



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



The CCP (Community Church Planting) Pastoral Training Course Book 6

Reaching all the Nations for Jesus Christ

Bereik al die Nasies vir Jesus Christus

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With grateful thanks, we acknowledge all those who contributed to the financing, writing, editing, translation and formatting of the CCP Pastoral Training Course.

We trust that God will use this Training Material to further His Kingdom on earth.

PREFACE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MATERIAL

Church planters require training for them to be adequately equipped for the task that is before them. Often Bible Schools and seminaries are remote options for rural and some urban pastors. Church planters and church leaders need access to structured and foundational material in order for them to gain skills, knowledge and competencies. This material is offered as a tool for the equipping of pastors, providing the necessary biblical and educational foundations, as well as practical ministry skills, which are required by pastors for church planting and pastoring. The CCP Pastoral Training Course was designed for rural pastors in Africa, but we believe that it could be useful in training pastors in other contexts.

This curriculum has been designed to accomplish two goals:

1. To provide training for pastors.
2. To encourage mobilization in the whole Body of Christ toward a church planting movement.

We see church planting movements taking place in many countries throughout Africa and the world and we believe that Church planting is the best method for world evangelization and disciple making. This material is designed to facilitate the planting and multiplication of spiritually mature churches

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The CCP Pastoral Training Course is a three year program consisting of 6 Books. Each Book contains 4 to 7 subjects of 5 lessons.

The curriculum has been designed to be used in parallel with the actual planting of churches. As such it is one tool along with the CCP Manual and other material which is used in Church Planting and equipping pastors while in ministry. Each Subject has been designed to provide theological knowledge and practical skills, answer questions, and discuss potential problems related to pastoring in a church planting movement process.

METHODOLOGY

1. Trainer

- Find and Train reliable people.
- Each Subject consists of 5 lessons, and each should take 2 hours.
- It is not necessary to teach every point of the lesson as trainees can study the material themselves.
As a trainer you should seek to highlight 3 or 4 of the most important points of each lesson.
- Be creative in your training methodology. Refer to the "Training Trainers" Material.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



-
- Make use of class discussion as this helps student assimilation of the material and for the assessment of trainee's performance.
 - Each subject concludes with a test for partial fulfillment for graduation.

2. Trainee

- Never skip a lesson
- Seek to put into practice your learning.
- Be prepared to participate in group or class discussion.
- Speak to your trainer or mentor for any clarification.
- Tests are designed for the assessment of the knowledge of the material.
- It is extremely helpful to have a mentor to encourage and advise you as you apply yourself to this learning. A mentor can also serve your need for accountability as you apply what you are learning. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to prayerfully seek some form of mentoring to enhance and strengthen your learning and ministry.

Further help

Do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance to you.

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Subjects As Per Book

<u>Book One</u>	<u>Book Two</u>
Train the Trainers	Shepherding and Epistles
Proclamation of the Gospel	Homiletics
Survey of the Old Testament	Mending Broken Lives—Part one
Survey of the New Testament	Introduction to Islam—Part One
Doctrine of God	History of the Christian Church
Christology	Acts
<u>Book Three</u>	<u>Book Four</u>
Corinthians	Cultural Anthropology
Discipleship	Ecclesiology
Mission to Children	Kingdom and the Sermon on the Mount
Sustainable Development	Eschatology
Gospel of John	Pastoral Counselling
Mending Broken Lives—Part Two	Introduction to Islam Part 2
	Holism
-	
<u>Book Five</u>	<u>Book Six</u>
Genesis	Mending Broken Lives—Part Three
Man, Sin and salvation	Ezra and Nehemiah
Mission to Youth	Spiritual Gifts
Human Dignity	1 John
Psalms	Ethics
Pneumatology	Angels and Demons



The 40 Month CCP Pastoral Training Program

Month One			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Manual			10
Omega Book 1			6
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
	The Church		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
Mobilizing Members			4
Total Hours			20

Month Two			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Training the Trainers		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
Omega Book 1			11
	The Church		
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
	Spiritual Character		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Prayer		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
	Bible Study Methods		
		Lesson One	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Three
Inspect First Generation Churches are Functioning



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Four			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Training the Trainers		
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Proclamation of the Gospel		
		Lesson One	
Omega Book 1			11
	Bible Study Methods		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
		Lesson Six	
		Lesson Seven	
	Evangelism		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
End of OMEGA Book 1			
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Five	
		Lesson Six	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Five			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Proclamation of the Gospel		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
Omega Book 2			11
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Seven	
	The Church		
		Lesson Five	
		Lesson Six	
		Lesson Seven	
		Lesson Eight	
	Spiritual Character		
		Lesson Seven	
		Lesson Eight	
	Prayer		
		Lesson Four	
	Leadership		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
	Cell Groups		
		Lesson One	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Six
Inspect Second Generation Churches are Functioning



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Seven			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Proclamation of the Gospel		
		Lesson Five	
	Survey of the Old Testament		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
Omega Book 2			11
	Cell Groups		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
		Lesson Six	
	Bible Study Methods		
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
		Lesson Ten	
		Lesson Eleven	
	Evangelism		
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Eight			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Survey of the Old Testament		
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
Omega Book 2			11
	Evangelism		
		Lesson Six	
		Lesson Seven	
End of OMEGA Book 2			
Omega Book 3			
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
	The Church		
		Lesson Nine	
		Lesson Ten	
		Lesson Eleven	
	Spiritual Character		
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
		Lesson Ten	
	Prayer		
		Lesson Five	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Nine
Break



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Ten			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Survey of the New Testament		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
Omega Book 3			11
	Prayer		
		Lesson Six	
		Lesson Seven	
	Leadership		
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Cell Groups		
		Lesson Seven	
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
	Evangelism		
		Lesson Eight	
	Disciple-Making		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			3
Total Hours			20

Month Eleven			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Survey of the New Testament		
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
Omega Book 3			11
	Disciple-Making		
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Spiritual Warfare		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
End of OMEGA Book 3			
Omega Book 4			
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Ten	
		Lesson Eleven	
		Lesson Twelve	
	The Church		
		Lesson Twelve	
		Lesson Thirteen	
Africa Outreach - Chronological			1
Evangelism Training			2
Total Hours			20

Month Twelve
Break



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Thirteen			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Doctrine of God		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
Omega Book 4			11
	The Church		
		Lesson Fourteen	
	Spiritual Character		
		Lesson Eleven	
		Lesson Twelve	
		Lesson Thirteen	
	Prayer		
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
	Leadership		
		Lesson Six	
		Lesson Seven	
		Lesson Eight	
		Lesson Nine	
		Lesson Ten	
Evangelism Training			3
Total Hours			20

Month Fourteen			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Doctrine of God		
		Lesson Five	
	Christology		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
Omega Book 4			10
	Cell Groups		
		Lesson Ten	
		Lesson Eleven	
	Disciple-Making		
		Lesson Six	
	Stewardship		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	The Family		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
End of OMEGA Book 4			
Omega Book 5			1
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Thirteen	
Evangelism Training			3
Total Hours			20

Month Fifteen
Inspect Third Generation Churches are Functioning



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Sixteen			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			6
	Christology		
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 1			
Omega Book 5			
	SCP Vision		
		Lesson Fourteen	
		Lesson Fifteen	
		Lesson Sixteen	
		Lesson Seventeen	
	The Church		
		Lesson Fifteen	
		Lesson Sixteen	
		Lesson Seventeen	
		Lesson Eighteen	
		Lesson Nineteen	
	Spiritual Character		
		Lesson Fifteen	
		Lesson Sixteen	
Evangelism Training			3
Total Hours			20

Month Seventeen			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 2			6
	Shepherding and Epistles		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
Omega Book 5			
	Prayer		
		Lesson Ten	
		Lesson Eleven	
		Lesson Twelve	
	Leadership		
		Lesson Eleven	
		Lesson Twelve	
	Cell Groups		
		Lesson Twelve	
		Lesson Thirteen	
	Preaching		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
	The Family		
		Lesson Three	
End of OMEGA Book 5			
Evangelism Training			3
Total Hours			20

Month Eighteen
Break



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Nineteen			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course			18
	Shepherding and Epistles		
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Homiletics		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Mending Broken Lives Part 1		
		Seminar 1	
Evangelism Training			2
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty One			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course			10
	Church History		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Acts		
		Lesson One	
Camel Evangelism Training			10
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty
Break

Month Twenty			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course			18
	Mending Broken Lives Part 1		
		Seminar 2	
	Introduction to Islam		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Church History		
		Lesson One	
Evangelism Training			2
Total Hours			20



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Twenty Three			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 2			8
	Acts		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 2			
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 3			12
	Corinthians		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Discipleship		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty Four			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 3			20
	Discipleship		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Mission to Children		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Sustainable Development		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty Five			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 3			14
	Sustainable Development		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Gospel of John		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
Denominational Training			6
Total Hours			20



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Twenty Six			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 3			16
	Gospel of John		
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Mending Broken Lives		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 3			
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			
	Cultural Anthropology		
		Lesson One	
Denominational Training			4
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty Eight			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			20
	Cultural Anthropology		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Ecclesiology		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Kingdom and Sermon on the Mount		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Twenty Seven
Inspect Fourth Generation Churches are Functioning

Month Twenty Nine			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			20
	Kingdom and Sermon on the Mount		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Eschatology		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Pastoral Counseling		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Thirty			
Break			

Month Thirty Two			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			20
	Holism		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 5			
	Genesis		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Man, Sin, and Salvation		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Thirty One			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 4			20
	Pastoral Counseling		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Introduction to Islam		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Holism		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Thirty Three			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 5			20
	Man, Sin and Salvation		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Mission to Youth		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Human Dignity		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Thirty Four
Break

Month Thirty Five			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 5			20
	Human Dignity		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Psalms		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Pneumatology		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Thirty Six			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 5			20
	Pneumatology		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 5			
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 6			
	Mending Broken Lives		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Ezra and Nehemiah		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Thirty Seven			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 6			20
	Ezra and Nehemiah		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Spiritual Gifts		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	First John		
		Lesson One	
Total Hours			20

Month Thirty Eight
Encourage Fifth Generation Church Planting



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Month Thirty Nine			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 6			18
	First John		
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
	Christian Ethics		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
Total Hours			18

Month Forty			
Course	Subject	Lesson	Hours
CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 6			10
	Angels and Demons		
		Lesson One	
		Lesson Two	
		Lesson Three	
		Lesson Four	
		Lesson Five	
End of CCP Pastoral Training Course Book 6			
Total Hours			10



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Mending Broken Lives - Part 3

~ Bruce Bennett



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COURSE FORMAT

SEMINAR One – Dealing with Self-Condernation &
Self-Righteousness

SEMINAR Two – Dealing with Sins of the Occult



COURSE FORMAT

This is Mending Broken Lives Manual Three. It consists of two seminars. Its main focus is to point out Biblical principles that lead to Spiritual healing even so to the healing of the whole person.

SEMINAR ONE

DEALING WITH SELF-CONDEMNATION & SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Seminar Purpose

1. The purpose of this seminar is to help the Church Planting Pastor to understand the sinfulness of human nature and its effect of human behaviour.
2. That Jesus has paid for all our sins
3. To present key Biblical principles to both emotional and physical healings.

Seminar Outcome

Upon completion of this seminar the Church Planting Pastor will able **to**:

1. Recognise why he/she acts the way he/she does
2. Be able to help self and others to deal with self-condemnation and despair
3. Be able to discover the hindrances to healing



1

Self-Condensation

LESSON ONE: Self-Condensation

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?¹
Cursed be the day of my birth, and cursed be the night when I was conceived.²
Oh, why should light be given to the weary, and life to those in misery?³
I have no peace! I have no quiet! I have no rest! And trouble keeps coming!⁴

Self-condemnation and Despair

Tom told the story of his mother who, born out of wedlock, grew up in an orphanage and foster homes. She was ostracized, because she refused to slip out at night and go into town with her peers. They held her down and humiliated her by beating her with hairbrushes. Her greatest pain was, however, derived from being demeaned and scorned on visiting days because she had no visitors. On these days she hid from her peers rather than face their vicious insults.

Tom's mother had many hurts in her childhood, but in later years she would say that her greatest scar was her lack of self-esteem. She was told she was stupid, and so she assumed she was. She was told she was the seed of wicked parents and no good would come of her, and she believed it. She believed and internalized the evil spoken against her. Throughout her life she has felt inferior to others, and berated herself for her failures. She followed her own mother in giving birth out of wedlock and lived for years in shame, guilt and self-condemnation. She was emotionally unstable with a record of failed suicide attempts.

Tom's younger brother, Jack, was also labelled emotionally volatile and mentally deranged. He found solace in alcohol. He, too, internalised his mother's lack of self-esteem and her practice of self-condemnation. He boiled at the injustice done to his mother and was deeply saddened by how cruel life had been to her. Failures dogged him and he grew up to be an angry and bitter man. Years after coming to Christ, he still had not learnt that, 'believers in Christ Jesus can no longer be condemned,'⁵ instead shame and despair haunted him. Jack became suicidal, placed a gun to his head he ended his tortured life.

Self-condemnation and self-hatred are scales that have grown upon the eyes of many since early childhood. This spiritual blindness leads to feelings of hopelessness, emptiness and despair; their effects continue into

- 1 NIV Ps 13:2
- 2 NLT Job 3:3
- 3 NLT Job 3:20
- 4 GW Job 3:26
- 5 GW Ro 8:1

adulthood and can't be removed by human effort alone. To lift these scales, we must invite Jesus into the darkened areas of our lives. Jack never opened all the doors of his life to the cleansing blood of our Lord. Legalistic teachings held him prisoner to his past. He tried to redefine his life in Christian truths without ever having fully understood the beauty of grace that connects you to the loving, healing, heart of Jesus. Instead, his counsellors reinforced his self-condemnation through loveless advice that encouraged him to suppress his feelings, and to live his tormented life in a silent world. Jack would alternate between moments of elation and depression. Days of stillness would erupt in an inexplicable outburst of rage and violence. Days of anguish, misery and gloom would follow until finally in the midst of his darkness he wrote a short letter and then ended his life. Self-condemnation, self-pity, and despair lead not only to dark thoughts, but also to suicide.

Christ life versus a self life

When children have been nurtured and reared without exposure to God's love, they replace a Christ-centred life with a self-life. When Christ isn't on the throne room of our heart, self is, and is always ably assisted by the devil and his entourage. Self acts in its own interests to the exclusion of all others. Self-centeredness underlies all sin, be it adultery, idolatry, murder, theft, hatred, or lying. Self acts in numerous ungodly ways, the two extremes marked by self-righteousness and self-condemnation. The next two units will examine this theme as we take a closer look at a self-absorbed world.

The self progression has two final and devastating consequences; in its extreme, self-righteousness will be expressed in hatred and rage that threatens and even ends the life of others, whereas self-condemnation leads to self-hate, deep sadness, isolation and finally suicide.

When Paul listed the fruit of the Spirit, he rounded it off with self-control.⁶ Spiritual fruit can't grow in isolation; we can't grow joy without goodness, peace without kindness, or patience without faithfulness. Christian love is expressed in an orchard that grows these fruit simultaneously. When one is missing, the others are marred by a worldly interpretation of love. It's impossible to express God's love when it excludes self-control. The self-continuum needs healing because by abdicating self-control we transfer the control of our life to circumstances, controlling personalities and even defiling spirits. When our spiritual fruit exclude self-control our lives will be out-of-control.

Poor self-esteem and self-condemnation are destroying far too many lives. We must find a balance between the soul-wrenching facts of our lives and Christ's merciful grace that will, in turn, lead to a healthy, God-glorifying, self-appreciation. Self-hate must be replaced with self-love, hopelessness with hope, and self-condemnation with self-acceptance. Self-love and self-acceptance is neither self-centred nor self-glorifying, but is found in the holiness of a Jesus-centred life.

As we learn to immerse ourselves in the limitless kindness of Christ, His spiritual ointments are poured into the aching wounds of our soul, replacing our discord with divine harmony.

6 Gal 5:22,23

Love-deprivation and self-image

The formative years of our childhood shape our identity. Self-hatred and self-condemnation are by-products of disobedience and rebellion against God. Ungodly parents disadvantage their children by excluding God's light in their rearing. These children's unfortunate reactions then reinforce their disadvantages as they believe and act on the lies spoken into their lives.

We suffer love-deprivation when God's love has not flowed into our hearts through our parent's affections. Ungodly parents' love is flecked with the selfishness of the world. Worldly love is centred in feelings, happenings and experiences. It's a love that earns and rewards behaviour, it responds and doesn't initiate, it grabs and never gives, and it lasts only as its reciprocated. Worldly love is impatient, unkind, envious, boasts, is proud, self-seeking, easily angered, and keeps a record of wrongs. Worldly love delights in evil and rejoices in error. Worldly love destroys and distrusts, it's always anxious, and is always giving up. Worldly love fails.

The outcome of healthy parenting will be appropriate feelings about others and ourselves. The receiving and giving of godly-love is the spiritual medication that counters selfishness with selflessness. Appropriate feelings and a balanced self-concept are achieved when we yield our lives to God's commands. Reaching out to others breaks self-rule and allows Christ to ascend to the throne of your heart. When He who is love takes His rightful place in your heart, He'll break your cycle of self-despair and self-blame. Obedience to the primary commands of loving God and others will initiate our healing.

The Lord blesses the godly with healing. 'Let's return to the Lord. Even though he has torn us to pieces, he will heal us. Even though he has wounded us, he will bandage our wounds.'⁷ Love-starved lives are healed as they're brought to Christ and experience His sanctifying balm. Those who would contend that psychological healing must precede spiritual healing aren't in step with scriptural truth. Return to the Lord and His grace and love will heal you. When we are submerged in Christ, our real life becomes His life, and the bondages of our past are replaced with the glorious presence of the Reigning One who controls our life.

We don't need to first fix our self-image before we can love God and others. Jesus summarized God's commands as: "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence" This is the most important, the first on my list. But there is a second set alongside it: "Love others as well as you love yourself."⁸ Godly love first demonstrated then taught is conducive to healthy Christian spirituality. Loving God and others unconditionally, with our entire beings, will bring about change in our entire beings. The flow of God's love will heal the rifts in our hearts created in the first place by the deprivation of His love.

The unlimited love of God is epitomized in giving. 'This is how much God loved the world: **He gave his Son**, his one and only Son...'⁹ '**Jesus gave himself** for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age...'¹⁰ Christ 'loved the church and **gave himself** up for her...'¹¹ Our love should be self-effacing and other-orientated.

7 GW Hos 6:1
8 Msg Mt 22:37-39
9 Msg Jn 3:16
10 NIV Gal 1:4
11 NIV Eph 5:25

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'We understand what love is when we realize that **Christ gave his life** for us. That means **we must give our lives for other believers**.¹² Godly love places the interests of others deep in your heart motivating you to a proactive giving love.

Christ-centred love is being soaked in this radiant giving love of Jesus which overflows our hearts and saturates the lives of others. 'We love because God loved us first.'¹³ Our acts of love are simply the result of opening up our lives to the pulsating, transforming love of Jesus. 'Dear friends, let us love one another, **for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God**.'¹⁴ The implication is clear: only those born of God can express the love of God. Those who haven't been born of God can't express His love. Jesus-followers are the only ones positioned to express godly love, not that they always do, their flesh can inhibit the flow of His love. Unbelievers can be incredibly loving, giving, caring and generous, often setting an exceptional example for believers. Yet, the fact is, the truest expression of love is only possible when it's hosted and given in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Loving others with God's love requires an understanding of who we are and how He accepts people, warts and all. His love, received and passed on, changes our self-concept; self-hate will transform into a godly self-appreciation. Correct opinions can only exist within our faithful obedience to an intense and truthful love of God and our neighbours. The liberating love of Jesus flowing through our relationships, mends our love deficient lives. 'To love others as ourselves'¹⁵ is to know the unlimited greatness of God's healing power.

Grace

'But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'¹⁶ 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'¹⁷ The Good News is that in Christ Jesus we're never too sinful, too unlovely and too hurt to be healed. God's grace is limitless – no matter where we're from, what we've been through, or how far we've sunk – it will always meet our needs. His kindness and compassion isn't only sufficient to meet our vilest sins, it's also extensive enough to meet all of humankind's sin.

Grace is this breathtaking thoughtfulness of God. God's grace is a dazzling jewel that shines kindness, mercy, clemency, and compassion into life's darkest holes. Grace is Jesus' unearned favour toward a people who would turn to Him. Loving God uncaps this fountain of grace cascading His healing and mercy upon contrite sinners. This unearned grace flows endlessly; restoring you and helping you grow day by day into the likeness of Jesus.

