how she must feel after her long day at work and with the kids. Also, shouting does not establish my leadership. A true Biblical leader serves and can control his own anger. I suppose I come across to them as being self centered and bossy – not Christ like! Maybe they have a point.
4. **I confess and renounce** this self-centeredness and chauvinism.
5. **I affirm that** “I am a man of God, called to serve,” and “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13) With God’s help, I can adopt the attitude of a servant leader rather than be driven by my tiredness and insecurity.

Your turn – Demolish a Stronghold!

1. “**I feel....**” *Identify a problem in your attitudes or actions*

Single out an area of struggle in your life, that could be an emotional problem or a sinful habit. Try to identify a very specific situation in which this problem manifests itself



Example

Problem (in general) - I feel annoyed! I get angry easily.

Specific situation - I snap at my wife when she asks me to pick up my underwear off the bathroom floor.

Your problem in general - I feel.... _____.

Specific Case - _____.

_____.

_____.

2. Identify feelings and thoughts: “I think...” “I say to myself...”

Remember the last time you gave in to this problem. What happened inside you? Try to get in touch with your “internal conversation” around the moment when you fell into this negative pattern. What were the thoughts, feelings and beliefs you can remember that accompanied this slip.



Example:

I was thinking...

1. She doesn't have the right to talk to me that way.
2. I work so hard that she should not demand that I do that kind of thing at home.
3. I'm the man of the house and I can leave my underwear wherever I want.

Thoughts and feelings I had... I was thinking... I said to myself...

1. _____

_____.

2. _____

_____.

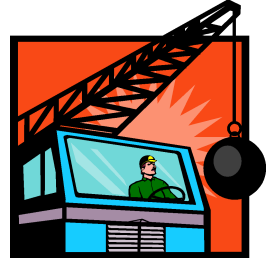
3. _____

_____.

3.. *“Change the camera angle.” “I could think....”*

Consider a different way of seeing the situation

Now try visualizing the same situation from a different perspective. Describe how you could have thought differently about the same situation.



Example: “I could think....”

1. She’s tired also and frustrated after a long day at work and then taking care of the kids. I can be patient and cut her some slack.
2. I’m annoyed, but I don’t need to shout or snap. I can let her know I don’t like her speaking to me in that manner without raising my voice or being disrespectful.
3. I’m called to love and serve my wife. To take care of such a little detail doesn’t “lower” me in any way. On the contrary, it’s a way of expressing my spiritual leadership in the home.”
4. I suppose if I wasn’t such a pig, then maybe she wouldn’t get so upset!

Different thoughts you can adopt – “I could think that....”

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. Confession and Renunciation

Example: *Lord, I confess the sin of self-centeredness and male chauvinism. I renounce this bad attitude, in the name of Jesus.*”

Write your prayer of confession and renunciation: _____

5. Affirm the truth

Example:

Verse: Philippians 4:13 – *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

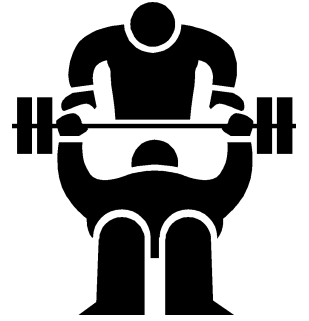
Phrase: *“I am a man of God – called to serve!”* In spite of being tired, I can be a man who is the servant leader in his home, without anger or explosions. *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!!!”*

Affirm the truth (and a verse) – _____

“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Juan 8:32





Training in Holiness

Role of Mentors and Discipline

“Train yourself to be godly....” – 1 Timothy 4:7b

In this lesson we consider...

- *The role of discipline and personal effort in the sanctification process*
- *The interrelation of human effort and divine power*
- *The importance of mentors and role models in the Christian life*

No Pain No Gain – Without blood, sweat and tears – no benefit!

Thank God, the blood that sanctifies us comes from the sacrifice of another -- the perfect lamb of God. Yet the process of some sweat and tears on our part! sanctification requires

The Apostle Paul’s “muscular”



Christianity

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

To be a successful athlete, one must...

- *Carefully observe and emulate role models and examples*
- *Accept criticism, guidance and instruction from good coaches*
- *Abstain from certain foods and indulgences to stay in shape*
- *Follow a strict regimen to stay sharp*
- *Practice, practice, practice....*



“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things...”

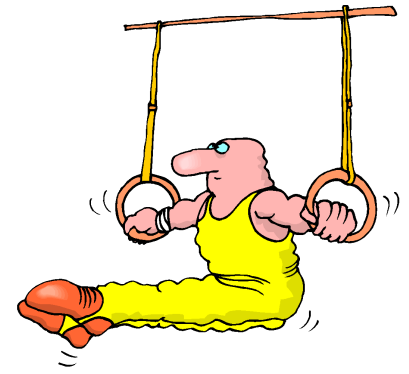
In much the same way as physical training, holiness requires “temperance” – moderation, abstinence, self denial. Because he dreams of that medal ceremony, the Olympic runner chooses to abstain from certain indulgences on a daily basis. Can you think of some examples of activities or indulgences, though perhaps not openly scandalous, which should be avoided by a Christian who is serious about growing in holiness?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To grow in holiness – one must pray and sweat!

“... by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” 1 Corinthians 15:10-11

We are saved *and sanctified* by grace. Holiness, like salvation, is a work of the spirit in the human heart. But grace and the work of the Spirit in our lives does not mean that we are passive recipients! Sweat and grace can and do go together!!



Practice makes perfect!



To win or achieve anything in life, we must train. An athlete adheres to a strict regimen of exercise and diet in order to tone his muscles and develop stamina and strength. A pianist takes classes and practices for hours on a daily basis. Likewise, Christian growth requires intentionality and execution: specific plans and regular activity.



Note below a skill or ability in your own life which required regular rehearsal, training or practice.

_____.

How about in your spiritual development? Do you apply the same intentionality and effort?

Yes _____ No _____

Interrelation of Human Activity and Divine Power

One Extreme - Legalism: Over-dependence on Human Effort

As we discussed in the previous lesson, we often try to do the Spirit’s work for him! Have you ever tried to make a significant change – losing weight, quitting smoking, etc. – by your own will-power? How did it go?

_____.

We quickly learn that on our own – we are helpless!!

Paul described it in this way... ,

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.” Romans 7:18-19



Thank God – it does not depend on us!

*“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. --
Zechariah 4:6*

As Jesus phrased the same idea... *“apart from me, you can do nothing.”* John 15:5

Another Extreme: Passivity



Sin is like the current of a river or the force of a mighty wind



There is a saying in Spanish.. *“Camarón que se duerme... se lo lleva la corriente.”* Roughly translated: *“The sleeping shellfish is swept away in the current.* If we float passively in a river or the ocean, without any movements, we will be taken wherever the eddies and currents carry us. In much the same way, the “tides” of this world and our own sinful inclinations will carry us away effortlessly should we choose to lower our guard.

The “tides” and “currents” of sin

1. *The World*

The basic “flow” of this world is corrupt. The social networks that surround us; the patterns of business in the marketplace; the values promoted through television and the mass media; and maneuvers of politics.... All “flow” towards sin in myriad ways.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.” 1 John 2:15-16

2. *The Flesh*

No child need “learn” how to be selfish and disobedient! Our sinful human nature is inherently corrupt, and propels us towards that which is evil: Our pride, sensual desires, selfishness, hatred and malice.

3. *The Devil* We do not inhabit a neutral spiritual environment, but one that is charged with spiritual conflict. Satan and his demons stalk us.



If we are passive, we will be drawn into sin – quickly!



Prayer and Action go together!

Spanish: “Oración” = Oración + Acción

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

According to these verses, how do we view God’s action and ours working together in the process of our growth?



Jesus is vine – we are the branches.

John 15:1-8

How does the image of the vine and its branches illustrate for us the dynamic interrelation of God’s power and human effort?

If our part is to “remain” or “abide” in the vine – then *how do we do this??*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Jesus said on the night of his arrest: “*Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation.*” Why is necessary to spend time in prayer in order to avoid succumbing to temptation, in your opinion?



“giving all diligence...” 2 Peter 1:5

Read 2 Peter 1:5-10



In your own life; how can you better “*give all diligence*” (KJV) or “*make every effort*” (NIV) to grow in Christian character qualities.

Peter lists several goals and character qualities for Christian growth. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____



And you? Do you have some personal goals for your growth in Christian character? List them below. Try to express them in the affirmative (be patient), rather than the negative (stop exploding).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Every Athlete needs heroes – Role Models

We all have heroes and role models in our lives. For many kids who play sports, a super-star such as “Big Papi” provides an example to follow. Mention three such figures from your own life – whether from childhood or adulthood.



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Seek examples and role models!

We usually learn best by observing the example of others, and then emulating them. An apprentice carpenter observes his “master craftsman” in action, and then seeks to imitate his technique. Likewise in the Christian life. We ought to seek role models and mentors to provide examples and offer counsel and correction as they observe us in action.

1. Jesus – the Perfect Example!

“...let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” Heb 12:2

We ask the question: “*What would Jesus do*” in this situation?

2. Paul presents himself as an example to follow

“*Imitate me as I imitate Christ.*” – 1 Corinthians 11:1

3. The disciples are called to provide an example to others: Timothy and Titus

“*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*” 1 Timothy 4:12

“*...encourage the Young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good....*” Titus 2:6-7

How could it be dangerous to focus too much on the example of other believers or spiritual leaders?

How can we avoid falling into this trap?

Identify role models God has placed in your life...

Note the names of some Christians you know who provide examples of some aspect of the Christian life. (Preferably not pastors). What, in particular, do they exemplify for you?

<i>Name</i>	<i>...is an example of...</i>
<i>Hermana Meche</i> <i>Roberto and Leonor Naranjo</i>	A devoted and faithful wife Service in the church
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Mentors – Every Athlete needs a Coach!

We all have had teachers, coaches, trainers or “big brothers” and “big sisters” who have taken us under their wing to teach us some skill or subject. Mention the names of two or three such “mentors” from your own past (or present).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pick one and describe the relationship you enjoyed with this person. What did he or she teach or influence you? How? What were some of the methods employed?

How can we cultivate mentoring relationships in our lives?

1. **Take initiative**
2. **“Catch” their spiritual anointing**
3. **Observe their example**
4. **Accept assignments**
5. **Receive correction – be teachable**

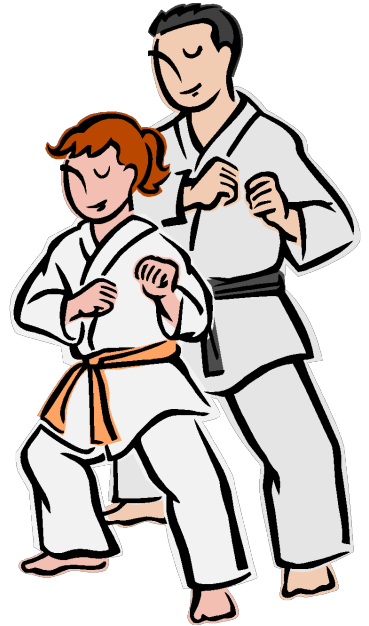
1. Take initiative – Want it! Be Pro-active!

To be trained – *you gotta want it!* We cannot passively wait to be adopted by a mentor. To be a true “disciple” or “student,” we must do our part to be pro-active in the process.

Finding mentors is your responsibility!

Karate Kid

In the film, “The Karate Kid,” the aspiring student of this martial art sought his own teacher. He literally “camped out” on his doorstep, night and day, until the “*sen-se*” took him under his wing. As the relationship develops, the *sen-se* gives him many menial and tedious tasks, and the young man becomes discouraged to the point of quitting. Thankfully for him, his decision to persevere under the master’s tutelage makes all the difference for his future success.



Discipleship and mentoring is much the same. If we genuinely want a teacher, then we must seek him or her out, and then persevere, especially when the initial “gloss” wears off.

Let’s brainstorm. How can you meet and become acquainted with potential mentors for your Christian growth?

Once you have identified some potential candidates, how can you begin to cultivate this kind of relationship? (Remember than most people who are worth learning from are already quite busy!)

2. “Catch” the spiritual anointing of your mentors

The Spirit is contagious! When we spend time with a mentor, the anointing of that person can be transferred and imparted to us. Consider these examples...

Paul and Timothy – the laying on of hands

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands...” (2 Tim 1:6)

Elijah and Elisha – The double portion

“When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?’ ‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied.” (2 Kings 2:9)

While this “spiritual contagiousness” is organic and somewhat spontaneous, it can also be cultivated and sought. How can we actively seek to “catch” the anointing of mentors?

3. Observe their Example -- “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 11:1

Of course, to observe the example of another person, *we must simply be around them*, which presents a challenge in our busy society. We must pro-actively seek opportunities to accompany a mentor in activities. Again, *we cannot wait passively for a mentor to make appointments with us*. We must be willing to adapt and “fit in” to his or her activities.

“Help out” and “tag along” with mentors in their activities

Example: Moses and Joshua in the Tent of Meeting:

*The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but **his young aide** Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.” (Ex. 33:11)*

What is a “fringe benefit” for Joshua of being Moses’ “aide?”

Getting specific, think of a potential mentor in your own life. What are some activities which could provide opportunities to share experiences?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Accept Assignments – without complaining!

We learn *by doing* – and then processing the evaluation of others.

Jesus sent out the twelve and then dialogued with them about their experience.

“Calling the twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits..... (Then) the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.” ” Mark 6:7 y 30

Why is it so important to “report in” and dialog with a mentor after fulfilling certain tasks and missions?



