

*Ministerial
Development Series*

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**"Living
like
Christ."**

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*by
Colleen Carter*

A Word from Africa Aflame



Christian Living is a textbook prepared for the *Ministerial Development Series* developed by the Africa Aflame Committee. Those who are, or have been involved in active international ministry have written the *Ministerial Development Series*. It is based on 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

This book is designed for use in our overseas training programs but would also be a blessing to anyone endeavoring to live a victorious Christian life.

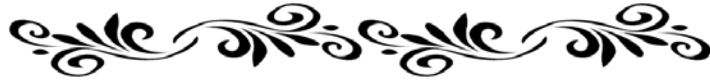
Christian Living is authored by Colleen Carter, an exemplary Christian lady presently serving in Ghana on the Associates in Missions (AIM) program. Barbara Westberg has edited this book. Both ladies are proven blessings to Africa Aflame Publications. They unselfishly devote their time and talents to our ministry. Because of their efforts, the church and Africa is able to declare, "And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region" (Acts 13:49).

The lessons have been prepared in an easy reading and study format. The first part of each lesson is entitled, "What I Have Learned" and is from the instructor's point of view. This is followed by "What Have You Learned?" which consists of study questions or discussion points to be completed by the student at the end of each lesson.

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James G. Poitras,
Chairman, Africa Aflame Publications
United Pentecostal Church International

Preface



Obedience to Acts 2:38 births one into the Christian family. After the new birth comes the day by day process of growing in Christ. Just as a baby requires nourishment and nurturing, so a newborn in Christ must be cared for and fed.

As revival sweeps around the world, the mother church is challenged to nourish and nurture her babies. She knows that for them to survive they must be taught the basic principles of Christian living. The Christian's mind must be filled with God's Word and his heart controlled by His Spirit.

Christian Living is a how-to-grow handbook. The biblical principles covered in this course when applied to a Christian's life will produce growth.

Only one who is living a Christian life can write an inspired course on *Christian Living*. From childhood, Colleen Carter has been nourished and nurtured by godly parents, teachers, and pastors. She is a graduate of Northeast Christian College. Now, as a totally dedicated young lady, Colleen's passion is to nourish and nurture newborns in the kingdom. For three years she has served as an AIMer (Associate in Missions) in Ghana, West Africa under missionaries Jim and Linda Poitras.

Her consecration, burden, and faithfulness have qualified her to write this manual. Her prayer is that teachers and students alike will thrive as they digest the biblical principles taught in these lessons.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Barbara Westberg
Children's Editor
Word Aflame Publications
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Introduction

What Is Christian Living?

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

Focus: The Christian life is holy. Holiness begins on the inside. The inward experience will affect the outward appearance.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

What is a Christian? A Christian is someone who is Christ-like, living daily as taught by the example of Christ.

Guideposts defines a Christian in four ways:

- ✓ A mind through which Christ thinks.
- ✓ A heart through which Christ loves.
- ✓ A voice through which Christ speaks.
- ✓ A hand through which Christ helps.

Many people label themselves as Christians, yet live any way they please. Christians live in obedience to God's Word, writing His commandments upon the tables of the heart.

"My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Proverbs 7:1-3).

A Call to Holiness

God has called us to a walk of holiness.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Christian living begins with holiness inside, but shows itself outside.

"We must believe in holiness externally, internally and eternally."
(T. F. Tenney)

Inward holiness is important. A person can appear holy on the outside, but be unholy on the inside. However, a person cannot be holy on the inside and unholy on the outside.

"Hudson Taylor was seated in a room with a new missionary to China. He filled a glass with water, placed it on the table, and then struck the table with his fist. As the water splashed out, he said to the young missionary: 'You will be struck by the blows of many sorrows and troubles in China, but remember, they will only splash out of you what is in you.'" (*The Divine Eagle* by Selwyn Hughes)

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

What is on the inside will eventually come out for all to see.

When we are holy, we have the truth of the Word of God in our hearts. The Lord desires truth in His children.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalms 51:6).

Only God can make a person holy. Only He can renew a heart and remove the stains of sin, washing it white as snow.

God's Promises

In Jeremiah 31:33, God promises:

- ✓ I will put my law in their inward parts.
- ✓ I will write it in their hearts.

- ✓ I will be their God.
- ✓ They will be my people.

This new covenant was needed because the old one was inadequate. The old one was written in stone, but Jeremiah prophesied that the new one would be written on the heart. The new covenant would be accompanied by the Holy Spirit. This would give people power and grace to live righteously.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

God gives us new hearts so we can better love and obey Him. The ability to lovingly respond to the Lord comes from the Holy Spirit in us.

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).

Internal Holiness

How can we develop internal holiness? Raymond Woodward in his book, *Because We Are His*, says, “If you are a spirit-filled child of God, you already have internal holiness, because God’s Spirit is holy!” However, God must reign in our lives for us to continue living a holy life. The power of the Holy Spirit overcomes sin, allowing us to live a victorious life.

One man said it this way, “In order for a car to run, you must keep it full of diesel. An empty tank will get you nowhere.” In order to live as a Spirit-filled overcomer, we must stay full of the Spirit. Christians can live above sin if they continue to seek His righteousness.

Lord Jesus,
 Here is my brain; think through it.
 Here is my face; glow through it.
 Here are my hands; touch with them.
 Here are my eyes; see through them.

Here are my ears; listen with them.
 Here are my lips; speak through them.
 Here is my heart; love through it.
 (Author Unknown)

The Christian Way

Christians have the mind of Christ, so they think like Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

He continued, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

If you are unsure of whether it is good to do something, ask yourself, “What would Jesus do? Would what I am about to do please Him?”

Paul admonished the Philippians to control their minds. Guard your thoughts. When we allow our minds to dwell on unholy thoughts, we pay the consequences. Worldliness will rob us of our peace, joy, and nearness to the Lord.

Conclusion

The study of the following subjects will help us live like Christ.

- ✓ Obedience to God (His Word and way).
- ✓ The mind.
- ✓ The heart.
- ✓ The tongue.
- ✓ The eyes.
- ✓ The hands.
- ✓ The feet.
- ✓ The seven deadly sins.
- ✓ The lust of the flesh.
- ✓ The lust of the eyes.
- ✓ The pride of life.

A short Sunday school chorus goes along with these subjects:

“Oh be careful little heart what you hide,
Oh be careful little heart what you hide,
For the Father up above is looking down in
love,
Oh be careful little heart what you hide.”

(The words can be changed to fit the various subjects.)

Man cannot see inside, but God can. He knows every thought and intent of our heart.

“For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chronicles 28:9).

“What have you done today that only a Christian would have done?”
(T. F. Tenney)

What Have You Learned?

1. How does *Guideposts* define a Christian? _____

2. What has God called us to? _____

3. What does T. F. Tenney say about believing in holiness? _____

4. What are God’s promises to His children in Jeremiah 31:33? _____

5. Why does God give us new hearts? _____

6. What does Raymond Woodward say about internal holiness in his book, *Because We Are His*? _____

7. What question should we ask ourselves when we are unsure of what to do? _____

8. What will worldliness rob us of? _____

9. According to 1 Samuel 16:7, man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks where? _____

10. What is the question that is asked to conclude this lesson? _____

Lesson 1

Obedience

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

Focus: Hearing the Word is not enough. Faith in God leads us to obey His Word.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

People are affected by our actions. Mankind was affected by Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. One man's wrongdoing placed a sentence of judgment on everyone. Through one righteous deed (Christ's death), the gracious gift of redemption came to all men. The effect of Christ's righteous deed extends as far as the effect of Adam's transgression.

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:15-18).

Disobedience made us sinners, but the obedience of Christ brought us redemption, allowing us to be called righteous. Christ's

obedience covers those affected by Adam's disobedience.

Hearers Versus Doers

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13).

In the *New International Version*, this verse says, "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

Everyone can listen to the Word of God, but only the ones who obey it are righteous in God's eyes.

The apostle Paul in his book to the Romans began (1:5) and ended (16:19) by linking faith to obedience.

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Romans 1:5).

The design of the gospel is to persuade men to obey God. Faith in God produces obedience. This is confirmed in Romans 15:18; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 7:15; and James 2:26.

Faith and obedience work together. Faith without commitment to the Word of God is vain.

"Faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior is both the act of a single moment and a continuing attitude for life that must grow and be strengthened. Our faith should become greater because we have faith in a definite person who died for us. Trust and obedience develop into loyalty and devotion; loyalty and devotion develop into an intense feeling of personal attachment to and love for Jesus Christ. This faith in Christ brings us into a new relationship with God and exempts us from His wrath; by it we become dead to sin and indwelt by the Holy Spirit" (*The Full Life Study Bible—King James Version*).

The depth of a person's faith can be judged by his obedience. When a person obeys Christ, his faith grows.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

"We cannot become what God wants us to become until we do what God wants us to do."
(T. F. Tenney)

Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Man can outwardly worship God, but if it is not accompanied with willing obedience, it is worthless. Saul disobeyed and rebelled against God's clear instructions. God told Saul to smite Amalek, sparing nothing. Instead of listening to God, Saul took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive. He also saved the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, and all that was good. Saul's disobedience cost him the kingdom. He was dethroned because he did his own thing.

King David was a different story.

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel" (1 Kings 2:1-4).

David admonished Solomon to live a life of obedience and faithfulness to God. But Solomon's disobedience and desire to do his own thing resulted in God's judgment. His disobedience led to the kingdom being divided and finally destroyed. There is a great price attached to disobedience.

The Word of God must be followed in every detail. From the crossing of the t's to the dotting of the i's, the Word of God is to be obeyed. Man cannot choose to obey some commandments and forget others. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

Christ's Example of Obedience

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of obedience.

As a child, Jesus was obedient to His parents.

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

Jesus did exactly what He was supposed to do. Even though He did not want to drink of the bitter cup of death, He did it.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

To do all He was supposed to, He had to die. Jesus Christ lived in complete obedience and gave His life for mankind.

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5: 7-9).

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

Obeying God Rather Than Man

"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:18-20).

Although Peter and John were threatened by the magistrates, they ceased not to preach the name of Jesus.

"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29).

Those who obey God receive the Holy Ghost and power.

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

Obeying God rather than man will not always make a person popular.

"And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:40-42).

When obeying God, it is not always possible to please man. Paul saw that his duty was to please God. If he displeased man by pleasing God, then so be it. A life separated from sin will conflict with some people.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

Conclusion

A godly example of obedience impacts others more than we realize. To be saved we must be doers of the Word and not just hearers. When God tells us to do something, we should obey His voice. He is our Heavenly Father and always knows best.

Christ gave us a spotless example of obedience. Although obedience costs us, the rewards are great.

What Have You Learned?

1. Summarize Romans 5: 15-18. _____

2. Who is considered righteous in God's eyes?

3. What two things work together? _____

4. How is faith measured in a person's life? ____

5. What did Saul's disobedience cost him? _____

6. What happened when Solomon neglected to obey God's Word? _____

7. What is obedience better than? _____
8. Who is our best example of obedience? _____

9. What happened to Peter and John when they preached Jesus? _____

10. Why does obeying God sometimes cause us to conflict with others? _____

Lesson 2

The Rewards of Obedience

*"If ye be willing and obedient,
ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah
1:19).*

Focus: The rewards for obeying God's laws are many.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

"That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deuteronomy 30:20).

Obedience Brings —

✓ Blessing

The people of God were given a choice of whether they wanted a blessing or a curse.

"A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-27).

The Israelites were to choose whether or not they would live a victorious lifestyle. God promised that if they obeyed His laws, His blessings would come upon them and overtake them.

"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto

the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 28:2).

Their obedience would bring blessings (Deuteronomy 28:3-14):

- ☑ In the city and field.
- ☑ In the fruit of their body, ground, cattle, kine, and sheep.
- ☑ In their basket and store.
- ☑ When they came in and went out.
- ☑ Their enemies would be smitten.
- ☑ Make them plenteous in goods.
- ☑ Make them a holy people.
- ☑ The Lord would open His good treasure unto them.
- ☑ It would rain on their crops in the right season.
- ☑ The Lord would bless all the work of their hands.
- ☑ They would be the head and not the tail.
- ☑ They would be above only and not beneath.
- ☑ They would lend unto many nations but never borrow.

All of this would only come, "If that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them" (Deuteronomy 28:13).

Abraham was blessed because he obeyed the Lord. His willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice brought God's blessings upon his life.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:15-18).

Because of Abraham's obedience, God's covenant promise remained in effect.

✓ **Long Life**

"And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days" (1 Kings 3:14).

When Solomon began his reign as king of Israel, he prayed that God would give him wisdom and a discerning heart so that he might know how to deal with God's people. This request pleased the Lord. Solomon had not asked for anything for himself. He could have asked for wealth, a long life, the lives of his enemies, but instead he asked for discernment in judgment. Solomon wanted to be a good king who cared for his people and gave them the best leadership possible. Because of his humility, God gave him what he asked for and many things that he had not asked for.

The gift of wisdom was not a guarantee that Solomon would always live a godly lifestyle. That is why God emphasized that a long life would be his if he walked in God's ways.

✓ **A Peculiar Treasure**

On Mount Sinai God gave Moses a message for the children of Israel. God told Moses to remind them of how He had brought them out of Egypt.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

God's message had a catch to it. "If" they obeyed His voice, they would be a peculiar treasure to Him. Israel was to be God's own treasure, having a different relationship with Him than other nations because He was Israel's

Redeemer. Their obedience separated them from the rest of the world, making them a holy nation.

Living a life acceptable unto the Lord requires us to separate from the world's sinful ways.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6: 17-18).

Christians are commanded to live a holy life.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

✓ **Salvation**

Noah's obedience to God's commandments saved his life, his family, and the world. (Would there be a world if Noah had not obeyed the Lord and built the ark?) People probably laughed at Noah and thought him to be mad. A 480-year-old man was building a boat on dry land to escape a coming flood when it had never rained. Noah's deep trust in God caused him to begin building a refuge of salvation for the family he did not have. Noah's first son was born when Noah was 500 years old.