Self-condemnation occurs because we won't drink from His fountain of grace. When self has usurped the throne of our heart, it sits in judgement. Self pursues its dreams, and when we never match up to its expectations, it berates, belittles and condemns. The more we fail the louder and more critical will become our self-voice. The more successful you become, the greater its expectation, and the greater your striving;

12 GW 1Jn 3:16
13 NIV 1Jn 4:19
14 NIV 1Jn 4:7
15 NIV Mt 22:39
16 NIV Ro 5:20,21
17 NIV 2Co 12:9

always keeping you just beyond the satisfaction demanded by this restless ruler. The world has ever-increasing expectations in its maddening pursuit of excellence; its unrealistic goals set people up for failure and censure. Self-condemnation feeds off false guilt, imprisoning you in legalism and disrupting the flow of God's grace into your life.

God's grace accepts you for who you are. We don't have to earn the favour of Jesus. We don't have to hide anything from His penetrating all-knowing gaze. We can come to Him as we are, and find favour, forgiveness, and compassion.

Time to Reflect

1. Has self-centredness caused you to sin?
2. In what ways, has deprivation of love affected your self-esteem?
3. Do you believe that loving God can be the source of your spiritual and emotional healing?
4. Have you been striving to gain favour with Christ? What should you be doing?

Today's Verse: But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Ro 5:20, 21 (NIV)

Causes of Self-condemnation

1. Abuse

- Emotional blackmail occurs when controlling personalities force you to perform and provide for them in return for their favour. Sufferers become performance orientated people-pleasers and find their worth in the commendation of others instead of God
- When controllers recognise the need others have for works orientated affirmation they will become increasingly manipulative. Victims become increasingly trapped in these abusive relationships and self-condemnatory feelings will soon spiral out of control
- People can be verbally abused by their parents, spouses, employers, authority figures and their children. The evil spoken in verbal abuse becomes implanted in our minds leading us to believe and live out these lies: 'I'm a failure and unworthy of love. If I desire acceptance I must perform or be rejected.'
- It is particularly heartbreaking when verbal abuse occurs in families as the family structure was designed by God to be the primary building block of a healthy society. When we don't experience unconditional love and acceptance in the family it distorts our concept of Christ's love
- Physical abuse not only marks and scars our bodies but leaves relationships balanced on an emotional knife. When violence, brutality and cruelty define and govern relationships self-esteem plummets to depressive depths. Physical abuse keeps its victims imprisoned in a ghastly tomb of pain, fear, terror and agonising memories

2. Cultural conditioning

- Magazines, newspapers, TV, films and advertisements promote unattainable worldly attributes. So, unless we wear chic clothing, have trendy accessories, fashionable addresses, drive the right model cars, frequent the right clubs, holiday in exotic locations or have looks like the mega models, we don't belong
- Peer pressure promotes its own sense of belonging and worthiness, which is too often equated with achievement, beauty, charm, compliance, intelligence and possessions. The more we conform with these standards the more worthy we feel; the less we comply, the less worthy we feel. Failure to meet peer standards will break you down
- Culture and community can have an insidious influence upon our lives. 'The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.'¹⁸
- 'Don't love the world and what it offers. Those who love the world don't love the Father. Not everything that the world offers- physical gratification, greed, and extravagant lifestyles- comes from the Father. It comes from the world, and the world and its evil desires are passing away. But the person who does what God wants lives forever.'¹⁹
- Conformity to the image of God doesn't equate to conformity to secular community. Plain simple lifestyles are not incompatible to radiant adventurous spirituality. When people clamour after the glamour's of this world, they will have little time to rest with Jesus. 'Demas has abandoned me. He fell in love with this present world...'²⁰ Have you become another 'Demas'?

18 NIV MT 13:22

19 GW 1Jn 2:15-17

20 GW 2Ti 4:10

3. Defective teaching

Self-condemnation and self-hatred is caused when we're persistently:

- Censured and told we're worthless without ever being validated
- Condemned as sinners in need of punishment without being shown the way of grace
- Taught that self-respect and self-love are evil plagues whilst not being confronted with the beauty of godly self-esteem
- Told to accept our difficult circumstances without being reminded of our heavenly rewards
- Told to suppress our yearning for better days whilst never being taught how to discover Christ's rest for our souls²¹
- Taught to be servile and to accept mistreatment without being made aware of our rights
- Taught that inferiority equates to humility and is a godly attribute, without being shown how to reconcile meekness with a healthy self-estimation
- Told to deny our personalities, dreams and abilities as a form of self-crucifixion without being shown how to explore our spiritual gifts and God's call upon our lives
- Taught to develop a selfish and secular concept of love that strives to prove its righteousness without understanding our virtue through Christ's finished work on the cross
- Misled by false teachers who don't understand the full counsel of God. 'False prophets were among God's people in the past, as false teachers will be among you. They will secretly bring in their own destructive teachings.'²² To the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus declared: 'You hypocrites! You lock people out of the kingdom of heaven.'²³

4. Emotive reasoning

- Deepening spirituality requires cognitive renewal: 'Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.'²⁴ Holiness requires God-directed thinking as He urges you 'to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'²⁵
- Our connection to the spiritual realm is through our minds, what we think about the truth will determine whether we're set free or held captive. Jesus is the truth and has said: 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'²⁶
- Our thinking directs our feelings and our feelings invariably direct our behaviours. Rational thinking leads to appropriate feelings, which, in turn, stimulates right behaviours. Emotive and irrational thinking leads to inappropriate feelings and wrong reactionary conduct
- I need: 'in my mind to be a slave to God's law',²⁷ or otherwise I'll constantly lose the war being waged by Satan 'against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.'²⁸
- Rational thinking dwells in the Word of God because it knows it's: 'full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires.'

21 Mt 11:25-30
22 GW 2Pe 2:1
23 GW Mt 23:13
24 NIV Ro 12:1
25 NIV 2Co 10:5
26 NIV Jn 8:31,32
27 NIV Ro 7:25
28 NIV Ro 7:23

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It exposes us for what we really are.²⁹

- Trial and tribulation don't cause emotions. It's how we assess our circumstances and the conclusions we reach that give rise to our emotional feelings and reactions
- Success doesn't cause contentment, elation or satisfaction. Failure doesn't cause sadness, anger or anxiety. Feelings follow thinking. How we process our success or failure determines how we feel
- Trial and tragedy will produce different emotions in different people, because they think differently about the same events. Different thinking leads to different emotions and to different reactions
- The dog barks and wakes me from my sleep. I think it barks at a cat. I'm annoyed, scold the dog and go back to sleep. The burglar steals my car
- The dog barks and wakes me from my sleep. I think I should check despite the dog having needlessly woken me before. I disturb the burglars and they run away. My car is safe
- First comes an event, then your thinking, then your feelings, and finally you act. How you act depends upon the interaction between your thoughts and feelings. We can choose to think and react differently to the same event leading to very different results. We can reprogram learned automatic emotional responses as our rational minds are spiritually sensitised
- We can either scold or praise a child who paints. The one who is scolded loses interest in painting; the one who is praised will be encouraged to continue. Thinking, feeling and reacting shapes not only who you are, but also the people around you
- We can continue feeling inadequate by persisting in skewed reasoning and negative thinking, or we can change by thinking differently. Challenging our feelings by analysing events and looking for growth opportunities leads to rational appraisals, sensible ideas, and worthy behaviour
- The heart is the governing centre of the inner-person controlling our conscience, feelings and emotions. 'Guard your heart more than anything else, because the source of your life flows from it.'³⁰ A guarded heart is a protected heart that feeds on Jesus and His Word; it's a rational spiritual mind with appropriate feelings and right reactions. An unguarded heart is an unprotected heart that's defiled by the voices of the world

5. Personal Failure

- In a modern, educated, efficient and technological society, many are left wounded on the sidewalks; failures that feel rejected and dispirited
- Inability to cope in a demanding and competitive world can lead to loss of employment. Being fired for incompetence is a humbling experience and can leave one disappointed, angry and depressed
- Having a business failure, being overlooked for promotion, or retrenched because of rationalisation and downsizing, can also leave you feeling disillusioned and unworthy
- All too often we conclude: 'I'm just not good enough. I'm useless. I'm a failure. I can't make a worthy contribution.' Failures leave people dejected with no expectation of succeeding; their lack of self-belief soon becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You can't convince others if you don't believe in yourself. Silent attitudes are soon openly displayed, and others, sensing your insecurity pass you over for the confident who have a will to succeed
- We can learn from past failure. When we don't try, we won't succeed. Quitters can't be winners.

29 NLT Heb 4:12
30 GW Pr 4:23

Why not try again?

- Thomas Edison conducted over 16000 failed experiments before discovering the light bulb
- Abraham Lincoln had 4 months of formal schoolhouse education when he first ran for public office; he lost, but he persevered until he was elected president
- In 1905, Albert Einstein had his doctoral dissertation rejected by the University of Bern
- In 1894, the report card of Winston Churchill read: 'a conspicuous lack of success' yet Churchill rose to become a world statesperson and a renowned orator
- 'Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his Father?'³¹ 'Blessed are those who endure when they are tested.'³² 'As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.'³³

6. Learned attitudes

- Dependable, consistent, loving, caring, godly parenting will produce a child with a healthy self-image
- Unaffectionate parents who fail to kiss and cuddle fall short in modelling love and affirming their children. Love-deficit children grow into dysfunctional adults
- Unreliable, uncaring, unloving, contradictory, domineering and protective parenting will restrain a child's emotional development and ingrain feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. 'Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.'³⁴
- Harmful parenting, by both Christians and non-Christians, includes abandonment, abuse, disparagement, criticism, discouragement, neglect, rejection, scolding and severe discipline. Such parenting will produce dysfunctional, angry kids who believe they are stupid and incompetent
- Attitudes are also sourced from siblings, nannies, care-givers, teachers, role-models and other authority figures

7. Sexual Abuse

- Sexual neglect and distortions can take a number of different guises: the suppression of children's normal sexual inquisitiveness; distorted sex education; the total disregard of sex education by prudish parents; the passing on of unhealthy sex biases of parents and authority figures; exposure to all forms of pornography; when children accidentally or intentionally observe the sex acts of others; and the observance of unnatural sex acts. The resultant sexual distortions and biases impinge on healthy sexuality and tarnish our God given humanity
- Sexual molestation and exploitation can take a variety of forms: when inappropriate sexual contact, touching or fondling takes place between a victim and a perpetrator regardless of the age or sex of the perpetrator; when sex predators physically force themselves upon hapless victims; when sexually lewd suggestions are communicated in whatever form; and sexual harassment.

31 NIV Heb 12:7

32 GW Js 1:12

33 NIV Jas 1:12

34 Msg Eph 6:4

- Sodomy, sadistic and masochistic sex, participation in the pornographic industry as actors or models, prostitution, stripping, satanic and ritualistic sex, wife-swopping, sex-orgies, internet-sex, same-gender sexual pleasuring and fondling and other perverse forms of sexual activity debase and dehumanise. Both voluntary and involuntary participation in these activities distort our God given image and leave us feeling defiled, unworthy and guilty
- Children who are forced, seduced, bribed or offered favours in return for sex acts by parents, care-givers, siblings, relatives or strangers grow up with distorted and perverted views of sex. In order to cope with their horrendous experiences many young children suppress memories of these incidents – however the damage done to them is evidenced in troublesome emotions, nightmares and bizarre behaviours
- Children that have been sexually abused and are suppressing the trauma will demonstrate four or five of the following symptoms: childhood memory gaps; same sex attraction; feeling unworthy of God’s love; uncontrollable rage; obsessive fears; self-loathing; migraine headaches; severe pre-menstrual syndrome symptoms; disinterest in sex; sexual infidelity; undiagnosed pains and aches; distrust; compulsive behaviours; eating disorders; depression

8. Unachievable dreams

- When we chart an unachievable future or hunger after an impossible dream, we’ll develop unrealistic expectations. Our hopes will be shattered as we fall short of our goals and we’ll lament our failures
- Goals aren’t sacrosanct; they’re markers. Failure to achieve goals after reasonable effort doesn’t equate to personal failure. We don’t need to feel undue pressure and shame by failing to live up to a goal, rather what is needed is a time of reflection, re-evaluation, redirection, reprioritising, and the resetting of life-goals in keeping with circumstances
- Planning and goal setting is commendable in bringing order and direction to your lives particularly when your desires are in harmony with God’s purposes for your lives. ‘Put God in charge of your work, then what you’ve planned will take place.’³⁵
- Personal goals and ideas that endeavour to order your world and exclude God’s plans are doomed to failure. ‘We humans keep brainstorming options and plans, but God’s purpose prevails.’³⁶

9. Unreasonable expectations

- Unrealistic expectations or standards set children up for disappointment; when we’re unable to achieve these targets we’ll become discouraged. When parents, friends, employers and domineering spouses set you unfeasible goals, you’ll inevitably fail. Feelings of inferiority, inadequacy and shame will follow, and if unattended will settle into the unrelenting habits of self-hate and self-condemnation
- Failure to understand limits and boundaries soon has people striving to meet the standards and expectations of others. The issue is aggravated when we believe that our performance conditions our acceptability to family and friends
- Employers have the right to set employees attainable standards and goals: however, unreasonable standards and unachievable goals is exploitation

35 Msg Pr 16:3

36 Msg Pr 19:21

10. Unconfessed sin

- Sin robs people of God's peace; it stands between you and His presence. 'Sin, taking the opportunity provided by this commandment, deceived me and then killed me.'³⁷
- Our understanding of God's kindness and favour only becomes possible as we live holy lives. 'We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.'³⁸ How will we know for sure we belong to Christ? By obeying His teachings!! Assurance of our salvation is being intimately aware of our status and privilege as children of God, and we'll only ever enjoy this when we obey Him
- If we disobey His instructions and live as the ungodly do, what assurance will we have that we're any different from the world? Sin congests our heart and defiles our understanding. 'Hypocrisy leads treacherous people to ruin'³⁹... the hope of wicked people ends only in fury⁴⁰...wicked people have lots of trouble⁴¹.
- Persistent unconfessed sin leads to self-condemnation. 'When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you do these very same things.'⁴² If we steal, lie, persist in adultery, or have unresolved anger, these sins will clog our heart, trouble our consciences and befuddle our thinking
- Breaking God's laws leads to feelings of guilt, shame and displeasure; leaving you demoralized, insecure and hating yourselves. 'An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him. He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his incredible folly.'⁴³

Time to Reflect

1. Which of the above factors are affecting your relationship to God and others?

Today's Verse: False prophets were among God's people in the past, as false teachers will be among you. They will secretly bring in their own destructive teachings. 2Pe 2:1 (GW)

37 GW Ro 7:11
38 NIV 1Jn 2:3
39 GW 11:3
40 GW Pr 11:23
41 GW Pr 12:21
42 NLT Ro 2:1
43 NLT Ro 5:22,23

Signs of self-Condernation

- You believe the lies spoken into your life
- You believe success eludes you and that you're a failure
- You feel inferior to others and try to compensate by striving for success and acceptance
- You carry deep hurt in your spirit at the injustices done toward you
- You continually run yourself down, privately and publicly
- You're both angry and sad at how life has treated you
- You feel hurt when others don't understand your circumstances
- You feel incompetent and worthless and struggle to cope and keep up with others
- You have no self-confidence which is compounded by the criticism of others
- You begin to believe that nothing can be done to change your circumstances or feelings
- You avoid Christian fellowship and service because you feel unworthy
- You feel unwanted, unaccepted, unloved and have difficulty mixing with others
- You have trouble making and keeping friends
- Your counsel is always discarded
- You become hypersensitive
- You're fearful that your contributions will be held up as evidence of your inferiority
- You avoid cocktail gossip and social occasions
- You're no longer invited to social gatherings and parties
- You withdraw and become friendless
- You believe you're unlovely and won't accept love or affirmation from others
- You have difficulty concentrating on, analyzing and discerning truth
- You no longer pray or have devotions and only attend church at irregular intervals
- You hate your life, your job, the world, and even God
- You suppress anger and resentment
- You hide feelings and are careful to avoid drawing attention to your self
- You have many critical thoughts which often leak out
- You then become defensive, confrontational, argumentative and unforgiving
- You suppress thoughts and feelings and grow submissive
- You give in to peer pressure and will indulge in alcohol, drugs and sexual immorality
- You're jealous of others
- You become socially clumsy and uncertain in the work place
- You're no longer interested, creative or inventive
- You're apathetic and unimaginative
- You become distraught, feel helpless and the future holds no hope
- You're plagued by guilt, become bitter and your self-beratement grows
- You become intolerant
- You become depressed and suicidal

Inferiority and self-condernation

Feelings of inferiority aren't uncommon; from time to time we're all plagued by our weaknesses. What is important is our response to such feelings. Do such feelings stimulate growth and change, or do they lead to guilt, self-pity and sadness? We should guard against negative reactions or soon we'll develop

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an inferiority complex and live in a world where our misery is compounded as we constantly make unfavourable comparisons with others. Inferiority becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when our feelings of uselessness inhibit our meaningful roles in society. To avoid Christian service, because of feelings of inadequacy, is to be trapped by the lies of the evil one.

Feelings of inadequacy lead to unhealthy self-talk which, in turn, produces unhealthy emotions. We have control over our thinking. We can choose to believe differently about ourselves and see our God-given potential. We can choose either rational biblical thinking or the lies of the evil one. Poor emotive self-talk must be changed if we are to be freed from the inferiority trap. Irrational self-talk leads to irrational emotions, irrational choices and irrational sinful behaviour. Rational thinking is biblical thinking that leads to rational emotions, rational choices and rational behaviour. To move from irrational thinking to rational thinking, we need to guard our heart from the voice of the evil one. We can do this by fostering an intimate relationship with Christ and His Word.

Dwelling in Christ and His Word leads to a healthy heart, giving you insight into making healthy evaluations about yourselves. Objective thinking will lead you to acknowledge that sin distances people from God. 'For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.'⁴⁴ Sound reasoning acknowledges that in our flesh we've a tendency to sin, because a holy life involves spiritual conflict.⁴⁵ I appreciate Paul's struggle when he said: 'I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.'⁴⁶ Such an understanding doesn't mean we should act like convicted felons and continuously censure and scold ourselves until we're left crippled and disabled. That's defective theology. God loved me, even when I was a sinner. He may detest the sin in me, but He loves me and sees me as a recovering sinner full of divine potential. God wants you to hate the sins of your flesh; however He also wants you to see yourself as a transforming saint. 'So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.'⁴⁷

When you invite Jesus into the dark rooms of your heart, He will free you from the binding emotions and habits of your past. This love-encounter with Christ will give crystal clarity to your Kingdom worthiness. Imprisonment, darkness and poor self-esteem are impossible in the presence of divine illumination.

This is indeed Good News; Jesus has set you free from the power of sin and death. Being a Jesus-follower means that both the penalty and guilt for our sins has been dealt with. Head-knowledge of these truths only becomes heart-knowledge as we learn to walk in holiness. We won't have assurance and peace in our hearts whilst we continue to live in sin: 'If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death.'⁴⁸ Peace comes when we walk in the power of the Spirit: 'But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.'⁴⁹ Healthy self-esteem, appropriate self-estimation, and good feelings are possible when the Holy Spirit is in control. 'So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family- calling him "Father, dear Father." For his Holy Spirit speaks to

44 NLT Ro 3:23

45 Eph 6:12

46 NLT Ro 7:15-17

47 NLT Ro 8:1,2

48 NLT Ro 8:6a

49 NLT Ro 8:6b

us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we will share his treasures- for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too.⁵⁰ Understanding my sonship and inheritance in Christ leads me to praise and rejoicing – not self-condemnation and self-hate. Co-heirs of Christ are favoured-children not inferior-children!

Self-love and loving others

Some would proclaim the evil of self-love; arguing for self-condemnation and inferiority as helpful attitudes in keeping pride at bay. Such argument sees self-love centred in pride. Pride is a superior attitude and an exaggerated desire to seek the favourable attention of others. Pride is an arrogant, haughty, sinful self-estimation that flaunts self and hides God. Self-love is sinful when it's defined in the context of pride; however it can be defined in terms of humility. Humility is a frank self-appraisal in the light of biblical truth. Humility is never self-seeking, but always other-orientated; it seeks to give instead of getting. It seeks to notice and reward, and receives its blessing through encouraging others. Self-love, centred in the generous giving of a humble spirit, understands the blessings that are ours through faithful service. A bruised soul, sacrificed on the altar of serving and loving others, soon finds its own healing flowing from the heart of God – this includes a healthy self-concept.