A mentoring moment – the multiplication of the loaves!

Read Mark 6:30-44

How do we see Jesus mentor the disciples through this experience?

List the variety of emotions the disciples must have experienced in various stages of this “teaching moment?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What do you think the disciples learned through this experience?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

A mentoring moment – Moses sends Joshua to fight!

“Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning...” (Ex. 17:9-11)

What do you think Joshua learned from the mentoring assignment?

5. Accept criticism and guidance from your mentor

No one enjoys being corrected. Any mentoring relationship will involve moments of conflict and tension. If we embrace this “discomfort” and submit ourselves, we will enjoy a rich harvest of spiritual growth.

Rebuke: Peter and Jesus

“...But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ he said. ‘you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’” (Mark 8:33)



How do you think Peter felt after this “mentoring moment?”

Have you ever received correction from a Christian brother or sister? What happened? How did you feel? How did you benefit from the experience?

Words of encouragement

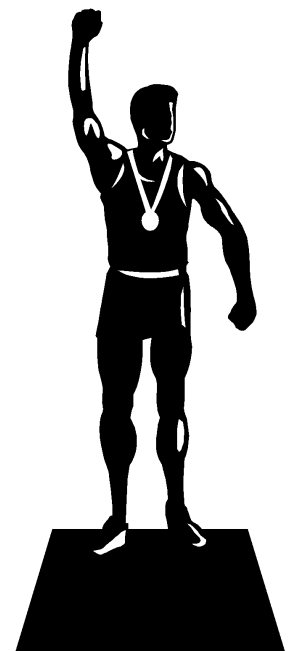
“... and I say to you; you are “Peter” and on this rock I will build my church.”

Listening to a mentor, we are corrected, guided and encouraged, but we must submit and be teachable.

Conclusion:

The promised land *was given* to the Israelites, but it also had *to be conquered by them!* Very little of value in life comes easily. Holiness is a gift from God – but it also must be fought for with passion and perseverance.

Are you willing to pay the price?



Self Examination – Coming into the Light Prophetic Plans for Personal Growth



“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”
2 Cor. 13:5

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
Psalm 139:23-24

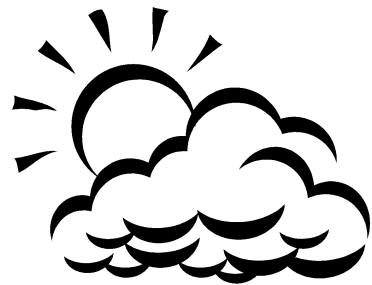
“The unexamined life is not worth living.”
Henry David Thoreau

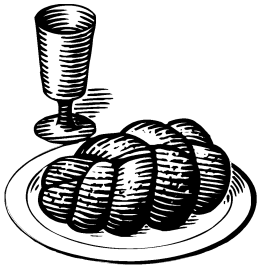
“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the wind of the storm, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”
Genesis 3:8-10

Sunlight is the best disinfectant.
Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

In this Lesson we learn...

- ***Why examine one’s self – The importance of healthy introspection***
- ***What does it mean to “walk in the light?”***
- ***The four quadrants of self-knowledge – of light***
 - *Our public self*
 - *Our blind spots*
 - *Our private areas*
 - *Our unknown self*
- ***Ways to walk in the light***
 - *Action*
 - *Confession*
 - *Correction*
 - *Revelation*
- ***How to identify areas of growth***
- ***How to make prophetic plans for personal growth***





Why examine one's self?

Self-Examination – A matter of life and death

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-33



Why is it critical that we examine ourselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper?

What is the purpose of this self-examination? (11:31)



Transparency – *the critical ingredient of walking in the light*

Read 1 John 1:5-9



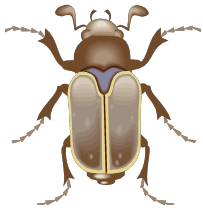
According to this verse, what are some benefits of "walking in the light?"

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

According to 1 John 1:8-9, how do we enter the light?

Denial = Darkness

Cockroaches and rats dwell in dark places. We flick the light switch and they scatter furiously, seeking new shadows. Likewise with demons, fears, neuroses, and emotional bondage, etc. When we come into the light, when we choose to be transparent, that which is evil and vile within us begins to shrivel and heal. No one finds self-examination and admitting faults to be easy or pleasant. We feel shame, quite naturally, and prefer to avoid dwelling on that which is unpleasant about us. Adam and Eve reacted to this sense of shame by hiding in the bushes and covering themselves with fig leaves. This human tendency to hide or cover our sins is what the Bible calls, "walking in darkness."



When we sweep our sins under the carpet, we sacrifice God's cleansing and blessing.

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Prov. 28:13



Quadrants of Light ³

<p><i>1. Our Public Self</i></p> <p>That which we know about ourselves And others also can perceive.</p>	<p><i>2. Our Blind Sides</i></p> <p>That which we do not realize about ourselves... But others can plainly see.</p>
<p><i>3. Our Private Self</i></p> <p>That which we know about ourselves... ... But others do not.</p>	<p><i>4. Our Unknown Self</i></p> <p>That which we do not realize about ourselves... ... And neither can others. Only God knows!!</p>

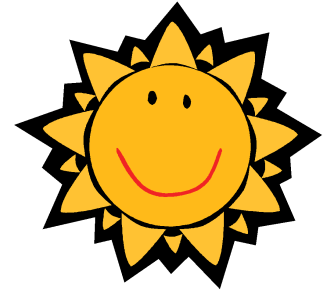
Review: Fill in the blank with the appropriate quadrant, in each case.

1. If I know that I am an impatient person and others also know this about me – *it's obvious to all* – then this problem falls in Quadrant # _____.
2. If I smoke, *but no one knows*, then this vice falls into Quadrant # _____.
3. According to Revelation 2:17, each believer has a new name written on a white Stone in heaven. No one on earth knows this name, not even ourselves, this side of heaven. This secret name falls into Quadrant # _____.
4. If I have coffee breath, and everyone knows, but I do not realize it, then this problem belongs to Quadrant # _____.

3

³Also known as “Jihairi’s Window.” Public domain.

How can I walk more fully in the light?



1. *Take Action*
2. *Receive Correction*
3. *Practice Confession*
4. *Seek Revelation*

1. *Take Action – to change obvious defects and problems*

Quadrant #1: Our Public Self – Obvious problems that are obvious to all

Spirit led action is required to bring about change.

Some sins and weaknesses are *obvious* to ourselves and others. These issues already have come to light. *Action* is needed, with the help of God and others, to effect change.

Impediments to action

- *Procrastination* – “I’ll work on this problem when my life is more settled...”
- *Fear of Change* – Our sins have become “normal” and familiar to us.
- *Rebellion* – “This is my life and I won’t change!”
- *Excuses* – “It’s just the way I am. You can’t teach an old dog new tricks!”

Reflect on your own life. When you struggle with an obvious problem or sin, what is the most common impediment that keeps you from pursuing change?

2. *Receive Correction – in order to recognize hidden sins*

Quadrant #2: Our Blind Sides – Sins of which we are unaware.

Correction is needed to bring these issues to our attention.

We all have sins, defects and weaknesses which are plain to all those around us, except ourselves!! We are blind to these problems and need *correction* in order to become aware of them. Just as a driver who attempts to change lanes without seeing a vehicle in his “blind” spot, the honking horn can make all the difference to prevent serious injury.

No one enjoys correction!! - but it is necessary for our sanctification

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.” Prov. 12:1

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. Prov. 27:6

A variety of people bring us correction.

- *A spouse*
- *Parents or Children*
- *Our boss*
- *Co-workers*
- *Employees*
- *Spiritual leaders*
- *Our enemies*
- *The police*

In your life, who are some people who bring you correction?

1. _____
2. _____

Excuses we use to avoid accepting criticism

- *“They just hate me and exaggerate my faults to make me feel bad.”*
- *“He’s my enemy and wants to make me look bad.”*
- *“She doesn’t really know me.”*
- *“He’s crazy and doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”*
- *“She’s so rude. She said this in such an unloving way.”*

Which is an excuse that you tend to use not to receive criticism that you hear?

_____.

Describe an instance in which someone corrected you in some way.

_____.

How did you respond?

_____.

3. Practice Confession— to bring secret sins to God’s healing light

Quadrant #3: Our Private Self – The sins we hide from others.

Confession brings hidden sin into God’s healing light.

Like Adam and Eve, our natural tendency is to hide our weaknesses and sins because of shame and fear. Confession is a precious gift from God, which helps us to bring these sins out of darkness and into God’s disinfecting light.

Confession can be difficult. Why?

- *Bad memories of religiosity from past religious background. (Perhaps confessing to a priest as if he were God.)*
- *Fear of being exposed before another person*
- *Fear that the person will criticize or look down on you*
- *Fear that personal information will be spread to others*
- *Natural human shame – we are embarrassed!*

Which of these might be an impediment for you to confess your sins to another person?

Why confess to another person and not only to God?

“Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you might be healed. The fervent prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

According to this verse, what is the benefit of confessing to another human being?

Qualities of an appropriate person to hear a personal confession

Do not confess to “just anyone!”

It should be a person who is...

- ***Discreet*** – who can keep a secret!
- ***Spiritually mature*** – and can help provide Biblical guidance and support
- ***Of the same gender*** – because of the intimate nature of confession

Note below the names of two or three people in your life who you think could be

appropriate people to hear a personal confession from you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



4. Seek Revelation – from the Holy Spirit to be free of unknown sins

Quadrant #4: Our unknown Self – Unconscious sin

Revelation is needed to bring these unknown problems to light.

Some sins and weaknesses remain at the unconscious level – unknown to both ourselves and others. The Holy Spirit can reveal such hidden sins and bring them to light, so we can be free of their influence.

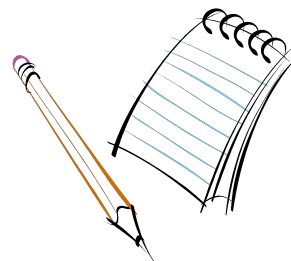
Our Part – Prayer

“Search me, Oh God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and guide me in the everlasting way.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

Why do you think it is so important to pray before practicing introspection? How can introspection be dangerous and even harmful if not done by the Spirit’s guidance?

Goals – Who needs them? -- We do!

As we clarified in the previous lesson, ***we do not believe in holiness by human effort, but neither do we believe God calls us to be passive in the process.*** As Christians, we make goals not as “New Years Resolutions,” but as prophetic prayers, aiming at personal change. The first step in any goal making process should be specific prayer related to the goal. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from him, we are helpless. But along with prayer, we do well to take action and “swim along” with the Spirit’s current in our sanctification process.



How to identify a goal for personal growth

- *Is there an obvious problem in my life which needs changing?*
- *Does a particular character flaw repeatedly “get me in trouble?”*
- *Does a secret struggle hamper my life, without anyone else knowing?*
- *Does a particular habit or attitude get me into regular conflict with others?*

Three areas for self-examination:

- ***The Self***
 - Emotional issues (Anger, depression, anxiety, rejection)
 - Character issues (Patterns of deceit, immorality, addiction)
 - Spiritual issues (Bondage from past spiritual activity)
 - Self Concept (inflated or inferiority)
 - Health issues... etc.
- ***Interpersonal Relationships***
 - Conflict with family, friends, or co-workers
 - Speech
 - Resentment and forgiveness
 - Immorality
 - Neglect of important relationships
 - Over-dependence on others
 - Desire to control others
- ***Life-style***
 - Work ethic
 - Time management
 - Financial stewardship
 - Destructive habits...etc.

Choose an area of life that needs change

Example - Depression

Note the area you want to “work on” - _____
 _____.

State the goal in a positive way

Example - To choose joy and hope in the midst of negative circumstances

Note the positive goal that corresponds to the issue you wrote above - _____
 _____.

Elements of an effective goal for personal change

- ***Specific!!***
 - Not -- “I would like to be more patient.”
 - Instead, “I would like to be more patient with my wife when dealing with the stress of getting the kids ready for school in the mornings.”

- ***Make realistic, achievable goals***
 - Not -- “I want to pray all the time for my kids – 24/7.”
 - Instead -- “I would like to try to pray for my kids at bedtime for ten minutes.”

- ***Set dates***
 - Not -- “I want to read the Gospel of John”
 - Instead – “I want to read the Gospel of John by Thanksgiving”

- ***Work with a mentor/friend***
 - Share your goals
 - Get suggestions for strategies
 - Help evaluate your progress, or lack thereof

Be encouraged!

We all have a plethora of weaknesses and personal defects that need work. Thank God, He does not ask us to change all at once. As a patient potter who molds the clay, he works with long processes that move towards his beautiful goals.

“... Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus...”

Romans 8:1

Assignment

Using the models included... Fill out a Prophetic Plan for Personal Change

Review Questions:

Why is it so important to examine ourselves regularly, and especially before partaking of the Lord’s Supper?

List the four “Quadrants of Light.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are the ways we can enter more fully into the light of God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are some reasons that we do not take action to change areas of obvious sin in our lives?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some excuses one might use to reject a word of *correction* from another person?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some characteristics of an appropriate person to receive a confession from us?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some features of a well crafted goal for personal change?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Prophetic Planning Sheets – Bad Example!

Prophetic Goal
Where?

Specific Steps
Evaluation

When?