Noah was a righteous man, called by God's Word "perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9). He walked with God. He lived a life separate from the evil corruption around him. He communed with God, and feared Him. The righteousness in Noah's life came through his faith. God's mercy and grace were bestowed upon him because he remained distant from a perverse generation. Noah was saved from the earth's destruction through the covenant God made with him.

✓ **The Presence of God**

Obedience to God's commandments brings His presence. He can be felt in a real way when we draw close to Him.

"The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:2).

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

Those who seek the Lord experience His wonderful presence.

✓ **Answered Prayer**

While Aaron and Israel disobeyed God, Moses obeyed and prayed for the Lord to show him His way. Because of Moses's obedience, God answered his prayers.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people" (Exodus 33:13).

"And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name" (Exodus 33:17).

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

God's promises are contingent upon our obedience. If we obey God's voice and continue in His ways, He will hear and answer our prayers. God responds to earnest prayer.

✓ **Restoration**

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Jews in Babylon. The seventy years of captivity had been a terrible time for them. In his letter, Jeremiah told them to continue to seek the Lord. If they would seek the Lord with all their hearts and obey His Word, restoration would be theirs.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall

ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Do not give up on God just because an obstacle has arisen. Jeremiah told Judah that the remnant would seek God earnestly for restoration. God promised to answer because He had great plans for them. God listened to their prayers, looked at their obedience, and fulfilled His promise.

"And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jeremiah 29:14).

Conclusion

Parents praise their children for obeying them. The Lord also rewards His children for obeying His commandments.

An obedient child of God is the most blessed individual on earth. Obedience does not go unrewarded. God sees all that we do and blesses us accordingly.

"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24).

What Have You Learned?

1. List five things that obedience brings. _____

2. What did the Israelites have to do in order to be blessed? _____

3. What continued because of Abraham's obedience? _____

4. According to this lesson, what are Christians commanded to do? Provide Scripture with your answer. _____

5. Why was God's mercy and grace bestowed upon Noah? _____

6. What do the people who seek God experience? _____

7. God fulfills His promises in response to what? _____

8. What did Jeremiah tell the Israelites in his letter? _____

Lesson 3

The Mind

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

Focus: The mind can be transformed when submitted to Christ.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

The mind is the headquarters where information is gathered and understood. The world affects the mind. Permanent damage can only be done if the individual allows his mind to dwell on evil. The Spirit of God renews the Christian’s mind and gives him the power to resist the enemy and overcome evil.

The Carnal Mind

“But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5, *TLB*).

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Every person is born a sinner. Sinners have carnal minds. Their main focus is on the things of the flesh.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:6-7).

Enmity means “an enemy.”

The rule of carnality can be defeated by coming to Christ. Christ can give us a new mind.

The New Mind

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun! ” (2 Corinthians 5:17, *TLB*).

When we repent of our sins, are baptized in Jesus’ name for the remission of our sins, and receive the Holy Ghost, we become new creatures. We are given a new mind. We think differently than we did before we were born again.

The Renewed Mind

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23).

“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you” (Romans 12:2, *TLB*).

We need to daily renew our mind. The enemy is constantly warring for our thoughts. The way to defeat him is to ask the Lord to renew our minds.

“Lord, renew my mind. Cleanse my thoughts with your blood, and help me to remain focused.”

The natural mind cannot know God. God speaks to man through His Spirit, and the Spirit speaks to the mind. To truly know God, we must have the Spirit of Christ. (See I Corinthians 2:10-16.)

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

When the mind is renewed, inward change produces outward change. If the spirit, temper, and nature of the mind are not renewed, an outward change is of little worth and will not last.

The Guarded Mind

“But the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind” (2 Thessalonians 3:3, *TLB*).

Guarding the mind is important. We need to be protected against the enemy’s tricks.

A few ways to guard our minds are:

- ✓ Through prayer and fasting.
- ✓ Reading God’s Word.
- ✓ Reading Christian literature.
- ✓ Asking God to cover our minds with His blood.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

“For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are” (Hebrews 4:12, *NLT*).

The Word of God is strong enough to tear down the kingdom of the devil and build God’s kingdom on the ruins.

The Word of God is sharp on both sides. It enters where no other sword can, performing a life-changing operation.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”(Ephesians 6:17).

It is no coincidence that the helmet that protects the soldier’s head and mind is mentioned in the same passage as the sword of the Spirit. The helmet protects the mind,

and the sword cuts down anything that might injure the mind.

The Submitted Mind

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

When we love God with all our mind, we submit our mental power to His will. We love His law and the gospel more than we do our decisions. When we willingly submit our plans, decisions, and thoughts to Him, we show that we truly love Him as He commanded.

The Christ-centered Mind

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

God robed Himself in flesh and came to earth to provide salvation for man. For three and one half years, He lived what He preached, showing man the way. By His words and example, He trained His disciples to carry on His work.

Jesus is our model. We should frame our lives, as close as possible, after His great example.

Conclusion

Even though we are born sinners, we can be made righteous by the cleansing power of the Jesus’ blood. He takes our carnal mind and makes it new.

A daily renewal gives perfect peace because our mind is stayed on Christ (Isaiah 26:3).

The enemy is warring for our minds. He wants control of headquarters. But, by dedicating ourselves to the Lord through prayer, fasting, and Bible study, we can guard our minds against the attack of the enemy, defeating him in Jesus’ name.

What Have You Learned?

1. What is the mind? _____

2. Quote Romans 3:23. _____

3. When do we get a new mind? _____

4. How often should man renew his mind? _____

5. When the mind is renewed, what does inward change produce? _____

6. Give two ways to guard our minds. _____

7. Quote Hebrews 4:12. _____

8. What do the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit do for the mind? _____

9. What happens when we love God with all our mind? _____

10. Quote Philippians 2:5. _____

Lesson 4

Doors to the Mind

"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" (Proverbs 4:20-27).

Focus: The five senses are doors to the mind. We must guard our senses to protect our mind.

"Thinking is more precious than all five senses."
(Nachman of Bratslav)

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, Satan has warred for control of man's mind. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent planted the seed of unbelief in Eve's mind, tempting her to sin.

Since then, a continual battle between good and evil has progressed in man's mind. Satan desires to control man's choices so he can rule him.

Satan cannot read our thoughts.

He can only attack our mind in hopes of destroying us.

This is proven in the story of Judas betraying Christ (John 13:2). Satan attacked Judas's mind and tempted him. He knew that he only had to mention money, and Judas would listen.

Satan knows our faults, but there is hope. After receiving the Holy Ghost, we have the power to defeat the devil. At baptism we take on the name of Jesus, and at the name of Jesus the devil must flee. Jesus' name is so powerful that Satan cannot withstand it.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Man's Five Senses

The mind is the headquarters, or scientifically speaking, the nucleus (basis) of the body. The brain sends messages to the rest of the body, telling the different parts what to do. It is the operating system. The mind has five doors.

The five doors are the five senses:

- ✓ Ears (hearing)
- ✓ Eyes (sight)
- ✓ Nose (smell)
- ✓ Mouth (taste)
- ✓ Hands (touch)

When God created man with five senses, He meant for man to guard them and screen what entered his mind. God wants to control man's mind, but He will never force man to submit to Him.

The devil is forceful, sneaky, and will take all he can get. "Give him an inch and he will take a mile." As Christians, we need not give him anything.

The devil brought man down by attacking the five doors. None were locked, so he entered and made himself at home.

We have previously studied Genesis 3, but have never looked for the senses.

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (*Eve opened her ear door when she listened to the serpent.*) And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of

the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise (*Eve opened her eye door when she looked at the forbidden fruit.*), she took of the fruit thereof (*The touch door opened when Eve took of the fruit*), and did eat (*Eve opened her taste door.*), and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:1-6).

The devil tricked Eve into unconsciously inviting him into her mind. His tricks are many. He will come as a wolf in sheep's clothing, ready to attack when there is any sign of weakness.

A Christian needs to stand tall and strong, telling the devil that he is a liar and the father of all lies.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Satan cannot control our mind unless we let him. When we resist him, he has to flee, but we have to start the fight.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

In the power of the Holy Ghost, we can guard the doors of our mind, stand firm in God's Word, and ignore the devil's knocking.

Linda Poitras in *Christian Education* says, "Unless we are physically handicapped (blind, mute, deaf), we have five gates (doors) that control access to our minds . . . What we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste determines what we learn . . . Our minds are the headquarters of our soul. What is put in our minds decides our eternal salvation or destruction."

Like a tape recorder, only what is recorded on the mind can be played back.

Oh Be Careful Little...

These precious gifts (five senses) that God has given to us are sometimes taken for granted. We become careless with these priceless abilities.

A class was asked to list what they thought were the present "Seven Wonders of the World." They finally agreed on:

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids,
2. Taj Mahal,
3. Grand Canyon,
4. Panama Canal,
5. Empire State Building,
6. St. Peter's Basilica,
7. China's Great Wall.

The teacher noticed that one little girl had not said anything. When asked if she was having trouble, she replied, "Yes, a little. I could not decide because there are so many."

The teacher said, "Tell us what you have, and maybe we can help."

The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are:

1. To touch,
2. To taste,
3. To see,
4. To hear,
5. To feel,
6. To laugh,

7. To love.

When she finished, the room was silent. The things we consider plain and “common” are truly wondrous. The most valuable things in life cannot be bought.

(Adapted from *The Ladies Touch, South Flint Tabernacle's Ladies Publication.*)

✓ **Ears:** “Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge” (Proverbs 23:12).

What we listen to goes into our mind.

The devil will knock at this door through bad language, dirty jokes, worldly music, television, radio, and movies/videos.

If we have disciplined ourselves to listen to only godly things, we will not hear the tempting tap of the enemy.

A few ways that man can keep his ears pure are:

- ☑ Listen to positive conversation.
- ☑ Listen to godly music that uplifts the Lord and praises His holy name.
- ☑ Attend church as much as possible to hear the preaching of the Word.
- ☑ After prayer, stop and listen to what God might say. He will give the strength needed to overcome the devil.

✓ **Eyes:** “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me” (Psalm 101:3).

The devil flashes the world before man’s eyes, trying to tempt him to sin. Many people have fallen for this trick, thinking they could find happiness and peace in sin, but the world has nothing to offer that compares to God’s peace.

A few ways the devil attacks the mind through the eyes are:

- ☑ Television, movies/videos.

- ☑ Billboard advertisements.
- ☑ Immodesty, fornication, and adultery.
- ☑ Immoral actions of others.
- ☑ Computer and Internet.
- ☑ Magazine advertisements and newspapers.

There is hope for the child of God. We can escape if we keep our eyes on Christ. The psalmist David made a covenant to not set anything sinful before his eyes.

With modern technology, it is becoming harder to avoid wicked images, but we still have the choice of whether or not we allow our eyes and minds to dwell on evil. We can turn our eyes on Jesus and look into His wonderful face. He will strengthen us to abstain from evil and stay focused on Him.

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped” (Psalms 28:7).

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psalm 121:1).

✓ **Hands:** “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:4).

The “touch” door is actually opened by more than the hands. We can touch with all of our body.

Man must protect his mind by abstaining from touching anything sinful or ungodly. Such as:

- ☑ A friend of the opposite sex (not the spouse).
- ☑ Drugs.
- ☑ Alcohol.
- ☑ Cigarettes.
- ☑ Sex focused magazines.
- ☑ Any enticing/beautiful object (not your own).

The enemy will tempt us to steal and commit murder. Hands can do either good or bad. It is our choice.

When we submit our hands to God's work, we have an easier time keeping them clean. God gives us the strength we need.

- ✓ **Nose:** The "smell" door is the one most closely connected to memory. It is not spoken of much, but the enemy knows the importance of this door.
- ✓ **Mouth:** "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

To have the strength to abstain from evil, we must feast upon the good things of God. Taste His sweetness. Enjoy His presence. What are we feeding our minds spiritually?

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

The enemy will try to enter our mind through our mouth by tempting us to:

- Lie.
- Murmur and complain.
- Backbite.
- Speak negatively.
- Curse.

When we give God control of our tongue, the devil cannot use our mouth to hurt others.

Satan will also try to physically bring us down through things that enter our mouth:

- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Cigarettes

As food is vital to life, a daily portion of the Bread of Life (God's Word) is vital to our spiritual survival.

Conclusion

"The battle for the mind has become more forceful. The venues of pornography have extended their devious tentacles into the

privacy of our bedrooms and offices via video and the Internet. I agree with Billy Graham, 'I'm shocked that I am no longer shocked!'" (Arnold Cook)

We have to be careful and protect our thoughts from the tricks of the devil. If he can get into our thoughts, he will take control of our mind, bringing about our destruction.

- ✓ We remember 10% of what we hear (1 door).
- ✓ We remember 50% of what we hear and see (2 doors).
- ✓ We remember 70% of things we hear, see, and speak (3 doors).
- ✓ We remember 90% of things we hear, see, speak, and do (4 doors).

It is crucial that we stay on guard. The enemy will use whatever means necessary to enter our mind and take control.

A Christian needs to remain alert, always aware of enemy's tricks. If we stay alert, we will be more likely to stand against the pressure he places upon us.

During the first one hundred years after the Great Wall was built, China was invaded twice. The wall was strong. How did this happen?

The gatekeeper became careless, and the enemy bribed their way through the gate.

Two invasions happened because someone unlocked the door and let the enemy enter.

How many Christians fall today because they do not guard the doors to their minds? We must never let our defenses down.

"Lock the door; keep out the devil.
Lock the door; keep the devil in the night.
Lock the door; keep out the devil.
Light the candle, everything is all right."

What Have You Learned?