Scripture does teach that there is an unhealthy self-love: 'there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves...'⁵¹ Love that's rooted in the world is soiled. Without the benefits of the cross, secular interpretations of love will exploit, manipulate and demand of others in order to gratify its own appetite. Unregenerate love is impure whilst regenerate love is in the process of being purified: regenerate love, is the love of the humble who are becoming a little more hidden in Christ with each passing day.

Jesus taught 'love your neighbour as yourself.'⁵² He assumed that we would love ourselves. Love for our neighbour springs naturally from a soul who has a healthy self-concept. A healthy self-concept is neither a prerequisite for loving others or a third command. Jesus taught two commands; firstly, love God; secondly, love others. Loving God heals broken hearts giving people new worth and a healthy self-appreciation. Obedience to the first and greatest command enables you to practice the second by equipping you with a holy self-esteem that recognizes your worthiness in Christ. Jesus called you to honour His Father through an intense, personal, loving relationship. He calls for a response to God's unlimited goodness by urging a deep-seated response that requires all of our heart, soul, mind and body. Relating to God at this intense and personal level transforms and heals our hearts, minds and bodies. As we behold His transforming love in our own lives we will have an increased desire to release it into the lives of others.

God despised sin, yet He saw people as worthy of His Son's love. We too can now love others despite their unpleasantness, because we've benefited from His forgiving love. God initiated His love for me in the giving and forgiving act of the cross. I too can now replicate Christ's selfless acts in reaching out to others, and as I do so, I find a heavenly principle at work: my healing grows in relation to my repeated acts of loving and giving myself to others.

50 NLT Ro 8:15-17

51 NIV 1Ti 3:1

52 NIV Mt 22:39

Suicide – a tragic solution to intolerable pain

The amalgam of tragic losses, painful abuse, chronic illnesses, sin, heart-wrenching betrayals, personal disappointments and cumulative setbacks can produce extreme emotional pain, which when coupled to dysfunctional families and churches leads to increasing thought of suicide as a means to terminating the endless cycle of insufferable pain. Suicide is not about objective facts but about feelings and a subjective conclusion that suicide is the only and final solution in coping with intolerable emotional pain. When pain mounts and exceeds our human coping mechanisms suicidal thinking is often triggered.

Suicidal thoughts and death wishes are not limited to the Godless. Discouragement led Moses⁵³, Elijah⁵⁴, Job⁵⁵ and Jonah⁵⁶ to desire death. Then there is Saul⁵⁷, Ahithophel⁵⁸, Zimri⁵⁹ and Judas⁶⁰, servants of God who when trapped in sin, failure and disappointment were driven to suicide. The continuum starting with the desire for death and ending in the act of suicide does not start out as sinless and end as sinful. Who will be the first to cast a stone and criticise and stigmatise the spiritual giants, Moses and Elijah, for their suicidal thoughts? That they fell under the influence of their carnal nature or an evil spirit that led them to such thinking is true. It is tragic and sad to see the devastation wrought by evil – but who of us are without sin that we would cast stones? Judging, labelling and bad mouthing the suicidal serves no purpose, indeed it aggravates an extremely sensitive and volatile human condition forcing victims to shy away from seeking help. Critics in expressing contempt and aversion are often simply hiding their own fears, insecurities and dark thoughts. The absence of compassionate family and friends intensifies victims' feelings of loss and pain – and so for insensitive Christians to compound this feeling by inappropriate remarks is extremely unfortunate. Mature Christian care-givers must remain non-judgemental and approachable, exuding warmth and compassion as they point victims to the helping heart of Christ.

Victims of tragedy and loss need burden bearing friends to help them mourn and process their pain, when this is denied the process of godly reflection and the ability to re-engage life is severely inhibited. Intentionally and unintentionally dysfunctional church communities also aggravate the alienation of the suicidal by inhibiting their mourning process. Without caring hearts and compassionate ears about them the person increasingly withdraws and isolates themselves. Alone with their tragic losses they cut themselves off from all outside help by erecting protective walls in an effort to both hide their suffering and ward off further harm. They wear masks that camouflage the wounded inner person but in doing so their alienation and despondency only intensifies. Their thinking becomes increasingly blinkered and they slip into a suicidal trance where pained thinking feeds pained feelings – and pained feelings feed pained thinking – spinning the spiral increasingly deeper.

Little mishaps, loneliness, unfortunate words, and faulty perceptions of every day circumstances feed the suicide trance. Their cocoon becomes increasingly impenetrable to outside voices and the only voices that are heard are the self-talk of the victim and the encouraging voices of evil spirits. The cocoon filters out all potential help and only absorbs that which adds to their sense of loss, which reinforces the perception that

53 Nu 11:14,15
54 1 Ki 19:4
55 Job 3:21; 7:15
56 Jnh 4:3
57 1 Sa 31:4
58 2 Sa 17:23
59 Ki 16:18
60 Mt 27:5

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suicide is their only logical choice. As the trance deepens the victim is increasingly isolated from reality. Their world is confined to unabated suffering, invincible hopelessness, and a grim determination to take control and end the traumatic tragedy. Death beckons, a creative calm descends, seemingly logical and methodical plans are formed, and then in either moments of extreme rage or determined calm the suicide plan is executed.

Compassionate presence saves lives! Compassionate listening saves lives! Friendships save lives! Jesus saves lives! Jesus said: 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'⁶¹ Peter said to Jesus: 'You have the words of eternal life.'⁶² Say to the Lord: 'Let me live that I might praise you.'⁶³

Time to Reflect

1. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.⁶⁴
2. So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.⁶⁵
3. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savoir and my God.⁶⁶
4. We who have fled to take hold of this hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.⁶⁷
5. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.⁶⁸
6. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.⁶⁹ (Read Appendix Six for further discussion on suicide)

61 NIV Jn 10:10
62 NIV Jn 6:68
63 NIV Ps 119:175
64 NIV He 10:38,39
65 NLT Ro 8:1,2
66 NIV Ps 42:5
67 NIV He 6:18,19
68 NIV Jn 14:27
69 NIV Eph 3:18,19



2

Friendship and Self-Esteem

Friendship and self-esteem

Companionship and friendship is the emotional and cultural ties that bind people to each other. Bondage restrains and imprisons, whereas bonding and friendship is about acceptance, attachment, belonging, community, connection, and togetherness. Friendship is a basic human need. People can't live in isolation, God said: 'It is not good for man to be alone.'⁷⁰ Failure to bond with God leads to spiritual ruin. Failure to bond with our children leads to psychological and emotional scarring and dysfunctional families. Failure to have intimate friends leads to loneliness, isolation and despair.

In July 2003, I received an SMS from my son, Brandon, who was working in London: 'A good friend committed suicide on Saturday night.' Dee, my wife, phoned a friend of his here in South Africa who told her that a group of friends had spent the evening together with him and had suspected nothing. The young man gassed himself in his car without a suicide note, without talking, and without the slightest inclination to his closest friends of his inner turmoil.

Friendship is often at a very superficial level. We need to bond with friends. Friendship is about attaching ourselves to mutual confidants with whom we can share our deepest thoughts and dreams. We're human and need to share our hurts, anxieties and fears with friends. If we can't be open and vulnerable and talk to others about the sufferings deep in our spirit, we haven't yet learnt the beauty of true friendship. Simply talking to an empathetic listener will save lives, but our sense of failure and shame shuts our lips, even as our cancerous wounds ravage our spirit. Sadly, our hurried world and impersonal relationships have blocked the discerning spirits of our families and friends, so we grit our teeth and silently bare our tormenting pains.

We were made in the image of God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They live in intimate relationship with each other and offer intimate relationship to their creation. 'The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.'⁷¹ Our emotional and spiritual wellness is rooted in people sharing in God's loving caring relationships. Sin and rebellion separate people from God and in this condition our inner chaos is isolated in a frightfully silent world. Worldly friends don't understand the healing value of transparent loving relationships. Godly love is about care and connection. Without caring friends I'm prone to poor self-esteem, self-hate and self-condemnation. 'A recluse is self-indulgent, snarling at every sound principle of conduct.'⁷² We must learn to open our hearts to our friends and talk through

70 GW Ge 2:18

71 NIV Ex 33:11

72 NLT Pr 18:1

our hurts. In turn, we must bend our ears toward others, even when they don't speak. This is called caring friendships. This is to be part of the heavenly family.

Barriers to friendship include

- 1. Poor Parenting.** Parents teach their children how to be intimate, love and care. We learn attachment and relationship through the parental process. Good nurturing teaches siblings how to form bonds in preparation for later relationships and friendships. Parental bonding teaches you: to connect your humanness to Jesus; how to receive His love and give Him yours; and how to trust, obey and worship Him. Failure to bond with our parents leads to the formation of faulty relationships. Bonding teaches connection and separateness, dependence and independence; it teaches you how to form healthy relationships and how to distance yourself from unhealthy ones. Bonding teaches the beauty of dependable friends, those who 'stick closer than family' and to be wary of those who 'can destroy one another'.⁷³ When we haven't internalised appropriate relationships with godly parents, we'll lack connection, confidence and relational insight. Failure to bond with our parents will lead to distrust, distance and insecurity. Failure to bond invariably means we're unable to handle our failures and limitations; these, in turn, then govern our relationships.
- 2. Abuse.** When we've endured rape, war, violence, neglect, abandonment, trauma and betrayal, we're predisposed to mistrust and will have difficulty developing healthy and normal relationships. I sat talking to a survivor of the Rwandan genocide; he had lost his father and an elder brother. He understands forgiveness is the path to reconciliation, yet an underlying mistrust and suspicion still hinder his relationships. Time, prayer and God's grace are needed to heal our deep emotional wounds. I met a mother whose daughter had been raped four years previously. The family had never talked the daughter through the ordeal. Only the occasional letter on the matter had passed between mother and daughter. It was just too painful for the victim and her family to voice their feelings to each other. I spoke to a street child whose last memory of his mother was her waving goodbye from a departing taxi as she abandoned him on the streets of Bujumbura. Needless to say his concept of motherhood was warped. A Columbian orphan's last memory of his father was a raised fist rushing to strike him. To him, images of a father brought back harsh memories of spousal and child abuse, and of drunkenness, neglect and abandonment. Our perceptions are moulded from our past experiences.
- 3. Skewed Reasoning.** The haunting voices of my past predispose me to thinking that I'm unlovable and unattractive to others. My past sins, failures, indiscretions, and family background leave me shamed and disgraced. I feel unworthy and become angry, controlling, critical and domineering, and so others avoid my company. Skewed reasoning also denies my need for others – I wear masks that conceal my secret need for friends and intimacy. Having previously been betrayed I now erect psychological barriers called 'indifference' and 'reserve' to minimise my need for others.

Signs that we have problems bonding with others

- Withdrawal and avoidance of people
- Aloofness and excessive reserve
- A critical spirit
- Lack of trustworthy and loyal friends

73 GW Pr 18:24

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- Inability to be a friend
- No one truly understands how you feel
- Unfounded suspicion
- Fear of intimacy
- Excessive distrust
- Compulsive needs
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Obsessions
- Delusions
- Paranoia
- Immorality
- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Infinite emptiness
- Life is meaningless
- Feelings of hopelessness and a bleak future
- Depression
- I become detached from my own needs and those of others

Christian friends provide:

- Help in time of adversity. 'A friend always loves, and a brother is born to share trouble.'⁷⁴
- Help in strengthening one another. 'As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend'⁷⁵
- Help in difficult times. 'Two people are better than one because together they have a good reward for their hard work. If one falls, the other can help his friend get up. But how tragic it is for the one who is all alone when he falls. There is no one to help him get up. Again, if two people lie down together, they can keep warm, but how can one person keep warm? Though one person may be overpowered by another, two people can resist one opponent. A triple-braided rope is not easily broken.'⁷⁶
- Intimacy. True friends know each other and don't wear masks. They live transparently: accepting, affirming and encouraging each other. 'You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant doesn't know his masters business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.'⁷⁷ Jesus wants intimate caring friends, not fickle followers.
- Kindred spirits. 'After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.'⁷⁸ May you find a friend that loves you, as they love themselves.

- Sacrificial love. 'We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That

74 GW Pr 17:17

75 NLT Pr 27:17

76 GW Eccl 4:9-12

77 NIV Jn 15:14,15

78 NIV 1Sa 20:41

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means we must give our lives for other believers.⁷⁹ To love, is to give our self wholeheartedly in warm caring relationships. Are you doing this?

Emotional and spiritual health requires friendship. 'But if we live in the light in the same way that God is in the light, we have a relationship with each other.'⁸⁰ We need to give serious attention to developing friends, for as has been said: 'if you need a friend be a friend.' We don't need to look far to find someone to befriend. Every where we look we'll find numerous hurting people silently crying for love and compassion. Caring for others amidst their needs is the start to building lasting friends. Friends give meaning to life, help handle stress, are tonics in time of sickness, and give you moments of fun that you'll treasure for eternity. Friends stick beside you in your good days and your bad days; they share your successes and encourage you through your dark times. Without your friends life would be dreary and your accomplishments meaningless.

False assumptions learned from dysfunctional parenting need to be replaced with the values of our spiritual family. Our Christian identity has to take precedence over our dependency in abusive relationships. Past hurts must be doctored with the spiritual remedies of love and the fellowship of Jesus-followers. Only in this way will you find release from your misery and the grace to love those who have mistreated you.

Clement, a Muslim, came to know Christ. When she told her husband, he asked her to renounce her faith in Christ or leave him and the children. Devastated, but unable to deny the Lordship of Christ, she was unceremoniously thrown out of her home, penniless and jobless. She lives in a makeshift hut on the church plot. Her husband and his new wife walk past her home daily, taunting and belittling her. Steadfastly she clings to Jesus, praying persistently and passionately for the souls of her family. The church family has adopted her, and numbers of others like her. They share their meagre possessions with one another. Clement's smile speaks volumes of her joy in the Lord. The spiritual family is a network of friends who aren't only obligated to help you in your dark days, but count it a privilege to do so.

Learning to develop healthy friendships

- Understand the importance of true friends
- Understand the role of parental bonding and its impact on other relationships
- Make conscious efforts to befriend others
- Be an intentional empathetic listener
- Learn to laugh with others
- Care for and share with others
- Be prepared to be transparent and vulnerable as you develop friendships
- Analyse troublesome emotions and challenge distorted thinking
- Invest time in developing a network of friends
- Attend small group meetings in your church
- Seek out the spiritually mature and take their counsel
- Meditate on the Word of God
- Pray passionately for others

Time to Reflect

79 GW 1Jn 3:16

80 GW 1Jn 1:7

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1. Do you have a friend who delights in your successes, helps in your time of need, and delights in your companionship? Do you have a friend with whom you can share your deepest hurts, anxieties and fears?
2. If you come from a dysfunctional family, how have you packaged poor bonding models?
3. List the signs that may indicate that you're having problems with bonding and developing friendships.
4. List the steps you're going to take in developing new friends.

Today's Verse: Two people are better than one because together they have a good reward for their hard work. If one falls, the other can help his friend get up. But how tragic it is for the one who is all alone when he falls. There is no one to help him get up. Eccl 4:9, 10 (GW)

Guilt and self-condemnation

Guilt causes endless human torment and deep moral pain. Guilt leads to feelings of shame, inferiority, sadness and despair. Guilt imprisons and relentlessly tortures our minds; it will warp our personalities and destroy our relationships.

Unresolved guilt drives people; it drives people to God and away from God. It drives people to church and away from church. Guilt drives people to drink and drugs and away from drink and drugs. And having seen how guilt dominates our lives we too will learn to use it in manipulating others.

God's solution to guilt is confession and repentance; this doesn't make sense to a performance-orientated society. The ungodly look to the wisdom of the world: they work frantically at hiding their guilt through: token atonements, self-inflicted punishment, compensatory behaviours, and drink and drugs in attempts to soothe their troublesome consciences. Guilt leaves you feeling dirty and defiled and our attempts at self-effort can't obliterate our worldly sorrow. Unresolved guilt leads to self-criticism, self-condemnation, isolation, self-hating, detachment, self-loathing and finally suicide.

Guilt and shame

Guilt occurs when you transgress a law. For example, I exceed the speed limit on the motorway, according to the county's laws I'm guilty, even though I'm unaware of the offence and I don't feel guilty. When we transgress laws and norms, we incur the unique penalties associated with that particular category of violations. Breaking God's laws incurs God's wrath, breaking cultural laws incurs the censure of the group, breaking my countries laws incurs their codified penalties

Shame refers to the guilty feelings and sense of failure over our transgressions, be it real or perceived. Being guilty and feeling guilty are different things. Guilt is a real transgression, an objective, undisputable fact that has nothing to do with our feelings. Feeling guilty is all about feelings or emotions. We feel guilty when we realise we have broken our country's traffic laws. We can also feel guilty because we perceive that our performance in the football match was inadequate. The feelings of shame and remorse after contravening a norm, depends largely upon how we react to our indiscretion. When our transgressions are immediately followed by remedial action, we minimize the intensity of our guilt. When we delay redressing our behaviours, feelings of guilt will intensify, dominate, and eventually pervert the normal functioning of our conscience.

Shame can be either justifiable and appropriate or unjustifiable and inappropriate. 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.'⁸¹

Unjustifiable shame leads to inappropriate responses; we seek an illegitimate escape from the consequences of our failures or sins. The inappropriate shame of worldly sorrow arises when guilt is exaggerated or minimized out of proportion to the seriousness of the indiscretion. Inappropriate shame leads to inappropriate feelings and inappropriate behaviours. We can become crippled by our feelings of incompetence, inadequacy, shame and rejection. Inappropriate emotions are illegitimate, because they don't lead me to corrective action, but rather keep me dwelling upon my sins or failures, and their

81 NIV 2Co 7:10

consequences. When sins or deficiencies are exposed it can lead people to feel irresponsible, idiotic and humiliated and instead of turning to God they seek self's ways in preserving their reputation and alleviating their insecurities. Illegitimate, unwarranted shame is often accompanied by annoyance, lies, anger and rage.

We can feel deeply ashamed and embarrassed by our looks or our parents' indiscretions. Feelings of shame and humiliation, no matter how they're provoked, threaten our identity and self-confidence. Shame drives people to either make amends or to hide the consequences.

We must learn to deal with the unjustifiable shame others hoist upon us. The indiscretions of our children, parents and spouse can devastate and embarrass us. Unwarranted shame excuses, trivializes or tries to hide its behaviours. Legitimate, warranted shame owns our association with those who cause our distress, apologizes and offers restitution to the offended and tries to correct the poor behaviours.

Justifiable shame is an appropriate, warranted feeling of guilt that leads to appropriate, suitable remedial action. Appropriate, warranted and reasonable guilt is a healthy emotion that leads people to change the way they think and act. It prompts transgressors to take corrective steps and redress poor behaviours. Appropriate guilt is a godly sorrow that leads to godly repentance. Appropriate guilt focuses on our sin and need to repent, make restitution, and seek forgiveness. The emotions we feel when we violate laws are legitimate and healthy so long as they lead to remedial action.

Causes of unjustifiable shame

- When we're unable to realise our dreams or achieve our own unreasonable goals
- When we're unable to live up to the ill-conceived expectations imposed by others
- When authority figures use guilt and shame to drive people, they will develop feelings of inferiority and self-criticism. Authority figures include preachers, politicians, teachers, parents, work colleagues and siblings.
- Constant criticism, condemnation and punishment by perfectionists will lead to feelings of failure and inadequacy
- Authority figures can also project their own prejudices and guilt upon young and innocent learners. Pupils will absorb a teacher's dissatisfaction with the government or church. An angry prejudiced educator produces angry prejudiced learners. The unresolved guilt of pastors will cloud their counsel. Pastor Jack's promiscuous sexual behaviour will distort his teachings on morality.
- The primary parental tool down the ages has been guilt, which has produced countless shame-centred children. 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your own mother?'⁸²
- The 'don't do's' and the 'you ought to do's' of parents condition young consciences to function on a false guilt level
- Constant shaming and criticism scars sensitive hearts displacing God's grace and heaping guilt into our spirits

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- False teachers lead people astray: they lie, they embellish and supplement, they dilute and deceive, and they distort and destroy the truth. Listening to false teachers corrupts our faith causing inner chaos and conflict. 'Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.'⁸³
- Inappropriate shame occurs when persistent sin has so seared our conscience that we no longer feel remorse over blatant sins. We will become so used to blasphemy that our perverted⁸⁴ consciences no longer feel shame over our utterances. Sin progressively hardens consciences making each subsequent violation more attractive and easier to commit. Conversely a neurotic will have an overly sensitive conscience and suffer torment over minor indiscretions or careless remarks
- Parental and authority figures can sear or sensitize the functioning of our consciences. They will either encourage or discourage appropriate reactions to sin. Parents often unwittingly share in the development of hardened criminals who have grossly insensitive consciences. Conversely they can also help over sensitize consciences, producing neurotics who can't tolerate minor failures.
- Satan and his hosts use guilt and troublesome emotions such as shame, unworthiness, embarrassment, and feelings of inferiority to imprison and disable Jesus-followers. Nebulous troublesome emotions that paralyze and immobilize are a sign that our guilt is satanically inspired

The inappropriate masks of shame

- Self-justification endeavours to justify, alleviate, minimize or trivialize our guilt. 'He is equally guilty,' 'It isn't as bad as you make out,' 'He can't take a joke.'
- Blame avoidance: 'It is Annie's fault.'
- Self-deception: 'Anyone would have done the same as me in the same circumstances.'
- Superficial confessions, which include excuses. 'I'm sorry, but you made me angry.'
- Self-rebuke and self-condemnation: 'I'm an idiot,' 'I'm a fool.'
- Feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, pessimism and martyrdom. 'I'm simply useless!'
- Discouragement, anger, withdrawal, depression and detachment.
- Deep emotional pain and spiritual turmoil, because of the real and horrible consequences that our evil has inflicted upon others. The abused remain abused, the maimed remain maimed, the dead remain dead; my guilt and culpability can't be glibly pushed aside.
- Tension, ulcers and other emotionally induced diseases.