<p>Problem:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Bad money management</i></p> <hr/> <p>Goal:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Be a millionaire</i></p> <hr/>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Spend less</i></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Play the lottery</i></p> <p>2. _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Give to the Lord</i></p> <p>3. _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Always</i></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Every now and then</i></p> <p>2. _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A lot!</i></p> <p>3. _____</p>	<p>N</p> <p>ov.</p> <p>Dec</p> <p>Jan</p>

What are some ways this prophetic planning sheet can be improved?

Prophetic Planning Sheet – Bad Example!

Prophetic Goal
Where?

Specific Steps
Evaluation

When?

N

ov.
Dec.
Jan

<p>Problem</p> <p><i>Depression</i></p> <hr/> <p>Goal</p> <p><i>Stop being so depressed.</i></p> <hr/>	<p><i>Rejoice in the Lord</i></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p><i>Pray</i></p> <p>2. _____</p> <p><i>Don't be sad.</i></p> <p>3. _____</p>	<p><i>Always - everywhere</i></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p><i>All the time</i></p> <p>2. _____</p> <p><i>Never – no where</i></p> <p>3. _____</p>	<p>1. _____</p> <hr/> <p>2. _____</p> <hr/> <p>3. _____</p> <hr/>
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How can this prophetic planning sheet be improved?

Prophetic Planning Sheet: Positive Example

<i>Prophetic Goal Where?</i>	<i>Specific Steps Evaluation</i>	<i>When?</i>	
<p>Problem: <i>Depression</i></p> <p>Goal:</p> <p><i>“Learning to choose hope and optimism when facing negative circumstances”</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Sing praise songs during my daily prayer times</i> 2. <i>Do a Bible study on the word, “hope”</i> 3. <i>Start jogging</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Daily @ 6:30 a.m. In my kitchen</i> 2. <i>By Thanksgiving</i> 3. <i>Tuesdays and Thursdays after work</i> 	<p>N</p> <p>ov. Decem ber Jan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

<i>Prophetic Goal Where?</i>	<i>Specific Steps Evaluation</i>	<i>When?</i>	
<p>Problem</p> <p><i>Bad money management.</i></p> <p>Goal</p> <p><i>“To spend and save money in a responsible way.”</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Call Alpha to sign up for Crown classes</i> 2. <i>Start tithing</i> 3. <i>Burn Credit Card</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>This Thursday a.m.</i> 2. <i>Every Sunday</i> 3. <i>Today!</i> 	<p>N</p> <p>ov. Decem ber Jan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

Assignment: *Fill out this prophetic planning sheet with specific and realistic goals and action steps.*

Prophetic Planning Sheet

***Prophetic Goal
Where?***

***Specific Steps
Evaluation***

When?

<p>Problem:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>1. _____ _____.</p>	<p>1. _____ _____.</p>	<p>1. _____ _____.</p>
<p>Goal:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>2. _____ _____.</p> <p>3. _____ _____.</p>	<p>2. _____ _____.</p> <p>3. _____ _____.</p>	<p>2. _____ _____.</p> <p>3. _____ _____.</p>

N

ov.
Dec.
Jan

Overcoming Temptation

“... lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...”
Matthew 6:13



We can be free!! Temptation need not rule us!

*“... No temptation has seized you except what is common to man, **and God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**”* 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

In this lesson we reflect upon...

- ***How to identify a “danger zone” and take precautions***
- ***Satan’s strategies in temptation***
- ***Our strategies in overcoming temptation***

Danger Zones

“... so if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall...”
1 Corinthians 10:12



“Danger Zone” = A “trigger” or vulnerability towards temptation

jWe all have weaknesses! Certain situations, times, places or “moods” may predispose us to commit sin. None of us is immune! We all have our “Achilles heal,” through which the enemy seeks to lure us into sinful behavior. A wise Christian learns to recognize his own weaknesses, be alert and take precautions.

We must be vigilant!

“... the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy...” Juan 10:10

“... Be dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning.... If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming he would not have let his house be broken into...” Luke 12:35, 39

“Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

If we recognize our “weak spots” or “triggers” that predispose us to temptation, then we can take appropriate measures to avoid stumbling. These “safeguards,” or “precautionary measures,” can help us to avoid patterns of sin.

Flee from temptation! There is always an “escape route!”

“Flee the sinful passions of youth...”(2 Timothy 2:22)

*“... No temptation has seized you except what is common to man, **and God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*** 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

We must set up safeguards to avoid tempting situations!

“Everything is permissible” but not everything is beneficial...” 1 Cor. 10:23

Avoidance can be a problem. As Christians, we need not flee from discomfort or personal challenge, *but the Bible clearly counsels us to avoid tempting situations.* If we learn to recognize where temptation lies, then we can take measures to avoid these situations when possible, or set up a “safety fence” of some sort.



For example...

- *The recovering alcoholic* learns to avoid bars
- *The recovering “womanizer”* is careful always to wear his wedding ring visibly
- *The recovering “compulsive shopper”* avoids certain stores at certain times..etc.



Example - Amargalina – Bitter Betty – Seeks to control her temper

Amargalina has an anger problem. She loses her temper quickly and tends to shout or say things she later regrets. This weakness has caused problems in her marriage and she even lost a job because of her quick temper. When she analyzes these explosions of anger, she realizes that her “tantrums” tend to happen when she is sleep deprived, and especially at certain “times” when her biological defenses are down. She also recognizes that situations of prolonged stress and pressure generally accompany these angry explosions.

What are some elements of her “danger zone”?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some safeguards Amargalina can put in place to help prevent explosions of anger during these moments and seasons of her life?



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Example: Paco wants to live in purity

Our brother Paco struggles with an addiction to internet pornography. Especially on Saturday evenings, when feeling lonely, he often goes down to his basement to his private study and watches inappropriate videos on his desktop computer. He has Christian room-mates, but they do not know the extent of his problem. He also struggles when away on business trips, after giving pressure filled presentations. This addiction provides an escape and method of relaxation after stressful moments.

What are some elements of Paco’s “danger zones?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What measures could Paco take to establish safeguards that might help minimize these tempting situations?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Analyze a personal struggle in your life -- It could be...

Anger... gossip... sexual immorality... poor money management... deception...etc.

Think of a specific example of when you gave in to this temptation...

- *What happened?*

_____.

- *When did it happen?*

- What day of the week? What time of day? What month of the year?

_____.

- *How did you feel just before “giving in?”*

- Tired? Sleepy? Hungry?
- Under stress? Lonely? Bored?

_____.

- *What were you doing before you “gave in?”*

- Busy? Bored? On vacation? On a business trip?
- Were you in contact with any particular person or people?

_____.

- *Where were you when you “gave in?”*

- Alone at home?
- With particular friends or acquaintances?
- In a particular neighborhood? Hotel? Room of the house?

_____.

Using these questions as a guide for analyzing this particular struggle, note below some elements you can identify of your own “danger zone” for falling into this particular problem or sin.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Note some possible precautions or “safeguards” you could set up to avoid falling into this problem again?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How to overcome temptation?

Stay tight with Jesus – our perfect “Helper”!

You are not alone! Jesus understands what you are suffering.

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Hebrews 2:18

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.” Hebrews 4:15-16

Why is it so important for us to remember that Jesus was tempted, just as we are?

Know your enemy! Satan’s schemes

If a military general knows the strategies employed by his enemy, then he can nullify any “element of surprise” and stand ready to resist. In the same way, our spiritual enemy employs strategies and schemes. Once we become aware of his techniques, we can thoughtfully resist or identify “escape routes” for retreat, if necessary!

“ ... that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” 2 Cor. 2:11

Scheme #1 – He “scratches where we itch”

Scheme #2 – He paints God as the “bad guy”

Scheme #3 – He takes advantage of our “false sense of security”

Scheme #4 – He tempts us to “cover up”

Scheme #5 – He leads us through temptation “little by little”

Scheme #1 – He “scratches where we itch”

He tempts us to fulfill legitimate needs in illegitimate ways.

Temptation usually appeals to a desire we have – often completely innocent and natural. For example, Jesus “was hungry” and thus Satan tempted him to change the stones to bread. Hunger itself is not sinful, but Satan tempts him to satisfy his hunger in the wrong way. Our enemy also tempts us to fulfill our “hungers” in sinful ways.





Concupiscence – Deceitful desire - The root of sin

“... but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows...” **James 1:14-17**

Concupiscence = a deceitful desire – A desire which promises what it cannot fulfill

We are tempted to seek a “good” thing in a “bad” way

A pop song sums it up... “lookin’ for love in all the wrong places...”

For example:

- Sexual immorality, could result from a quest for companionship
- Drug abuse, could result from a desire to calm our anxiety and find peace... etc.

We seek the “right” things in the “wrong” ways.

In each case, note down what the person might be seeking in his or her sinful behavior.

1. The adulterer—might be seeking

_____.

2. The thief – might be seeking _____.

3. The alcoholic – might be seeking _____.

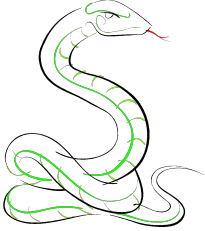
4. The gossip – might be seeking _____.

5. The materialist – might be seeking _____.

Think of a particular struggle in your life: What hunger or desire are you seeking to fulfill when giving in to this temptation?



Scheme#2 – God is painted as “the bad guy”



The enemy causes us to doubt God’s goodness by making us think that God’s limitations deprive us of happiness and well being.

Read Genesis 3:1-13 -- Adam and Eve



How does the Serpent sow the seeds of doubt regarding the character of God in his dialog with Eve? How does he paint God as the “bad guy.”

A deception usually mixes truth with falsehood

In the temptation of Adam and Eve, which are the truths with Satan employs in order to trick them into sin? Which are the lies?

Truths _____

Lies _____

Analyze the process of Adam and Eve’s temptation – How could they have escaped?

1. *She dialogued with the serpent*
2. *She listened to his lie – “You will not die!”*
3. *She doubted the Character of God – “God does not want you to be wise, like He is.”*
4. *She dwelt on her desires for attractive food and wisdom – and sinned!*

Now identify the “escape routes” -- How could they have interrupted this process?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

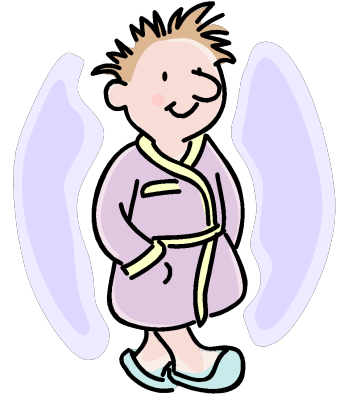
***Scheme #3 – Satan lulls us into “false security”
and takes advantage***

He allows us to feel invincible and thus lower our guard



“...if you think you are standing firm, be careful so you don’t fall...” (2 Cor. 10:12)

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5: David and Bathsheba



David was securely established on his throne, having won amazing victories against overwhelming odds, when he succumbed to temptation. How can times of success and relative calm be even more dangerous than times of struggle?

Although it was “*in the time when kings go to war,*” David “*stayed in Jerusalem*” and fell into sin. We know that he was also sleeping in the afternoon before strolling on his roof and observing the bathing Bathsheba. What can we learn from this?

Jesus warns us not to lower our guard!

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap... be always on the watch, and pray...” Luke 21:34-36



According to this warning from Jesus, which are some habits or attitudes that could leave us vulnerable and cause us to lower our guard?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Think of your life. Which are the moments when you feel “comfortable” and perhaps vulnerable to lower your guard?

Scheme # 4 – We cover sin, and make it worse!

Covering up our sin only entangles us further!

After sinning, what is our most natural impulse?

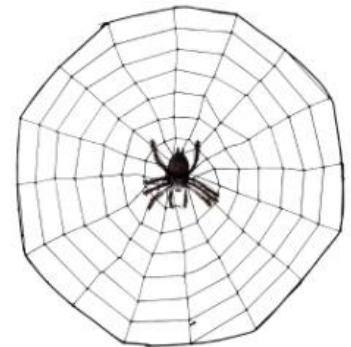
Cover up!!

What is necessary, in general, to cover our sin?

Lie!

There is only one escape...

Confession!



A wise man once said: *“When in doubt, tell the truth!”*

In order to cover his sin, David ordered the death of Bathsheba’s husband.

He who covers his sin will not prosper, but he who confesses and renounces them will find mercy. -- Prov. 18:13

*“O what a tangled web we weave,
when at first we practice to deceive.” - Shakespeare*

We analyze David’s temptation process – How could he have escaped at each point?

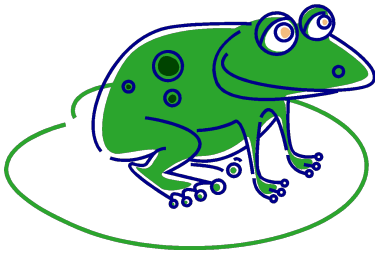
1. *He felt comfortable, invulnerable and invincible after his great victories*
2. *He stayed in the palace during the season when kings go out to war*
3. *He was lazy and slept during the afternoon*
4. *He indulged his desire to linger in his gaze upon a bathing woman*
5. *He committed adultery*
6. *He sought to cover his sin with duplicity*
7. *He ultimately ordered the death of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba’s husband*

Identify the “escape routes” – List the ways David could have interrupted this process and avoided falling into the sins he committed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Scheme #5 – Satan leads us along “little by little”

Illustration – how to cook a frog!



It is said that when a frog is placed into boiling water he will instinctively leap out and save his life. However, if that same frog is placed in lukewarm water, heated up little by little, he will stay still and be boiled. Satan employs this strategy by leading us through temptation one little step at a time until we succumb.