1. According to Nachman of Bratslav, what is more precious than all five senses? _____

2. What has Satan fought for since the beginning? _____

3. What can Satan not do according to this lesson? _____

4. When does man receive power over the devil? _____

5. What happens at baptism? _____

6. Quote James 4:7. _____

7. What are the five doors to the mind? _____

8. Give the statement from the lesson that best fits the devil. _____

9. Explain what happened in Genesis 3:1-6, and which doors Eve opened to her mind. _____

10. What must the devil do when we resist him? _____

11. Quote Ephesians 6:12-13. _____

12. What are two ways we can keep our ears pure? _____

13. What did the psalmist David do to protect his eyes? _____

14. When will we have an easier time keeping our hands clean of sin? _____

15. What is the nose most closely connected to? _____

16. What is vital to the survival of a Christian? _____

17. What are the statistics related to the senses and memory retention? _____

18. Explain how the enemy got through the Great Wall of China. _____

Lesson 5

The Will

*"A man's heart deviseth his way:
but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs
16:9).*

Focus: Our prayer needs to be, "Thy will be done O God."

What I Have Learned

Introduction

The will of man is where emotions and knowledge come together and decisions are made.

The will must be surrendered to God in order for Him to have control. He will not force us, but it is necessary.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

The Different Choices

Man makes many choices as he goes through life. Some of them are good, while others are bad. Man chooses to live for God, or the devil.

Some examples of right choices are:

Right Choices	Scripture Reference
Steadfast	Psalm 108:1
Full of integrity	1 Kings 9:4
Prompts action	Exodus 25:2
Loves God	Deuteronomy 6:5
Tender	Ezekiel 36:26
Seeks God	2 Chronicles 19:3
Sincere	Hebrews 10:22
Obedient	Psalm 119:36
Purposeful	2 Chronicles 6:7
Decisive	2 Chronicles 6:7

Some wrong choices:

Wrong Choices	Scripture Reference
Works wickedness	Psalm 58:2
Deceitful	Jeremiah 17:9
Inclines toward evil	Genesis 8:21
Hard	Exodus 8:32; 4:21
Proud	Ezekiel 28:2
Stone-like	Ezekiel 36:26
Unrepentant	Romans 2:5
Unbelieving	Hebrews 3:12

Choices take place in the human will. God has given man a will of his own where he makes the decisions for his life.

The Will of God

How is the will of God connected to the heart?

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

The prophet Jonah finally obeyed God, but not because he had a change of heart. The people of Nineveh repented, but Jonah still despised them and wanted the Lord to destroy them (Jonah 3-4).

We cannot just know the will of God and do it, but we need to do the will of God "from the heart."

When we desire to do the will of God with our whole heart, God will tell us what to do. We will not have to question if we will only listen to what He has to say.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

If Christians would obey this Scripture, religion would be everywhere honored. If they would separate from the world, Christ would be

glorified. A renewed mind that seeks only to do the will of God, will not be slow in finding it (Adapted from *Barnes' Notes*).

We cannot go wrong when we seek God's guidance. "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). Whatever God wants us to do, it is our reasonable service to do it.

"The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9).

The Grace of God

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

God's grace working in us, makes us capable of doing His will. Even though God is working in us, we must choose to follow His leading. We must choose to obey Him. We remain free to reject this wonderful grace. We may know what God wants us to do, but will we do it?

Conclusion

God has given us the opportunity to choose the right from the wrong. He stands near with arms open wide; ready to lead us if we will only let Him. Knowing the will of God is not good enough; we must put action behind the knowledge.

"To know the will of God is our greatest knowledge.
To do the will of God is our greatest achievement" (George Truett).

A sincere love for God will make the believer want to do His will no matter what.

God will never lead us where grace cannot keep us. Trust Him for His will to be done in earth as it is in heaven.

What Have You Learned?

1. What is the will of man? _____

2. Give three right choices man can make. ____

3. Give three wrong choices man can make. ____

4. How is the will connected to the heart? ____

5. Can we go wrong when seeking God's guidance? _____

6. Quote Psalm 25:9. _____

7. What makes a believer want to do God's will? _____

Lesson 6

Guard Your Heart

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

Focus: God is looking for truth in man. We need to guard our hearts from the tricks of the devil by putting on the breastplate of righteousness.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

The key Scripture cautions man to guard his heart, or keep it with all diligence. Why? Because, man sometimes has a hard time keeping his heart clean.

The heart contains the issues of life spiritually and physically. This is a direct reference to the arteries that carry the blood from the heart through the whole body, all the way to the fingertips and toes. As long as the heart receives and sends blood, life continues.

If the heart is the fountain of life, some care must be taken so the fountain is not stopped.

Tom Hove in his book, *Extreme Righteousness*, tells three stories about world-class athletes who had the external appearance of beautiful, physical health. But hidden problems soon claimed their lives.

- ✓ "In 1988, forty-year-old 'Pistol Pete' Maravich, the holder of numerous 'unbreakable' college basketball records and later an NBA All-Star dies while playing a pickup game in Pasadena, California. A health enthusiast whose last words were 'I'm really feeling good,' Maravich died of a hidden heart defect."
- ✓ "Flora (Flo) Hyman, a tall and powerful volleyball spikier, led the U.S. women's

team to a silver medal in the 1984 Olympics. She died of a heart attack a few years later at age thirty-one."

- ✓ "In November 1995, at age twenty-eight, Russian figure skater Sergei Grinkov, winner of two Olympic gold medals, dropped to the ice during a practice session and died. He too had suffered a massive heart attack."

"The problem of the heart
is the heart of the problem."
(James Poitras)

We need to examine our hearts consistently.

We must guard our heart with everything in us.

Wholeheartedly Following Christ

Charles Spurgeon told his London congregation, "Set your heart upon God's Word! It is the only way to know it thoroughly; let your whole nature be plunged into it as cloth into a dye."

Moses sent Joshua and Caleb with ten other men to spy out Canaan. They saw beautiful fruit, fertile land, and giants. Ten spies focused on the giants, and two, Joshua and Caleb, focused on God's promise. "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30).

Some thirty-eight years later, Caleb at the age of eighty-five asked Joshua to give him Hebron for his inheritance. (See Joshua 14:12.) Caleb's character answered to his name, which means "all heart; faithful."

"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it" (Numbers 14:24).

"I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the

hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly' So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly" (Joshua 14:7-9, 14, NIV).

We, too, can wholeheartedly serve the Lord.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

The Armour of God

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14).

1. The Girdle

The girdle covered the intimate parts of the body. This piece of armour kept the whole suit together.

Barnes' Notes says, "The girdle was the bracer up. It kept all the parts of the suit in their proper place. Truth is also to brace us up, and to gird us for faithfulness and firmness in our conduct."

"Great is the laxity (carelessness) of falsehood;
truth binds the man."
(Grotius)

Barnes' Notes adds, "Truth conserves a man from those slack views of morals, of duty and of religion, that leave him uncovered to every attack. It makes the soul sincere, firm, constant, and always on its guard. A man who has no consistent views of truth is the man whom the devil will attack."

Truth or honesty is our girdle. It was prophesied of Christ that righteousness should be the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins (Isaiah 11:5).

"Truth:

Let this be my brazen wall; that no man can reproach me with a crime,
and that I am conscious of my own integrity."
(Adam Clarke's Commentary)

God desires truth and sincerity in the inward parts. Sincerity comes from the heart of man. It is the strength of his loins.

2. The Breastplate

The armor that covered the body from the neck to the thighs consisted of two parts. One covering was on the front and the other on the back. It was made of rings, or scales, and fastened together in order to be flexible, but still guard the body from a sword, spear, or arrow. The breastplate kept the vitals safe and sheltered the heart. A soldier could not defend himself against the enemy without a breastplate.

The righteousness Christ gives us protects us against the enemy's arrows. Without it we cannot successfully resist temptation. A lack of integrity leaves us exposed to the enemy like a soldier with a defective breastplate.

The king of Israel was hit between the joints of his breastplate by an arrow sent from a bow, drawn at a chance (1 Kings 22:34). Many men who think they have on the Christian armor are struck in the same manner because they have a character defect, a lack of integrity, or an unguarded point. The enemy is watching for a weak spot to attack.

- ✓ David was tempted to commit the enormous crimes that stain his memory.
- ✓ Peter was tempted to deny his Lord.
- ✓ Judas was attacked through his greed.

Many have been attacked and have fallen. We must have the righteousness that God gives to protect us from the enemy's arrows.

Adam Clarke's Commentary says, "As the breastplate defends the heart and lungs, and all those vital parts that are contained in what is called the region of the thorax; so this righteousness, this life of God in the soul of man, defines everything upon which the man's spiritual existence depends. While he possesses this principle, and acts from it, his spiritual and eternal life is secure."

Conclusion

David Schafer's wife gave him a very important present, not knowing that it would save his life.

October 1, 1977, David, a police officer in America, was working the night shift and received a call on his radio. A pharmacy robbery was in process. He arrived just in time to see the suspect fleeing in his car. David followed. Three blocks later the suspect suddenly pulled over to the side of the road.

Officer Schafer was approaching the car, when suddenly the door burst open. The suspect pointed his revolver at the officer and pulled the trigger.

The next morning, Officer Schafer's wife, Terry, answered the door and was told good and bad news. The bad news was that her husband had been shot. The good news was that the bulletproof vest that she had bought him had saved his life.

Christ provides us with the breastplate of righteousness—a shield over our hearts that sin cannot penetrate.

(The above story was adapted from Paul Aurandt in *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* by Charles R. Swindoll.)

God's Word hidden in our hearts will keep us from sinning. No temptation of the enemy can penetrate the breastplate of righteousness.

What Have You Learned?

1. What must the heart be capable of in order for life to be continued? _____

2. What did Charles Spurgeon tell his London congregation? _____

3. How did Caleb serve the Lord? _____

4. What was Caleb given in Joshua 14? _____

5. What is special about the girdle in the armour of God? _____

6. What is our girdle? _____

7. What does God desire in the inward parts? _____

8. What is the Christian's breastplate? _____

9. What was the purpose of the breastplate? _____

10. What will the righteousness of God do? _____

11. What saved Officer David Schafer's life? _____

12. What is the spiritual application? _____

LESSON 7

How Is Your Heart?

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"
(Psalm 139:23-24).

Focus: A child of God needs to be careful with the condition of his heart.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

The condition of the heart is vital to the survival of the body. When the heart is not functioning properly, the body suffers. As a healthy physical heart is necessary to man, so a healthy spiritual heart is to a Christian.

The condition of a man's heart determines his response to the Word of God. A good heart will receive the Word with gladness and obey it wholeheartedly.

Parable of the Sower

What is a parable? *The Full Life Study Bible* says, "A parable is a simple story from everyday life that reveals a truth to those whose hearts are prepared to hear, and conceals truth from those whose hearts are unprepared."

Jesus told the parable of the sower to explain how the gospel will be received. (See Matthew 13:3-8, also Mark 4:3-8 and Luke 8:5-8).

This parable teaches us many things. *The Full Life Study Bible* lists three specific truths.

1. Conversion and fruitfulness depend on how one responds to God's Word.
2. There will be a mixed reaction to the gospel by the world.

- ✓ Some who hear will not understand.
 - ✓ Others will believe unto salvation, but will later fall away.
 - ✓ Others will persevere and bear fruit in varying degrees.
3. The enemies of God's Word are:
- ✓ Satan.
 - ✓ Worldly concerns.
 - ✓ Riches.
 - ✓ Pleasures.

The ground in which the seed of God's Word is sown is the heart. It should not be empty and unyielding like the field of the slothful (Proverbs 24:30). It is capable of:

- ✓ Improvement
- ✓ Bearing good fruit

The Word (seed) will only live in man's heart if the heart is prepared. The prepared heart bears fruit when the seed of the Word is nurtured.

The four different types of soil represent four types of hearts.

Soil	Results	Represents
Wayside	None	Hard hearts
Stony	Short-lived	Shallow hearts
Weedy	Choked out	Cluttered hearts
Good	Fruitful	Whole (responsive) hearts

The Hard Hearts

"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up" (Matthew 13:4).

Some seeds scattered by the sower fell on ground that had not been plowed and was hard like a pathway. The seed could not sink into the ground and take root.

Those with hard hearts hear the Word, but they do not understand it because their heart has not been prepared. They are not interested in the things of God.

Hardening of the arteries of the heart robs the body of the flow of blood and life-giving oxygen. A hard heart prevents the soul from absorbing the life-giving Word of God.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary says, "The great truth is that hearts unbroken and hard are not fit soil for saving truth. The devil who is so afraid of losing a victim finds something to attract the attention away from the things of God, and destroys the seed."

"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side" (Matthew 13:19).

When the heart is hard, the ears are dull. The whispers of the Spirit are not heard. The calling of the Word is disregarded, and the ears are stopped (Psalm 58:4-5).

Mindless, careless hearers are an easy prey to Satan. He is the great thief of sermons and robs everyone he can of the Word. The birds pick up the seed that falls on the unplowed ground. If we do not break up the ground by preparing our hearts for the Word, and do not cover the seed with meditation and prayer, we will be unfruitful.

The Fallow Ground

Fallow ground is soil that has been so neglected and hardened that it cannot receive seed. In Hosea 10:12-13, the people's hearts had become like that spiritually. They needed to break up their own hearts and minds by a repentance that would open them to the Word and will of God.

"For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench

it, because of the evil of your doings" (Jeremiah 4:3-4).

When God told Judah and Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground," He was referring to their commitment to the truth. He wanted them to renew themselves in righteousness. They had to repent of their sins and break up the hardened soil of their hearts. The evil must be removed from their hearts as the foreskin is removed in physical circumcision.

The Shallow Heart

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away" (Matthew 13:5-6).

Shallow hearts contain things that hinder growth.

1. The hard, rocky soil with very little earth does not allow the roots to penetrate and grow.
2. The small amount of dirt allows the seed to quickly germinate and form a plant that is just as quickly destroyed.
3. When the sun comes out, the thirsty plant withers away and dies.