Shame and Scripture

'And immediately the rooster crowed. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went away, crying bitterly.'⁸⁵ Peter's shame led him to be distressed and disillusioned, and for a season his thoughts turned back to fishing. But Jesus came looking for his disciple, questioning his affection and devotion to Him. Once more Jesus asked him: "'Simon son of John, do you love me?'" Peter was grieved that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you."⁸⁶ Peter's deep sorrow came from an appropriate understanding

83 NIV 1Ti 4:2

84 Tit 1:15

85 NLT Mt 27:74,75

86 NLT Jn 21:17

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of his guilt – his denial and betrayal of Jesus – these, in turn, led to deep legitimate feelings of shame. Peter's feelings of shame were appropriate because they led him to a humbling confession. Jesus forgave Peter, which led to the reconciliation of their relationship and the re-commissioning of Peter into service.

'When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That is your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.⁸⁷ Judas soon recognized the gravity of his sin and acknowledged it to the temple priests and elders. Judas tried to minimize his guilt feelings by returning the bribe. The one thing he should've done, which he didn't do, was seek forgiveness from Jesus. Judas' response was the inappropriate and illegitimate shame of worldly sorrow. He was humiliated at being exposed, and when his compensatory behaviour failed, his disgrace intensified. Instead of turning back to Jesus, tragically, he sought an inappropriate escape from his hurtful shame through suicide. Worldly shame always produces unhealthy results: angry silence, explosive outbursts, insecurity, vulnerability, brokenness, sadness, lingering remorse, haunting guilt, self-hatred, self-condemnation, and in its extreme, suicide.

Peter epitomized godly shame and sorrow, which always motivates people to confess and repent of sin, make restitution, and return to God. Godly sorrow acknowledges my transgression when I'm caught speeding, apologizes, pays the fine and leaves me with a resolve to pay closer attention to my driving habits. Godly sorrow always resolves shame and focuses on corrective conduct, reconciling and reforming our behaviour.

Worldly sorrow and shame leads me to condemn myself for my stupidity in being caught, arguing with the law enforcers, and seeking less policed roads on which to speed. Worldly sorrow leaves me fearful, tearful, angry and neurotic. Judas epitomizes the devastating consequences of worldly sorrow.

The Bible always talks of objective theological guilt and seldom talks of subjective guilty feelings. God never uses guilt or shame to drive and motivate people. Godly sorrow is born of love not guilt. We too must never use guilt to manipulate people into following Jesus or conforming to Christian standards. We must preach the Word truthfully and lovingly without using guilt to pressurise and manipulate people into a response. 'For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing what concern, what readiness to see justice done.'⁸⁸ Godly distress is a deep moral pain, which jars people to turn back to God, and when they do, breathtaking relief will flood their souls. Why tolerate endless worldly sorrow? Why not turn back to Jesus?

87 NIV Mt 27:3-5

88 NIV 1Co 7:9-11

Time to Reflect

1. Describe the difference between guilt and feeling guilty.
2. Give an example of appropriate shame. What caused it and how did you handle it?
3. Give an example of inappropriate or illegitimate shame. What caused it and how did you handle it?
4. Discuss the differences between Peter and Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

Today's Verse: Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 2Co 7:10 (NIV)

Resolving Self-Condensation

Step One - Reclaiming personal identity

We need to appreciate that we can develop a personal identity apart from our heritage, family and friends. We need to redefine our emotional, spiritual and physical boundaries so as to own our thoughts, emotions and behaviours. We either claim our identity or we'll live in bondage to others. Setting boundaries is a normal part of our developmental process. The development of a personal and unique identity can be impaired through: physical and emotional abuse; false religious teaching; manipulation; ineffective parenting; cultural and social pressures; and satanic influences. We have the right to our own choices, feelings, abilities, desires and attitudes. When we allow domineering personalities to invade our lives, our boundaries become invaded, as wittingly or unwittingly, we allow ourselves to be manipulated, controlled and directed. Failure to own your boundaries will lead to: unhealthy family relationships; selfish friendships; unwholesome church community; poor interpersonal relationships in the work place; inadequate self-esteem; and self-condemnation.

Reclaiming personal identity is about repairing boundaries and reclaiming property rights: it's about resolving past injuries and dealing with domineering relationships so as to establish one's own identity. Parents and spouses who try to control through force, violence, manipulation or guilt need to be lovingly confronted. It requires a firm stand and sometimes it's useful to solicit the aid of a skilled counsellor. Love must allow you to express your freedom and individuality. Any relationship that dominates and denies identity is unhealthy. Failure to guard your boundaries will lead to the invasion of: your personal territory, your choices, your rights, your uniqueness, and your God given individuality. Losing these rights will lead to: resentment, frustration, anger, rage, passive-aggressive behaviour, co-dependency, indecisiveness, mistrust, anxiety, guilt-driven behaviours, and self-blame.

Healthy relationships are about trusting, sharing and loving without the invasion and denial of personal freedoms. Trust respects an individual's independence. A mother who trusts and respects will allow her child to explore and develop a separate and distinctive personality, in return such a mother will be rewarded with her child's spontaneous affection. A mother who protects and domineers will rear a passive-submissive child who fails to mature and adequately relate in an adult world. Steps to break these abusive relationships include:

- An appreciation of your right to protect your personal boundaries
- Learning to resist domineering and smothering personalities
- Stop blaming past injuries and take responsibility for the rest of our lives
- Stop playing martyr and set limits to what we will or won't accept
- Reflect on troublesome emotions and analyse and challenge warped thinking
- Discuss and agree to respect personal freedoms with our spouses, children, parents, and with whom ever else we deem necessary
- Learning to distinguish and appreciate the independence and interdependence in healthy relationships. Uniquely talented individuals can still belong and identify with a well-knit team

Step Two – Expressing our true self

'It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.'⁸⁹ Paul teaches that two opposing principles are at work within people. We were created in the image of God. A part of you, your **new-self**, hankers after holiness and godly standards, conversely since the fall you've been infected by sin and so there is a part of you, your **old-self**, that's constantly being assaulted by and succumbing to evil.

Our two selves are at war. The victories and failures of these antagonists are largely dependent on our level of spirituality. Worldly believers lack discipleship and spiritual armour and will have a troubled existence. They'll keep suppressing their old-self who is always threatening to expose their weaknesses. They'll live ashamed and haunted by their secret passions and thoughts. Our old-self is always condoning and excusing our failures. Our new-self denies our passions looks down upon our weaknesses and seems to live in a twilight world of guilt and legalism. Our old-self hides behind emotional speech, exaggeration, licence and a distorted view of grace. Our new-self judges, idolises and condemns.

Resolving this internal dilemma requires that we find our **true-self**. Failure to accept your true-self will lead to aggressive, outward or reflexive, inward reactions. An aggressive response includes: irritability, intolerance and anger. A reflexive response includes: anxiety, self-deprecation, sadness, withdrawal, depression, and detachment.

Our true-self accepts that we're recovering sinners on the road to perfection. Our true-self won't accept sin, nor will it prematurely proclaim perfection while evil hovers on the horizon. 'I myself in my mind am a slave to god's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.'⁹⁰ Our true-self is the yearning for freedom from sin by practicing the presence of Jesus. Godliness isn't trying to be Jesus, but being in training to live like Jesus, it's intentionally practicing the spiritual disciplines that draw us into the heart of our Deity. Jesus-Followers are on a transformational journey to find their true God-image. (See Appendix Three for a discussion on Spiritual Disciplines.)

Spiritual growth isn't naïve, it appreciates the power of our sinful nature, and when we do lapse it doesn't despair, instead it readily returns to Jesus. A forgiven sinner acknowledges that: 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'⁹¹ Our growth process requires a fervent desire for purification and an increasing detachment from our passions and worldly distractions.

Self-condemnation endlessly berates and suppresses my old-self. My true-self, however, appreciates the love, grace, patience and the forgiveness of Christ. My true-self is able to sensitively confront my old-self, taking it by the hand and journeying with it to the new-self. Hand-in-hand my true-self and old-self reconcile negative feelings as they dwell in the Word, persist in prayer, and seek out the fellowship of mature believers.

When we talk of how our different parts or different selves war with one another, we're not talking about split personalities; we're one person with one personality. We're talking about a struggle within our single

89 Msg Ro 7:21-23

90 NIV Ro 7:24

91 NIV Ro 8:1

spirit, single nature and single personality. The war between my new-self and old-self is a war between two diametrically apposed principles at work within me, and is resolved when my true-self clings to my ideals while forgiving my inclination to worldliness.

Step Three - Reconciling my present with my past

Relationship resolution is the basis of all healing. We may not be able to reconcile and restore all our harmful relationships, but we can reconcile ourselves to God, and through Him reconcile ourselves to the hurts of our past. We're accountable for how we think, feel and behave. We may not have been in charge of past events, but we can learn to take ownership of the present. This includes how we allow our past to shape our present. If we learn to think differently about past events, we will reshape the present. Thinking differently starts with courageous decisions. 'I want to be in charge of my life. I want to guard what I allow into my spirit. I want to rise above my past and experience healing and growth from my wounds. I want the blood of Jesus to cleanse me from the negative effects of my emotional and physical wounds. I want godly standards to replace tyrannical relationships and dysfunctional family values. I want to distance myself from the negative effects of my hurts. I want to distance myself from the sin of others without negating my Christian duties.'

Unresolved relational issues have a treacherous influence on human personality. Our inability to face up to our inner conflicts gives rise to emotional instability that disintegrates our humanness. We become slaves to the authority figures of our past, living in accord with the tradition of our elders rather than giving our allegiance to God. Conscious efforts must be made to re-evaluate harmful relationships and beliefs and to throw off the yokes of slavery, including the yoke of self-condemnation. Efforts must be made to package the past with Christ's healing grace.

Spiritual growth is the only answer to past hurts and confusing emotions. Jesus is the only one able to truly transform disintegrated personalities. He invites you to lay the horrors of your past at His feet. 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'⁹²

Step Four - Actively participate in the fellowship of the saints

The fellowship of believers is a caring forum in which the Holy Spirit releases healing power to the saints for ministry one to another. Find reliable, trustworthy believers with whom you can be transparent and vulnerable, and take seriously God's call to pray for each other. The healing fellowship of believers moves way beyond ingratiating platitudes to the astonishing wisdom of sacrificial care-giving. The fellowship of Jesus-followers is friendships in action.

Step Five - Replace harmful introspection with the Word and prayer

Paul said, 'the sinful mind is hostile to God'⁹³ and 'his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.'⁹⁴ When self-talk persists, and hurtful memories surface, we must turn to the Word. Slow deliberate and consistent

92 NIV MT 11:28-30

93 NIV Ro 8:7

94 NIV Col 2:18

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reading of the Word is medicine to a hurting spirit and will revolutionize our souls. The Psalmist said it like this: 'Look at my misery, and rescue me, because I have never forgotten your teachings.'⁹⁵

Reflect on Jesus: 'Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.'⁹⁶ Focusing on Jesus will intensify our love relationship and bring peace to our souls. We need to intentionally replace harmful hurtful thinking with meditation and prayer. It's infinitely more beneficial to talk with Jesus than to indulge in confusing self-talk. When we think of our disadvantages, praise God for His presence in our weakness. When we cry over the past, reflect on that soon and coming day when there will be no death, crying, mourning or pain, and where Jesus will wipe every tear from our eyes.⁹⁷ Passionate, persistent prayer will carry you into the throne room of God; at His side harmful introspection is ancient history.

Step Six - Change your thinking habits

Decide against negative and harmful thinking. Negative thinking runs counter to God's Word. It blames, condemns and criticises. It sees no future and prefers to withdraw. Negative thinking keeps you irrational, inactive and indecisive. It will only see fault and the disadvantages that weigh you down. Rational thinking is a decision. Decide to think and behave differently. Rational thinkers seek true and hopeful solutions for all situations. There is hope in Christ Jesus, no matter what the circumstance. Reasonable thinking produces hopeful, workable solutions that move you away from distressing to hopeful emotions – and from inactivity to taking concrete steps to build a quality future. 'Fix your thoughts on what is true and honourable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.'⁹⁸

Step Seven – Change your self-concept by claiming His promises

Self-appreciation and self-acceptance are integral to the development of a healthy self-concept and require an honest self-appraisal in the light of our relationship with our Lord. We need to sense God's joy as He rejoices over us 'with singing.'⁹⁹ We need to sense our belovedness as we hear Him proclaim, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'¹⁰⁰ Our self-concept needs the peace and confidence that are ours in Christ. 'The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.'¹⁰¹

Our self-concept refers to the way we understand and value ourselves. A healthy godly picture of yourself sees you serving your Master. As the temple and tools of Christ on earth we have infinite value. There is nothing that God won't do through one who is fully devoted to His Kingdom purposes. We're important to God; we're children of a Royal Family and have access into the very throne room of God. The very presence and power of God is at the disposal of His faithful children; in Him we're competent to achieve heavenly purposes.

95 GW Ps 119:153
96 NIV He 12:2
97 Rev 21:4
98 NLT Phil 4:8,9
99 NIV Zep 3:17
100 NIV Lk 3:22
101 NIV Isa 32:17

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A biblical, healthy self-image must focus people back to their privileged status as children individually set-aside in the family of God. 'As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"¹⁰² We're integral parts of Christ's temple, uniquely equipped for service in a uniquely designated corner of God's vineyard. You count for Christ – He depends upon you to fulfil your life purpose.

Self-condemnation must be replaced by a Christ-esteem that grasps that we're, 'conquerors through him who loved us'¹⁰³ and that God: 'always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ.'¹⁰⁴ Our thoughts, attitudes and feelings must be shaped by our praise to: 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.'¹⁰⁵

Today's Verse: Fix your thoughts on what is true and honourable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil 4:8,9 (NLT)

102 NIV 1Co 12:20,21
103 NIV Ro 8:37
104 NIV 2Co 2:14
105 NIV Eph 1:3



3

Dealing with Self-Righteousness

A. DEALING WITH SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Definitions

Self-righteousness and self-condemnation are opposite extremes in a self-encapsulated world. Self-righteousness stems from a personal and biased estimation of your own worthiness and goodness. To be righteous, is to be considered principled, pious, pure and having unquestionable morals. When Cathy calls Maggie righteous, she is saying: 'It's my opinion that Maggie has godly values'. Therein lies the beauty of the complement; someone else has made the assessment. When God calls Brian self-righteous, He says: 'Brian you're always saying you're right without ever considering what others think of you.' Therein lies the problem of self-righteousness; it's a self-opinionated self-estimation that won't consider the objective norms or opinions of others. Self-righteousness is a sin, because it forms an opinion that ignores Christian values. 'A fool does not find joy in understanding but only in expressing his own opinion.'¹⁰⁶

When we talk of God's righteousness, we're talking about His attributes that portray His perfect justice in the moral government of creation. When we talk of the righteousness of Jesus, we talk of His perfect obedience to the law of God and His willing sacrifice as He suffered the penalty of our sin. The unrighteous acts of our unjust lives are turned into righteousness by the brutal acts against Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Righteousness is received and we must simply stand in awe at the inexplicable humbling of the Eternal Son.

When we talk of the righteousness of a Jesus-follower, we talk of the justice Christ assigns to our lives when we accept Him as our Saviour, and the hunger we now have for a lifestyle that reflects His values. Self-righteousness is a self-centred, self-focused attitude out of harmony with godly values. Christ-righteous gives birth to an unquenchable yearning for more of God in our lives, an ever-increasing yearning for holiness. 'Since God chose you to be holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.'¹⁰⁷

Self-righteousness and pride

Pride can be defined as a superior opinion of one's abilities and merits. One can be justifiably proud. It's normal for a parent to be proud of the achievements of their children. As a patriotic South African I can be proud of the performance of our national cricket team. I can also be pleased with my wife's accomplishments just as I can be with those of my own. There is a difference between justifiable pride and

106 GW Pr 18:2
107 NLT Col 3:12

unjustifiable pride. Justifiable pride feels happy over a job well done that's tempered with humility and modesty. Acceptable pride is reasonable and understandable, and never superior, arrogant or vain. When we refer to pride in this module, we refer to the sin of false-pride; a pride that's egotistical, narcissist and has an arrogant consciousness of its lofty position.

Self-righteousness is a skewed self-estimation of one's rightness or worth, whereas pride is an arrogant consciousness of your superior position. Pride is an attitude that displays and flaunts itself over its accomplishments. Pride keeps pointing at and feeding off its deeds. Self-righteousness keeps broadcasting its belief in its own worthiness and merits. Pride and self-righteousness are best viewed as two separate, but closely related root sins. Which comes first, pride or self-righteousness? Does pride encompass self-righteousness or does self-righteousness encompass pride? Can we have one without the other? The world can't have the chicken without the egg. Nor do we believe that the righteous can be proud, or that the humble can be self-righteous. Pride naturally leads to self-righteousness just as easily as self-righteousness leads to pride. Self-righteousness and pride are twin-sins. To have one without the other is a contradiction in terms.

Pride is the root sin that caused Satan to fall

'Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.'¹⁰⁸ Because Satan became proud and aspired to a more prestigious position than God, he was cast from heaven: 'You said to yourself, "I'll climb to heaven. I'll set my throne over the stars of God. I'll run the assembly of angels that meets on sacred Mount Zaphon. I'll climb to the top of the clouds. I'll take over as King of the Universe.'"¹⁰⁹ Pride and ambition led Satan to have a fanatical desire to be exalted; it was the root sin that led to his downfall.

Pride and power

The history of men and nations is the story of an intimate correlation between power and the corrupting, destructive character of pride. Pride is at its most dangerous when it's found in the heart of leaders. Many leaders have commenced noble paths of public service and reformation, of discovery and invention, of peace and protection of human rights, only to pause and look back on their achievements and have their satisfaction turn to pride. Pride inflates and soon turns into arrogance. God gave Samson colossal power and he did great feats on behalf of God's people. He turned to admire his triumphs and was soon boasting: 'With the jawbone of a donkey, I've killed a thousand men!'¹¹⁰ Accomplishments and victories tempt people into losing perspective. Throughout history pride has been a monumental problem to kings, priests and presidents.

Power and success raise you above the ordinariness of life and has an appealing tendency to discolour your self-image. Followers, subordinates, fans and the media inflate our fickle egos. Pride, power and prestige form an evil alliance through which demonic powers seek active participation. Inner perversion soon manifests in the bizarre and unaccountable behaviour of leaders. Pride blinds you to evil, allowing you to justify your actions. The more prominent your position the greater will be your influence over others. Demonic powers are the energizing forces behind brutal dictators, cult figures, immoral pop stars and evil

108 NIV Eze 28:17

109 Msg Isa 14:12-15

110 NLT Jdg 15:16

idols. This demonic influence isn't restricted to the leader, but infiltrates sadistic regimes, unjust policies, corrupt institutions and cultic practices.