Read Proverbs 7:6-27 – The example of the “foolish young man”

The writer of proverbs observe this scene through his window one evening.

A saying: *“Don’t be in the wrong place at the wrong time!”*

How does the temptation of the “foolish young man” teach us the truth of this saying?

The process of the temptation of the foolish young man – How could he have escaped?

1. *He walked down the street where this woman lived – (wrong place)*
2. *He walked down this street at twilight – (wrong time)*
3. *He spoke to the woman when her husband was away on business –
(very, very wrong time!)*
4. *He engaged in dialog with this woman*
5. *He went in the house*
6. *... and sinned.*

Identify the “escape routes” – What are three ways that this young man could have avoided falling into this temptation at various points in the process?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____.

Some guidelines for overcoming temptation

1. ***Flee – There is always an escape route!***
2. ***“Pack Heat” -- Memorize verses***
3. ***Stay awake -- Pray regularly***
4. ***Stay busy in positive activities***
5. ***Spend time with positive people***
6. ***Be transparent***
7. ***Set up safeguards***

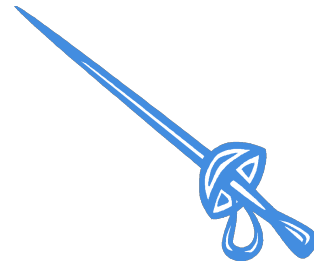
1. Flee! There is always a “way out!”

“Flee the sinful passions of youth...” (2 Timothy 2:22)



Read Genesis 39:7-12

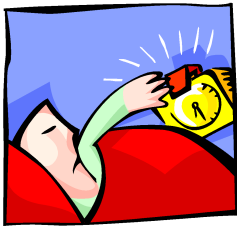
When Joseph realized the schemes of Potiphar’s wife, what did he do to avoid falling into temptation? (Gen. 39:10)



2. Use the sword – Memorize the word!

“How can a young man keep his way pure... by living according to your word... I have hidden your word in my heart so I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9 y 11)

“Jesus responded, saying, “It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Luke 4:4)



3. Stay awake – Watch and Pray

“Watch and pray so that you won’t fall into temptation.. the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak..” (Mateo 26:41)

What do we mean that prayer keeps us “awake” spiritually?

4. Stay busy (in that which is positive)

“The idle mind is the devil’s playground.”

If David had stayed busy fighting the battles of the Lord, then he would not have had time to stroll on his roof and linger in his gaze at a bathing woman in the first place.

List some ways one could stay busy in positive ways during potential seasons of temptation.

- 1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

5. Spend time with positive people – (and avoid the negative!)

“Bad company corrupts good character...” 1 Cor. 15:33

“He who walks with the wise, will become wise....” (Prov. 13:20)

“Enséñame con quien andas, y te diré quien eres...” (Popular saying in Spanish)
“Birds of a feather, flock together.”

Friendships can lead us to greatness... or to failure! We believe that Christians ought not to isolate themselves from all interaction with outsiders. Otherwise, how could they share their faith with others! Yet common sense shows us that some friendships tend to lead us towards sin, and require that we put a healthy distance.

Take note of a couple acquaintances who “bring out the best” in you.

1. _____
2. _____

Think of a couple who “bring out the worst!”

6. Be transparent – walk in the light and avoid shadows

As a rule, temptation thrives in darkness and anonymity. We feel that no one will notice a sin we commit, and the temptation has greater “pull.”

We must confess our struggles to a spiritually mature brother in Christ – *before giving in!*

Note down the names of three individuals you know who are appropriate to receive a confession from you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7. Set up safeguards

To avoid falling off a balcony, we set up a railing. Likewise in the Christian life: If we

are serious about avoiding sin, then we must establish a margin in our lives that makes sinning that much more difficult to accomplish. These safeguards make falling into sin less likely.

Avoid shadows – situations of anonymity



“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.... Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them... For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret...”Ephesians 5:8-12

Situations in which no one knows you or sees you tend to provide easier access to temptation.

Examples...

The man who struggles with internet porn ---- Remove the computer from private places.

The young woman tempted to immorality --- Live with a Christian female room-mate

Ex – alcoholic ---- Avoid neighborhoods or bars where you used to drink

The gossip ---- Avoid phone conversations with certain friends

Final Example for Review: Compulsive Shopping – “Shopaholic”



Materialistic Matilda

Poor Matilda. Every time she feels anxious, sad, and lonely or under stress, she goes shopping! She buys sweaters. She buys jewelry. She buys shoes. She buys purses. She buys, buys, buys and buys more!!! Her credit card debt is through the roof and she cannot get a loan to buy a car – let alone a house! Poor Matilda. She feels she just cannot resist the temptation to spend money. Sometimes she goes to the mall to “kill time” when she feels lonely. She promises herself she will not buy anything, but always leaves with her arms full of bags! Especially when she spends time with her friends on Friday night, they go shopping together. Can you share some advice,

based on this lesson, to help Matilda to avoid this temptation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Forgiveness

*“In your anger do not sin:
do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27*

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...” - Jesus

*“By age 50 every man has the face he deserves!”
– Abraham Lincoln*

Our Goal: – Freedom from Bitterness!

- *Why is it so important to forgive?*
- *What forgiveness is, and is not!*
- *How to forgive?*



Why is it so important to forgive? Three Testimonies

Testimony of a Dying Woman

A grandmother we will call “Mary” was gravely ill in the hospital and at the point of death. She had accepted Jesus as her savior in a sincere prayer before slipping into a coma. Following her wishes, the doctors and family decided to disconnect the respirator machine. She wavered between life and death for a few days and afterwards awoke, horrified by what she had experienced. Mary shared how she had entered into a dark dimension and knew that before dying in peace, she must forgive a certain person who had done her “much harm.” Right there from her hospital bed, she requested a phone and called the woman in question. After expressing forgiveness for her, this grandmother lived on for a few more months, seeking God and enjoying rich time with her family. Shortly thereafter, Mary died with a holy and sweet peace.⁴

The case of Sister “Bitter Betty”

Betty has been called a “feisty” believer. She seems to bounce from one conflict to another, constantly arguing with her husband, kids, employers and co-workers. She demonstrates intense and passionate love for God and a desire to serve, but she always seems to end up in conflicts with others.

As a child who grew up amidst very difficult circumstances, Betty learned early that one must fight to survive in this world. She says, *“I forgive but don’t forget. When people mistreat me I have the right to get even. It’s just the way I am and I cannot change!”*

In this lesson we attempt to convince Betty that forgiveness is the key for a life of joy,

4

⁴Included with the family’s permission



peace and fruitful service in the Kingdom of God.

John Wimber's Testimony

John Wimber, the Founder of the Vineyard Churches, which now exist around the world, ministered with an exceptional gift of healing. Under his ministry thousands were healed and the churches he founded still minister with distinctive anointing in the area of healing. He shares the story of how he once prayed for a man who suffered from a relatively minor ailment. As he ministered, Wimber felt the Spirit in a truly unusual way – as if electricity were flowing through his hands. He was certain that the man was healed.

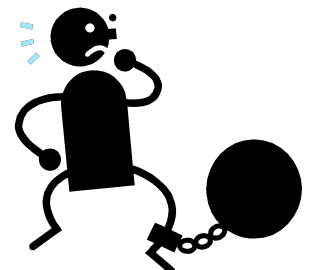
Some time later he heard the news that this man had died suddenly!! Brother Wimber felt perplexed by this, being so sure of the man's healing when he had prayed for him. Upon further investigation, he learned from acquaintances of the man that he had indeed experienced complete healing after Wimber prayed. Shortly afterwards, however, he received a call from an estranged family member with whom he had not spoken for many years. This relative asked forgiveness for his failings in the relationship, but the man refused.

Within a week, he was inexplicably dead.

.....Forgiveness is indeed a matter of life and death!

Why forgive?.... We forgive for our own good!

- 1. When we forgive – we are forgiven!**
If we refuse to forgive – God refuses to forgive us!
- 2. When we forgive – we are free!**
Bitterness is a Spiritual Bondage
- 3. When we forgive – we are delivered!**
Bitterness can provide an opening for Satan in our lives
- 4. When we forgive – we are healed!**
Bitterness is an emotional infection
- 5. When we forgive – our worship is acceptable!**
Bitterness contaminates our spiritual disciplines
- 6. When we forgive – we are filled with the Holy Spirit!**
Bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit
- 7. When we forgive – we have greater capacity to love!**
Bitterness contaminates relationships in the future



We forgive for our own good!



**1. If we do not forgive, God does not forgive us!
When we forgive --- we are forgiven!**



The Lord's Prayer

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your father will not forgive your sins.” Mateo 6:12-15

According to these words of Jesus, why is it so important for us to forgive others?



Read Matthew 18:21-35 - Parable of the Unmerciful Servant!

How do we often behave like this “unmerciful servant?”

When we are “hard” on others – God will be “hard” on us!



“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:37-38)



Preachers usually use these verses to introduce the topic of tithes and offerings. When read in their proper context, however, these verses deal not so much with our *material* generosity, but rather with our *emotional* generosity with others when we choose to forgive and overlook offenses. We reap what we sow. Those who come down hard on others, experience similar treatment when it is their “turn” to fall short!

According to Luke 6:37-38, above, how will a kind and forgiving person be treated when they fall short or fail in some way?

2. Bitterness is a Spiritual Bondage – Emotional Torture!

When we forgive, we are free!

- *Resentment binds us to the person who has hurt us*
- *The memory of the person and the violation continues to cause emotional damage*
- *We “carry” our pain and mistrust into future relationships*



When we forgive we “release” the person – forgo the “right” for revenge.

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 18:18

We often read this verse as in reference to spiritual warfare against Satan, but in its context, “loosing” and “binding” has more to do with forgiveness than struggles with demons! When we forgive, we can move on without carrying the emotional torture caused by the offense we suffered. Even secular psychologists teach this principle: “*There is freedom in forgiveness!*”

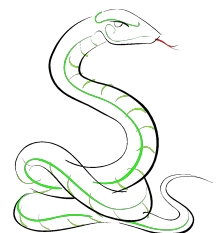
3. Bitterness can provide an opening for demonic oppression *When we forgive – we are delivered!*

Sometimes literal demons can attach themselves to those who refuse to forgive others.

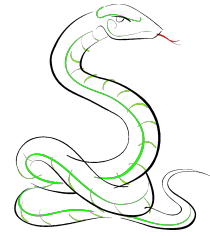
“In your anger do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold.” (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Anger in itself, is not sinful!

Anger can be healthy and appropriate. What is the difference between “good” anger and sinful anger, in your opinion?



Why does the verse say “do not give the devil a foothold?”



4. Bitterness can provide an opening for demonic oppression
When we forgive – we are delivered!

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Why does the verse say “do not give the devil a foothold?”

**4. Bitterness is an Emotional Infection - It grows and chokes out our life
When we forgive, we are healed!**



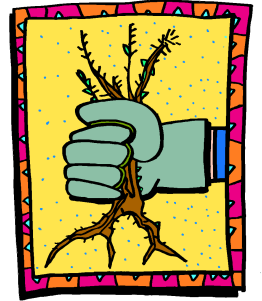
Example: Cain and Abel – Bitterness compared to a beast that must be tamed.

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. Genesis 4:7

How could it be possible for bitterness to dominate our lives, in your opinion?

Bitterness compared to a weed: “Root of Bitterness... contaminate many.”

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Hebrews 12:14-15



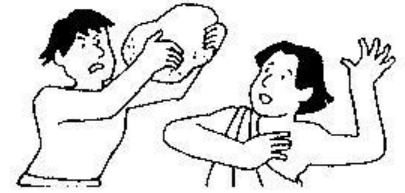
What do bitterness and weeds have in common?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How can a conflict between two people “contaminate many?”

Doctors tell us that bitterness can cause physical ailments. What do you think? Any examples?

4. Bitterness contaminates our spiritual disciplines *When we forgive, our worship is acceptable!*



Some of the most bitter people are the most religious! As much as any other sinful attitude, bitterness can lace our spirituality.

“... Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast...”
Genesis 4:4-5

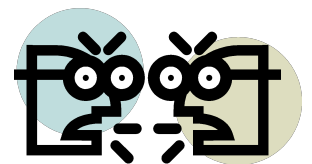
What caused the dispute that led to the first murder?

Don't be a Christian Pharisee!

The super-religious Pharisees prayed and fasted more than any others, but also allowed bitterness to taint their spirituality. With cruel jealousy they orchestrated the brutal murder of Jesus on the cross. If we allow bitterness to take root in our hearts and personality, we also can become “*Christian Pharisees.*”

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” James 3:13-16

Have you ever seen Christians fight tooth and nail about theological or church related issues? According to the text above, how do we demonstrate true Christian wisdom?





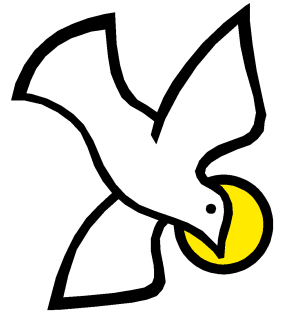
Bitterness and witchcraft – Simon the Magician

Read Acts 8:18-23

Why is bitterness compared to being “captive to sin?”

5. Bitterness Grieves the Holy Spirit
When we forgive, we are anointed!

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:30-32



According to this text, list some specific things that sadden the Spirit.