The stony, shallow hearts:

- ✓ Hear the Word.
- ✓ Are quick to receive it.
- ✓ Receive it with joy.
- ✓ Endure for awhile.

These hearts have no understanding of commitment. They produce a shifting lifestyle.

Matthew Henry's Commentary gives some reasons for their lack of fruit. They have:

- ✓ No root in themselves.
- ✓ No settled, fixed principles in their judgments.
- ✓ No firm resolution in their wills.
- ✓ No rooted habits in their affections.

- ✓ Nothing firm that will be either the sap or the strength of their profession.

“It is possible that there may be a green blade of a profession, yet there is no root of grace. Hardness prevails in the heart, and what there is of softness is only in the surface. Inwardly, the people are no more affected than a stone. They have no roots and are not united with Christ who is our Root. Those who have no root will endure but awhile. A ship without weight, though it may at first out-sail the loaded vessel, will fail in stress of weather, and never make her port.” (Matthew Henry)

1. Times of trial become stumbling blocks for man, and he cannot get over them.
2. Shallow hearts are easily offended.
3. Persecution is like the scorching sun.
4. The same sun that warms and cherishes the rooted plants withers and burns up those without roots.

The Cluttered Heart

“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them” (Matthew 13:7).

In a field where thorns and weeds grow, the crop is limited. Thorns and weeds destroy positive growth in the plants around them. The thorns block light and air and sap the moisture and nutrition from the soil.

This type of soil is a little better than the stony one. It represents the condition of those who do not quite cast off the Word of God, yet come short of any saving benefit by it. The things of the world overcome the good they gain by the Word.

“Prosperity destroys the word in the heart, as much as persecution does; and more dangerously, because more silently: the stones spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit.”
(Matthew Henry's Commentary)

The seed that fell among the thorns and weeds was choked out by the clutter. The cluttered heart does not allow the Word of God to grow, because sin smothers the things of God. In this

heart the things of God are not important. Many Christians have priority problems. The things of God come second, while the world has first place.

“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14).

In this heart-soil there is softness and depth; but the thorns sap the strength of the soil and starve the plant.

Some of the thorns that choke out the things of God are:

- ✓ Cares of this world.
- ✓ Deceitfulness of riches.
- ✓ Desires of other things.
- ✓ Pleasures of this life.

These thorns devour our time, energy, money, and divide our loyalty.

The Whole (Responsive) Hearts

“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Matthew 13:8).

The whole (responsive) heart is the prepared heart, cleared of stones and clutter. This soil is soft and ready to receive the seed of God's Word. The Word sinks into its moistness and grows into a strong plant.

There is a goodness about this last type of heart-soil.

- ✓ Its softness and tenderness, receives and cherishes the seed.
- ✓ Its depth, allows it to take firm root, and not quickly lose its moisture.
- ✓ Its cleanness, gives its whole vigor and sap to the plant. (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*)

A heart soft and tender stirred to its depths by the great things of eternity and jealously

guarded from worldly things will produce much fruit.

Fruitfulness separates Christians from hypocrites. They bring forth fruit of righteousness and are called disciples of Christ (John 15:8).

Jesus did not say that this good ground had always been without stones or thorns. But the hindrances had been removed so that the seed could grow. Christians are not free from temptation, but they are free from its control.

Matthew Henry's Commentary gives a description of the hearers represented by the good ground:

- ✓ They are intelligent hearers; hearing the Word and understanding it.
- ✓ They are fruitful hearers, which is an evidence of their good understanding. Fruit is produced when the mind and lifestyle conforms to the gospel we have received and obeyed.
- ✓ They are not all alike in fruitfulness; some a hundred-fold, sixty, or thirty. Among fruitful Christians, some are more fruitful than others. The harvest will be plenteous if the ground is good, the fruit right, and the heart honest.

Jesus, the Heart Specialist

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

How is your heart? What type of soil are you? After examination, if you seem to fall short, there is still hope. Jesus, the heart specialist, knows how to clear, plow, and fertilize your heart-soil. He can make your life productive, but you have to ask for His help.

King David called for help when he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Jesus wants to do a work in our hearts. Let's let Him:

- ✓ Give us a new heart.
- ✓ Write His laws upon our hearts.

We need heart-soil that will bear much good fruit.

Conclusion

Let us examine our hearts to make sure that the soil is prepared to hear and obey the gospel. We need to be deeply rooted in the Word of God to live a holy life, pleasing and acceptable to God.

Is anything choking out God's Word in you? If there is, allow the Heart Specialist to give you a heart trans-plant.

"A tourist was once staying at an inn in a valley in northern Italy where the floor was dirty. He thought he should advise the landlady to scrub it, when he perceived that it was made of mud and the more she would scrub it the worse it would become.
So it is with our hearts; its corrupt nature will admit of no improvement; it must be made ever anew." (War Cry)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What Have You Learned?

1. What does the condition of a man's heart determine? _____

2. What parable is studied in this lesson? _____

3. What are the enemies of God's Word? _____

4. What is man's heart-soil capable of producing? _____

5. What does the reception of the Word depend upon? _____

6. List the four types of soil and hearts. _____

7. What kind of heart is compared to the hard ground? _____

8. What is the only thing that will prepare the hard heart for seed? _____

9. What four things identify stony, shallow hearts? _____

10. List three reasons for the lack of fruit in stony, shallow hearts. _____

11. According to *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, what do the stones and thorns destroy? _____

12. What are some of the thorns that choke out the things of God? _____

13. What type of heart is the whole heart? _____

14. What type of heart bears much fruit? _____

15. Who is the best heart specialist? _____

16. Quote Psalms 51:10. _____

17. Quote 2 Corinthians 5:17. _____

Lesson 8

Fruitful Actions

"Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening—it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet growth in grace and character" (Hebrews 12:11, TLB).

Focus: Fruit is produced by our actions. What we plant is what we will harvest.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

The produce of a person's life can be seen in his actions. What type of life he lives, and how he talks will indicate what crops are growing in his fields.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:16-20).

"Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will reap a crop of my love" (Hosea 10:12, TLB).

The Barn is Full

Many people have a barn full of fruit. But, what kind of fruit do they have? When a farmer plants potatoes, he expects to reap potatoes. He cannot plant potatoes and expect to reap yam. What is planted is what will grow. Sowing joy will reap joy. Love produces love. Hate produces hate.

"Don't be misled; remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it: a man will

always reap just the kind of crop he sows! If he sows to please his own wrong desires, he will be planting seeds of evil and he will surely reap a harvest of spiritual decay and death; but if he plants the good things of the Spirit, he will reap the everlasting life that the Holy Spirit gives him. And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up. That's why whenever we can we should always be kind to everyone, and especially to our Christian brothers" (Galatians 6:7-10, TLB).

Two different types of crops are:

- ✓ The fruit of the Spirit.
- ✓ The works of the flesh.

What is planted is what will grow.

The Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

"But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another" (Galatians 5: 22-26, *New Living Translation*).

(The explanation of each fruit is adapted from *The Full Life Study Bible*.)

- ✓ **Love**—seeking for the good of another person without thought of personal

gain (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:14).

- ✓ **Joy**—the feeling of gladness based on the love, grace, blessings, promises, and nearness of God that Christians feel (Psalm 119:16; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:8).
- ✓ **Peace**—the quietness of mind and heart based on the knowledge that all is well between the Christian and Christ (Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20).
- ✓ **Longsuffering**—endurance, patience, being slow to anger or despair (Ephesians 4:2; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 12:1).
- ✓ **Gentleness**—wanting to not hurt anyone (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12).
- ✓ **Goodness**—kindness to others, not allowing evil to have control (Matthew 21:12-13).
- ✓ **Faith**—loyalty by promise, commitment, honesty, and trustworthiness (Matthew 23:23; Romans 3:3; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:7; Titus 2:10).
- ✓ **Meekness**—the ability to be angry when anger is needed and humbly submissive when submission is needed (2 Timothy 2:25; 1 Peter 3:15)
- ✓ **Temperance**—this is self-control over desires, passions, including faithfulness to marriage vows (1 Corinthians 9:25; Titus 1:8; 2:5).

When the Spirit of God works in the hearts of men and women, the fruit of the Spirit is produced.

The fruit of the Spirit works in conflict with the works of the flesh.

The Works of the Flesh

After conversion, man continues to war within himself. The works of the flesh fight for control. Only a committed heart enables us to overcome the enemy.

The seventeen works of the flesh begin in the heart and mind of man and are manifested in his actions.

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21, *New Living Translation*).

(This list is also adapted from *The Full Life Study Bible*.)

- ✓ **Adultery**—sexual relations of a married person with someone other than their spouse.
- ✓ **Fornication**—immoral sexual conduct before marriage, and also includes taking pleasure in pornographic pictures, films, or writing.
- ✓ **Uncleanness**—sexual sins, evil deeds, including thoughts and desires of the heart.
- ✓ **Lasciviousness**—sensuality, following passions and desires to the point of having no shame or public decency.
- ✓ **Idolatry**—worship of spirits, persons, or graven images, also trusting in someone or something to have greater authority than God.
- ✓ **Witchcraft**—sorcery, black magic, worship of demons, and use of drugs to produce a spiritual experience.
- ✓ **Hatred**—intense, hostile intentions and acts, extreme dislike or enmity.
- ✓ **Variance**—quarreling, a struggle for superiority.
- ✓ **Emulations**—resentfulness, envy of another’s success.
- ✓ **Wrath**—explosive anger or rage that flares into violent words or deeds.

- ✓ **Strife**—selfish ambition and seeking of power.
- ✓ **Seditions**—introducing divisive teachings not supported by God’s Word.
- ✓ **Heresies**—division within the congregation into selfish groups that destroy the unity of the church.
- ✓ **Envyings**—resentful dislike for another person who has something you desire.
- ✓ **Murders**—killing a person intentionally and with malice.
- ✓ **Drunkeness**—impairing one’s mental or physical control by alcoholic drink.
- ✓ **Revellings**—excessive feasting; a party spirit involving alcohol, drugs, or sex.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Corinthians 6:9).

“Stop and think! Have you ever known a truly good and innocent person who was punished? Experience teaches that it is those who sow sin and trouble who harvest the same” (Job 4:7-8, *TLB*).

The Fruit of Righteousness

“Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions” (Isaiah 3:10, *NASB*).

Isaiah was instructed to encourage those who remained faithful to the Lord in the midst of unfaithful people. God wanted Israel to be a fruitful nation. He compares them to a blossoming vineyard (Isaiah 27:6).

The righteous will be like trees planted by the river waters (Psalm 1:3). God gives life to those who faithfully serve Him.

Two examples from Scripture of fruitful people are:

- ✓ Ruth (Ruth 3:10-11). God honored Ruth’s virtue. She forsook her homeland to be with her mother-in-law (Naomi). After Ruth

married Boaz, Obed was born. Obed was the father of David. This is the family line through which Christ came into the world.

- ✓ Jonathan (2 Samuel 9:1-7). Jonathan was loyal to David. David made a promise that he would always show Jonathan’s family kindness. Jonathan’s loyalty saved his son Mephibosheth.

“So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:10-11, *NIV*).

We need to be sincere, without any mixture of evil, completely pure before the Lord. This will produce fruit of righteousness.

The True Vine

Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches. He expects us to bear fruit. If we remain attached to Him, we will have life and bear fruit.

In John 15, Jesus talks about two types of branches on vines.

- ✓ The fruitless.
- ✓ The fruitful.

The branches that do not bear fruit, no longer have life in them that comes from enduring faith in and love for Christ. These dead branches are taken away and destroyed.

The fruit bearing branches have life because they are attached to the source of life. They love the Lord with all their being.

Sometimes the branches need pruning. God cuts away the things that would hinder growth, and the vital life-flow of Christ into them.

Our fruit must bring glory to God through our life and witness.

“And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God’s children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself” (Ephesians 3:17-18, *TLB*).

Conclusion

We will be known by our fruit (Matthew 7:16). What we have inside will come out in our actions. If Christ is the center of our lives, the fruit of the Spirit will be evident. But, if Christ has no place in our hearts, the works of the flesh will be seen.

We must harvest fruit of righteousness like Ruth, Jonathan, and many other people in the Bible. This can be done by staying connected to the True Vine Christ Jesus. He is our source of life.

What Have You Learned?

- 1. What is produced by our actions? _____
- 2. What kind of crop do we reap? _____

- 3. List the fruit of the Spirit. _____

- 4. What conflicts with the fruit of the Spirit?

- 5. What enables us to overcome the enemy? ____

- 6. What does this lesson say about Ruth? _____

- 7. What will produce fruit of righteousness? ____

- 8. Who is the true vine? _____
- 9. What are the two types of branches? _____

- 10. What must our fruit do? _____

- 11. How will we be known? _____

Lesson 9

The Destructive Three

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;" (1 Peter 2:11).

Focus: Satan's tricks fall into three categories. We must not be ignorant of his devices.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

All sin fits into one of three categories. Since the Garden of Eden, Satan and mankind have warred on these battlefields.

- ✓ Lust of the flesh.
- ✓ Lust of the eyes.
- ✓ Pride of life.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

Love of the World

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

We cannot love the Father and the world at the same time. Loving the world defiles our relationship with God and leads to spiritual destruction.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with

God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. Adultery is being unfaithful to our avowed love. Embracing the sins of the world, giving in to lusts, and enjoying evil are signs of unfaithfulness to God.

The world boasts of many things and makes promises it cannot keep. All that the world can give is temporary fulfillment.

"Friendship with the world" is not meaning that we should not be friends with the people of the world, but that believers must not have a close relationship with the world's evil system. We should be friendly, attempting to win them to ourselves and to Christ.

Jesus gave an example in Matthew 9:11 when He ate with the publicans and sinners. He did not become a part of the world, but attempted to show the way of salvation to those who were lost.

Lust of the Flesh

"The lust of the flesh is bodily and impure desires that seek their delight in women, strong drink, delicious viands (foods), and the like" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*).