Gods warnings against pride

- 'I hate pride and arrogance.'¹¹¹
- 'Pride leads to disgrace.'¹¹²
- 'Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.'¹¹³
- 'Their pride will pull them under.'¹¹⁴
- 'First pride, then the crash- the bigger the ego, the harder the fall.'¹¹⁵

Humility is the opposite of pride

To understand the evil of pride, we should contrast it to the purity of humility:

- 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'¹¹⁶
- 'God has had it with the proud. But takes delight in just plain people.'¹¹⁷
- 'But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'¹¹⁸

The contrast between proud and humble people

- Pride works at glorifying self, provoking God and seeking destruction. Humility works at destroying pride and seeking advantage for others, so that in due course God may lift you up
- Pride places itself first. Humility places God and others first. 'Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.'¹¹⁹
- Humility practices hospitality and enjoys neighbourliness. Humility is the Good Samaritan. Pride is the priest and Levite who pass by on the other side of the road¹²⁰
- Pride won't serve others. But Jesus 'did not come to be served, but to serve...'¹²¹
- Pride is never content and always grumbles. Humility says: 'I've learned to be content in whatever situation I'm in.'¹²²
- Pride is ambitious and constantly strives. Humility says: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.'¹²³
- Pride isn't happy with the success of others. Humility says: 'Be happy with those who are happy.'¹²⁴
- Pride doesn't weep with those that weep. Humility says: 'Be sad with those who are sad.'¹²⁵
- Pride has a hard heart: 'Jesus cried.'¹²⁶

111 NIV Pr 8:13
112 NLT Pr 11:2
113 NLT Pr 16:18
114 Msg Isa 25:11
115 Msg Pr 16:18
116 NIV Js 4:6
117 Msg 1Pe 5:5
118 NLT Mt 23:12
119 NIV Ro 12:10
120 Lk 10:25-37
121 NIV Mt 20:28
122 GW Php 4:11
123 NIV Pr 30:8
124 GW Ro 12:15
125 GW Ro 12:15
126 GW Jn 11:35

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- Pride won't lay down its life for others. Humility demonstrates its love by laying down its life for others. 'We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian friends.'¹²⁷
- Pride doesn't accept correction or rebuke. Humility favours correction
- Pride doesn't trust. Humility trusts
- Pride won't allow others to make mistakes. Humility overlooks mistakes
- Pride is impatient. Humility waits patiently
- Pride won't forgive others. Humility turns the other cheek
- Pride always has the right answer and the right method. Humility loves counsel
- Pride boasts about its gifts, talents and good points. Humility is self-effacing and says: 'Don't brashly announce what you're going to do tomorrow; you don't know the first thing about tomorrow.'¹²⁸
- Pride boasts about its weaknesses: 'I drink too much.' Humility mourns its sin
- Pride aims to reach the peak in sport, to amass wealth and to seek fame. Humility is a team player, works hard, and always considers others superior
- Pride steps on others on its way to the top and shuns the lowly and outcasts. Humility teaches: 'Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!'¹²⁹
- Pride has a wrong attitude, even though it gives the right answer. Humility is gracious and shows wisdom in silence
- Pride seeks authority, but shuns responsibility. Humility delights in responsibility while taking the lowest place at the table
- Pride is inflexible. Humility is flexible
- Pride accepts, but will never give: 'Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.'¹³⁰
- Pride looks for sins in others lives. Humility overlooks sins and finds strengths
- Pride criticises. Humility encourages
- Pride rebels against the will of God. Humility submits to the will of God

127 NLT 1Jn 3:16
128 Msg Pr 27:1
129 NLT Ro 12:16
130 NIV Pr 25:14

Time to Reflect

1. What do you understand by the term self-righteousness?
2. What do you understand by the term pride?
3. Do you see pride in yourself? Go through the list and record the characteristics of pride that others may be seeing in you.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Today's Verse: First pride, then the crash- the bigger the ego, the harder the fall.
Pr 16:18 (Msg)

An example of God bringing down the proud

All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven from your people and will live with wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

At the end of that time I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honour and splendour was returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.¹³¹

Ambition and self-exhalation had motivated King Nebuchadnezzar in building a palace befitting his status. Power, conceit and arrogance defiled his heart as he reflected upon his feats. In response to his pride, a voice told him that his fortunes would be reversed until he acknowledged his dependency on the Sovereign Lord. The prophecy came true and for a season Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason, fame and honour until at last he turned and glorified God. He was restored as King when he acknowledged his dependence on God. The clear warning to all is that God is able to humble the proud. God's justice will bring about a season of great shame and suffering for the proud; it's far better to deal with it whilst God warns, rather than to await His corrective and disciplinary intervention in our affairs.

Biblical examples of pride

In case people think Nebuchadnezzar was the exception, we must look at other examples of God dealing with the proud:

- 'Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord? Why should I obey him and let Israel go?"'¹³² Ten plagues later a distraught Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron and declares: 'You and the Israelites must leave my people at once. Go, worship the Lord as you asked.'¹³³

131 NIV Da 4:28-37

132 GW Ex 5:2

133 GW Ex 12:31

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- King Uzziah was sixteen when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. He sought and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord; however we read: 'But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord...'¹³⁴ so the Lord afflicted him with leprosy.
- King Hezekiah knew the protection of the Lord for many years, but he too grew proud and took God's favour for granted. So God poured out his wrath upon King and people. 'Then Hezekiah repented of his pride, and the people of Jerusalem humbled themselves. So the Lord's anger did not come against them during Hezekiah's lifetime.'¹³⁵
- Naaman was a valiant and respected leader that God used to give victory to King Aram. King Aram sent Naaman with a letter to the king of Israel asking that he cure his commander of leprosy. When he was told to go wash in a river, he angrily retorted: "'I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?'" So he turned and went off in a rage.¹³⁶ Proud Naaman would rather die with leprosy than submit to bathing in the Jordan. It must be his servants that return him to his senses.
- Haman was honoured among all King Xerxes court officials, yet he became proud and fumed when Mordecai would not bow to him or show fear in his presence. Haman plotted against Mordecai, but through Queen Esther's intervention the king hangs him on the very gallows he intended for his enemy.¹³⁷

Time and time again we see God dealing decisively with proud people. God gives leaders and people favour that they might become His servants and serve His purposes in this world. When we have success, we too easily become conceited and arrogant. We slip into our self-encapsulated world where we credit our feats to our strength. God warns, and when we still don't listen, He'll act purposefully to humble the proud. Don't mistake God's tolerance and patience as a sign of weakness. People will find that the Holy One can either be a Safe Hiding Place or a Stumbling Stone; if your stumbling doesn't turn you – you will soon find He is a Tiresome Trap that snares, and won't release unless you repent.

Pride leads to various associated sins

Successful people who become proud fail to understand their condition. Jesus said to the church of Laodicea: 'You brag, "I'm rich, I've got it made, I need nothing from anyone," oblivious to the fact you're a pitiful, blind beggar, threadbare and homeless.'¹³⁸ The Laodiceans had been lured by their worldly wealth into believing they were self-sufficient, instead they were admonished by Jesus for their spiritual poverty and cautioned to acquire from Him spiritual treasure.

Wealth is a major stumbling block to spirituality, breeding a false sense of security that loathes placing its trust in Jesus. Jesus saw into the heart of the rich young ruler and told him to give his wealth away.¹³⁹ The ruler turned his back on Jesus rather than turn from the lure of his wealth. This generation admires

134 NIV 2Ch 26:16-21

135 NLT 2Ch 32:26

136 NIV 2Ki 5:11,12

137 Est 3-8

138 Msg Rev 3:17

139 Mt 19:13-24

individualism and worships the self-made and super-successful. We've wrapped ourselves in a culture that spurns dependency and faith in a provider God; instead of money serving God's purposes we've allowed our pride to turn it into an idol.

Pride has a compulsive desire to attract attention to its accomplishments rather than direct people to the glory that rightly belongs to God. Pride is a selfish bigheaded attitude that holds itself superior to others. Pride leads to spiritual insensitivity, then on to disobedience, boasting, defiance, haughtiness, conceit and rebellion.

Pride and our children

We can take unreasonable pride in the accomplishments of our children. We can delight in and boast in the accomplishments of our children and indirectly seek attention for ourselves through genetic association. At every opportunity I swell with pride as I declare my children's giftedness and accomplishments and then take great satisfaction in sharing in the limelight. We all know such parents and grandparents. They may be loving and doting, but they can also be obnoxious and insensitive in declaring the wonder of their offspring. Parents and grandparents need to praise and encourage their children and grandchildren, but in doing so must avoid vanity, conceit and pride. Much of the boasting in our offspring simply panders to our own egos as we seek recognition for our incomparable genes. Exaggerated praise teaches children to be pompous and conceited. Parents who see no evil in this groom their children to live in a self-exalting, self-centred world.

Pride and our sport

Moderate or justifiable pride is commendable. The skills of our local soccer team can be a wonder to behold. But when uncontrolled pride grips my heart and I can't appreciate the same brilliance in the opposition, pride has become an evil that blinds and distorts my reasoning. Indeed, for the same brilliance I applaud my team, yet I boo the opposition. It isn't the game I enjoy; my delight rests only in the success of my team. Pride leads to impartiality, prejudice, discrimination, exaggeration and blind loyalty. Soon I become a fanatic who would rather disrupt the game than watch my team lose. So too, I rage and rampage, even physically attacking the supporters of the opposing team.

Pride and our nation

Nationalism and patriotism are feelings, which can become distorted and unreasonable. Nationalism is immersed in culture, heritage, history, geography and language. Patriotism is the preservation and pursuit of national identity. The danger in patriotism lies in its tendency to conceit, egotism and obsessiveness. When patriotism is manipulated, it can be unfair to foreigners and aliens. It can be directed and manipulated into colonialism, imperialism, expansionism and war mongering. Pride has destroyed many leaders, organisations and even nations. Proud and powerful national leaders soon become arrogant and contemptuous, needlessly sending their nations to war. The rise and fall of nations is too often the history of corruptive pride. Pride keeps reason and diplomacy out of the equation, and war becomes the preferred option in resolving disputes. It's often within the means of these leaders to avert hostilities, but unyielding personalities frustrate peace initiatives leading to the tragic displacement and deaths of countless millions of innocent people.

Left unchecked, pride will distort and disintegrate our personalities and relationships. Successful leaders can develop feelings of invincibility and infallibility and become reckless in their thinking and actions. Pastors can be blinded by pride; minor indiscretions will soon be followed by more blatant lapses until finally their ministry is destroyed. Pride isn't a complacent emotion; it's a restless irresponsible power that seeks to envelop and dominate. We need to be alert to its course in our own lives or we too will be left ruined in its wake.

Time to Reflect

1. Can you think of both a biblical and contemporary example where God has humbled a proud leader?
2. What accomplishments lead to pride in your life? How have you dealt with this?
3. Is your life characterised by power and pride, or by service and humility?

Today's Verse: And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. Da 4:37 (NIV)

A parable on self-righteousness

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men- robbers, evildoers, adulterers- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said: 'God have mercy on me a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."¹⁴⁰

The prayer of the Pharisee

The prayer of the Pharisee reeks of self-confidence, self-importance, sanctimony and ostentation. The Pharisee is brazen in his public display. He takes pride in separating himself from others and flaunting his religiosity, he can barely conceal his loathing of the tax collector. Although he may address God, his intentions are clear; this is a public pronouncement of his righteousness, an occasion for self-promotion and self-congratulation. There are no elements of biblical prayer in his words, he neither glorifies God nor gives thanks, and there are no petitions, no guilt, no remorse, nor any confession.

When there is no sense of sin, there can be no sorrow or repentance, and so we're excluded from forgiveness. The Pharisee takes consolation in his works: 'I am not like... I fast... I give...' and holds out these deeds as symbols of his own righteousness.

The Pharisee went to the temple ostensibly to pray, but instead publicly placed himself above others. Instead of drawing nearer, he aggravates his departure from the heart of God. Many so-called prayers are just this, polished public speeches, not untypical of many prayer meetings. So too, many of our private prayers are nothing more than a speech to ourselves about ourselves, an expression of our opinions, desires and hopes. Personal prayers are often nothing more than private pep talks.

We can't separate our prayer lives from the condition of our heart. An angry heart prays angry prayers; a sad heart, sad prayers. A boastful heart doesn't take respite during an intermittent prayer life. An insensitive uncaring heart doesn't have an automatic antonym during its prayer moments. Caring sensitive prayers are birthed from a caring sensitive heart. Compassion, contrition and consolation are evidence that we have developed intimacy and communion with the Holy Trinity.

The prayer of the Tax Collector

The disposition of the tax collector reflects his humility and sense of unworthiness in the presence of the Holy One. Standing at a distance he was nearer to the heart of God than he who sought centre stage.

140 NIV Lk 18:9-14

Standing at a distance he desperately desired distance from his sins. A consciousness of divine presence evoked guilt and remorse leading to his anguished plea for mercy. His downcast eyes and the pummelling of his breast augments the cry that rises from the depth of his soul: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

The self-righteous despise those who have a need to confess their sin; critical and judgemental spirits harden people against the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The humble are ever conscious to examine their lives, attitudes and emotions. They desire sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and will earnestly beg forgiveness of sin, and fervently seek the grace to grow in grace.

Comparisons with others aren't an aid to prayer life. Comparisons lead to either; self-exaltation and complacency; or to self-condemnation and despair. Jesus is the only yardstick for people to gauge their spirituality. When we, like the tax collector, place our life alongside the life of Jesus, we'll have neither the time nor capacity for comparison with fellow followers. The radiance of Jesus' life shuts out superfluous contrasts and keeps you focussed on Him, the only true measure of personal holiness.

The results of the prayers

Jesus concluded the parable with a decisive pronouncement that it was the tax collector rather than the Pharisee who went home justified. The tax collector came with a troubled heart seeking relief and went home experiencing the peace of a forgiven sinner. The Pharisee came confident of his own righteousness and looking down upon others, and went home having reinforced his misguided beliefs. The parable teaches that there are right prayers and wrong prayers. Right prayers have untold effect in changing the condition of people whereas wrong prayers leave people where they are, sin-laden and wallowing in self-righteousness.

The closing remarks of Jesus sum up perfectly the central truth of the parable: 'For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honoured.'¹⁴¹ God always favours the humble and contrite in spirit, just as He always admonishes the self-righteous and arrogant.

Self-righteousness and holiness

Holiness and self-righteousness are mutually exclusive; they cannot co-exist within our hearts. Holiness is based upon the attributes of God whereas self-righteousness is centred on the attributes of worldly people. The self-righteous are locked into a self-centred universe where their character is dominated by an egocentric evil. In their world godliness and altruism are banished as threats to modernism and progress. 'Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience'¹⁴² are holy virtues that minimises an ego and are unwelcome in the hearts of self-righteous people. Quiet simply, they lack sensitivity, sympathy, empathy, tolerance, patience and self-sacrifice. A holy heart is 'content whatever the circumstance'¹⁴³ whereas the self-righteous are restless impatient strivers.

The godly and the ungodly display fruit in keeping with their respective spiritual conditions. Authentic spirituality has undergone an authentic transformation and evidences in ever increasing measure the image-of-God-within towards which we return. An egocentric being is always coveting and competing for

141 NLT Lk 18:14

142 NIV Col 3:12

143 NIV Phil 4:11

attention. A godly heart: 'is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.'¹⁴⁴ Self-righteousness is invariably uncontrolled, arrogant, haughty, conceited, insolent, boastful, intolerant and rebellious.

Self-righteousness and anger

Human anger is often born from self-interest. Self-righteousness that's frustrated will turn to anger. Self-righteousness performs for merit and enjoys the glory of recognition. Christian excellence is commendable, however Christian competition and comparison is an entrance to pride, shame and resentment. When toil doesn't produce the expected accolades, or when achievements are minimised or rebutted, anger will be ignited.

Anger that is induced by selfishness is harmful, destructive, and, in turn, leads to further sin. This anger can take many forms. Little frustrations will lead to an anger that smoulders beneath the surface, and like a volcano it will explode at the most unexpected times, venting its fury upon all who happen to be in reach. Failure to win recognition can lead to guilt which when unresolved leads to an internalised and suppressed anger. This buried anger becomes an integral, but destructive part of our personality. Such anger is rarely expressed for what it is, and is likely to be evidenced in psychosomatic or neurotic illnesses.

Parents are often party to the development of self-righteous children who have an inbred anger associated with years of striving and struggling to prove their worth. Children try to alleviate their frustration and bitterness by projecting anger towards their parents; it can also be projected upon other innocent parties, including spouses and children.

The anger of a self-righteous person is a vengeful anger; when they perceive an injustice they will use their anger to punish their persecutors. When they feel threatened, betrayed or ignored, they involuntarily seek satisfaction by reacting angrily.

The self-righteous will claim that their anger emanates from the actions of others, because they've endured injustice, rejection or humiliation. External circumstances are held up to mask their selfish motives which rage uncontrolled below the surface. However the principal cause is simply selfishness: 'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Aren't they caused by the selfish desires that fight to control you?'¹⁴⁵ _

The case history of Mary

Mary grew up in a small farming village in the midlands of South Africa. Mary's father, Duncan, was a dairy farmer. Duncan had a weakness for young women. But he was white, the women were black, and this was apartheid South Africa in the 1960's. Mary's first inclination that something was wrong was when her father was arrested for 'interracial sex' when she was six. When she was eight, he was again jailed for the same offence. This young child was plunged into a very difficult home environment and soon learnt the torment of being ostracized, made doubly difficult in a small community where everyone knew everyone else's affairs.

144 NIV Tit 1:8

145 GW Jas 4:1

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You had to have lived in South Africa to understand the stigma that was attached to 'interracial sex'. It was: 'an unimaginable betrayal of one's racial heritage, an offence against country and God; a vile, despicable crime, which the white apartheid government was determined to stamp out.'

The media circus around Duncan's 'apartheid crime' and court appearances intensified the family's shame. His photo was splashed across the daily papers as he was ignominiously led from the courthouse and taken off to jail. Mary, and her older sister Lilly, suffered the abuse and jeers from family and friends alike. Fortunately her parents were able to afford a private school in the city for Lilly, and so Melanie, their mother, bundled the eldest daughter off to boarding school and away from the snide remarks and vicious reactions of the community. Mary didn't have this privilege, she was enrolled in the local boarding school and had to face her cruel world head on. It was an intensely hostile and an unforgiving environment, every teacher and pupil knew of the 'family disgrace', town folk explicitly forbade their children to play with or speak to Mary. She was literally abandoned without friend or counsel and had to process an avalanche of intimidating events and caustic comments in unbearable isolation whilst suffering incredible mental and emotional anguish.

I interviewed Mary and asked her what her most difficult childhood memories were. Mary told me of the pain and loneliness she felt staying on in boarding school over free weekends after her parents had sold the farm and moved down to a coastal city. She described the relentless torment and destruction of her inner-world over a guilt she could never quiet articulate. She described the harrowing taunts of her peers, the smug and knowing silence of the community, the discriminations of her teachers, and the increasing distance between herself and her family. She told me how she finally adjusted at school, excelling in hockey and tennis, building a few close friends around her, then only to be removed from the school by her mother in her final year, because she had divorced Duncan after yet another lapse into sin. Mary was devastated by yet another forced removal that never considered her personal circumstances and thrust her into another strange environment just as she was managing a semblance of survival. Mary recounted the horrors of the media publicity when her dad again lapsed into sin and was rearrested during her high school years. The reopening of her painful wounds in the glaring eyes of a new intimidating school environment left her angry and bitter. She left the telling of her most excruciating memory to last. Forty years after the event, tears still welled up in Mary's eyes as she told me of her devastating discovery that her parents had sold the farm, her horse, her dogs, and her cats without telling her or allowing her to say goodbye to the only childhood securities she ever had known. Even the pain of her father's subsequent suicide was more tolerable than her separation from her pets that had never once hurt her.

Mary came from a dysfunctional family. To survive in her childhood world, Mary learnt to repress her traumatic memories and deny her hurt, abandonment, fear, neglect, and isolation. She developed compensatory behaviours: she became critical and judgmental; by highlighting the faults of others she could minimize her own. She became self-driven and worked exceptionally hard at excelling in sports, earning respect and accolades from her peers. Mary was an impoverished soul, no-one else who would stand up for her, and so she fashioned a personality interwoven with self-protection, self-justification and self-righteousness.

Her childhood wounds, unresolved pains, repressed inner-conflicts, and the dysfunctional behaviours she acquired were transmitted into her adulthood. There was a direct link between Mary's past and her functioning in the present. God forbid that we would ever be opinionated about the self-driven and self-righteous without first understanding their history.

Time to Reflect

1. Find words to contrast the prayers of the self-righteousness Pharisee with the humility of the Tax Collector.
2. Discuss: 'the parable teaches us that there are right prayers and wrong prayers'. Discuss: 'an eloquent prayer may not be a heartfelt prayer'.
4. How can we ensure that we leave the prayer sanctuary confident that God has heard our prayers?
5. Have you identified troublesome behaviours in your life which can be linked to events in your childhood?