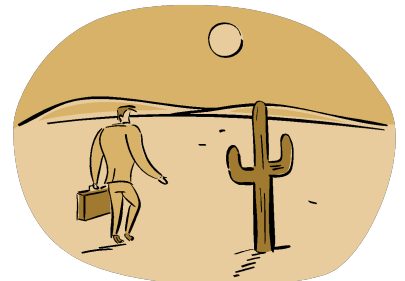
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Bitterness renders our prayers impotent

“Have faith in God, Jesus answered. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Mark 11:22-25

6. Bitterness contaminates future relationships
When we forgive, we have greater capacity to love!

Cain becomes a “***restless wanderer***” as a result of his bitterness. (Genesis 4:12). Likewise with many of us – our bitterness prevents intimacy with others.



Our bitterness condemns us to live in isolation and mistrust.

How can bitterness from a previous relationship poison future relationships?

****** We forgive for our own good!******

Forgiveness: A Definition



Forgiveness is...

- *A decision by faith to let go of the right to revenge...*
 - *To release the person emotionally*
 - *To cancel the Spiritual debt*
 - *To bless instead of curse*

Forgiveness is not ...

- *A feeling of affection*
- *Minimizing, justifying, excusing or indulging sin*
- *Tolerating abuse*
- *Protecting the offender from the consequences of his actions*
- *Becoming intimate friends again, necessarily*

Thinking of real life examples; for an abused woman, what does it mean to forgive the abuser? What does it not mean?

How to forgive?

1. *Prayer of faith*
2. *Emotional release (Letting go of the right to revenge)*
3. *Blessing*

1. *Prayer of Faith*

Feelings may not change over night!

The prayer to forgive is a step of faith, much as the prayer to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Feelings may change gradually as we reaffirm this forgiveness by faith again and again. If anger and resentment persists, repeat the prayer, even for years if necessary, until our heart is free and healed!

A Model Prayer of Faith

“Lord, I recognize that you have forgiven me for my sins.

Therefore, I forgive _____.”

I release the right to “get even” and seek revenge,

And I put him/her in your hands.

I give you my feelings of resentment and my desire for revenge.

Heal my heart, I pray.

I bless him in the name of Jesus.

Amen.”



2. Emotional Release – Giving up the right to “get even”

Place the person in God’s hands – “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.”

Example: Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 37-50)

The story of Joseph reads like an adventure novel (with a hint of soap opera!) Out of envy and bitterness, his brothers abused him and sold him into slavery. He experienced an amazing odyssey of tragedy and blessing, until finally ascending to a position of supreme authority in the nation of Egypt. After many years, his brothers came to Egypt seeking food during a famine, and did not even recognize their long lost brother! Instead of executing vengeance upon them, Joseph responds in this way...



“... his bothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” Genesis 50:18-20

What an example of forgiveness!! According to Joseph’s reassurance to his brothers, what are the reasons behind his forgiveness?

1. _____
2. _____

3. Bless the offender – Jesus’ idea!!



“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Mat 5:43-44

Overcome evil with good - What does it really mean to love our enemies?

Read Romans 12:14-21

Based on this text, mention some specific strategies for loving our enemies.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What does it mean to “heap burning coals” on the heads of our enemies?

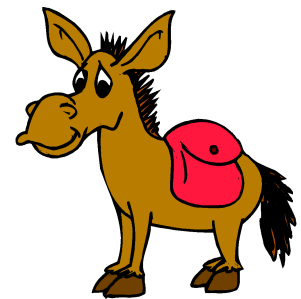
“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:20-21

Some read the following meaning into this text: *If you bless your enemies then God will punish them more!* Not only does this interpretation belie the underlying message of love and forgiveness, but it fails to understand the most likely meaning of this image. In certain cultures of the ancient near east, repentant sinners carried “burning coals” in containers upon their heads as an act of penitence and contrition. As we bless our enemies we shame them into contrition, provoking repentance in them and the desire to confess their wrongdoing.

Actions of Love – Medicine for our souls!

What to do with your enemies “ass” – kick it or save it??!!

“If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.” Exodus 23:4-5



Even in the Old Testament Law, God taught the principle of love for our enemies, returning the lost donkey to the grumpy neighbor. Consider one of your own “enemies” (or a person who annoys you!) Can you think of specific “loving acts” that we can do to help heal the bumps and bruises of interpersonal conflict and prevent the growth of resentment?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



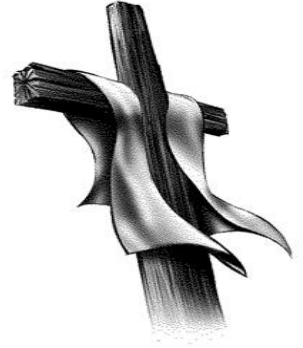


Prayers of Blessing – Canceling the bad vibe!!

“Bless those who curse you... pray for those who mistreat you...” Luke 6:28

Jesus on the Cross!

“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34



Stephen the Martyr

Read Acts 7:54-60

How do we observe that Stephen follows Jesus’ example?

Note that Saul, (future Apostle Paul), was there at the execution of Stephen. Considering this detail, highlighted in the text, how might we see the way Stephen’s prayer was answered?!!

Some questions for reflection and clarification about forgiveness

What do I do if the person who offended me is not sorry!?? Is forgiveness possible in such a case? Why or why not?

What do I do if the person continues to hurt me? (case of abused woman)

What do I do if I still have feelings of resentment even after praying? Is it hypocrisy to say I have forgiven the person?

Does forgiving the person mean we must become as close friends as we were before?

What if I serve in a position of authority and someone has violated a rule or law under my supervision? (Judge, police officer, teacher..etc.) What does it mean for me to forgive in such a case?

If I have not forgotten what happened, does that mean I have not forgiven the person?

Review

List some good reasons (from the lesson) why we should forgive others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

How can we define true forgiveness?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mention some ways to “bless” a person who has done you harm?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Freedom!

Breaking Generational and Spiritual Bondage

“... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!”
Jesus – John 8:36

Bondage – Invisible Chains

Bondage = A mental and spiritual pattern

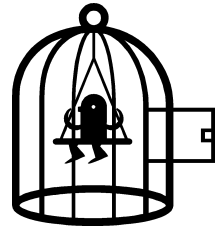
- Which impels us towards destructive behavior
- Which keeps us from living an abundant and fruitful life

In this lesson we learn...

- *Definition of a “generational curse”*
- *How problems, sins and demons pass from generation to generation*
- *How to identify and break a generational curse*
- *What is “spiritual bondage?”*
- *How certain occult or spiritual activities can bring contamination and bondage*
- *How to identify and renounce contaminating spiritual activities*
- *How to be free of demonic bondage, without living in fear and paranoia*

Illustration – Birds that do not fly

Some types of birds can be trained not to fly. Bound with a string, these birds walk around their cages, but never learn to use their wings and fly. After a certain time, the string can be removed, but the bird will continue walking in circles, without ever attempting flight. After so much time in “bondage,” the unfortunate little creature has forgotten his innate capacity to fly! Even though he has wings, he has forgotten how to use them.



Spiritual and generational bondage functions in much the same way in our lives. Our enemy, Satan, has convinced us that we are still slaves to him and can never change. In reality, the Lord Jesus has called us to abundant life, characterized by freedom from every bondage which enslaves us in vicious cycles. By faith, we can enter into our new reality, which is *freedom*. Jesus bought us with his blood and we now belong to him. Under his leadership in our lives, we can now fulfill our potential and live an abundant life in every way. It is up to us, however, by faith in him to break the bondages that hold us down!

In this lesson, we learn about two types of bondage: *Generational and spiritual*. We see how we came to acquire these bonds, and how we can be free.

Part I: Freedom from Generational Curses

Generational Bondage – *A negative pattern, inherited from our family background, which impels us to behave in destructive ways.*

Like Father – Like Son! Many sins and problems pass down from generation to generation.

- Domestic violence
- Occult
- Alcoholism
- Depression
- Suicide... etc.

Praise the Lord, there is no generational bondage that Christ cannot break!

The Bible teaches that sin passes from generation to generation

... unto the fourth generation.. - Exodus 34:5-7

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”



Cain and Lamech – Read Genesis 4:17-24

In this text we see how the sins of Cain passed down the generations and became fully manifest in his descendent, Lamech. How do we see Lamech following in Cain’s footsteps, and taking his ancestor’s sin to a new level of intensity and depravity?

1. _____
2. _____



Abraham and Isaac – Read Genesis 20:1-7 and Genesis 26:1-11

Dejavu!! We say this French Word when we experience the sensation of having previously experienced a certain moment, sometimes in rich detail. Likewise, we often re-live certain patterns which have already been established by our ancestors. The same errors repeat themselves, sometimes in perfect detail!

In this case of Abraham and Isaac, how do we see a sin pass from one generation to another?

Question: *Is it fair that we be punished for the sins of our ancestors?*

God does not punish us for the sins of others!

We are punished because *we repeat the same sins that our fathers committed*. The Word of God clarifies that we suffer generational *punishment* because we commit generational *sin*. The children and grandchildren follow the example of their fathers and commit the same sins. Thus, they suffer the same negative consequences. The Lord declares that a person is in no way guilty for the sins of his fathers unless he also *practices* those sins as well. (Ezekiel 18:1-20)

Therefore, we are not guilty for the sins of our fathers, but many times we are influenced by them in the following ways:

How are sins passed down the generations?

1. ***We learn from their bad example***
 - Daughters who grow up in families characterized by domestic violence sometimes marry violent men, repeating the same cycle.
 - Many kids see their parents' pornography, and follow their example of immorality
 - Sons of an unfaithful father might follow this negative model of manhood; and daughters might expect the same behavior from their husbands.
2. ***Genetic Tendencies*** – we inherit genetic proclivities
 - The predisposition to alcoholism
 - The tendency to mental illness
 - Vulnerability to depression and/or suicide...etc.
3. ***Spiritual Transference***
 - Demons can pass from parents to children
 - Witchcraft and occult spiritism can run in families
 - Some families live under special covenants made through occult ceremonies
 - The anointing of the Holy Spirit also passes along to children!

4. ***Some traumas have generational influence***

- A bitter mother can pass along her mistrust of others to her children
- Some experience rejection even from the womb
- A child can carry pain suffered by his mother during the pregnancy

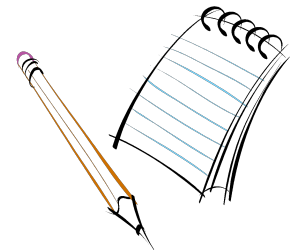
How can we break generational curses?

Be a pioneer – initiate a new beginning for yourself and your descendents

1. *Take an inventory of your family background*
2. *Confess the sins of your ancestors*
3. *Make intercession for the family*
4. *Make a prayer of faith to break every curse*

Step #1: Take an inventory of your family background

Every family leaves a legacy of positive and negative elements. We must discern between the two.



Positive inheritance from your family background

Note below two or three “good inheritances” from your family background. These positive qualities which you have observed in your parents or grandparents can be affirmed, “claimed,” and passed down to future generations.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Negative inheritance

Note below two or three “negative inheritances” from your family background. These destructive patters which you observed in your parents or grandparents can be acknowledged, confessed, and broken.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Step #2: Confess the sins of the fathers

“But if they will confess their sins, and the sins of their fathers... then I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and will remember the land.” Leviticus 26:40-42

What do we learn about the legacy of sin and the legacy of God’s covenants from this verse?

To confess the sins of our fathers is to *ask God to cancel the negative spiritual consequences* that those actions have produced for the ensuing generations.

Step #3: Make Intercession for the family

“Intercessor” = A person who represents others before God

We are connected to our family and nation

According to the Hebrew mentality, all humanity is organically connected. The sins of one member of the community contaminate all. In one case from Old Testament history, the sins of a single Israelite, Achan, provoked the wrath of God upon the entire nation. (Joshua 7). The sin of Adam clearly touches us all, right up to the present day. For good or ill, *we are connected to one another!*

There exists Generational “Blessing” as well!

Thank God, in the same way that sin “spreads,” so also spiritual blessing can be contagious. The promises to Abraham pass along to Isaac and Jacob – and all of us! Through the act of intercessory prayer, a single Jew can represent all his fellow Israelites before the throne of God. Thus we see that Jesus was able to die *for us all*, representing us before his heavenly Father, effectively taking punishment in our place. We also can represent others before God’s throne through a type of prayer called *intercession*. Such intercession can cancel generational curses, and establish generational *blessings!*



The Intercessor identifies with the group he or she represents.

Read Daniel 9:1-7 and 9:15-19

We observe that Daniel uses the first person plural (we) in his confessions, even though he personally had not committed the sins he confesses.

“... we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws...etc.”

If Daniel was a man of such impeccable integrity, then why does he pray in this manner?

Step #4: Make a prayer of faith to break curses

Dare to be a pioneer in your family line!

Prayer of Renunciation

Lord, I confess that my family has participated in

_____.

I ask your forgiveness and renounce _____.

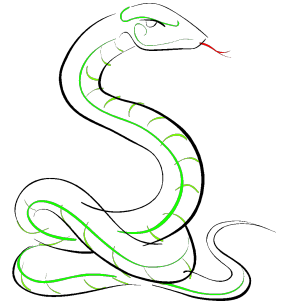
I cancel every generational curse that this sin has produced.

Cleanse us and set us free in the name of Jesus Christ! Amen!



Part II: Freedom from Spiritual Bondage

Spiritual Bondage – A demonic influence in our life, acquired through sinful and/or idolatrous practices.



We all must “renounce” Satan

In the first generations of the church, new converts were required to “renounce Satan” during their baptismal ceremony. Why, one might ask? Is it not obvious that a person who has converted to the gospel and desires to be baptized has already rejected Satan in his or her life? These early Christians knew that even genuine believers may live under spiritual oppression. Through occult practices of spiritism or idolatry, we can become contaminated with demons, many times without even knowing it.