The lust of the flesh is not only "lust for flesh," but also the "flesh's lusts." The lusts of the flesh are not all sexual. Man can lust after wealth. This lust has its base in the flesh. Flesh used in this moral sense (as opposed to the physical sense) is man's carnal nature, which has a tendency to displease God.

A man can lust after a woman (or the woman after a man). The thought enters the mind (usually through the eyes), and without self-control and discipline, the thought process leads to lust. At this point many fall into adultery or fornication.

The lust of the flesh is dangerous and destructive.

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).

"For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thessalonians 4:2-3).

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Lust of the Eyes

"Lust of the eyes is inordinate desires after finery of every kind, gaudy dress, splendid houses, superb furniture, expensive equipage, trappings, and decorations of all sorts" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*).

The eyes are the gate from the world to the flesh. While the lust of the flesh means physical pleasures, the lust of the eyes deals more with mental, artistic pleasures.

Satan uses advertisements to incite lust and wreck lives. The world places many glamorous things before our eyes, trying to make us believe that we need these things. This is a trick of the enemy to get our focus off Christ. Satan wants us to lust after earth's treasures.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Timothy 6:10-11).

Pride of Life

"Pride of life means hunting after honours, titles, and pedigrees; boasting of ancestry, family connections, great offices, honourable acquaintance, and the like" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*).

The "pride of life" causes us to lust after the world's recognition. We want fame and power.

"When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them" (Proverbs 11:2-3).

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18-19).

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

The less people know about God's Word, the easier they fall. The devil fell through pride, which is a good reason why we should take heed of pride. Pride turns angels into devils.

Source of the Destructive Three

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life do not come from God or lead to Him. They are of the world and offer temporary pleasure. They begin, grow, and end in man's desire to satisfy his carnal nature. They corrupt the mind, distract it from divine things, and leave it incapable of spiritual enjoyments. Doing the will of God leads to eternal life.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17).

Lust in the Garden

When Adam and Eve sinned, sin entered the entire human race (Romans 5:12). God told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This command was a moral test, to see if they would obey the Lord. The serpent took this as an open door to tempt Eve.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5).

When the serpent questioned God’s word, unbelief formed in Eve’s mind.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

Genesis 3:6 and 1 John 2:16 are connected.

Genesis 3:6	1 John 2:16
Eve saw the fruit on the tree, that it was good for food.	Lust of the flesh
It was pleasant to the eyes.	Lust of the eyes
It was desired to make one wise.	Pride of life.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their sin:

- ✓ Started the cycle of physical death in their bodies.
- ✓ Brought spiritual death, severing their close relationship with God.
- ✓ Made every man born a sinner.

Even though man is born a sinner, God continues to deal with him, attempting to draw him closer and rebuild the close relationship.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:12-13, *NKJV*).

Because of the corruption of sin, man desires to do his own thing and go his own selfish way.

Satan used God’s creations to “get back at God.” He fell because of lust and pride. He wanted to be like the most high. (See Isaiah 14:12-14.) Thus God cast him out of heaven with one-third of the angels.

Ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man has sought for moral knowledge and discernment apart from God. However, the search is fruitless.

Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11 records the temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness. Satan tried to entice Christ when He was at one of His weakest points. He had fasted for forty days and was weak in body. Satan tried to make Him stray from the will of God.

Each time Jesus submitted Himself to the Word of God, He overcame the temptation.

The Full Life Study Bible adds:

- ✓ Satan is our greatest enemy. As Christians we must be aware that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare with unseen, but real powers of evil. These evil forces often attack the child of God trying to weaken his stand for Christ.
- ✓ Without the Holy Spirit and the proper use of the Word of God, a Christian cannot overcome sin and temptation.

The Full Life Study Bible gives a list of how to use the Word of God to overcome temptation:

- ✓ Realize that through the Word of God you have the power to resist any appeal Satan can make.

- ✓ Memorize the Word of God.
- ✓ Meditate day and night on the verses you have memorized.
- ✓ Say the memorized passages to yourself and God the instant you are tempted.
- ✓ Recognize and obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit to live by God's Word.
- ✓ Surround all the above steps with prayer.

Conclusion

"An old maxim says, 'When lust takes control, God is quite unreal to us. When we are in the grip of lust, the reality of God fades.'" (T.F. Tenney)

Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life are devices Satan uses to try to destroy our relationship with God. When we are aware of his tricks, we can overcome him.

We can be victorious like Christ. The "destructive three" will not have an entrance into our lives if we:

- ✓ remain in the Word,
- ✓ stay full of the Spirit, and
- ✓ determine to live as Christ has shown us.

What Have You Learned?

1. Name three things that will destroy the child of God? _____

2. Is it possible to love God and the world at the same time? Give Scripture with your answer. _____

3. To what can friendship with the world be compared? _____

4. What must man flee from according to 1 Corinthians 6:18? _____
5. What is the gate from the world to the flesh?

6. Summarize what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21. _____

7. Why should we take heed of pride? _____

8. What will happen to the one who does the will of God? _____
9. Explain how Genesis 3:6 is connected to 1 John 2:16. _____

10. How did Jesus overcome temptation? _____

11. According to *The Full Life Study Bible*, how can the Word of God be used to overcome temptation? _____

12. List three ways to keep the "destructive three" out of our lives. _____

Lesson 10

Which Frame of Mind Are You?

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Focus: A negative frame of mind tears down and destroys, but a positive frame of mind builds up.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

A "frame of mind" is an attitude. An attitude is like a picture frame. The frame makes the picture look good or bad.

Our attitude determines how we think. A negative frame of mind (attitude) can destroy goals, relationships, and even the soul. But a positive frame of mind (attitude) can empower us to overcome sickness, poverty, trouble, and even insure salvation.

Negative attitudes are destructive but can be overcome and we can victoriously move forward with a brighter outlook on life.

Attitudes in the Bible

A study of the Word of God reveals many positive and negative attitudes. A few examples are:

Positive Attitude	Scripture Reference
A willing mind	I Chronicles 28:9
A Bible-based mind	Psalms 1:2
A God-focused mind	Isaiah 26:3
A teachable mind	Titus 2:12
A renewed mind	Romans 12:2

Negative Attitude	Scripture Reference
A reprobate mind	Romans 1:28
A defiled mind	Titus 1:15
A worldly mind	I John 4:5
An evil mind	Jeremiah 4:14
A poisoned mind	Acts 14:2

A Destructive Attitude

Negative attitudes destroy. There are people in the Bible whose attitude destroyed them. They did not have the mind of Christ.

Saul's rebellious attitude had him removed from the throne. He liked to do things his way. God told him to destroy all of the Amalekites, but Saul rebelled and took Agag the king captive (I Samuel 15:8-9).

Because Saul would not utterly destroy the enemy (I Samuel 15:9), he was destroyed. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (I Samuel 15:23). Satan uses rebellion to destroy Christians.

Saul's rejection as king does not mean God rejected him personally. He was removed from his office of leadership, but still could experience the forgiving power and close relationship with God.

Man will sin and perhaps be lowered in rank of office, but no sin is too great that God will not have mercy upon and forgive.

A Constructive Attitude

Joseph, the son of Jacob, had an excellent attitude. His attitude was constructive. He had many occasions to be hateful, but continued to have the mind of God (Genesis 37, 39-45).

Joseph was not like the other sons of Jacob. His attitude was pure even though he was sold as a slave, lies were told about him, and he was unjustly imprisoned.

Joseph's constructive attitude was a blessing to him, and those around him. When he went to Potiphar's house (Genesis 39), the Lord was

with Joseph (Acts 7:9-10). Joseph was not the only one blessed.

"From the day Joseph was put in charge [of Potiphar's house], the LORD began to bless Potiphar for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs began to run smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished" (Genesis 39:5, *NLT*).

He was taken to Egypt to bring salvation to God's people. His positive attitude built up and changed the future of a starving nation.

God knows what He is doing in our lives. He can take the bad and make something good.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, *NASB*).

How can we keep a positive attitude? The apostle Paul gave some pointers in I Thessalonians 5: 16-18:

- ✓ Be joyful.
- ✓ Keep on praying.
- ✓ No matter what happens, be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

A Further Study

The key verse tells us to let this mind be in us that was in Jesus Christ.

Paul is talking about Christ coming to the earth. The God of glory robed Himself in the flesh of a baby, and slipped into our world. Where was this King of kings born? Surely His parents were rich and famous.

This baby was born of a virgin, in a stable where the horses and cows slept. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger where the cows ate their grain. Our Saviour humbled Himself to the life of a servant, and became of no reputation so we could receive eternal life (Philippians 2:7).

He lived to serve and save others. Paul tells us to imitate Christ's humility and "be likeminded,

having the same love, being in one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2).

We should strive to be humble as the Lord was, following His example. We need to have the same attitude or frame of mind that Christ had.

Conclusion

October 10, 1989 was a beautiful day. Mr. E. Carter went to work as a logger as he normally did. His outlook on life was positive and praise-filled. Before nightfall, life would drastically change, challenging his attitude and trust in God.

Before noon, a tree hit Mr. Carter on the back, paralyzing him from the armpits down.

While paramedics were coming, Mr. Carter laid on the ground, near the tree that changed his life, and sang praises to his God. He sang, "I claim the blood that Jesus shed on Calvary."

Attitudes control us. For the past twelve years, Mr. Carter has not walked, but his positive attitude is infectious. He continues to spread the story of how God is good, and how God has been with him through it all.

Circumstances have given Mr. Carter a chance to develop a negative attitude, but he knows that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

By having the mind of Christ, we have power to overcome negative attitudes. We can victoriously move forward in Jesus' name.

"Two thoughts cannot occupy the mind at the same time, so the choice is ours as to whether our thoughts will be constructive or destructive."
(Betty Sachelli)

What Have You Learned?

1. What is a "frame of mind"? _____
2. Can negative attitudes be overcome? _____

3. What kind of attitude did Saul have? _____

4. What did Saul's attitude cost him? _____

5. How was Joseph different from his brothers?

6. How can we keep a positive attitude? _____

7. What is Paul talking about in Philippians 2:5?

8. What does Paul tell us in Philippians 2:2? ____

9. What does Betty Sachelli say about our thoughts? _____

Lesson 11

A Matter of Attitude

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Focus: Attitudes are important. A person's attitude determines his success or failure.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

David and Loretta Bernard in their book, *In Search of Holiness: A Practical Guide for Today*, say, "Attitudes are the most important basics of holiness. If a person has the right attitude towards God and his fellow man, his holiness will be seen in all areas of his life. If he does not have the right attitude, no amount of outward holiness will cover the lack of inward holiness in the sight of God. Wrong attitudes are the first signs of backsliding and are usually works of double standards."

Three Kings

Different attitudes are visible in each of the first three kings of Israel, Saul, David, and Solomon.

Saul - An Attitude Problem

"And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:2).

"And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years" (Acts 13:21).

Saul started out good. He was in favor with God when Samuel anointed him king of Israel.

"And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6).

When Saul was anointed king, God gave him another heart (1 Samuel 10:9). But three chapters later, Saul developed an attitude problem. Pride took over, and an "I can do it myself" attitude surfaced. King Saul decided he no longer needed God.

Saul's attitude problem consisted of the following:

- ✓ Impatience (1 Samuel 13:11-12).
- ✓ Partial obedience (1 Samuel 15:10-14).
- ✓ Rebellion (1 Samuel 15:22-23).
- ✓ Profanity (1 Samuel 14:24).
- ✓ Selfishness (1 Samuel 15:12; Philippians 3:15).
- ✓ Disloyalty (1 Samuel 14:39).
- ✓ Jealousy (1 Samuel 18:5-9).

(The above list was adapted from *A Man After God's Heart* by Luis Palau.)

Because of his attitude, Saul lost the kingdom. Disobedience and rebellion, the products of pride, cost him the throne. Saul's attitude led to his downfall.

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1 Samuel 16:14).

David—A Man after God's Own Heart

Saul's successor, David, had an entirely different attitude than Saul.

"And when he had removed him [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22).

David was just a boy when he was anointed to be the next king of Israel.

God told Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

David had a heart to do the things of God, but he was not perfect. His salvation was his ability to repent. When he sinned, he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew within me a right spirit [attitude]."

When Saul sinned, he made excuses for himself. See the difference in their attitudes?

"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day" (1 Kings 3:6).

Solomon—A Wise and Discerning Heart

When Solomon became king, God asked him what he wanted. Solomon asked for a discerning heart.

He could have asked for power, wealth, and many other things, but he asked for discernment. He desired to rule well. He wanted God's help in making the right decisions. .

"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-9, *NIV*).

Because Solomon's request pleased God, He blessed him with what he did not ask for. Besides a wise and discerning heart, God gave

Solomon riches and honor, and promised him a long life if he walked in His ways (1 Kings 3:10-14).

Could a wise and discerning heart be the key to greater things? Could it be a secret to other blessings of prosperity and honor? It was for Solomon.

Beatitudes

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:3-12).

We can have an attitude of meekness, mercy, peace, and where we strive to please the Lord. The Christian should hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Seven Attitudes of the Spiritual Life

One definition of "attitude" is "posture." Our attitude is reflected in our posture or body language.

The way we walk, sit, or stand, tells a story about our attitude and the way we view things. (This section has been adapted from the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*.)

✓ **Lying down for spiritual rest:**

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psalm 23:2).

- ✓ **Sitting for instruction:**
"And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word" (Luke 10:39).
- ✓ **Standing for warfare:**
"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;" (Ephesians 6:14).
- ✓ **Walking for fellowship:**
"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).
- ✓ **Running for progress:**
"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1).
- ✓ **Leaping for ecstasy (joy):**
"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8).
- ✓ **Mounting up for exaltation:**
"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Our attitude determines our altitude. How high we go in God and in life, whether we success or fail, depends largely upon our attitude. Look at Saul, David, and Solomon. Their lives tell us that it is so.