Today's Verse: For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honoured. Lk 18:14 (NLT)

Self-righteousness and the family

The family environment is a common breeding ground for self-righteous behaviour. Like produces like. Self-righteous parents are likely to rear self-righteous children. This is particularly true when parents are ungodly and their children aren't exposed to Christian values; however self-righteous behaviour isn't exclusively confined to the unregenerate; nominal Jesus-followers can be as guilty.

A role model is a powerful tool in shaping behaviour. Children don't have to be explicitly taught, it's enough when parents frequently demonstrate their bad habits. By our example and practice, we indoctrinate our children with faulty concepts. Our children perpetuate self-righteous behaviour because it's ingrained in their learned concepts of esteem, acceptance and love. This learning is reinforced by modern westernism: its media, education, music, literature and culture pays homage to self-made idols that promote these secular norms.

Children cry out for love, encouragement and attention, and when it isn't forthcoming they adopt manipulative behaviours that serve their needs. Sibling rivalry conspires with poor parenting to reinforce poor behaviours. Neglected and love deprived children are sub-consciously taught to compete with each other for parental attention. Sibling rivalry extends well beyond mere competitiveness and a performance bias; it soon entails devious scheming to bring about the disfavour and the downfall of sibling contenders. Siblings' weaknesses and strengths are artfully exploited through manipulative and counter-balanced behaviours. If one child wins parental approval for neatness, then the other seeks to sabotage these efforts. If one child wins disapproval for under-achieving at school, the other will seek to win favour through over-achieving. When they can't compete on one stage, they will seek attention through performance on another. Sue is a brilliant academic, so Jack seeks to counter her with his performance on the athletics track. If this doesn't work, he will then seek attention in another area. Even rebellious behaviour that detracts attention away from the more successful siblings is considered better than inaction. Children need to be noticed and when one sibling is constantly favoured to the exclusion of another negative behaviour could be attempted in order to seek attention.

The practice of earning favour soon inspires a performance-orientated routine that spreads to every facet of the child's existence and development. Our performance-orientated society teaches people to compare, compete and to be successful at all costs. So instilled is this winner culture that today's children are generally far more conceited and arrogant than that of past generations. When Jesus said: 'Therefore, anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven,'¹⁴⁶ He didn't have in mind 21st century children in western urban primary schools with their CD-players, cell-phones, laptops, credit cards and chauffeurs.

Childhood practices become even more finely honed in adulthood. Today's achievement orientated societies have sophisticated winners who despise humility. Inflated egos of the chic are advertised with the flagrant flouting of the fruit of their success: homes, dress, clothing, jewellery, cars and holidays. Earning and constantly comparing merit isn't conducive to stable relationships and healthy self-concepts. There are pervasive insecurities, uncertainties and fears that plague children, these don't disappear in adulthood; their expression just becomes that much more complex as seen in paranoia and obsessive-compulsive behaviour. Family environments either develop or disintegrate personalities; they are by far the most influential factors

146 NLT Mt 18:4

in the development of our character. Behaviours learned so easily in childhood will take years of determined effort and counselling to undo in adulthood. Our healing and growth is contingent upon unlearning and replacing poor behaviours with appropriate behaviours. This process involves recognising the triggers that were instrumental in shaping our behaviours. 'What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.'¹⁴⁷ Parental errors will need to be highlighted in order to be resolved. Self-righteousness mustn't however be replaced with judgemental attitudes and the dishonouring of our parents; the key to healing damages from the past is the spirit of forgiveness. True Christian faith must separate the carnal influence of parents without the severance of family ties.

The good news is that we can break the shackles of a traumatic childhood and the plethora of dysfunctional behaviours that have been carried into our adult world. By speaking through her past and being shown how her survival tactics became part of her personality, Mary now appreciates the connection between her dysfunctional past and her troubling adaptive behaviours. As she begins to understand more and more about the relationship between her past and present she is increasingly being liberated through conscious choices to change her present. Mary's healing was initiated by a dramatic and cathartic encounter with the Holy Ghost, but it continues as a daily journey into the spectacular freedom she is finding in Jesus. Pause for a moment and pray for Mary.

Causes of self-righteous behaviour

- Excessive ambition and self-drive
- Instilling highly competitive behaviours in people, both children and adults
- Leadership
- Media and culture
- Our attraction to our self-driven and self-made heroes and mega-stars
- Our successes and triumphs
- Parental abandonment
- Parental neglect
- Parenting conditioned by worldly standards
- Poverty
- Power
- Satanic influence
- The attention, admiration and accolades of others
- The frantic pursuit of materialism
- Wealth
- Worldly teachers, pastors, educators and authority figures

Self-righteous indicators

- The saints don't seek out our companionship
- The saints don't pay heed to our counsel
- Our companions aren't encouraged to godly behaviour
- Our companions easily slip into gossip, scandal and criticism
- Our spouse isn't maturing into a loving friend
- Our children are disobedient and rebellious
- We ignore the advice and wisdom of our companions

147 NIV Ecc 1:9

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- We're competitive and enjoy being considered more spiritual than others
- We treat others as inept children
- We avoid encouraging others
- We take advantage of others
- We dislike serving others
- We're jealous of the success of others
- We can't rejoice when God blesses or bestows favour on others
- We're critical and judgemental. 'If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.'¹⁴⁸
- We're the gossipmongers of the church, the first to carry the latest news. 'Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people.'¹⁴⁹
- Our righteousness depends on our favourable comparison with others; we're therefore compelled to advertise their faults. 'Whoever forgives an offence seeks love, but whoever keeps bringing up the issue separates the closest of friends.'¹⁵⁰
- We aren't adverse to interpreting and retelling events to suit our purposes. We re-invent truth with half-lies and innuendos, even deceiving ourselves into believing our fabrications. In the extreme, we become delusional, incapable of distinguishing between reality and our inventive imaginations.
- We keep our associates supplied with facts, lies and perceptions that discolour the reputation of others. To stay on top, others must be brought down. We even go so far as to share sensitive prayer items that display others as weak, inept and sinful. 'Sin is unavoidable when there is much talk, but whoever seals his lips is wise.'¹⁵¹ 'Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals – these are the very things that destroy them.'¹⁵²
- We marry someone who is submissive and easily controlled
- We demean and debase our spouse when they threaten our self-interests
- We seek to surround ourselves with compatible associates, non-threatening opposite personality types. The wise, trustworthy and responsible are surrounded by their cronies, the stupid, the absent-minded and the irresponsible – whom they delight in correcting and criticising.
- You portray yourself as considerate, affectionate and generous yet others reject you as cold, calculating and manipulative
- We inwardly desire more meaningful friendships yet we're always putting others down and displaying an air of superiority
- We surround ourselves with complex airs and graces
- We fear transparency and vulnerability
- Others feel unworthy and contaminated by our company
- We aren't natural team players, preferring individualistic sports
- We easily see the speck in the eyes of others, but can't see the plank in our own, and since we won't confess we don't repent. 'While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.'¹⁵³

148 NIV Js 1:26
149 NLT Lev 19:16
150 GW Pr 17:9
151 GW Pr 10:19
152 NIV Jude 10
153 NIV Jer 7:13

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- When cornered, we always have an excuse to justify inexcusable behaviour. 'You can't whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them.'¹⁵⁴
- Since we see error and sin as weakness we deny our own, because we can't understand how people could love someone with faults
- We can't accept a self-sacrificing love as a true motive and relentlessly question the actions of others. 'But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.'¹⁵⁵
- You attribute your own motives to others who you persecute for no other reason than they reached out to you with a love you didn't understand. 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.'¹⁵⁶
- You misconstrue the motives of others and separate yourselves from the very people who can guide you to the Caring-Counsellor
- We're forever restless in search of meaning and fulfilment. We're constantly exhausted as we relentlessly struggle for an illusive love. 'But your wrongs have separated you from your God, and your sins have made him hide his face so that he doesn't hear you.'¹⁵⁷
- We do good works, but with false motives, we desire return and recognition for our deeds. False motives flow from a worldly spirit and grow dubious fruit. 'They're a vine that comes right out of Sodom, who they are is rooted in Gomorrah; Their grapes are poison grapes, their grape-clusters bitter. Their wine is rattlesnake venom, mixed with lethal cobra poison.'¹⁵⁸
- We love displaying our superior knowledge and have learnt to ask questions that only we can answer. We believe we've a superior knowledge of the Scriptures and dominate study groups with our ingenious comments, opinions and arguments.
- We never ask questions to learn, but only to expose the shortcomings of our teachers. 'Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.'¹⁵⁹ 'Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin; anyone who speaks boastfully invites a disaster.'¹⁶⁰
- We're distrustful and see hidden motives behind all attempts at help
- We're by nature distrustful; distrusting God and His Word
- We're resistant to the movement of the Holy Spirit
- We're resistant to seeking God's healing and mercy
- We're obsessive controllers and have great difficulty in delegating. In the church, we're resistant to change and the introduction of new ideas.
- When my faults finally catch up with me, I will role-play the humility and remorse of the righteous
- We only admit our indiscretions if they will demonstrate our noble purposes. 'I'm sorry I'm late, but it's because I stopped to drop off food for the poor.'
- The heart of the self-righteous is misguided, misinformed and imprisons you in darkness
- We're blinded to truth and reason and stumble about like the dying. 'Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead.'¹⁶¹

154	Msg Pr 28:13
155	Msg Ro 5:8
156	NIV Mt 5:11
157	GW Isa 59:2
158	Msg Dt 32:32
159	NIV 2Ti 2:14
160	NLT Pr 17:19
161	NIV Isa 59:10

Time to Reflect

1. In which ways have you been responsible for the development of self-righteous attitudes in your children?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Write down the causes of your self-righteous behaviour

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. List the traits that may identify you with the self-righteous.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Today's Verse: You can't whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them. Pr 28:13 (Msg)



4

Setting the Self-Righteousness Free

Setting the Self-righteous Free

Step One - Understanding Christ-righteous characteristics

It's as we peer beyond the prison bars of our unrighteousness and begin to glimpse the beauty of a godly life that we'll yearn for our freedom. These then are the fruit of a righteous life that can be ours in Christ Jesus:

- 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'¹⁶²
- 'Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced.'¹⁶³
- 'Because of this, make every effort to add integrity to your faith; and to integrity add knowledge; to knowledge add self-control; to self-control add endurance; to endurance add godliness; to godliness add Christian affection; and to Christian affection add love.'¹⁶⁴
- 'Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude.'¹⁶⁵
- 'As holy people whom God has chosen and loved, be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle, and patient.'¹⁶⁶
- 'Love must be sincere.'¹⁶⁷

Below is a list of words that reflect Christ-righteousness. How many of these fit your life?

Acceptance	Benevolence	Compassion	Consideration	Confidentiality
Contentment	Courage	Devotion	Discernment	Faithfulness
Forgiveness	Generosity	Gentleness	Goodness	Godliness
Holiness	Humility	Impartiality	Joy	Knowledge
Love	Peacefulness	Perseverance	Purity	Sincerity
Submissiveness				

162 NIV Gal 5:22,23
 163 Msg Jas 3:17
 164 GW 2Pe 1:5-7
 165 NLT 1Co 13:4
 166 GW Col 3:12
 167 NIV Ro 12:9

Step Two - Understanding the character of a self-righteous person

Having set our eyes upon the righteousness of Christ we must now have the courage to acknowledge the condition of our own hearts. Which of the following self-righteous traits are still evident in your life?

Aloofness	Arrogance	Bigotry	Blame	Boastfulness
Chauvinism	Conceit	Criticism	Deceitfulness	Detachment
Discontentment	Egotism	Fear	Gossip	Greed
Hypocrisy	Infidelity	Impatience		Impurity
Insincerity	Judging	Pompousness	Prejudice	Pretentiousness
Pride	Self-indulgence	Selfishness	Unfaithfulness	Unforgiveness
Unhappiness			Wickedness	

Setting the self-righteous free is exceptionally difficult because of their extreme reluctance to acknowledge fault. When self-righteousness is embedded in our character it's difficult to extract, because it pervades our entire personality. Self-righteousness isn't dealing with isolated blemishes and an occasional sin; it's confronting a flawed character structure. It's far easier acknowledging an occasional lapse into sin than to extricate a self-righteous spirit that under girds our entire emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social fabric. 'I'm what I think. My distorted perceptions are my reality. I dream and live my self-righteousness. I know no other way.'

A fundamental step in dislodging a self-righteous spirit is to understand how years of poor repetitive behaviours have damaged our personalities. As we compare our character to Christ's standard, we'll be overcome by an enormous disparity. What is required isn't a simple repair job, but a new motor to ensure a thorough transformation. 'I, who know no other way of living, must die to self, and find a new life through Christ.' We might bring about some successes through years of self-discovery, secular counselling and self-repair, but to be sure, what is needed is a meeting with the Holy Ghost and His amazing answers.

Bondages, habits, compulsions, fixations, and vices are deeply ingrained in our personalities and spirits. Egocentric people become firmly shackled to their upbringing, life experiences, and the pervading culture, such that the extraction of a self-righteous root will leave a large vacuum in their character. If egocentricity and self-righteousness are removed and not replaced with Christly graces, people will soon resort to the former impaired ways. The Spirit of God probes the hidden depths of our personality exposing every spirit that pollutes and breaking every chain that binds. Responsible deliberate discipleship must however ensure that character formation prevents lapses into old ways. The Holy Ghost can heal in a moment, but maintaining health is a life-long responsibility for seasoned saints. Feeding daily on spiritual truths leads to growth in our Christian character and moral sensibility.

Step Three - Lovingly confronting the self-righteous

Later, when Peter came to Antioch, I had a face to face confrontation with him because he was clearly out of line. Here's the situation. Earlier, before certain persons had come from James, Peter regularly ate with the non-Jews. But when that conservative group came from Jerusalem, he cautiously pulled back and put as

much distance as he could manage between himself and his non-Jewish friends. That's how fearful he was of the conservative Jewish clique that's been pushing the old system of circumcision. Unfortunately, the rest of the Jews in the Antioch church joined in the hypocrisy so that even Barnabas was swept along in the charade.

But when I saw that they were not maintaining a steady, straight course according to the Message, I spoke up to Peter in front of them all: "If you, a Jew, live like a non-Jew when you're not being observed by the watchdogs from Jerusalem, what right do you have to require non-Jews to conform to Jewish customs just to make favourable impressions on your old Jerusalem cronies?"¹⁶⁸

- Initially Peter ignored the rigid exclusiveness of the Jews and shared in a common meal with the Gentiles. But in the face of the Jews from Jerusalem he retreated behind religious taboos
- Peter didn't act according to Gospel standards. He allowed past practices to lead him into sin and the trap of justification through observing the law
- Peter was becoming performance driven, trying to be justified by the law as opposed to faith in Christ; in doing so he was setting aside the grace of God
- Peter's unholy fear and traditionalism separated him from other believers
- Paul confronted Peter's contrived righteousness
- Paul reminded Peter that we aren't justified by observing the law, but by faith in Christ Jesus. He went on to admonish Peter for turning his back on righteousness through faith, saying: 'If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.'¹⁶⁹

Universal principles that arise from this passage are

- It's obligatory that discerning believers lovingly confront the feigned righteousness of believers when they reflect fruit that's contrary to Scripture
- Performance driven Christianity has a hideous law-orientation that discards the faith and grace bias of the Gospel. This leads to guilt-motivated behaviours like exclusivity and hypocrisy
- Self-righteousness and self-improvement leads to a self-created character that's driven by past worldly experiences, whereas righteousness through faith in Jesus produces Christ-likeness
- Left unchecked, self-righteous behaviour contaminates others, even leading mature believers astray. The church must be vigilant against the dangers of this evil

To many, confrontation doesn't come easily. Lovingly and prayerfully we need to take up the reins of responsibility and seek to help free those bound by the law of their own morality. Honest sensitive rebuke must be coupled with patience, acceptance and love. 'A person's words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook.'¹⁷⁰

Conversely, we too need to be open to the probing eyes of mature believers. Seek out a mature believer who you can ask to appraise you of self-righteous fruit. Third party confrontation can stimulate an honest self-assessment. The dawning realisation that we've lived a life of deception will prepare you for the healing work of the Holy Spirit.

168 Msg Gal 2:11-14

169 Msg Gal 2:21

170 NLT Pr 18:4

Step Four - Consciously choose to die to self and rise with Christ

Christ-righteousness calls for death on the cross, death to self-interest, self-centeredness, and selfish-works, and rising to newness in Christ. 'For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.'¹⁷¹ 'If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure hardship, we will reign with him.'¹⁷² 'For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.'¹⁷³ 'When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first.'¹⁷⁴

Being liberated from the pit of self-righteousness is beyond our ability – yet this makeover is possible for everyone through the power of Christ's cross. You must renounce egocentricity and disown selfishness if you want Christ to own you. Jesus will not own evil practices. We must be unshackled from our evil vices in order to live the freedom of His light. This entails a deliberate decision to disown the destructive force of our personality – selfishness – the fertile source for every imaginable sin. Repent of it!!

Repentance and confession always precedes the healing work of the Holy Spirit. Confession without repentance is meaningless and keeps people in darkness. Confession talks, repentance acts. Heartfelt repentance over selfishness and self-righteousness is an earnest cry to God acknowledging the fault in your ways and pleading His grace to set you free. Do this, and you'll experience a mammoth weight rolling off your spirit and the exhilarating lightness of Christ Jesus.

To live in the freedom of Christ's righteous life, we must appeal to God to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. His Holy Spirit power is available to lead you, first and foremost that we might be His light in a dark world, and in being, we're given authority to do His work.

Self-righteous people are known by what they do. In God's sight, works that don't flow from holy lives are dead works. The only way to please God is to live pure lives. The eradication of self-righteousness calls for a radical reorientation in our thinking. Self-righteous people want to do, Christ righteous people want to be. The desire to be Christ-like, or to display exceptional holiness, must have pre-eminence over our desire to do if we're to be acceptable to God.

Self-righteous people have it back to front; they want to do things to please God, whilst He wants you to grow and be, so that you might go and do. 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.'¹⁷⁵

Holiness isn't a distant pipe dream. You can attain it with the simple disciplines of trust and rest in Jesus. Try it – and you'll see. (See Appendix 2)

Why not acknowledge your self-righteous tendencies? Ask God to forgive you, and then consecrate your life to Him, telling Him you want to live your life thoroughly immersed in Jesus and His ways. Then plead with Him to send His Holy Spirit to empower you to do His will through your life.

171 NIV Php 1:21
172 NLT 2Ti 2:11,12
173 NIV Col 3:3
174 NLT 1Co 15:36
175 NIV Ro 12:1,2

Time to Reflect

1. What six words best reflect your strongest Christ-like characteristics?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. What six words best reflect your tendency towards self-righteousness?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

3. Ask a trusted friend to complete the same evaluation of you.

4. Have you acknowledged and repented of self-righteousness?

Today's Verse: Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. Js 3:17 (Msg)



SEMINAR TWO: DEALING WITH SINS OF THE OCCULT

Seminar Purpose

1. The purpose of this seminar is to help the Church Planting Pastor to understand that we live in an evil world and that we serve a mighty God.
2. That Jesus's Name is above all other names on earth and in heaven
3. To present key Biblical principles on how to help those under the devil's attack.

Seminar Outcome

Upon completion of this seminar the Church Planting Pastor will be able to:

1. Help those under Satanic influence
2. Be able to help self and others to deal with demonic possession
3. Be able to discover the hindrances to deliverance



5

Sins of the Occult

Introduction

There is an abundance of Christian literature on Satanism, demons, witchcraft, the occult and cults. This unit isn't meant to supplement such literature, but has as its primary purpose ministry to those who've been caught up in the seductive ways of the great deceiver of this age. Increasingly I'm beginning to understand that as Jesus-followers we're called to wage war on Satan and his evil forces. Indeed, our identity in Christ will only be realized as we vigorously participate in this daily struggle. In order to take our stand against the evil one, we must fasten the belt of truth around our waist, it's central to holding together the Jesus-follower's armour.¹⁷⁶

It's wise to know our enemy, and what God has to say about him and his evil ways. However I'm also aware that it isn't necessary to undertake extensive extra-biblical research and make exhaustive studies on Satan and the occult to be an effective Jesus-follower. Moderate knowledge is enough when we're filled with the Holy Spirit. 'I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.'¹⁷⁷

Meditation of the Word, obedience, and Holy Spirit guidance is enough in gaining understanding of truth. I was told recently of a mature Christian couple that decided to make an in-depth study of Satan. They soon became so fascinated with the study of occult literature that they gave less and less time to the worship of God. We must guard against morbid fascination that can imprison and render people ineffective.