Common “portals” or entry-ways for demonic influence in our lives.

1. ***Occult practices of idolatry or spiritism***
2. ***Sexual immorality***
3. ***Bitterness***
4. ***Drug or Alcohol use***
5. ***Family inheritance***

1. Occult Practice – idolatry – an entry for demonic influence

“Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No. But the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? 1 Corinthians 10:19-21

There are many forms of “spiritual idolatry” today

- *Devotion to Saints*
- *Santeria*
- *Spiritual “cleansings”*
- *Use of charms and crystals*
- *Astrology*
- *Witchcraft*
- *Magic*
- *Tarot Cards*
- *New Age*
- *Hypnosis*
- *Ouija Boards*
- *Transcendental Meditation... etc.*



All Spiritism is serious sin

“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God” Lev. 19:31

“I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am the Lord your God.”” Lev. 20:6-7

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. ” Rev. 21:8



According to these verses, what are the results of spiritism and divination?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

We must break covenants established by these spiritualistic practices

The spiritual realm functions under *legal norms*. For this reason, even Jesus needed to die to satisfy the legal consequences of sin. Through certain practices, we can give our Enemy a legal *right* to influence our lives. Therefore, it is necessary to renounce Satan, *to cancel such covenants* we have established with the evil one, and to close every door which could have been opened.

2. Sexual Immorality

For good or ill, the sexual union establishes a spiritual connection between two people. This connection leads to an exchange of spirituality as well as physicality.

- ***The Sexual Relationship establishes a spiritual connection – 1 Cor 6:15-18***



... “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”

- ***Cultic sexuality in pagan practice***

Cultic sexuality and prostitution were practiced in ancient paganism. It was believed that engaging in sexual relations in the temple of the pagan god or goddess unleashed spiritual power to make the earth fertile. This combination of sexuality and idolatry recognized that demons and spiritual contamination transfer through sexual union. (See Numbers 25:1-9; Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:23)

- ***Mary Magdalene, an ex-prostitute, was delivered from 7 demons (Mark 16:9)***

3. Bitterness and Anger

Be angry, but sin not; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians. 4:26-27

The lack of forgiveness can open a door for demons to establish a foothold in our thoughts and emotions. For this reason, sometimes forgiveness precedes deliverance from demonic oppression.

4. Drug and Alcohol use

Throughout human history, witches and shamans used chemical substances to alter their state of consciousness and facilitate their entering the spiritual realm. When we lower the natural defenses of the human mind, we become more vulnerable to spiritual influences.

5. Family Inheritance

As we already observed in Part I of this lesson, sin often passes down family lines, causing certain proclivities towards particular sins or spiritual influences. We always have the choice, however, to resist these family tendencies rather than indulging them.

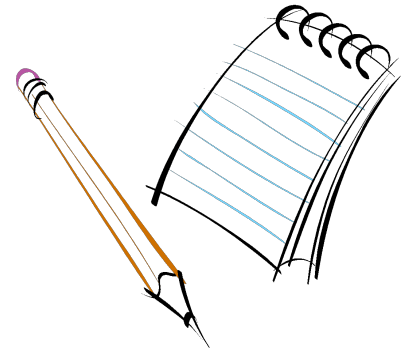
We must “clean house!” – Renounce all contamination

- 1. Take a personal inventory***
- 2. Confess all practices that could have caused contamination***
- 3. Rid ourselves of certain objects and tokens of spiritual sin***
- 4. Make a prayer of renunciation***

Step #1: Take a personal inventory

Make a list of questionable activities from your past that could have invited spiritual contamination.

Note down below any activity from your past which could have invited spiritual contamination into your life.



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step #2: Confess – to a spiritually mature and appropriate person.

“Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you might be healed.”

We remember that demons, like cock-roaches and rats, thrive in darkness. Therefore, when we confess, we turn on a spiritual light, and the demons flee!

Write the name of a person to whom you can confess these things:

_____.

3. Rid yourself of tokens or keepsakes of spiritual idolatry

Sometimes we must throw away objects which symbolize spiritual evil. Especially to be rejected are those objects which are actually used in spiritual, occult practices. (See also Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 2 Kings 18:4)

Example of the Ephesians



Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. (2.5 million dollars!) Acts 19:18-19

Why was it necessary for the Ephesians to rid themselves of their books about magic?

List some objects which represent idolatry or sin for you, which you should consider discarding.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Prayer of Renunciation – Be specific! (Repeat, if necessary)

Lord Jesus, I confess the sin of _____.
(Astrology, Santeria, Use of charms... etc.)

It was rebellion against you, because you only are God.

I renounce every alliance with Satan that was formed through these activities.

Jesus is my Lord!

I ask you, God, to cleanse me of all spiritual contamination

And I cover myself with the blood of Jesus.

Fill me with the Holy Spirit.

I yield control of my life to you once again.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.”





Final Note: Don't "freak out!" We need not live in fear!

Be careful not to become paranoid about demons - Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-31

What did Paul do when served meat which had been sacrificed to idols?

Careful to avoid becoming spiritually contaminated, many brothers in the time of Paul refused to eat meat which had been obtained from animals which had been sacrificed to idols. However, Paul explains that he had no qualms of conscience about eating any meat, even that which had been sacrificed to demonic idols, "*because the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.*" He believed that contamination comes through the worship of idols, but not through the eating of meat.

We need not live in fear of demons!

In Christ we are more than conquerors, and need not live in the fear that demons lurk behind every shadow. The Psalmist puts it well, "*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*" (Ps. 23). By blood of Jesus, we are free of fear, even when the enemy is near.

Affirm your freedom from every bondage!

"... and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free!" John 8:32

"Now the Lord is Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." 2 Cor 3:17

Review

What is the definition of a "bondage?"

What are some ways that sin passes from generation to generation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are some steps we can take to break a generational sin or curse?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some ways that people become contaminated by demonic influence?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some steps to break a spiritual bondage?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Is it ok to eat in restaurant where idols are worshiped (Thai)? _____.

The Tongue – The power of Life and Death

“Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”
Proverbs 18:21

Words – the Measure of the Man or Woman

If all our words were taped, how would your recording be?

A Grandmother’s Testimony



Visualize a bed surrounded by friends and family as death gradually approaches for a gentle elderly woman. Adult children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and even a tiny great-grandchild come and go from the room to be at the side of their beloved matriarch. Her lucidity has departed long ago, and her mind remains completely affected by an enveloping dementia. She now inhabits her own private world of memories and dreams. Instead of conversing with those who are actually standing by her side, she sees in her mind the faces of friends and loved ones from ten, thirty, or even seventy years earlier. Right there, in this bedroom, she re-lives conversations which took place decades earlier. Her family members enjoy this sacred window into her inner world as they listen to her speaking – and even praying – for her children when they were children and young adults.



Lord please bless them. May they be healthy and pure in their college years. O Father, please bring them Godly spouses who love you. May my grandchildren serve you, O God!”

In these echoes of words from years past, all those gathered enter into her inner world of memories, feelings, and priorities. They hear her heart! According to Jesus, our words, more than anything else, reflect the true nature of our hearts – for good or for bad. Every conversation is taped in heaven, and one day will be played before a holy God in the final evaluation of our lives.

How does your recording sound?

In this lesson, we reflect upon the importance of our words.

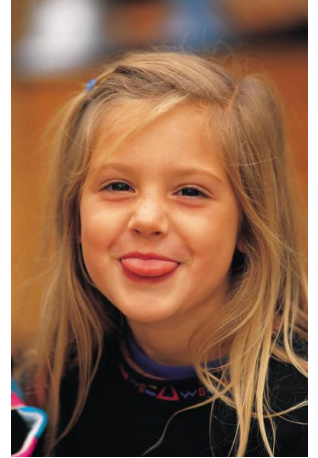
- **How our words are the measure of our maturity**
- **The power of blessing and faith affirmations**
- **Words of life – encouragement, thanksgiving, counsel, wisdom...etc.**
- **Words of death – Complaint, slander, falsehood, immorality, gossip...etc.**
- **How to express complaints in an appropriate manner**
- **How to control our words - – cultivating silence and discretion**

Words – the Measure of our Spiritual Maturity

“Before a Word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.”
Psalm 139:4

Stick out your tongue!

How many times has a mother or grandmother asked a sick child; “Stick out your tongue.” Analyzing this organ, she somehow can discern the child’s malady. Thus it is with our words. Our way of speaking reveals our inner being – our level of spiritual maturity. If you want to evaluate your spiritual health; *“Stick your tongue out!”*⁵



Words reflect our hearts

Key verse: Read Matthew 12:33-37

What does it mean that Jesus says, *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks?”*

How will our words be used in the final judgment?



Words influence our destiny

Read James 3:1-12

According to this text, how do we define a “perfect” or “mature” person?

Mention the three analogies from this text that convey the power of the tongue.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5

⁵Image drawn from a sermon by Haddon Robinson; Gordon College, circa 1996.

Words have Power: To Bless; To Curse and To Confess Faith

God created by his word!

“... Long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed... by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire....” 2 Peter 3:5-7

The Son of God is called “The Word”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... The word became flesh and dwelt among us...” John 1:1 and 1:14

Humans have been endowed with the power of language

- *Naming:* Adam names the animals and Eve! Not only does this naming process convey dominion, but also prophetic hope in the case of Eve – “*The mother of all the living.*” (See also the name change for Sarah in Gen. 17:15-16)
- *The Tower of Babel* – the unity of language resulted in tremendous power, in this case, for prideful purposes. At *Pentecost*, the reunifying of language represents a new humanity in the Spirit!

What does it mean to bless or to curse?

To Bless: *To invoke God’s favor and mercy upon a person a person, place or process.*

To Curse: *To invoke God’s punishment, disfavor or resistance to that which is evil.*

Most prayers are spoken to God, but a blessing speaks directly to the recipient, invoking God’s favor upon them. Instead of saying “*God, please heal my son.*” We pray, “*May God heal you, my son.*” The healer is still God, but our prayer is spoken directly to the recipient of God’s active favor. When we bless in this way, we fulfill a priestly function, mediating God’s power and activity on earth!

Conversely, a curse pronounces God’s resistance or punishment upon that which is evil. The New Testament teaches clearly that we are “*to bless, and not to curse,*” (Rom. 12:14) even our enemies! Jesus prayed that God forgive those who nailed him to the cross (Luke 23:34) and the first Christian martyr, Stephen, did the same! (Acts 7:60) However, the apostle Paul occasionally “*cursed*” those who opposed or perverted the gospel. (Elymus; Galatians; 2 Corinthians) It is clear that he did not to seek vengeance upon his enemies, but rather prayed aggressively against the efforts of those who would keep others from hearing the true gospel.

God blesses from the beginning – He pronounces his favor.

- Adam and Eve: Gen 1:28 – “*God blessed them (Adam and Eve) and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it ...’*” (Repeats the blessing to Noah in Gen. 9:1)

God also pronounces curses as the result of sin – He declares the legal consequences of sin.

- The serpent: “Cursed are you above all the livestock...” Gen 3:14
- The ground: “Cursed is the ground because of you...” Gen 3:17
- Cain: “Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground...” Gen 4:10-11

Blessing and Cursing has a “legal” sense

The spiritual world functions upon legal lines, and thus God, and his authorized servants, have certain authority to pronounce blessings or curses. As a judge pronounces a sentence or reward, based on the law, so also God and his authorized servants may declare the consequences that flow to those who obey God’s law and believe his promises. For example, God’s covenant with Israel was a legal document, with certain positive consequences associated with fidelity, and negative ones for disobedience.

Deut. 28:1-3: Blessings for Obedience

¹ If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. ² All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: ³ You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country...etc..

Deut. 28:15-16: Curses for Disobedience

¹⁵ However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you: ¹⁶ You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country...etc..

The Old Testament Priests had the special authority to bless

The Priestly Blessing: Numbers 6:22-27

The priests with empowered to “place the name” of Yahweh upon his people through the act of blessing them!

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴ “‘The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.’” ²⁷ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

What do you think it means when God says, “so they will put my name on the Israelites...”

Patriarchal Blessings are common in the Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament we read of fathers or spiritual authorities pronouncing blessings upon their sons and future generations. These pronouncements turn out to be prophecies which are fulfilled down the generations!

- *Gen 9:24-27* – Noah blesses and curses;
- *Gen 14:19-20* – Melchizedek blesses Abraham;
- *Gen 27:27-29* – Isaac blesses Jacob;
- *Gen 48:12-20* – Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh;
- *Gen 49* – Jacob blesses his sons;
- *Deut 33* – Moses blesses the tribes;

New Testament: The apostolic blessings in the epistles

Virtually every New Testament letter begins and ends with a blessing. Here are a couple particularly common ones...

- **1 Cor 13:14** – *“may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*
- **1 Thes 5:23-24**: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”*

New Testament curses

The Apostle Paul also pronounces some very strong curses, but in each case they deal with those who resist the advance of the gospel, and not those who would persecute Paul himself. On the contrary, he virtually jokes about those who try to cause him trouble and blesses their efforts to spread the gospel, even insincerely. (Philippians 1) However, in both the Corinthian and Galatian churches, certain individuals were deceiving believers by perverting the gospel. Jesus says for such individuals who cause others to sin, *“it would be better to have a millstone tied around their necks and be thrown into the sea.”* Again, believers are not allowed to put “curses” on their enemies, but certain spiritual leaders can do spiritual warfare in defense of God’s people.