Conclusion

"Our attitude toward the world around us depends upon what we are ourselves. If we are selfish, we will be doubtful of others. If we are of a generous nature, we will be likely to be more trustful. If we are quite honest with ourselves, we won't always be expecting dishonesty in others. If we tend to be fair, we

won't feel that we are being cheated. In a sense, looking at the people around you is like looking in a mirror. You see a reflection of yourself." (Good Reading)

Arthur Schopenhauer adds, "To one man, the world is barren, dull, and superficial; to another rich, interesting, and full of meaning."

It is all a matter of attitude.

What Have You Learned?

1. According to David and Loretta Bernard, what are the most important basics of holiness? _____

2. What are wrong attitudes a first sign of? _____

3. Who were the first three kings of Israel? _____

4. According to Luis Palau, what did Saul's heart problem consist of? _____

5. What was David called? _____

6. For what did Solomon ask? _____

7. What did God give Solomon in addition to his request? _____

8. List the seven attitudes (postures) of the spiritual life. _____

9. What does our attitude toward the world depend upon? _____

10. What does Arthur Schopenhauer say in this lesson? _____

Lesson 12

The Unruly Member

*"But the tongue can no man tame;
it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James
3:8).*

Focus: An untamed tongue is powerful and destructive.

"The tongue is the only tool that grows sharper with constant use."
(Washington Irving)

What I Have Learned

Introduction

"Oh be careful little tongue what you say,
Oh be careful little tongue what you say,
For the Father up above is looking down in
love,
Oh be careful little tongue what you say."

The Revell Bible Dictionary defines "tongue" three ways.

1. *The moveable muscular structure in the mouth.* "So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink" (Judges 7:5).
2. *A language or dialect.* "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people" (Isaiah 28:11).
3. *Figuratively, one's speech.* "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and

arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Psalm 57:4).

"And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity" (Jeremiah 9:5).

The tongue can defend or defeat. The powers of life and death are in the tongue. (See Proverbs 18:21.)

The Untamed Tongue

James chapter three gives a detailed explanation of how dangerous an untamed tongue is. This little member can do great damage (James 3:5-6).

James compares the tongue to several common things.

- ✓ **A horse's bit (James 3:3).** The bit is placed in the horse's mouth to make it obey when the reins are tugged. With the bit in the horse's mouth, a man can control the animal.
- ✓ **A ship's helm.** Strong winds drive a ship, but a small wheel called a helm controls it. With a turn of this wheel, the ship goes wherever the captain chooses (James 3:4).
- ✓ **A fire.** A small fire can do a world of damage. The tongue can defile the rest of the body and destroy many lives (James 3:6).

"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2)

If man is able to tame his tongue, he can control his whole body.

The tongues of beasts, serpents, birds, and sea life have been tamed, but man cannot tame his tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:8). Only the Spirit of God can give us power to tame this disobedient member.

The Snare of the Soul

"A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 18:6-7).

With his lips, a fool starts a fight. He is snared in the trap built by his words.

"He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:26-28).

One of the easiest ways to sin is with the tongue. It is in a slippery place and can cause man to fall quickly.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

The Full Life Study Bible lists ways that we can sin with our mouth. We must avoid these snares.

- ✓ Gossiping / talebearing / slander (Proverbs 26:20-22).
- ✓ Lying / exaggeration (Exodus 20:16).
- ✓ Cursing (harsh words) / taking the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7).
- ✓ Teaching false doctrine (1 Timothy 6:3-5).
- ✓ Boasting (Psalm 10:3).
- ✓ **Talebearing, gossip, or slander**

These are of the same nature.

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 26:20-22).

Satan tries to use talebearers and gossips to destroy the church.

Talebearing sows discord.

"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Proverbs 20:19).

This is one of the seven abominations or things God hates, mentioned in Proverbs 6. No one who works an abomination will enter heaven (Revelation 21:27).

"To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2).

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4:11).

"Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I [God] cut off" (Psalm 101:5). That is a sobering thought.

"All gossipers are liars. Why?
If one's motive is wrong,
he can't keep his story straight."
(T. F. Tenney)

Those involved in gossiping repeat things that should not be repeated. They delight in sharing the "facts" about someone else, causing hurt, destroying confidence, and damaging lives. Like a fire, the story grows and becomes more destructive. This is not of God.

✓ **Lying and exaggeration**

Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16). God hates lies.

"And all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Lying costs people more than they ever want to pay.

Of the seven abominations God hates listed in Proverbs 6, two are connected to speech—a lying tongue and a false witness.

Stretching or adding to a story is called “exaggeration.” Many people fall into this sin. The original story was not interesting enough so to keep the attention of the audience, a few extra details are added.

- ☑ Twice Abraham lied when he said that Sarah was his sister and not his wife (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-16). He excused himself by calling a half-truth, the truth. (See Genesis 20:12.) But a half-truth is a lie. Truth is pure. It cannot be mixed with anything and remain truth.

Both of Abraham’s lies led to near disaster. The king would have married Sarah had God not intervened and given her back to Abraham.

- ☑ Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost and died for it (Acts 5:1-11).

“Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart” (Proverbs 26:23-25).

“A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Proverbs 26:28).

“It takes great ability to make a goat taste like a deer,
but Isaac’s wife knew how to do it. Deceit finds a way.”(T. F. Tenney)

Lying is not always done with words. Actions speak louder than words. Showing a false certificate or continually being with someone

other than your spouse can give the wrong impression to those around you.

Christians do not lie. They tell the truth, even if they have to pay the consequences.

Honesty is the best policy!

✓ ***Cursing, and taking the Lord’s name in vain***

One of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

Many people use the name of the Lord in loose conversation. They are not praising Him, but still they say, “God, Jesus, Lord, or Christ.” This is taking the name of the Lord in vain. If God is not being prayed to or praised, then His name need not be said. Slang expressions are unnecessary. This habit must be broken.

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37).

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (Romans 12:14).

Cursings and blessings should not come out of the same mouth. People inconsistently use their tongues to speak well of God and degradingly about their fellow man.

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:9-10).

When others do wrong, instead of cursing them, pray for them, taking their name before the throne of God. Bless them.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matthew 5:44).

✓ ***Boasting***

“For they [wicked people] brag about their evil desires; they praise the greedy and curse the LORD” (Psalm 10:3, *NLT*).

A bragger is self-centered. Talking about himself and his opinions is his highest joy.

The Solution

A Christian can refrain from sinning with his mouth by giving the Holy Spirit control. The guidance of the Spirit “casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The Spirit will make us aware of when we are offending God and our fellow man.

Conclusion

An untamed tongue can do much damage. We need the Holy Ghost to give us power to control this unruly member.

“If our lips would keep from slips,
Five things observe with care:
To whom you speak; of whom you speak;
And how, and when, and where.”
(William Norris)

What Have You Learned?

1. What are the three definitions that *The Revell Dictionary* gives of “tongue”? _____

2. What is said about the tongue in James 3?

3. Give one of the comparisons that James states about the tongue. _____

4. Quote James 1:19. _____

5. Name three ways that we can sin with our mouth. _____

6. How can a Christian refrain from sinning with his speech? _____

7. What does the guidance of the Spirit cast down? _____

8. What does talebearing sow? _____

9. Who is the father of lies? _____

10. Who died because they lied to the Holy Ghost? _____

11. What is the best policy? _____

12. Quote Exodus 20:7. _____

13. What should not come out of the same mouth? _____

Lesson 13

Words Fitly Spoken

*"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb,
sweet to the soul, and health to the bones"
(Proverbs 16:24).*

Focus: Words fitly spoken bring health and healing.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good it is" (Proverbs 15:23).

The wrong words can destroy, but words fitly spoken can bring health to the soul (wounded spirits) and healing to the body (bones) and relationships. (See Proverbs 12:18.) Fruitfulness and productivity are the rewards of words fitly spoken.

Pleasant Words

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

King Solomon drew a word picture to show us how important right words are. A word spoken at the right time and the right place can have a beautiful affect on someone's life. Advice, or comfort, given seasonably, and in apt expressions, is like golden balls resembling apples, or like apples of a golden color, framed with silver. The right words are priceless. As a picture is pleasing to the eye, so is a word fitly spoken pleasing to the ear.

Honest Conversation

In the past, a man's word was as good as a written guarantee. When a man gave his word, he did what he said. His word could be trusted.

"Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool" (Proverbs 19:1).

An upright, poor man is favored over a rich, lying fool.

"A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Proverbs 18:20-21).

The following list of Incentives of Speech was adapted from *Peace in Society and Purity in Speech*.

- ✓ **Honest words bear fruit.** "A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled" (Proverbs 18:20).
- ✓ **Honest words are valuable.** "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel" (Proverbs 20:15).
- ✓ **Honest words bring freedom.** "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).
- ✓ **Honest words bring acceptance.** "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend" (Proverbs 22:11).

Revealing Words

The tongue is the hardest member of the body to control. David and Loretta Bernard in their book *In Search of Holiness: A Practical Guide for Today* put it this way, "The way you use your tongue is a good indication of your relationship with God. The tongue speaks whatever is in the heart."

Whatever is in the heart comes out in conversation. Maybe it will not all come out at once, but eventually it will show itself.

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance

of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

Warren W. Wiersbe in *The Dynamics of Preaching* said, "Since what we say with the tongue comes from the heart, we had better be careful about the vocabulary we use when we talk to ourselves. When we least expect it, what we've been saying in our hearts will come out of our lips and embarrass us."

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"
(Proverbs 4:23).

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 15:18).

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

The mouth talks about the things that fill the heart.

Other Tongues

Have you ever wondered why God used speaking in other tongues as the initial sign of receiving the Holy Ghost? One reasonable explanation is that the tongue is the hardest part of a man to tame. Once God has control of the tongue, He has the life.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

This disobedient member is the hardest for us to yield to God. Therefore, when we speak in tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance, it signifies that we have given God complete control.

Powerful Words

Jesus taught the importance of the tongue when He said that men would be judged by their words.

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

To use the power of words constructively, let us pray:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).

Conclusion

Words have the power to bring life or death. They will either build or destroy.

If we want to be bring health and healing to ourselves and those who hear us, our words must be fitly spoken.

"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:8).

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

"Dear Father,
Help me bridle my tongue, so that
on judgment day I will not be found
guilty of assault with a deadly weapon."
(Anonymous)

What Have You Learned?

1. What are pleasant words to the soul and to the bones? _____
2. Quote Proverbs 25:11. _____

3. What powers are in the tongue (Proverbs 18:20-21)? _____
4. Give one of the Incentives for Pure Speech listed in this lesson. _____

5. What do David and Loretta Bernard say about the tongue and relationships with God?

6. Quote Proverbs 4:23. _____

7. What is a reason why God used speaking in tongues as the initial sign of receiving the Holy Ghost? _____

8. Name two things that words can do. _____

9. What psalm can we pray when trying to control the unruly member? _____

10. Give the quote at the end of this lesson. ____

When to Keep Your Mouth Shut

by Jessie Rice Sandberg

("The Sum of My Happiness")

Do Not Open Your Mouth:

1. In the heat of anger - Proverbs 14:17.
2. When you do not have all the facts - Proverbs 18:13.
3. When you have not verified the story - Deuteronomy 17:6.
4. If your words will offend a weaker brother - 1 Corinthians 8:11.
5. If your words will be a poor reflection of the Lord or your friends and family - 1 Peter 2:21-23.
6. When you are tempted to make light of holy things - Ecclesiastes 5:2.
7. When you are tempted to joke about sin - Proverbs 14:9.
8. If you would be ashamed of your words later - Proverbs 8:8.
9. If your words would convey a wrong impression - Proverbs 17:27.
10. If the issue is none of your business - Proverbs 14:10.
11. When you are tempted to tell an outright lie - Proverbs 4:24.
12. If your words will damage someone's reputation - Proverbs 16:27.
13. If your words would destroy a friendship - Proverbs 16:28.
14. When you are feeling critical - James 3:9.
15. If you cannot speak without yelling - Proverbs 25:28.
16. When it is time to listen - Proverbs 13:1.
17. If you may have to eat your words later - Proverbs 18:21.
18. If you have already said it more than one time (then it becomes nagging) - Proverbs 19:13.
19. When you are tempted to flatter a wicked person - Proverbs 24:24.
20. When you are supposed to be working instead - Proverbs 14:23.

**"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue
keepeth his soul from troubles"
(Proverbs 21:23).**

Lesson 14

Holy Hands

*"I will therefore that men pray every where,
lifting up holy hands,
without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).*

Focus: God desires worship that comes from a clean heart and is expressed with holy hands.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

"Oh be careful little hands what you touch,
Oh be careful little hands what you touch,
For the Father up above is looking down in
love,
Oh be careful little hands what you touch."

"Hand" is referred to 1,600 times in the Bible and is symbolic of power or ability. The hand can:

- ✓ Bless or curse;
- ✓ Lift up or tear down;
- ✓ Worship or scorn.

Hands in Worship

Barnes' Notes gives an insight to the key verse, 1 Timothy 2:8. "Holy hands here, means hands that are not defiled by sin. When men approach God, they should do it in a pure and holy manner."

Spreading and raising of the arms and hands in prayer was a common custom practiced by both Jews and heathens. While praying, they reached out and symbolically held onto the help they asked for. (See Psalm 28:2; 63:4; 119:48; 134:2.)

Right after talking about men lifting up holy hands, Timothy referred to the way women should dress.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with

shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Timothy 2:9).

Why would God say that men should lift holy hands and women should dress modestly? What is the connection?

Barnes' Notes gives a reasonable explanation, "The apostle had stated particularly the duty of men in public worship (1 Timothy 2:8), and he now proceeds to state the duty of women. All the directions here evidently refer to the proper manner of conducting public worship, and not to private duties; and the object here is to state the way in which he would have the different sexes appear."

Body language speaks as loudly as verbal speech. We communicate with our hands. Hands have a language of their own. They express:

✓ **Victory**

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (Exodus 17:12).