Testimony

There was a time when I scoffed at and trivialized that which I couldn't understand, but this has changed through God's gracious intervention in my life. I was en route from ministry in Burundi and the eastern DRC when I had a strange dream in a hotel room in Nairobi. I dreamt that I was walking through a meadow with a friend. Our walk was interrupted by police who escorted us over a brow of a small hill where we saw a number of people huddled together in the field. As we approached, the group parted and we saw a grave that had been desecrated. I sensed an eerie presence. We moved closer until I saw a young girl lying motionless on the ground. As I stared at her she began to float in the air. When she was a couple of feet off the ground, she sat cross-legged then turned upside down. The group of spectators began chanting and dancing in a circle around the suspended girl.

¹⁷⁶ Eph 6:10-20
¹⁷⁷ NIV Ro 16:19,20

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A great fear took hold of me. I grabbed hold of the hand of my friend and tried to tell him to pray, but no words would come from my mouth. Desperately I struggled to communicate our need to pray, but the words choked in my mouth. I again looked towards the chanting group and saw that the girl had now joined in as they chanted and skipped around the grave. As I looked into her face I saw hatred and rage. Her evil eyes locked onto mine, and screaming, she left the circle and ran toward me with outstretched hands intent on throttling me. Terrified I tugged at the hand of my friend and tried to ask him to pray. The word 'pray' stuck in my throat. With a last frantic effort, I tried again. I woke up in that hotel room screaming out the word: 'Pray!' So, there and then, in the early hours of the morning, I did just that, even though I couldn't understand this perplexing dream.

Several months later I was ministering in Mbuji-Mayi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our workers told me that the area was filled with syncretistic churches. I was given many examples; one 'church' practiced nakedness before the Lord; only after worshippers were totally naked were they allowed entering the place of worship. Another 'church' was called 'What's yours is mine', the pastor claimed and redistributed the possessions of the congregation as he saw fit. He even reallocated grieving spouses to church leaders. 'Pastors' in the city regularly consulted witchdoctors to cast death spells on rival 'churches and pastors'.

During a time of prayer and fasting I had a vision of a snake appearing out of a drainpipe. I told myself that it was nothing to worry about, because the snake only had a small head. Immediately the snake began slithering out from the pipe and as it did so its body kept growing to ever increasing proportions. Immediately a voice in my spirit warned me never to underestimate or trivialize the scope and consequences of evil.

That same night I was woken by the exact dream I had dreamt six months earlier in Nairobi. Sitting in my room in Mbuji-Mayi I pondered long and hard on the dream; my prayers constantly being interrupted by disconcerting thoughts. Suddenly it was brought to my mind that Joseph was given the ability to interpret dreams. Immediately I prayed and said to God: 'What you did for Joseph I believe you can do for me. Will you please interpret this dream for me?' Immediately a voice spoke into my spirit and said: 'You're under spiritual attack.' After a brief contemplative silence I asked God: 'What is the source of this attack?' Immediately God gave me a vision of a young woman in South Africa who had called down a curse on our ministry. At the time she had done so I had paid scant regard to her outburst. Now in this vision I understood the enormity of what she had done in marshalling evil against our ministry. The vision of the snake and this twice-repeated dream, along with God's interpretation now made perfect sense. There and then I prayed for release from the consequences of that curse and on return to South Africa began mobilizing intercessors for our ministry.

Never underestimate or trivialize the desire of Satan to attack you, particularly as you prepare to stand against him and his schemes. As we approach this unit I would encourage you to devote yourself more intensely to prayer, and if you haven't done so yet, to gather intercessors about you who would pray you through this study. Give considered thought to equipping yourself with 'all of God's armour'¹⁷⁸ as you stand firm in Christ.

178 NLT Eph 6:11

Worldviews and the spirit world

A worldview is the filter through which we process and comprehend reality. Worldviews differ sharply, and since they determine how we perceive and relate to the spirit world, we have very significant differences of opinions coexisting in our respective societies. An animistic worldview sees personal and impersonal spiritual powers inhabiting and directing human, animal, and plant life, as well as controlling weather, natural disasters, and world events. In this modern materialistic age, a first world church barely conceals its disbelief in things supernatural and when we engage post-modernists, we find many to be largely agnostic.

Our cultures, education, society and religion are filters that give meaning to our world, such that our worldviews either enhance or hinder our perceptions of truth. The only authentic worldview is that which is based on authentic filters. Truth, which requires human intervention and interpretation, will always be fallible. Humanity needs a revealed, indisputable worldview to comprehend divine realities. Christianity is the only revealed religion that meets this objective standard; God took the initiative to reveal Himself through creation, in historic acts, through His Word, and through His son Jesus Christ. Only when the absolute truths of God are central to our worldview are we positioned to comprehend and relate to the spirit world. The Bible, the infallible Word of God, must be our handbook as we navigate through this topic.

Satan

There is a spiritual being named Satan, also described as Lucifer, or an angel of light. 'Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.'¹⁷⁹ We believe in God, because the Bible tells us so; we believe in Satan, because the Bible tells us so. Despite the scepticism of our age, despite what our logic would say, evil is personified in Satan and his host of dark angels. Since the fall of Adam there has been an intense effort waged by Satan for the allegiance of our souls. 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.'¹⁸⁰

According to Scripture¹⁸¹ before his rebellion Satan was:

- The model of perfection
- Full of wisdom
- Perfect in beauty
- Adorned with every precious stone
- Anointed as guardian cherub, an archangel
- On the holy mount of God
- Walked among the fiery stones
- Blameless in his ways

He was then:

- Overcome by evil
- Filled with violence
- Became proud on account of his beauty
- Corrupted by his wisdom

179 NIV 2Co 11:14

180 NIV Eph 6:12

181 NIV Eze 28:12-19

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- Thrown out of heaven by God and
- Continued in his iniquitous ways

Satan is personal and real; he has a name, a character, and acts independently. In the **Old Testament**, he was called:

- The 'king of Babylon'¹⁸²
- The 'small horn'¹⁸³
- The 'stern looking king'¹⁸⁴
- The 'prince that shall come'¹⁸⁵
- 'Lucifer' or 'brightness'¹⁸⁶
- 'O morning star'¹⁸⁷
- 'Son of the dawn'¹⁸⁸
- 'Serpent'¹⁸⁹ or the shining one
- 'Leviathan the gliding serpent' and 'Leviathan the coiling serpent'¹⁹⁰
- 'Satan'¹⁹¹ our adversary or opponent

In the New Testament, he was called:

- The 'Devil'¹⁹²
- 'Satan'¹⁹³
- The 'prince of the demons'¹⁹⁴ or the 'ruler of demons'¹⁹⁵
- The 'evil one'¹⁹⁶
- 'His enemy'¹⁹⁷
- 'Beelzebub'¹⁹⁸ or 'the lord of garbage'
- The 'murderer'¹⁹⁹
- The 'ruler of this world'²⁰⁰
- The 'prince of this world'²⁰¹
- 'Belial'²⁰²
- The 'prince of the power of the air'²⁰³

182	NIV Isa 14:4
183	NLT Da 7:8
184	GW Da 8:23
185	NIV Da 9:26
186	KJV Isa 14:12
187	NIV Isa 14:12
188	NIV Isa 14:12
189	KJV Ge 3:1
190	NIV Isa 27:1
191	KJV 1Ch 21:1
192	GW Mt 4:1
193	GW Mt 4:10
194	NIV Mt 9:34
195	GW Mt 9:34
196	GW Mt 6:13
197	GW Mt 13:25
198	GW Lk 11:15
199	GW Jn 8:44
200	GW Jn 12:31
201	KJV Jn 14:30
202	KJV 2Co 6:15
203	KJV Eph 2:2

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- The 'man of sin' and 'the man of destruction'²⁰⁴
- The 'antichrist'²⁰⁵ the 'false' or 'substitute christ'
- The 'ruler over the kings of the earth'²⁰⁶
- 'Apollyon' or 'Abaddon'²⁰⁷ the 'angel of the Abyss' or 'the angel of the bottomless pit'
- The 'huge serpent'²⁰⁸
- 'An enormous red dragon'²⁰⁹
- The 'ancient snake'²¹⁰ who leads the whole world astray
- The 'beast'²¹¹
- The 'deceiver'²¹²

Time to Reflect

1. Read Ephesians 6:10-8.

2. Pray as the Spirit of Christ directs.

Today's Verse: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:12 (NIV)

204	GW 2Thes 2:3
205	GW 1Jn 2:18
206	GW Re 1:5
207	GW Rev 9:11
208	GW Rev 12:9
209	NIV Rev 12:3
210	GW Rev 12:9
211	GW Rev 13:1
212	GW Rev 20:10

Satan's objectives:

Firstly, Satan desires to **keep the lost in spiritual blindness** in order that they might serve his purposes. Some he'll involve directly in occult activities that promote the extension of his purposes and others he'll hold captive by the seductive and destructive forces of the world.

Secondly, Satan wants to **minimise the effectiveness of Jesus-followers**. In this world, the church is his enemy; he'll make every effort to lead Jesus-followers in rebellion against God. When he doesn't succeed in capturing your souls, he'll concentrate on either injuring or taking you captive in sin, and so immobilizing your Christian service.

Satan's tactics

Satan has several ways in which he sets about achieving his objectives:

- Satan, with the help of his demons, directly confronts by **attacking, troubling, oppressing and opposing believers** and their ministries. This is a specific tailored satanic response to individuals and their families involved in Christian work, particularly when it's of a pioneering or strategic nature.
- Satan, with the help of his demons, directly **solicits the aid of non-believers by possessing and inhabiting their bodies** then redeploying these to serve his purposes. Demon possession involves the total control of a person whereby they can no longer separate their own consciousness, identity and ideas from the indwelling demon or demons.
- Satan and his demons can directly confront non-believers; guiding and influencing people to actively participate in satanic purposes, structures and organisations without actual possession. Such individuals can become involved in false religions, secret societies and corrupt world orders that entrench evil in human affairs by cooperating with the rulers, authorities, principalities and powers of this: 'dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the spiritual realm.'²¹³
- Satan uses our carnal nature, or flesh-centeredness, to hold people captive to bad habits, evil desires and thoughts. In Ephesians, it's clear that, 'gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts' is the work of, 'the ruler of the kingdom of air.'²¹⁴ Paul confirms that his carnal nature continues to hold him: 'slave to sin.'²¹⁵ Satan corrupts both believers and non-believers through their carnal nature.
- The **world and its sensual and satanic seductions** is Satan's corporate response to the carnal and self-centred tendencies of fallen humanity. The transient distractions of the world are purposely tailored to tempt, deceive, blind and imprison carnal people.²¹⁶
- The **deception of believers** is perhaps the greatest threat facing the church in the last days: 'The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.'²¹⁷ 'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'²¹⁸ 'For false Christs and false prophets

213 NIV Eph 6:12
214 NIV Eph 2:2,3
215 GW Ro 7:11
216 1Jn 2:15-17
217 NIV 1 Ti 4:1,2
218 NIV Mt 24:4,5

will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible.²¹⁹

- **Complacency, indifference, apathy, passivity and neglect** are other ways that Satan immobilises the body of Christ. 'But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business.'²²⁰ 'Woe to you who are complacent in Zion...'²²¹ 'A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work.'²²² 'Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins'²²³

The occult

The occult can be divided into three branches; these aren't rigid and overlap.

- Witchcraft is the **power branch** of the occult. It seeks control and supremacy in direct opposition to God. These acts of rebellion are seen in such things as astral projection, hypnosis, levitation, telekinesis, touch healing and witchcraft. In many African societies, 'witchdoctors' and 'medicine-men' have frequently entreated 'good spirits' to counter the 'evil spirits' of witches. Witchcraft can take many forms, but in general they practice sorcery and magic, use charms and offer sacrifices to cooperative spirits. Witchcraft, sometimes known in modern days as 'Wicca', and sometimes designated simply as 'The Art' refers to itself as a 'religion of pagan nature'. It also 'recognizes a plurality of divine things' and worships nature. Witchcraft affirms a 'creator beginning', whose 'beginnings are the goddess and god'. The goddess is also known as 'great mother' and represents the 'generating universal energy, the uterus of all creation'. 'The god' is often designated the 'horned god' and we're told he was 'born of the goddess'. We're further informed that this 'horned god' is 'the eternal hunter', but is also the 'hunted animal'. Witches maintain that with instruction and 'right intentions' they're capable of accomplishing magic. Some branches would decry black or bad magic, satanic worship, sorcery practiced through allegiance to Satan, ritualistic sacrifices, blood pacts, cruel tortures and sexual abominations. Other branches however continue such practices in the name of witchcraft. Witches: 'good' or 'bad' have practices in opposition to the Word of God and serve to promote the kingdom of darkness.
- The **knowledge branch** of the occult is the desire to deceive, lie and propagate falsehood and misfortune through things such as fortune-telling, astrology, automatic writing, clairvoyance, crystal balls, pendulums, divining, ESP, horoscopes, numerology, omens, palm-reading, séances, tarot cards, tea leaf reading and telepathy. Divination includes the search for 'truth' through false religions such as Christian Science, Freemasonry, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, New Age Movement, Scientology, Spiritualism, Unification Church, Confucianism, Hare Krishna, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, African Traditional Religions, and Ancestral Worship. Satanism and the church of Satan, founded by Dr Anton Szandor LaVey, could also fall into this category, because they too deceive, lie and propagate falsehood. Yet in a sense they go well beyond this, seeking to control individuals and even the world order through secret satanic structures. Satanic knowledge is spread through satanic literature such as the Satanic Bible, the Satanic Rituals and The Satanic Witch. Satanism is propagated and entrenched through satanic doctrines such as 'the nine satanic statements': 'the nine satanic sins': 'the eleven satanic rules on the earth', as well as its 'satanic symbols', including the 'symbol of Baphomet', a five pointed star used by the Knights of

219 NIV Mt 24:24
220 NIV Mt 22:5
221 NIV Am 6:1
222 NIV Jer 48:10
223 NIV Js 4:17

the Templar to represent Satan, and the 'inverted cross' as a symbol of disrespect and denial of Christ and the victory He achieved through the cross. The practice and doctrines espoused by Satanists can take varied forms; suffice to say, it's a dark and devious religion that advances the kingdom of darkness by denying God and opposing His Kingdom.

- The **magic and sorcery practices** of the occult include the usage of amulets, birthstones, fetishisms, zodiac signs, charms, hallucinogenic drugs, hex signs, lucky symbols, ouija boards, religious artefacts and talismans. In African traditional religion, numbers of plants, roots and flowers are said to contain 'magic' properties, also, certain potions containing 'body parts' are said to have efficacy in healing, protection in time of war, or warding off evil spirits. African societies continue to place great value in a fetish; they believe that spirits can inhabit these inanimate objects, bestowing protection and power. They also often bury these sacred objects beneath buildings and in strategic locations. A fetish can also become a treasured family heirloom.

Demons, their nature and work

- Demons are lesser spiritual beings or fallen angels who: 'did not remain faithful... who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them, but left the place where they belonged.'²²⁴ Demons are beings subservient to Satan and minister on his behalf.²²⁵
- There are two theories regarding the origin of demons. They came into existence through:
 1. The multitude of angels who fell into sin prompted by Lucifer's original rebellion against God. 'And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.'²²⁶
 2. The unnatural offspring of angels and ancient women: 'the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.'²²⁷
- Demons are said to enter the body to torment one with disease,²²⁸ they were also associated with severe mental disorders,²²⁹ or those who acted or spoke as if mad.²³⁰ Demons can control the body,²³¹ the mind,²³² and the emotions.²³³
- The Gospels draw a clear distinction between demon possession and health matters.²³⁴ We can't attribute all illnesses to demons; Luke²³⁵ and Matthew²³⁶ draw clear distinctions between physical diseases, mental illnesses and demon possession.
- The practices of idolatry, magic and witchcraft in the Old Testament were related to demonic forces²³⁷

224 NLT Jude 5,6
225 Lk 10:17,18
226 NIV Rev 12:7-9
227 NIV Ge 6:2
228 Mt 9:33
229 Lk 8:27
230 Jn 7:20
231 Mt 9:32,33
232 Mt 17:15
233 Lk 8:26-39
234 Mk 16:16-18; Mt 10:8
235 Lk 4:40,41
236 Mt 4:24
237 Dt 32:16,17; Ps 96:5

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- In the New Testament, the presence of demons are described in terms of 'unclean spirits'²³⁸ or 'evil spirits'²³⁹
- The Apostle Paul said gods worshipped by idolaters have no existence; but there are demonic forces to which the worshippers become subject to. 'What I am saying is that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want any of you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too.'²⁴⁰
- John²⁴¹ and Paul held that in the last days the activity of demons would increase and many would be seduced into following their ways. 'The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.'²⁴²
- The Jesus-follower is told to combat rulers, authorities, and powers, in: 'this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.'²⁴³ This passage indicates order and organization in Satan's armies; there are rulers, authorities and powers
- Jesus reinforces the unity in Satan's army when He says: 'If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?'²⁴⁴
- The devil and his followers, human and spiritual, are murderers,²⁴⁵ powerful,²⁴⁶ and numerous²⁴⁷
- Satan, and so too his followers, can afflict people with disease; kill livestock, servants and children; and destroy buildings²⁴⁸
- Satan, and so too his followers, can tempt²⁴⁹
- They oppose prayer²⁵⁰
- They oppose the saints²⁵¹
- They masquerade as 'godly ministers'²⁵² blinding people to the truth
- Demons can inhabit animals²⁵³

Satan's forces have already been defeated

The New Testament is consistent in its presentation of a conflict between two realms: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. This doesn't however imply an equal war between two evenly matched armies. It's an unequal war, because through the work of Jesus and His cross He has already secured the final victory.

- Jesus has destroyed the works of the devil. 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy what the devil does.'²⁵⁴

238	KJV Mk 5:2,3
239	KJV Ac 19:12-16
240	NLT 1Co 10:20,21
241	Rev 16:13,14
242	NIV 1Ti 4:1
243	NIV Eph 6:12
244	NIV Mt 12:26
245	Jn 8:44
246	Lk 8:29
247	Mk 5:8,9
248	Job 1,2
249	Ge 3:1-7
250	Dan 10:10-13,20
251	1Pe 5:8
252	NLT 2Co 11:15
253	Mt 8:31
254	GW 1Jn 3:8

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- Jesus has rendered the devil powerless. ‘Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.’²⁵⁵
- Jesus has triumphed over all spiritual rulers and authorities. ‘And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.’²⁵⁶

What we now see are Satan’s restricted and frenetic skirmishes: his last desperate and dangerous efforts to distract people from completing their Kingdom assignments. Jesus-followers can’t sit back and rest. Even though the victory may be secured your orders remain unchanged; stand firm, and don’t give him an inch. ‘Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.’²⁵⁷ A victorious life on earth is only possible as we recognise and actively participate in this daily struggle against the evil powers of this present age. Heroic resistance today will not go unrewarded on Judgement Day.

Time to Reflect

1. How do, ‘Satan’s restricted and frenetic skirmishes’ affect your daily life?
2. List ways in which we can stand against the devil.
3. In what ways, have you recently had victory over evil?
4. Where and when are you most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks?

Today’s Verse: And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col 2:15 (NIV)

255 NIV He 2:14,15
256 NIV Col 2:15
257 NLT Js 4:7

Demon possession

The Greek word 'daimonizomai' – meaning to be under the power of a demon or to be demon-possessed – isn't used in Scripture. In the New Testament, the Greek construction is 'daimonion echein', meaning 'to have a demon', or 'to be demonized'. To be demonized, implies to be either afflicted or possessed by demons. Possession implies being inhabited and controlled by a demonic spirit. In possession, a demonic spirit enters a person's body and directs their will, speech and actions. Being demonized, whilst including possession, could admit to lower degrees of influence, such as opposition and oppression.

Demon possession and Jesus-followers

Much controversy peppers Christian literature about whether or not Jesus-followers can be demon possessed. What appears to be the central issue is whether or not a believer can possess a demon in their spirit when they are already inhabited by the Spirit of God. We know that God inhabits heaven and that Satan operates in the heavenly realms, but since evil won't be tolerated in the presence of God there must therefore be areas in the heavens in which Satan is restricted from entering. The New Birth gives rise to the believers' spirit becoming part of the habitat of the Holy Spirit; therefore it is conceivable that there is also a restriction of the presence of evil in the very depths of their spirit. This constraint doesn't imply that evil can't hold sway in their spirits: your carnal nature has an innate tendency to sin, and through this, satanic forces will seek to gain influence over you. The devil, operating from without tempts both the godly and ungodly through appeals to their carnal nature. Succumbing to His temptations provides him footholds in your life. Even if Satan or his demons aren't inside of you, they can crouch at your door shooting their flaming darts into your spirit, mind and body.