- **1 Cor 16:22** – *“If anyone does not love the Lord – a curse be on him. Come, O Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”*
- **Gal 1:8-9** – *“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!”*

Different from Pagan concept of “spells”!

Pagans believe that they can pronounce blessing and cursing by their own spiritual power or by using the correct words or by positive thinking. But in scripture we see that blessing works much like prayer. We may speak in faith, but the power and decision to act lies entirely with God! He is not obliged to fulfill our declarations!!

- ***Example of Balaam – Numbers 22-24 – The power is inherently God’s and not ours!***

In these Old Testament Narratives, the pagan king Barak calls on a corrupt “prophet of the Lord,” Balaam, to curse the people of Israel. Time after time, this prophet tries to curse them, but is compelled by the Spirit to bless them instead. In spite of his own desire to curse, God possesses the ultimate authority and *he was powerless to bless or curse apart from God’s will!*

- ***Jesus commands us to bless our enemies – Matt 6***

And in Romans 12:14 we read – “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*” Scripture absolutely prohibits a Christian from trying to “put a curse” on someone out of spite or vengeance. “*Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.*” Christians are to love their enemies and trust God to implement his own judgment in his own way!

Exercises: Write Blessings! (Use “you”)

Example: *Noah, my son, may God give you joyful play and peaceful sleep!*

Family Member:

Write a blessing for your boss (or coworker):

Write a blessing for an enemy. (not necessary to put the name)

Doxology: *An expression of praise, spoken to others rather than directly to God.*

- Jude 24 – “To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”
- 1 Tim 1:17 - “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
- Rev. 1:5-6 – “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Considering the examples below, why would we express praise to God to people, rather than directly to him, in your opinion?

Faith Confessions! *Affirmations of our belief in God’s words and promises.*

We confess our faith in Christ for salvation. Prayer to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- *Romans 10:8-10–^s But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”^(u) that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ^v If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ^w For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

We confess our faith that God will fulfill his promises to us!

- Faith and words go together! 2 Corinthians 5:13 ¹³ *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.”^[b] Since we have that same spirit of^[d] faith, we also believe and therefore speak...*

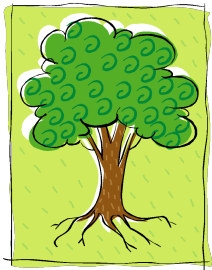
Exercise: Write a “faith confession,” affirming the truth and trustworthiness of God’s word as it applies to an area of need in your life

The tongue has the power of life

“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver...” (Prov. 10:20)

1. ***The tongue can heal***
2. ***The tongue can bring success in life***
3. ***Words of encouragement***
4. ***The art of giving thanks***

1. The tongue can heal



“The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” Prov. 15:4

“Reckless words pierce like sword, but the tongue of wise brings healing.” Prov. 12:18

“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” Prov. 16:24



For example.... Think of a person you know whose words bring healing. Who is it? How have you observed this gift in action?

2. *The tongue can be a key to success!*

“He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.” Prov. 22:11

“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, And a gentle tongue can break a bone.” Prov. 25:15

For example... How is verbal expression important in your workplace?

3. **Encouragement** – *“The art of lifting another up!”*

“An anxious heart weighs a man down, But a kind word cheers him up.” Prov. 12:25

“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.’” Isa. 35:3-4

Practice: Mention a person who you see on a daily basis:

Think of three specific “encouragements” you could offer.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. **The art of giving thanks – the antidote to poisonous words**

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” Ephesians 5:3-4

In general, words of death are *negative* in nature. In contrast, *thanksgiving* expresses gratitude for that which is positive and cancels out much negativity in life situations!

Let’s get specific....

Mention four specific things you tend to complain about in daily life. (seeing the glass “half empty”)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now for each complaint, try to come up with something positive related to the situation, for which you can give thanks. (seeing the glass “half full”)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The Tongue has the Power of Death

“When words are many, sin is not absent...” (Prov. 10:19)

Words of Death

1. ***Violence***
2. ***Sexual Immorality***
3. ***Falsehood***
4. ***Gossip***
5. ***Complaint***



1. Violence – words can be daggers

*“Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Prov. 12:18*

*“A scoundrel plots evil,
and his speech is like a scorching fire.” Prov. 16:27*

“Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me.”



Mention some cases which show that the truth is otherwise! What types of speech can “cut?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. Sexual Immorality



“... it will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words,” Prov. 2:16



“For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,
And her speech is smoother than oil;” Prov. 5:3

What are some types of conversations or communication which are impure?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

“Reserve” – a critical part of relational holiness.

Some conversations can seem perfectly innocent, but in fact be part of a process which will undermine marriage or lead to sexual immorality. For example, a married person may share too openly or freely with a member of the opposite sex, forming a type of emotional connection that undermines his or her marital bond. Also, certain topics should never be discussed with members of the opposite sex outside of marriage. A certain “reserve” constitutes an important part of sexual purity.

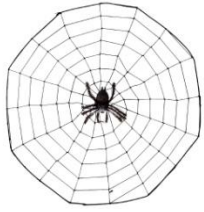
3. Falsehood

“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him;
haughty eyes, a lying tongue...” Prov. 6:16-17

Little White Lies

Mention some examples of apparently “harmless” lies which are commonplace in daily life.

1. _____
2. _____



Deceit Entangles

*“An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk,
but a righteous man escapes trouble.”* Prov. 12:13

*“Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When at first we practice to deceive.”* Shakespeare

How is it that falsehood can lead to entangled, complicated situations?

“The anatomy of a lie”

Rarely do we tell lies without a reason. Mention some of the motivations behind the lies we tell:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Insincerity

“My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords.” Psalm 55:20-21

“Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart. A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.” Prov. 26:23-25

Mention some cues that help us detect insincerity in a person.

1. _____

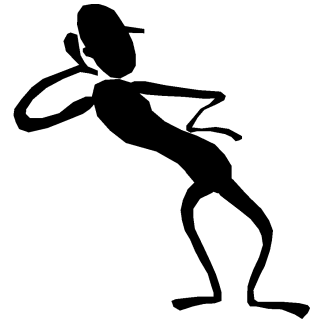
2. _____

3. _____

4. Gossip

It takes two! Listening is part of the sin as well!!

*“The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to a man’s inmost parts.” Prov. 18:8*



What is so “delicious” about listening to a piece of juicy gossip, in your opinion?

Gossip separates friends

*“A perverse man stirs up dissensions,
and a gossip separates close friends.” Prov. 16:28*

How so? Can you share an example?

The one who gossips to you, will gossip about you as well!

*“A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.” Prov. 11:13*

Your most recent violation!

Let’s think about this past week. Can you think of a time when you passed along a piece of information about someone else that could, perhaps, be considered to be gossip? What provoked this conversation?

5. Complaint

“Do everything without complaining or arguing...” Philippians 2:14

Why are the words “murmuring” and “grumbling” used so often for the practice of complaining, do you think?

Review: The opposite of complaining is...



Example: The Israelites murmur in the desert

Read: Exodus 16:1-3; Numbers 11:4-6 y Numbers 14:1-4

What are some of their specific gripes with the Lord?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Consequences of Grumbling

“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.... And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel.” 1 Corinthians 10:6,10



In the case of the Israelites, what were the consequences of their murmurings?

And you? Mention some complaints you have whispered this week!!???

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

So what do we do when we are upset??

Legitimate ways of expressing complaints

Ought we to “suffer in silence” and never express anything negative?

Sometimes – Yes!! “Discretion is the better part of wisdom”

Sometimes – No!! We ought to express our feelings in Godly ways.

There are appropriate ways to express negative feelings:

1. Lament – being honest with God!

No one despises a child for crying to us when he or she is in pain. Likewise with us and our heavenly Father. Many Psalms of Lament freely express intense anguish in prayer to God. Moses also was a master of lament!



Read Numbers 11:11-15

“Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Psalm 10:1

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” Psalm 13:1

What is the difference between “lament” and “murmuring”?

Lament is complaining to the Lord in prayer.

Murmuring is complaining about the Lord in rebellion.

It may not be pretty or religious sounding – but better to complain to God in prayer rather than complain all day long to everyone else!

2. Confrontation – Being honest with others

There are moments when we ought to express complaints honestly with others in order to resolve problematic situations. Instead of gossiping, complaining and criticizing the person, we speak directly with them in love – seeking reconciliation in the relationship and resolution of the problem. However, confrontation can be hurtful and unproductive if done unwisely.

How to confront? Some basic guidelines to keep in mind...

- 1. In private*
- 2. With love*
- 3. With humility*
- 4. Balanced with affirmation*

Guidelines: how to confront?

1. Confrontation should be in private

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.” Matthew 18:15

Generally we turn this chronology upside down: We speak to everyone except the one who offended us. Thus we destroy the reputation of our brother or sister.

2. Confrontation should be in love

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

Some “honest” believers express their complaints and criticisms in a way that bulldozes the other person. Such truth lacks love.

3. Confrontation should be done in humility

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?’”
Matthew 7:1-4*

Sometimes it is we who are in the wrong!! (Shocking but true!) We always need to be open to discovering that we have somehow misunderstood the other person, or added to the problem without realizing it. The conversation may end with the need for us to ask forgiveness, and not the other person.

4. It should be balanced with affirmation

Notice how Jesus, when bringing words of rebuke to the churches in the book of Revelation, always began with affirmation of the positive. *“Yet I have this one thing against you...”*



Read Revelation 2:19-20

Let’s get specific: *Think of a situation that has you grumbling on a regular basis. How can you express your complaint in an appropriate way? Try visualizing a conversation in which you are in private; loving; balanced and humble. How would it sound? Describe the situation below.*

How to “Tame the Tongue”

The Discipline of Silence

“... The wise man holds his tongue.” Prov. 11:12b)

“A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.” Prov. 17:27-28

Discretion: Install a “delay” between your brain (or gut) and your mouth!

Email has the “save draft” button. Radio stations always use a delay, so that inappropriate comments can be “beeped” out of existence. By the power of the Spirit, we can install such a mechanism in our own verbal machinery. Our thoughts and feelings need not translate into spoken expression. They can be “beeped” before reaching the open air!! Praise God!

Before speaking, pass the thought through...

The Three Filters⁶

A Young disciple arrives at the house of his wise teacher and says...

“Listen, teacher, a friend of yours was saying terrible things about you....”

“Wait,” interrupted the sage, “Before continuing, have you passed this piece of information through the ‘three filters?’”

“What are these “filters” of which you speak, revered teacher?”

“The first is truth. Are you sure that what you want to tell me is absolutely true?”

“Well, I suppose I heard it from a neighbor.”

“Ok, now let’s try the second filter: Kindness. Will this comment be of benefit to anyone or inflict harm?”

“Well, I suppose....”

“All right, now the last filter is “necessity.” Is it really necessary to pass along this piece of information that you are dying to share?”

“Honestly, no.”

“Very well, then,” said the wise man with a smile, “if we are not sure it is true, nor kind,

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⁶Maria Montero. Mexico City.

nor necessary, then let's toss this into the sea of forgetfulness."

What are the "three filters?"

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Always remember: The Spirit is the invisible listener to every conversation.

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice..." Ephesians 4:29-31

According to this text, how do we decide if a word is edifying or not?

Let's pray to install this "delay" in our hearts to edit our words!

Memorize these verses and pray them this week!

*"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."
Psalm 141:3*



"Let the words of my heart and meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O God my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14

Review: List some positive ways of speaking from the lesson: “Words of Life”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

List some sinful ways of speaking. “Words of death.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List some guidelines for Biblical confrontation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Sex – God’s way!

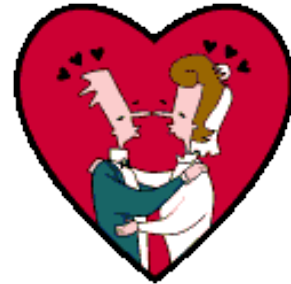
*For this reason a man will leave his mother and his father,
and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
(Genesis 2:24)*

God invented Sex!

Not Hollywood; not Andrea Boccelli or Pablo Neruda; not even Satan! *God invented sex!*

In this lesson we learn... .

- ***That God has a purpose for sex***
- ***That the sexual relationship forms a spiritual bond***
- ***Some distortions of human sexuality***
- ***That God is merciful with sexual brokenness and struggle***
- ***Biblical counsel for...***
 - *Singles*
 - *Married people*



In this lesson we seek to answer the following questions:

- *What is the appropriate context for sexual relations?*
- *Is it possible to become spiritually contaminated through sexual activity?*
- *Is it a sin to use pornography?*
- *Is it acceptable to live together before marriage?*
- *Is it wise to be intimate with a person before marrying in order to confirm compatibility?*
- *What are the Biblical reasons for divorce?*
 - *Is it “ok” to divorce if one no longer feels love in a marriage?*
 - *Is it “ok” to divorce if I fall deeply in love with another person?*
- *Is it acceptable for a Christian to marry or date an unbeliever?*
- *Is it “ok” to be emotionally intimate with a member of the opposite sex, as long as the relationship does not become explicitly romantic or physical?*
- *Should I cease to attend church if I continue to struggle with sexual sin?*

Sex and Marriage



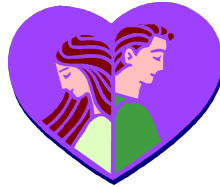
God made us to be sexual beings

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:27-28a)

This text teaches that...