As long as Moses held up the rod of God, which symbolized power and authority, Israel prevailed over the Amalekites.

The rod in the air showed their dependence on God. They had faith that God would bring the victory. When we lose our dependence on God, the enemy will prevail.

The waving of the hands in the air is a sign of victory. It is a way of saying, "To God be the glory for the things He has done."

✓ **Supplication**

Outstretched hands are a sign of reaching out to God. They indicate pleading or supplication (Psalm 88:9).

"Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Psalm 68:31).

Can a country have hands? This verse refers to the time when Ethiopia would stretch forth its hands in supplication.

✓ **Uplifting**

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Hebrews 12:12).

The arms, hands, and lower limbs are the strength of the body. If they are weak, the whole structure is unstable.

Hands hang down because of fear. The enemy uses fear to make us think we are weak and unable to do anything for God. Fear takes our focus off God and weakens our hands and knees.

Do not allow your brother or sister's hands to hang down. Lift them up. Strengthen them through encouragement. Hold their hands high.

✓ **Submission**

"Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:11-12, *NIV*).

Using our hands to do God's work requires submission. The work of our hands is not necessarily measured by how much we do, but by whether or not we give our all. When working for the Lord, it is up to us to give our best.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

A submissive person opens his hands, surrendering all. Whereas, a closed tight fist indicates clutching and an unwillingness to yield.

How do you receive a gift? Can you properly hold the package with closed hands? In order to receive the gifts God has for His children, we must open our hands. The same concept works when giving a gift. If you clutch the gift, the other person cannot receive it. At times, God may be more willing to give than we are to receive.

Heart and Hands

Throughout Scripture, the heart and hands are referred to in the same passage (Job 11:13; Psalm 24:4; 78:72; 73:13). Why?

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

What is in the heart dictates the actions of the hands. What do we hold dear in our hearts? The works of our hands reveals our priorities.

Look at two people doing the same job. One likes the job and the other does not. Who is the most likely to do the best work? The one who likes his job. Why? Because his heart is in what he is doing and he will give it his all. The attitude of his heart expresses itself through the deeds done by his hands.

God's people have pure hearts and clean hands. Jesus taught about the hypocrite who was clean on the outside, but dirty inside.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25-26).

Man is easily fooled by outward cleanliness. However, God sees the heart. We cannot have clean hands and a dirty heart at the same time.

Clean hands involve abstaining from things that pollute and defile. Many sins are committed with the hands. They are conceived in the mind but carried out with the hands. For example:

1. Stealing
2. Murder
3. Fornication/adultery
4. Vandalism
5. Sexual harassment

The actions of the hands can plant the seed of sin in the mind. For example—when touching a person of the opposite sex who is not your spouse. In church circles we shake hands and say, “Praise the Lord.” It should stop at that. Holding hands can lead to lustful thoughts. Continued interaction feeds the sexual hormones. If the body is not brought under subjection, sin can enter and defile the body, possibly leading to adultery or fornication.

“(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using)” (Colossians 2:21-22).

The apostle Paul warned against infecting our lives by touching and handling forbidden things. Do not purposely put yourself in a tempting situation. Keep yourself pure before the Lord.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24: 3-5).

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

In the Old Testament, a man who was ceremonially unclean could not enter the Temple. He first had to go to the priest and be pronounced clean.

Matthew Henry’s Commentary adds, “The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands. They are not to be soiled with undeserved increase, or anything else that would make a man unclean and offensive to God.”

The work of man’s hands will be counted as nothing if his heart is not pure. Both our hands and our hearts must be clean before our works and our worship are acceptable to God.

“I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD” (Psalm 26:6).

“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:8).

“The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9).

Conclusion

Lifting up holy hands in worship shows God that we love Him. The language of the hands speaks the feelings of the heart. God accepts worship that comes from a pure heart and is expressed by holy hands.

What Have You Learned?

1. What are the three things that the hand can do? _____

2. What does 1 Timothy 2:8 show? _____

3. List the things that the hands can express. __

4. What happened when Moses’s hands were up? _____

5. What does Psalm 68:31 mean? _____

6. What type of hands will a submissive person have? _____

7. What did Jesus teach about in Matthew 23?

8. List three sins that start in the mind and are carried out by the hands. _____

9. Give an example of a sin that starts with the hands. _____

10. What are the two things that need to be clean according to James 4:8? _____

Lesson 15

Dedicated Hands

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Focus: The Lord wants us to use our hands for His work. It is up to us whether or not we dedicate them to His service.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Our hands represent our passion. What we do with them shows what we are dedicated to. For example:

- ✓ A farmer uses his hands to break the soil and plant the seed.
- ✓ A writer uses his hands to put on paper the words of his mind.
- ✓ A fisherman casts the net and pulls it in with his hands.

Giving Hands

"Hand Go! Hands Come!"
(African Proverb)

This section was adapted from James Poitras in his book *ACTS: God's Training Manual for Today's Church*.

A Christian should have giving hands. In the Book of Acts the believers sold their possessions and gave to the church to help in the financial crisis.

In two days, the church went from 120 people to at least 3,120. This meant that there were many more people to feed.

The believers realized how the Lord had blessed them and felt that they should share their blessings. They sold their possessions and brought the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need.

Many people do not want to give out of the abundance of their wealth, but they expect God to give to them abundantly. God does not operate that way.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

How you give is how you will receive. Reluctance will reap reluctance, but joyous giving reaps joy.

"God has given us two hands – one for receiving and the other for giving."

(Billy Graham)

We have a call to sacrificial giving.

The sacrificial giving of the Macedonian church pleased the Lord.

"Now I want to tell you, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in Jerusalem. Best of all, they went beyond our highest hopes, for their first action was to dedicate themselves to the Lord and to us for whatever directions God might give them" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, *NLT*).

Their sacrifice produced a sweet, acceptable aroma (Philippians 4:18). Their giving also brought them prosperity (Philippians 4:17).

Break the curse of poverty by giving more than you can afford, because you can never outgive the Lord.

God gives us a promise when we sacrificially give to Him. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Warring Hands

"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms" (Psalm 18:34).

In spiritual warfare we protect ourselves by holding the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:16-17).

Hold high the shield of faith. Faith in God's Word will protect us from Satan's fiery darts.

What is faith? Hebrews 12:1 tells us it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is believing without evidence. Faith is our defense against Satan's attacks.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The sword is the only defensive piece in the soldier's armor.

It is called the sword of the Spirit because it is the Spirit of God dwelling inside us that makes the Word of God effective in our lives.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Matthew Henry's Commentary has an interesting thought to add, "Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel temptation with. Christ Himself resisted Satan's temptations with, 'It is written'

(Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10). This (the Word of God), being hid in the heart, will preserve from sin, killing those lusts and corruptions that are hidden there."

When Satan throws his fiery darts at us, we can hold high the shield of faith and use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to quench his arrows.

- ✓ If he comes at us with poverty, we can quote Philippians 4:19.
- ✓ When Satan aims an arrow of lust at us, we can escape by quoting Philippians 4:8.
- ✓ When he pierces us with sickness, we can cut him down with I Peter 2:24.
- ✓ When Satan throws persecution at us, we will rejoice as we quench his fiery dart with Matthew 5:10-12.

Whatever dart comes at us, with the shield of faith and the sword of God's Word we can defeat Satan.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

Ministering Hands

Christ is the head, and we are the body. We are the limbs that get the work done. He gave us His Spirit and then told us to go and tell everyone about it. Christ works through the hands of man.

While Christ was on the earth, He touched the children, the sick, and even lepers. His hands ministered to those around Him everywhere He went. As Christ's hands, it is our duty to reach out to people, and meet their needs.

Christ has no hands but our hands to do
His work today
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in
the way
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell
men how He died

He has no help but our help to bring them
to His side.

We are the only Bible the careless world
will read.

We are the sinner's gospel; we are the
scoffer's creed;

We are the Lord's last message, given in
word and deed;

What if the type is crooked? What if the
print is blurred?

What if our hands are busy with other work
than His?

What if our feet are walking where sin's
allurement is?

What if our tongue is speaking of things
His lips would spurn?

How can we hope to help Him or welcome His
return?

(Annie Johnston Flint)

Working Hands

Christ has given His children power to do His work.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The church only progresses when we have a mind to work. Growth will not just happen.

Nehemiah and the Jews in Jerusalem are good examples of "hands-on" laborers (Nehemiah 3-6). Because the people were unified, saw the task before them, rolled up their sleeves, and got to work, they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in fifty-two days.

Many people, when they are saved, are shocked to discover how much plain, old-fashioned hard work is involved in serving God. Lazy people have a hard time living for God. Some miss opportunities because it is disguised as hard work.

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28).

"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (I Thessalonians 4:11).

Conclusion

Giving, warring, ministering, working—all require dedicated hands.

Christ needs our hands to do His work. We will face opposition, but He has equipped us with the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit so we can do the job.

What Have You Learned?

1. What type of hands should a Christian have?

2. Quote Luke 6:38. _____

3. What does Billy Graham say about hands?

4. Quote Philippians 4:19. _____

5. What do we need to hold in our hands during warfare? _____

6. What is faith? _____

7. What is the sword of the Spirit? _____

8. What type of arguments are the most powerful? _____

9. Who are Christ's hands? _____

10. When will the church progress? _____

Lesson 16

Have Ears? Listen

*"Apply thine heart unto instruction,
and thine ears to the words of knowledge"
(Proverbs 23:12).*

Focus: To live an overcoming Christian life, we must open our ear door to God's voice, but shut out the filth of the world.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Oh be careful little ears what you hear,
Oh be careful little ears what you hear,
For the father up above is looking down in
love,
Oh be careful little ears what you hear."

What are we listening to? What information is entering our mind through the doorway of our hearing? It is important that we listen to things that lift up and exalt Christ.

The Ear Door

Biblically, the ear represented receiving, understanding, and responding to God's Word.

"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth [receiveth, understandeth] my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock" (Luke 6:47-48).

"He that is of God heareth [receiveth, understandeth] God's words: ye therefore hear [receive, understand] them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47).

Many times Jesus admonished, "He who has ears, let him hear [receive, understand]." (See

Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 13:43; Mark 4:9, 23, 7:16; Luke 8:8, 14:35.)

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says, "In biblical times people spoke to each other's ears: instead of listening they 'inclined their ears.' When they prayed, God 'bowed down His ear' to hear them."

The same reference also adds, "The ear had a significant part in some Jewish ceremonies. It was sanctified by blood in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood (Exodus 29:20; Leviticus 8:24), and at the cleansing of a leper (Leviticus 14)."

The Seeking Ear

"The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15).

Why have seminars, conventions, or conferences? We want to learn more about the Word of God. We want to hear more from anointed men and women of God who can help us grow in Christ.

Those who seek knowledge will find it. God never said seeking was time wasted, but "seek and you shall find" (Matthew 7:7). If the ear seeks knowledge, the heart gets it, keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must get knowledge, not only into our heads, but also into our hearts.

"Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 23:12).

The Itching Ear

Laws are made for our benefit. (See Deuteronomy 32:46-47.)

Many people believe if they do not listen to the laws, they will not be held accountable because they "didn't know."

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

To know God’s laws, we must heed the teaching of His Word. God’s commandments were given to show us the right way to live. When the man of God is preaching, or teaching, it is to our benefit to listen with diligence.

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:3-5, *NIV*).

Many people want the gospel to be sugarc coated. Their ears itch to hear pleasing things—things other than the truth. This is dangerous territory.

“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9).

There is a tremendous cost in turning away the ear. If we do not regard God’s Word, our prayers will not be accepted, and they will be as an abomination to God. Refusing to listen to God’s Word costs us God’s listening ear. If we want God to listen to us, we must listen to Him.

“But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke . . . Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes” (Proverbs 1:24-31, *NIV*).

“To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it” (Jeremiah 6:10).

The Closed Ear

“But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jeremiah 7:24).

When we fail to listen to the Word of God, we backslide. The people of Judah set up a competition between their will and God’s. They did not incline their ears to listen, or their hearts to obey His commandments. They wanted their own way and did as they chose, ignoring what God asked of them. They relied on their own counsel, rather than the Word of God.

At Mount Sinai Israel said that whatever God said they would do. (See Exodus 19:8.) They started well, but less than two years later, they fell behind at Kadesh-Barnea when they wanted to choose a new leader and return to Egypt (Numbers 14). God told them to go forward, but they turned their ears from hearing. If they had just obeyed, all would have been well, but they drew back in rebellion and paid for it.

The Selective Ear

Satan will try to get control of our mind through our hearing in a variety of ways.

- ✓ Advertisements (radio, television, magazines)
- ✓ Movies/Videos
- ✓ Music (The lyrics are suggestive and the music can inspire evil.)
- ✓ Conversations
- ✓ Sounds

We must be careful what we listen to. The enemy is out to claim our soul and will try

every trick he can to succeed. Through prayer and a life committed to Christ, we can stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Choosing not to listen to sinful things (such as foul language and bad stories) may cost us popularity, and even friendships. However, the bottom line is, our walk with Christ is more important. We can choose not to listen to the filth of the world.

"Two little girls were looking at the great picture of Christ at the door. One asked the other, 'Why don't they let Him in?' The other replied, 'Maybe they're down in the basement and can't hear Him!' Too often we are down in the basement of our lower selves, the cellars of sin, and we hear not His voice. The big question today is not, 'Is God speaking?', but 'Are you listening?'" (*The Vance Havner Quote Book*).

The Heart and The Ear

What is the connection between the heart and the ears? What you hear enters your heart. The ears are very tender. What is heard is put into memory and later comes out in conversation.

"Consider carefully what you hear" (Mark 4:24, *NIV*).

A child will repeat much, if not all, of what he hears. What is being programmed into your children's hearts and minds?

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

Israel had a history of refusing to listen to God. They listened to the ungodly nations around them.

In his message in Acts 7, Stephen warned the Jews to turn from their wicked ways. When we harden our hearts towards the Word of God, judgment comes. Those who refuse to hear [receive, understand] will pay a tremendous price—eternal death.