- God created us as sexual beings – with innate differences
- The concept of gender – male and female – is not merely a social construct
- Together, male and female reflect the image and likeness of God
- We are blessed by God in our sexuality
- That God created sexuality *before* sin entered into human experience

God instituted Marriage



Read Genesis 2:18-25

The Lord formed the woman from the man’s rib. Why do you think God chose to make the woman in this way? What the symbolism can we observe in the fact that woman was made from man’s rib?

What expression does scripture use to describe the sexual relationship between man and woman? (Genesis 2:24)

“And they were both naked, the man and the woman, and they were not ashamed.” (Gen. 2:25)

Why this detail? What does it teach us about the nature of their relationship? How did things change drastically after sin entered the picture?

Sex is good, holy, and meant to be enjoyed!



Read Song of Solomon 1:2-4; 4:1-7; 7:1-9; 8:6-7

Song of Solomon contains vivid love poetry – celebrating eroticism in the marital relationship. While it has been read as an allegory for our spiritual intimacy with Christ, its original context has to do with literal sexuality.

Mention four references in these texts to erotic admiration and pleasure.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Marriage: The exclusive context for Biblical Sexuality



*Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.*

*¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets,
your streams of water in the public squares?*

*¹⁷ Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.*

*¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.*

*¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be intoxicated with her love. Prov. 5:15-19*



Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

According to this text, why does God command us to be sexually active in marriage?

Mention an acceptable reason for temporary abstinence.

The Nature of the Sexual Act – Physical and Spiritual Union

“For this reason a man will leave his mother and his father and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

The sexual act is different from any other. It establishes a physical *and spiritual* union between two people. For this reason, the Bible uses the term “*to know*” to refer to the sexual relationship (Luke 1:24), not as a euphemism, but because sex forms a spiritual connection between two people unlike any other physical action.



Our body is Sacred

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

What is our body, according to 1 Corinthians 6:15 and 6:19?

1. _____.
2. _____.

According to 1 Corinthians 6:18, how does sexual sin differ from any other?

Transference of spirits in the sexual act: “The two will become one flesh”

Ancient Paganism utilized cultic sexuality – the combination of sexuality with spiritism

The sexual union establishes a spiritual connection between two people, for good or ill. For this reason, much ancient paganism incorporated ritual sexuality and “sacred” prostitution into its spirituality. It was believed that by engaging in sexual relations in the temple of the god or goddess, spiritual power was released to make the land fruitful. This combination of sex with idolatry recognized that spiritual contamination could be transferred and unleashed through the sexual union. (See Numbers 25:1-9; Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:23).

Spiritual Contamination – Jesus cast 7 demons out of Mary Magdalene

Perhaps on account of this spiritual contamination contracted through the sexual act, it was necessary for Jesus to cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, a former prostitute. (Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2).

God calls us to Sexual Purity

The Biblical warnings are strong!



Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

According to these instructions of the Apostle Paul to new believers, why is it so important to separate ourselves from sexual immorality?



Read Ephesians 5:3-8

According to these instructions to the Ephesians, why should fornication not even be mentioned among the saints?

“.....Flee also youthful passions... ” 2 Timothy 2:22

What is Paul’s advice to the young pastor, Timothy? _____.

Varieties of Sexual Distortions

- **“Pornea”** The most common Word in the New Testament for sexual immorality.” *It encompasses a variety of sinful practices and attitudes.*

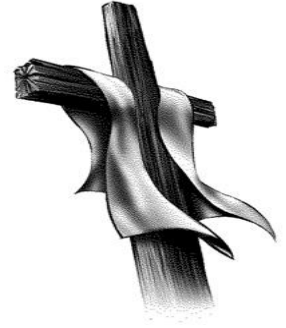
¹⁹ “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery...” Galatians 5:19

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^[a] ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ Matthew 5:27

- **Fornication** – Sexual relations between unmarried persons
- **Adultery** – Sexual behavior, when one or both participants are married to others.
- **Lewdness; Lust**; - Sexual activities and attitudes outside of the marital relationship. (Pornography; flirtations...etc.)
- **Incest** – Sexual contact between relatives. (Lev. 18:6-18)
- **Homosexuality** – Sexual contact between two people of the same gender. (Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9)

Mercy – There is no condemnation in Christ!

Whenever we deal with issues of sexual purity, we must always emphasize that Jesus desires to heal us and set us free, *not condemn us!*



Jesus showed grace toward many sexually broken people

The woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)

“Let him who is without sin cast the first stone...”

After “catching” an adulterous woman in the act, the religious zealots of the day wanted to execute her by stoning, but Jesus taught them the importance of mercy – and self awareness. We ought not to condemn others, but rather concern ourselves with our own sins and failings.

Jesus did not reject anyone due to his or her “past” – The “sinful woman” (Luke 7:36-50)

“...The one who has been forgiven much, loves much.”

In one particularly shocking narrative, a woman of ill-repute barged into a gathering at a religious leader’s home, determined to worship Jesus. She not only touched him, but bathed his feet in her tears and dried them with her hair. Not surprisingly, the religious leaders were scandalized by this impropriety, but Jesus rebuked them and defended the woman’s act of adoration. We ought never to think that Jesus will reject sincerely repentant worshipers because of their chequered past.

.... But Grace is not License!

We should not abuse the grace of God

“What should we say, then? Should we continue in sin, so that grace might abound? Absolutely not! We have died to sin, so how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 6:1-2)



The Corinthian Example -- Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

What sin did the Corinthians tolerate among them? What should they have done?

The Church is a Hospital

*... a refuge for those who are struggling, but not...
A hiding place for those who seek to rationalize a double life of sin!*

The church is a hospital for sinners, established by God to heal those who suffer its torture. If a repentant, sincere believer continues to struggle while seeking the power to change, they should feel welcome in the church as a refuge in which to find help and guidance. However, God never intended the church to be a hideaway for the insincere individual who seeks to rationalize immorality and continue to live a double life.

Counsel for Married People

Stay married!

“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband..” (1 Cor. 7:10)

The marriage vow, whether made before a pastor, a justice of the peace, or a sea-captain, has meaning before God. When we take a “vow” we make a promise not just to the other person, but to God. We stay married not only to be faithful to our spouse, but to Him.

Practice Sexuality!

¹⁸ *“May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be intoxicated with her love. (Prov. 5:18-19)*

³ *The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband...Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:3,5)*

Sexual intimacy must be cultivated in marriage. Satan has undermined marital sexuality in many ways, not least of which through idealized portrayals in the media. Sexual intimacy, like any other, involves a consistent investment of time and attention.

Question: What if my wife is injured in a car accident during the honeymoon and cannot be sexually active? Is that a basis for divorce?

The marriage vow explicitly promises “in sickness and in health.” Physical intimacy can be cultivated in a couple even when more “normal” manners of sexuality may not be possible.

Cultivate Intimacy

Discover your spouse's "love language." Gary Chapman has written a modern masterpiece about the variety of ways in which we experience affection and love from others. While love is a commitment not based on feelings, the emotional component of intimacy can and should be cultivated intentionally. We "feel loved" in different ways. For some, physical touch communicates love, while for others a gift, words of affirmation, quality time, or an act of service can make a person feel truly valued. A spouse should intentionally seek ways to make his or her partner feel cherished.⁷

Avoid intimate friendships with members of the opposite sex

Infidelity can be emotional as well as sexual. Intimate sharing with a member of the opposite sex undermines the marital relationship and creates an extremely dangerous opportunity for sexual infidelity.

Divorce only in extreme situations

God said, "*I hate divorce.*" (Malachi) Not only does it violate the laws on which God created humanity, but also tears deeply at the emotional fabric of individuals and families. Yet Scripture also teaches that divorce can be justified in certain extreme cases. We list some of them below.

1. Sexual infidelity - Mateo 19:9

"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

2. Abandonment - 1 Cor.7:15-16

15 "But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"

3. Physical Abuse - (implicitly, but not explicitly stated)

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church. Eph. 5:28-29

Again, we emphasize that even in these cases we should seek reconciliation and healing. We glorify God best when violations when we forgive and experience reconciliation. What a testimony when an abusive or unfaithful husband repents and the marriage can be restored! In the absence of such positive resolution, however, divorce can at times be necessary and appropriate.

7

⁷The Five Love Languages. Gary Chapman.

Illegitimate reasons for Divorce

1. I am no longer “in love” with my spouse

Love is a *decision*, not a feeling. While affection and passion can and should be cultivated, matrimonial love is a commitment not based on changeable feelings, but on eternal vows.

2. I made a mistake by marrying

God calls us to be faithful to our marriage vows, even if we did not choose a spouse wisely. After making such vows, God wills us to remain faithful to them. Because of our human imperfection, any spouse in any marriage could wonder if a he or she made “a mistake” because of our idealized expectations. We need to adjust our expectations to the realities of human life! However, even if we did err in marrying, *breaking our vow would be an even greater mistake!*

3. I have fallen in love with another person

Feelings and impulses can be profoundly deceptive. As Christians we need not follow every impulse, feeling, or emotional drive. Many, many feelings in life should be denied on a regular basis:

We feel like killing our boss

We feel like eating ice cream for breakfast

We feel like staying in bed rather than getting up for work...etc.

Likewise with our feelings of attraction towards people other than our spouse. We ought not, and need not indulge them!

Question: *What do I do if I am a believer, and my husband is not?*

If he wants to stay together – do not throw in the towel!

¹² *To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. (1 Cor. 7:12-13)*

¹ *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. (1 Pe 3:1-2)*

Review: List three Biblical justifications for divorce.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____.

Advice for Singles

You are not a second class citizen!

While churches rightly emphasize the sacredness of marriage and the importance of helping couples to be healthy and faithful, we can sometimes give the wrong message to single adults. A single man or woman is not “half” a person, but entirely complete in the eyes of God!

God calls many to singleness for part or all of their lives.

⁹ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry. ¹¹ Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.” (Matthew 19:10-13)

Use your freedom to serve God!

The man or woman God calls to singleness (permanently or for a time), enjoys freedom to serve God in a *wholehearted way that married people cannot!* The Apostle Paul was single – *and happy!*

³² I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. ³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— ³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor. 7:32-35)

Marry if you want to! – 1 Cor. 7:8-9

⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (1 Cor. 7:9)

Question: *Is it wise to test out sexual relations with a potential spouse in order to be sure that the couple is sexually compatible?*

!NO!

The Bible calls sex before marriage “*fornication*,” a grave sin. Because of the sacred and deeply emotional nature of the sexual bond, God commands that it be reserved for the marriage relationship.

Question: *How can a dating or engaged couple stay pure?*

1. Agree on “limits” to be mutually observed

The dating or engaged couple which desires to honor God should decide in advance what limits they will observe in their expression of physical affection. If the two do not have the same opinion, the limits of the more conservative person should be respected.

2. Avoid “danger zones”

“Flee fornication...” – 1 Cor. 6:18

Certain situations lend themselves to greater temptation than others. In general, situations of complete privacy or late at night, present an opportunity for sin – *“The wrong place at the wrong time.”* Couples serious about holiness can agree to avoid such situations, and seek to spend time together in less isolated contexts.

3. Seek transparency – share regularly with a trusted friend or mentor.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. Ephesians 5:7-8

In order to “walk in the light,” one must embrace transparency and be willing to share personal struggles with a mature and trusted person (of the same gender). This accountability provides a transparency that limits Satan’s tempting schemes in our lives.

If you are single and dating, mention the names of two people (of your gender) whom you can trust to help keep you accountable and provide guidance as you seek to maintain purity in your relationship.

1) _____

2) _____

4. Seek counsel!

Marriage counselors and couples’ groups in Lion of Judah provide guidance and support for couples, whether married, engaged or dating! Why wait for engagement to seek Godly counsel and support!?

Question: Is it ok to date an unbeliever?

¡NO!

The Word commands believers to seek believing spouses.

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. (1Cor. 7:39)

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial¹⁶? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ?” 2 Cor. 6:14-15

*“Unequal yoke” -- This text does not refer directly to the marriage relationship, but to formal relationships in general between Christians and non-Christians – perhaps in business or intimate friendship. One might ask, however, “What relationship between two people can be more formal or intimate than marriage? A believer marrying an unbeliever can be compared to placing the same yoke on two oxen that desire to go in opposite directions. *Constant tension results!* When a believer dates an unbeliever, it is most likely that the believer will compromise his or her principles...*

“Flee fornication...” – 1 Cor. 6:18

***Conclusion – Do not stop coming to church!
The Church is a Hospital for “recovering sinners!”***

What do I do if I am in the habit of some form of immorality, seeking to be free, but still continue to struggle?

- ***Accept the Love of God*** – Romans 8:1 – *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus...”*
- ***Keep coming!*** - The church is a hospital! (The healthy have no need of a doctor, but those who recognize their spiritual illness!)
- ***Seek a friend to whom you can confess*** your struggles. (James 5:16 y 1 Jn 1:5-10)
- ***Seek counsel*** from a trusted friend or mentor (of the same gender) who has the spiritual maturity to help!
- ***Keep studying the word!*** Repeat level #2 if you feel it is necessary!



Review Questions:

What is the difference between using the church as a refuge of grace and abusing the church as a hideaway for license and a double life?

Imagine you have a friend who wants to date an unbeliever. What counsel and arguments could you use in advising her?

You have another friend whose boyfriend, a church member, pressures her to have sexual relations with him in order to test out their compatibility. What advice can you give?

List some ways to help keep a dating relationship pure.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

What do we say to the person who wants to divorce because “he no longer feels love” for his wife and “has fallen in love” with another?

What do we say to the person who struggles with sexual sin and feels that they should stop coming to church, saying they do not want to be a “hypocrite?”