The Ear of the Lord

God is all seeing (Proverbs 5:21, 15:34). It can also be said that He is all hearing. He hears the faintest cry of a child or worried mother. The simple mention of His name gets God's attention immediately. God wants to hear our voices calling upon Him.

"In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears" (Psalm 18:6).

God hears every need. He also hears and delights in our prayers and praise (Psalm 71:8; Proverbs 15:8).

King Hezekiah wrote about God hearing his cry. "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications" (Psalm 130:2).

God's ears are always listening for our voice.

"He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" (Psalm 94:9).

Conclusion

<p>"He who has ears, hears what he chooses." (Anonymous)</p>
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People can be deaf by choice. Sounds that disturb one person's thoughts may never affect another one's. The hearing sense can be turned on or off.

For example: A mother and father both have the same hearing sense. However, at the faintest movement or cry from the baby, the mother is up for the midnight feeding, while the father continues to sleep. Why? The maternal instinct sharpened the mother's sense of hearing, allowing her to hear the baby. The mother sleeps with one ear open, while her husband sleeps with both ears closed.

We can be the same with the world. We can be deaf by choice, blocking out the filth and evil. Although we have ears, we do not have to hear all that goes on around us.

On the other hand, we can choose to hear God's voice and live an overcoming Christian life.

"He that hath an ear,
let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7).

What Have You Learned?

1. What does the ear represent biblically? _____

2. Quote Proverbs 18:15. _____

3. What happens when the ear seeks knowledge? _____

4. What is the cost of turning away the ear from God's Word? _____

5. Explain what happened to Judah when they failed to listen to the Word of God. _____

6. What is the connection between the heart and the ears? _____

7. What gets God's immediate attention? _____

8. What does God like to hear? _____

9. Quote Psalm 94:9. _____

10. Give the final quote in this lesson and explain what it means. _____

Lesson 17

Clear Vision

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"
(Matthew 6:22-23).

Focus: We need to guard our eyes from the filth of the world. Focusing on Jesus keeps our vision clear.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

To live a holy and acceptable life, we need a clear vision, focused on Christ.

Without a vision, people perish. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

Blinded

The god of this world (Satan) blinds people to the truth so they will not be saved.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan knows that one of the easiest ways to enter the mind is through the eyes. People like things that appeal to the eye. Therefore, Satan fashions the things of this world to tempt the flesh. He gives the worldly lifestyle a glamorous appearance to make it appear good and exciting.

After being exposed to these temptations over and over, we become accustomed to them and accept them as normal. If we look at and think about sin long enough, we eventually sin, which is what the devil wants. Many people think that they have to commit the act before they have sinned, but allowing it to remain in our thoughts is also sin.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32).

People who take pleasure in seeing sin are as guilty as those who have committed the sin.

Satan wants us to focus on immorality, violence, pornography, and other lustful things. He displays these things through the media, movies, television, books, magazines, and advertisements.

"It is not the darkness that blocks your vision so much as what is between you and God"
(Gail B. Trafford).

Eyes not guarded against the filth of the world, eventually become blind. Spiritual blindness robs man of eternal life.

Enlightened

There is hope for the blind. God is forgiving and ever-loving. When we obey the plan of salvation, the spiritual scales fall from our eyes and our understanding is enlightened.

We do not see things as before. When the film of the world is removed, God's way becomes clear.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the

hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:17-18).

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Jesus' blood covers all sin. The cleansing power of the blood is always available to mankind as he draws nearer to God.

When we are cleansed by the blood, God gives us light so we can stay focused on Him. When we focus on Him, understanding comes.

Focused

"My eyes are ever looking to the Lord for help, for he alone can rescue me" (Psalm 25:15, *TLB*).

We keep our eyes from evil by staying focused on Jesus. When we look at Him, the things of this world lose their appeal.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of this earth
Will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace."

The prophet Isaiah made a promise, "And shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isaiah 33:15-16).

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 121:1).

If we can keep our eyes on Jesus, we will have strength to refrain from sin. Stay focused on Him!

"Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you" (Proverbs 4:25, *NIV*).

Just as the runner keeps his focus on the finish line, so should the Christian look unto the author and finisher of his faith.

How can we stay focused? How can we guard our eyes?

✓ **Make a Covenant.**

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalm 101:3).

The psalmist David promised that he would not set any wicked thing before his eyes. How appropriate this is for our day.

✓ **Read God's Word.**

We can only stay focused on a God we know. Reading about Him opens our eyes to His power, love, and grace.

✓ **Prayer and fasting.**

Talking to Jesus helps us think about Him more. We rarely think about someone we never talk to.

✓ **Be around other focused Christians.**

United we stand, divided we fall. There is strength in numbers. When we feel weak and like giving in, our Christian friends can encourage us to press on.

"But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD" (Psalm 141:8, *NIV*).

Conclusion

As Christians, we must guard our eyes. Evil enters the mind through the eyes. Whatever we need to keep out of our minds, we must first keep away from our eyes. Clear vision is vital to a Christian.

"Vision is essential for survival. It is spawned by faith, sustained by hope, sparked by imagination, and strengthened by enthusiasm. It is greater than sight, deeper than a dream, broader than an idea. Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the

safe, the expected. No wonder we perish without it!" (Charles R. Swindoll)

A clear vision that is focused on Jesus sees the light of the gospel and envisions great things in God.

What Have You Learned?

- 1. What do we need in order to live a holy and acceptable life? _____

- 2. What is one of the easiest ways to get into the mind? _____

- 3. What would Satan like for us to focus on? _____

- 4. What is spiritual blindness? _____

- 5. How can the sight of a spiritually blind person be restored? _____

- 6. When does this restoration take place? _____

- 7. Quote 1 John 1:7. _____

- 8. Give the comparison between the Christian and the runner. _____

- 9. How can we stay focused? How can we guard our eyes? _____

- 10. Finish this statement. United we stand, _____.

- 11. How important is clear vision to a Christian? _____

- 12. What does Charles R. Swindoll say in this lesson? _____

Lesson 18

Walking in His Ways

*"Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (Psalm 86:11, NIV).*

Focus: A person will be able to stand when walking in the truth.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

" Oh be careful little feet where you walk,
Oh be careful little feet where you walk,
For the Father up above is looking down in
love,
Oh be careful little feet where you walk."

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established" (Proverbs 4:26).

When living for Christ, our destination is known. We must walk the path of righteousness, asking God to give us the strength we need to keep moving forward.

The Proper Footwear

The Israelites ate the Passover with their shoes on. They were ready to travel.

Jesus commanded His disciples to wear sandals, so they could travel and do His work.

Just as the Israelites were on the way to possess the Promised Land, we are on a journey from this strange land to our eternal home. We must stand tall as we travel through this life.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15).

In the Bible, shoes, or greaves (leggings) of brass, were part of the military armour. They

protected the feet and legs from being wounded by sharp sticks, stones, and unexpected holes. If a soldier's feet were wounded, he could no longer march, and the enemy could overtake him. A wounded soldier could neither stand to resist his enemy, chase him, nor run from him.

When a soldier went to battle, he needed proper footwear. As we go into spiritual battle, it is important that our feet are protected. A Christian who has properly dressed his feet can make it through obstacles and trials.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

The devil wants the soul of man, and he does not fight nice. He will try every trick he has to try to knock us off our feet. In order to stand tall and strong, we must be steady on our feet so the winds of false doctrine and the storms of life cannot knock us over.

The road of life has many obstacles such as misunderstandings, opposition, or apathy that make it difficult to continue walking if our feet are not properly shod.

Ill-fitting shoes leave blisters. We must wear our own shoes. If we try to wear someone else's, our feet will become sore. God has called us to a personal walk of holiness where we walk at our own pace, wearing properly fitted shoes.

Walking on the right path is important. A child of God has only one path to walk, the path of righteousness. "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18, NIV).

The Plan of Salvation is the gateway to the path of truth. At the gate we begin the journey toward the finish line, walking in righteousness and truth all the way.

After obeying the plan of salvation (Acts 2:38), we are armed with the true message, and we can withstand whatever Satan throws in our path. The preparation of the gospel allows us to maintain a steady pace, overcoming difficulties and dangers.

"The preparation of the gospel of peace signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart, to adhere to the gospel and abide by it"
(Matthew Henry's Commentary).

The Leading Heart

"Where your heart is, your feet will follow."
(Anonymous)

"The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Psalm 37:31).

"Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way" (Psalm 44:18).

What is in the heart determines where the feet walk. If Christ lives in us, we will walk in the right direction. The Spirit of God leads in the path of righteousness. A sincere love for God will not allow us to visit worldly places.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"(Psalm 23:3).

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23-24).

Keeping His Commandments

"Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (Deuteronomy 8:6).

To walk in His ways we must keep His commandments. Here are some other things that will help walk in truth.

- ✓ Seek God's will in making life decisions (Proverbs 20:24).
- ✓ Make the church a regular stopping place (Luke 2:37).
- ✓ Walk only where Christ would walk (Colossians 2:6).
- ✓ Have family devotions, as well as personal devotions. Show your children the way (Psalm 5:3).

Psalms 1:1 states:

- ✓ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
- ✓ nor standeth in the way of sinners,
- ✓ nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Obedying the Word of God keeps us on the right road. Seeking after God and His righteousness is walking in His ways. Following after the Spirit of God keeps our feet on the right path.

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133).

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

The Lord will not force anyone to do anything or go anywhere. But He will gladly guide our footsteps when we ask for His help.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Walking in the light of God's Word shows us the impurities in our lives. When a light is turned on, the dirt is revealed. Cleansing is needed to remove the dirt. The light of Christ

reveals the sin, and the blood of Christ removes it.

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:1-2).

He who walks uprightly, works righteousness (does right), and tells the truth. He stands tall before God and his fellow man.

In Hannah’s song of praise or prayer, she mentions the feet. “He will keep the feet of his saints” (1 Samuel 2:9).

When we walk in truth, God will not allow our feet to slip.

At His Feet

Jesus Christ walked in integrity, compassion, and submission.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Luke records that Jesus came to earth, “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). He came as a baby to teach us how to walk.

If we want to learn how to walk, we must spend some time at Jesus’ feet. Sitting at His feet and looking at His example will tell us a great deal about what we should do. While Martha was worried about the meal, Mary forgot about the cares of life and sat at His feet.

“And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (Luke 10:39).

Conclusion

Obedying God’s Word will keep us on the path of truth. Having our feet properly shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace will

keep us from stumbling and falling as we walk in His ways.

“I have refused to walk the paths of evil, for I will remain obedient to your Word” (Psalm 119:101, *TLB*).

What Have You Learned?

1. Quote Proverbs 4:26. _____

2. Why did the Israelites wear their shoes when eating the Passover? _____

3. What is the quote about the heart and feet in this lesson? _____

4. Who orders the steps of a good man? Give Scripture with the answer. _____

5. Explain the importance of a Christian wearing the right footwear. _____

6. What does Ephesians 6:12-13 say? _____

7. What must one keep in order to walk in the ways of the Lord? _____

8. Quote Psalm 119:133. _____

9. What will walking in the light of His Word do for us? _____

10. What should we do if we want to learn how to walk in Christ? _____

Conclusion

Reflecting His Glory

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Focus: As Christians, we are to reflect God's glory. People are watching us. We must be holy for He is holy.

What I Have Learned

Introduction

Are we reflecting God's glory so that others see His love, mercy, and compassion in us? Do we reflect Jesus?

It's good to be a Christian and know it, but it's better to be a Christian and show it!

Mirrors

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).

Man was created in the image of God. We are to reflect His image.

A mirror reflects the image set before it. When you look in the mirror, you see yourself looking back at you.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all *reflect the Lord's glory*, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV).

"But we Christians have no veil over our faces; *we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord*. And as the Spirit of the Lord works

within us, we become more and more like him" (2 Corinthians 3:18, TLB).

Many people whom we will never talk to are watching us. When we live for Jesus Christ, we live in a glass house where everyone watches our every move. Will they see the love of Christ in us? The true Christian reflects a wonderful and loving Savior.

Holiness

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you" (Leviticus 20:7-8).

Holiness is essential to salvation.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

After the new birth experience, a battle for holiness begins between the born-again spirit of man and the old carnal nature.

Our holy God demands that His children be holy like Him.

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Holiness changes us inside and out. It is shown on the outside through obedience to the Word of God. God's Word clearly states that men are to look like men and women are to look like women (Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11). This is practical holiness.

An inward spiritual change of heart and attitude sets us apart from the rest of the world. The spiritual change creates a physical change that separates us. As children of God, we are not supposed to look like the world, because we are a chosen generation, royal priesthood, and holy nation.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;

that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Sacrifice

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

We are called to a life of holiness and separation. Holiness includes the sacrifice of our desires and will. We must be holy and separated in order to be acceptable to God.

Love for God

Love for God maintains holiness.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

When we love God, we will seek to please Him, live holy, and reflect His glory. A true and sincere love for God creates a desire within us to abstain from the evil of this world.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Love of God

First Corinthians 13 is the love chapter of the Bible. In this chapter Christ-like character is exalted more than ministry, faith, or the possession of spiritual gifts. God values and emphasizes character that acts in love, patience, kindness, unselfishness, and love for truth.

Those who are rich in holiness, godliness, and love for God are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The love of God poured out within

the believer's heart through the Holy Spirit is always great.

Grow in Grace and Glory

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Some ways we can grow in grace and glory are:

- ✓ Study God's Word.
- ✓ Pray.
- ✓ Fast.
- ✓ Show God's love to others.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

To behold the glory of God is to realize the glory, truth, and person of Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the gospel. It means to experience His nearness, love, righteousness, and power through prayer and the Holy Spirit, while abiding in Him and His Word. It results in our transformation into His likeness.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

If the gospel is found wanting, it is because our gospel is something less than the gospel of Christ.

"His glory is full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that



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