The question we need to answer is to what degree is Satan able to control or exercise influence over Jesus-followers. In possession, we loose control over our own individuality and identity; whereas in affliction, oppression and carnal obsessions there is still conscious recognition of both sinful and good tendencies, and above all, a desire to do good, even though we fall into sin.²⁵⁸

It's my opinion that Jesus-followers can't be demon possessed in the sense that demons can't share the 'temple of the Holy Spirit', which God has already bought with a price.²⁵⁹ This however doesn't mean that demons can't afflict, confront, hound, oppress, and oppose Jesus-followers. Some members of the church are given the gift of discerning spirits that they might detect the spiritual forces, which attack believers.²⁶⁰ Satan aims to lure people into sin and pollute their spiritual lives, imprisoning them in evil and so rendering them ineffective in serving Christ. He'll actively seek to afflict Jesus-followers with mental and emotional anguish tempting you to fall into sin so that your witness to the world betrays your loyalty to your Master. In Job, we see God permitting, but restricting satanic activity designed to lead His servant into sin.²⁶¹ We also find an evil spirit sent by the Lord to torment a disobedient Saul.²⁶² The evil spirit afflicted Saul with anger and murderous intent.

The chains that bind

258 Ro 7:13-25
259 NLT 1Co 6:19,20
260 1Co 12
261 Job 1
262 1Sa 16:14

What people understand about possession affects the procedure they adopt in breaking the chains that bind; either they exorcise the demon, which inhabits and controls, or they repent of and break from the sin that defiles and corrupts. Exorcism is commanding the demons in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to come out of a possessed person. To be consistent in our thinking, this would require you to first exorcise the possessing spirit or spirits, and then lead the sinner into a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas the extraction of a besetting sin from a believers' carnal nature is breaking the chains that bind the person to their wicked habits.

Jesus-followers can intentionally or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly become entrapped by the devil as they lay claim to his services. Satan will oblige requests for knowledge of the future, communication with the dead, the cursing of enemies, fellowship with evil spirits, being charmed and healed; but always with devastating consequences. His demons may not reside and control from within, but they bind believers to their deeds with heavy chains, and the more we dabble with and entreat the devil, the heavier the chains will become. In possession, the chains that bind are direct demonic control of our will, character, personality and spirit. The chains that bind believers to their evil deeds are: addictions, compulsive habits, dark thoughts, evil desires, obsessions, and unrelenting temptations. These binding chains leave believers with tortured consciences, corrupted minds, troublesome emotions, broken relationships, shattered hearts and the penance demanded by society.

A believer's frequent and repetitive sin will greatly warp conscience and personality. Repentance from such deep-rooted fixative sin requires a profound change in the very character of the believer. The term 'besetting sin' is used to indicate an enticing repetitive sin that plagues a believer. Although conscience may be troubled by this particular obsessive evil, the believer keeps succumbing to it. Besetting sins will include things such as: lust; pornography; self-righteousness; pride; compulsive habits such as gambling, blasphemy and addictive substances; unnatural fears; unbelief; pessimism; anger; and jealousy – sins that you've repented of often, but which continue to trip you up at frequent intervals.

Symptoms of possession

A combination of several of the following behaviours in an intense form over a long period could be an indication that someone is demon possessed.

- Abnormal sexual behaviour
- Amazingly high IQ
- Arbitrary body pains unrelated to known illnesses
- Banging and strange noises, voices, footsteps, and loud knocks in the vicinity of the possessed person
- Being disturbed by a crucifix, Bible or picture of Jesus
- Blasphemy
- Blatant rebellion against God
- Compulsion to commit evil deeds
- Cursing of self, others and even God
- Damaging of objects and possessions
- Deep depressive moods
- Destruction of Bibles and Christian literature
- Desecration of graves and tombstones

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- Erratic and extreme behaviour
- Evil and hateful facial expressions
- Excessive spite
- Excessive sexual craving
- Extra-ordinary physical strength
- Extreme aversion to Christian company
- Extra-ordinary feats of memory
- Falling into a trance and speaking in strange voices and in unknown, unlearned languages
- Falling unconscious during counselling
- Falling unconscious or having a fit during a sermon
- Fits of fury and defiance against authority figures
- Fear of the dark and the unknown
- Feelings of persecution
- Feelings of restlessness
- Frowning and an inner disturbance at the name of Jesus
- Grinding of teeth, screaming, raving, uncontrolled swearing
- Hearing guiding voices
- Hatred toward God, Jesus-followers and the church
- Haunted by unnatural fear
- Idolatry of money, possessions or sex
- Impure thoughts
- Indifference and defiance to spiritual truth
- Lack of peace
- Laughing scornfully when others speak of Jesus, the cross, or His blood
- Lewd suggestions
- Multiple personalities
- Murderous rage
- Murderous threats
- Obeying a directing demon
- Openly exhibiting enmity
- Opposition to God's Word, His will and His works
- Paranormal abilities
- Passion for lying
- Powers of clairvoyance that can reveal the sins and secrets of others
- Refusal or inability to pray
- Refusal to sing a hymn or chorus
- Seeing apparitions, ghosts, poltergeists or phantoms
- Self inflicted injuries
- Self-hypnosis
- Sleep walking
- Suicidal tendencies
- Telepathic ability
- Unforgiving spirit
- Violent outbursts and behaviour
- Violent reaction to the name of Jesus and an inability to repeat or write His name

- Vile body odours
- Wilful and defiant sin

Sins and demon possession

Sins aren't responsible for demon possession, but are rather the gateways through which demons can enter and take control. Nowhere in Scripture are we informed that possession occurs because we commit a particular sin. And nowhere in the Bible are the demon-possessed blamed or criticized for their condition. Demons are free to enter whenever they have a legitimate right; that's when they find 'the house unoccupied', even though it's 'swept clean and put in order.'²⁶³ The implication is clear; all noble decent men who don't have Christ are susceptible to demon possession. That one is possessed, isn't a sign of relative morality, but merely indicative of Satan's right to choose.

The only sure safeguard we have from being inhabited by an evil controlling spirit is to be occupied by the Holy Spirit. 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.'²⁶⁴ It's also possible for demons to leave whenever they choose; nowhere in Scripture are we told that a demon is confined to one individual and that they can only leave during an exorcism.

Things happen in the spiritual realm that defies human analysis. I witnessed such an incident. A young man I knew was violently opposed to Christ and the church, but fell in love with a young Jesus-follower. In order to impress her, he accepted an invitation to her sisters' baptism. During the service he was disruptive, sniggering and noisy. During the sermon without any ministerial prompting, prayer, or rebuke he fell to the floor unconscious as a vile odour was emitted from his body. He had no medical history that could explain such a circumstance. When he regained consciousness, he was meek and submissive, with an urgent desire to know Christ.

During a pioneer church service in the rural areas of central Africa, a neighbour was in her home casting a spell against the church. During the closing prayer, which she could vaguely hear, she had a vision of a sword coming into the room and beheading a snake that she held in her hand. Gripped with fear she ran into the church and pleaded with Pastor Freddy to pray to his 'god' to restore her magical powers. She explained that her spiritual supervisor had ordered her to oppose this church plant and she had been busy in her room with her magic potions and spells when this sword came in and decapitated the snake. She was distraught because she had failed in her mission and pleaded for the pastor to help her ward off the revenging powers of her supervising witch. Needless-to-say Pastor Freddy introduced her to the God-of-all-power who, through the spilt blood of Jesus, is able to ward off all evil power. This dear lady was delivered of her demons and now serves as an active member in the local church.

263 NIV Mt 12:43,44

264 NIV Jn 14:23

Time to Reflect

1. Have you a habitual or besetting sin that continues to plague you?
2. Prayerfully list some of the activities in your life which could give the devil a foothold.
3. Pray with a prayer partner.

Today's Verse: Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honour God with your body.

1Co 6:19, 20 (NLT)

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Entry points for demon possession

The renunciation of a sin that contributed to possession is helpful in exorcism. Demons can enter a person through participation or unrelenting participation in any of the following sins. This isn't an exhaustive list, nor does it imply that all who've committed one of these sins is demon possessed. Below is a checklist that could be helpful in identifying the source of possession:

Adultery	Anger
Anxieties	Astrology
Blasphemy	Bitterness
Cannibalism	Critical spirits
Cursing	Charms
Clairvoyance	Consulting or acting as a medium
Demonic Covenants	Demonic deception
Demonic games	Divination
Drugs	Emotionalism
Envy	False doctrines
False	Religions Fears
Fortune telling	Freemasonry
Frights	Generational curses
Hatred	Habitual sins
Horoscopes	Human sacrifices
Incest	Interpreting omens
Initiation ceremonies	Idolatry
Jealousy	Non-Christian Meditation
Murder	Occult practices
Occult games	Oujia boards
Palmistry	Perjury
Pilgrimages	Psychic experiences
Prostitution	Rebellion
Rejection	Resisting the Holy Spirit
Satanism	Satanic and demonic films
Satanic and demonic literature	Satanic and demonic music
Satanic rites and blood pacts	Secret societies
Sexual sins	Sorcery
Spiritism or enquiry of the dead	Superstitious practices (amulets, letters of protection)
Transcendental meditation	Transgenerational sin
Transfer of occult power	Unbelief and stubbornness
Unrepentant spirit	Unforgiveness
Violence	Witchcraft

Principles and Practical Suggestions for Exorcism

- 1. Exorcism is a relatively simple ministry when we follow biblical guidelines.** It's clear from the ministry of the seventy-two that the disciples delivered the demon possessed.²⁶⁵ The disciples were specifically commanded by Jesus to drive out demons.²⁶⁶ 'Jesus gave authority to His twelve disciples to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.'²⁶⁷ It's evident that exorcism was central to the ministry of the Apostles. 'Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.'²⁶⁸ It's evident that exorcism was a normal and a relatively simple part of the disciples' ministry with only one exception.²⁶⁹ Scripture doesn't seem to support the idea that it's a specialist ministry, but rather that all disciples who are adequately taught and follow biblical principles could participate in it. We mustn't be fearful: 'we have more forces on our side than they have on theirs.'²⁷⁰
- 2. It is apparent that in severe cases of possession prayer and fasting was a prerequisite to exorcism.** 'And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.'²⁷¹ Prayer and fasting is always recommended in difficult cases, particularly when the exorcee has a history of violence.
- 3. It is preferable to minister in a team.** The disciples went out two by two. The possessed can have superhuman power; this coupled with a violent history can prove extremely dangerous to the uninitiated. It's therefore better to minister in a team of at least two, but preferably with three or four. Team ministry isn't always possible, particularly in pioneer missions; prayer, faith and God's anointing will guide believers in such cases. It is always recommended that a novice serve as an apprentice to a seasoned disciple.
- 4. It is advisable for a group of intercessors to pray during and after an exorcism.**
- 5. Speak to the exorcee.** Determine what is happening inside the person, what inner voices they hear, and what they're feeling. Knowing the root causes and sins isn't only helpful in deliverance, but also in counselling people to remain free. Explain the necessity to submit to the authority of Christ, His Word, His blood, and the leadership of the church.
- 6. In certain societies, it may be prudent to ask the exorcee to sign a release form prior to the exorcism.**
- 7. Keep the procedure simple.** Never engage in dialogue with the evil spirit. If it speaks, command it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be silent. Explain to the exorcee that you're going to command the spirit to leave and never to return, and that after their deliverance they can invite Jesus Christ to enter their lives as Saviour and Lord. If they're agreeable, sing praises and read the Word. Ask God to reveal to you what spirit or spirits possess the patient. Rebuke and command the spirit to leave and not return. 'You, the spirit of rebellion, come out of Joe.' It doesn't matter if you don't know their names; command

265 Lk 10:17
266 Mk 16:17
267 NLT Mt 10:1
268 NIV Ac 5:16
269 Mt 17:14-23
270 GW 2Ki 6:16
271 KJV Mk 9:29

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each and every evil spirit to leave. Exorcism is using the delegated authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to command evil spirits to come out of, and to stop harassing people.

You could pray and follow a procedure similar to this:

Holy Father we pray for your cleansing touch upon the life of Joe. We pray that you will cleanse his spirit, soul, mind and body, which have been contaminated by evil and vile spirits and that through the power of Jesus' blood Joe will be healed and made whole.

Now you can command the evil spirits: *In the name of Jesus Christ, we renounce every evil spirit that inhabits, oppresses and defiles Joe. We command you, the evil spirits, to immediately cease pursuing and opposing Joe. We renounce every spirit of sickness, every spirit of troublesome emotion, every spirit that inhabits and controls the mind and body, every spirit of affliction, disease, sin and curse. And now, in silence without dramatic manifestation we command you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave Joe, leave this room and this town. Leave now without harming or entering anyone else present here or in this town.*

Lord Jesus, we pray that every symptom of possession be removed from Joe and that his troubled spirit, emotions and mind would be healed; and that you would heal Joe of every disease and sickness that was associated with the unclean spirits that have now left him. We praise you Holy God for the work you have done in the life of Joe.

Holy Father would you now send your Holy Spirit to seal this deliverance and anoint Joe with power from on high, bathing him in your presence and peace. Holy Father we humbly plead that you would give Joe the garment of praise and the oil of gladness that he might praise your goodness for the work you've done in his life. Amen.

- 8. Invite the delivered person to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour.** Explain the Gospel clearly and simply then invite the liberated individual to acknowledge their sinfulness and any particular sins that the Holy Spirit brings to their mind. 'If we admit our sins- make a clean breast of them- he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing.'²⁷² Encourage people to be specific in their prayer of confession. After their confession of sin pronounce their absolution from these sins. 'If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good.'²⁷³ Absolution is simply to announce Christ's promise of forgiveness to those who've confessed and so help people experience His forgiveness and be freed from the bondage of false guilt. Arrange baptism and discipleship classes. Encourage the new believer to give testimony to God's healing work in their life. Integrate the believer into the fellowship circles of the church.
- 9. Destroy all vile objects associated with their bondage.** Charms, books, art, figurines, and all other objects associated with the occult or that promote evil practices should be removed from their homes; not sold or given away, but destroyed. 'All kind of witches and warlocks came out of the woodwork with their books of spells and incantations and made a huge bonfire of them.'²⁷⁴
- 10. Dissociate yourself from those involved in the occult.** Graciously inform those who you collaborated with of your need to dissociate with their evil practices. Do 'not associate... have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.'²⁷⁵

272 Msg 1Jn 1:9
273 Msg Jn 20:23
274 Msg Ac 19:19
275 NIV Eph 5:11

11. Relapses are possible. 'When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says: 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.'²⁷⁶ A relapse is indicated in the following statement as well: 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said: 'I command you, come out and never re-enter him again.'²⁷⁷ We need to ensure that our discipleship and counselling keeps people from falling back into sin.

Signs of deliverance

1. The face of the exorcisee will glow with the presence of the Lord; you will literally see joy and release etched into their features.
2. Whereas formally they were unable to pronounce the name of Jesus, they will now be able to sing His praises.
3. They will be able to renounce the works of the evil one.
4. Paranormal abilities such as divination, levitation etc will disappear.
5. Abnormal physical, emotional and mental disturbances will disappear.
6. It isn't uncommon for healings to occur at deliverance. Severe diseases, paralysis, blindness, deafness, epilepsy and insanity can occur in possession and conversely can be cured at deliverance.

Today's Verse: If we admit our sins- make a clean breast of them- he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. Jn 1:9 (Msg)

276 NIV Mt 12:43-45

277 NIV Mk 9:25

Jesus-followers and the occult

As we reviewed the entry points for possession upon the lives of non-believers it would have crossed your mind that many believers have lapsed into these sins and practices. Adultery, consulting horoscopes and fortune-tellers, and participation in secret societies aren't sins exclusive to the world; many church folk fall into horrendous sin. We've all encountered professing believers whose witness is patently marred by addictive and obsessive sin. All too well we know our own fleshly weaknesses. Demons may attack, but if we're filled with the Spirit we need not fear occupation. We must be alert to the schemes of the evil one because he tailors his attack to where we're most vulnerable, and once we succumb and slide into sin, our state as a Christian sinner isn't more meritorious than that of a worldly sinner. It's only grace that separates you.

We shouldn't be surprised by our struggle with evil; our story is that of the age-old struggle initiated in the Garden of Eden when Satan corrupted that which God had made. That fateful day when Adam and Eve fell into temptation we lost the ideal God had purposed to give humanity. We lost:

- Our intimate and unmediated fellowship and communion with God.
- Our original creation likeness to God that reflected His glory.
- Our innocence and purity in our relationships.
- Our ease and harmony in procreation.
- Our partnership and companionship in managing the environment.
- Our ideal and abundant work environment.

We lost these ideals because sin wedges were placed between people and God:

- Satan parted the relationship between a holy God and a holy couple by a sin wedge. No longer does God visibly walk in the garden and talk with humanity. People can now only approach God through Christ and His cross.
- Satan marred our original likeness to God by placing the wedge of original sin into our spirits. We now do battle with our carnal or flesh nature. We have marred spirits, baffled minds, problematic emotions, and dying bodies; it's through these weakened and fallible faculties that Satan now launches his attacks.
- Satan's temptations corrupted Adam and Eve's innocent and pure relationship: shame, blame, jealousy, rage, and murder entered into their and their children's relationships. Since the day of the apple, humanity has an innate tendency to corrupt and damage relationships.
- God, in response to Eve's participation, cursed human kind's procreation. The pain of that curse has not been confined to labour pains, but includes the heartache of families and nations torn apart by sin.
- God also informed Eve that her husband would rule over her, and so the entrance of sin onto the world stage spoiled the partnership and companionship between man and women. Man has over-played his chauvinist role: he has over-eagerly participated in this ruinous state by exploiting his helper into an abused and subservient position.
- In response to Adam's role in the sin, God cursed the ground and toil of the human race in providing for itself. In place of a paradise, we now toil in corrupted sinful market places, and the scourge of unemployment and exploitation are the 'thorns and thistles' that mar our management of the world.

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Speaking to Satan at the time God foretold that through the offspring of Eve He would raise One who would strike Satan's head.²⁷⁸ This was Jesus, the Son of Man who: 'came to seek and to save what was lost.'²⁷⁹ In other words, the redeeming work of Jesus Christ would initiate a process to restore that which was lost in Eden through Satan's evil deeds:

1. Humanity's personal relationship and fellowship with God.
2. Humanity's ability to be transformed back into the likeness or image of God.
3. Humanity's ability to have restored and healed relationships.
4. Humanity's ability to have victory in procreation.
5. Humanity's ability to have responsible male-female relationships.
6. Humanity's ability to have a pleasant and favourable work environment.

Jesus-followers were intended to continue His ministry and have been given every tool needed for victory. The current affairs of humanity are a reflection of the failure of the church to take seriously the call to combat the evil one.

Occult means 'kept secret', or 'concealed' or 'involving evil supernatural powers'. In this day and age, the Jesus-followers' struggle with the sins of the occult has largely been a losing one. Satan has imprisoned too many people with his lies concealing the victory they could have through faith in Jesus. The Pharisees of this age, wittingly or unwittingly, aggravate matters by spending their time debating the finer points of doctrine, rather than pointing battle-weary Jesus-followers to the incredibly powerful resources at their disposal in overcoming evil, including the Counsellor; who not only counsels, but can demolish every authority that corrupts and binds.

Dear Christian, you can have victory over your flesh, you can have victory over the world, and you can have victory over the evil one and his cohorts. You don't have to roam aimlessly through life with sin crouching at your door; Satan can be resisted.

Seven Steps to Break the Chains that Bind Christian's to Evil

1. Consciously **take your stand against the evil one**. Recognize the areas in your life where he is directing his flaming arrows. Don't proceed further until, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you articulate the areas of your life that need to be brought under the blood of Jesus. Satan would have you understand that your little enjoyments, habits, obsessions, and your personal and private secrets are harmless, or at most, minor indiscretions. Well they aren't. In the sight of a Holy Father, He who still hears the cries of Jesus echoing from Calvary, our fun and mistakes are sin, an affront to His grace and mercy. Call sin what it is – sin. See sin for what it is – sin. Sin breaks the heart of God and contributes to the nail scars upon the hands of Jesus. We need to acknowledge that our sin is collaboration with Satan. Below write down the sins that are still corrupting your witness:

278 Ge 3:15

279 NIV Lk 19:10

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2. Forgiveness requires both confession and repentance. Your list is a confession to your self in the sight of God. But the Apostle James taught: '**confess your sins to each other** and pray for each other so that we may be healed.'²⁸⁰ Seek out a mature believer or believers to whom you can confess your sin. This will become a definitive act in both your life and in the spiritual realm.

Repentance sees sin for what it is – a filthy rag before a holy God – and this demands contrition: our heartfelt remorse over having transgressed the law of God. As I verbalize my offence to others I express my understanding that my deeds have brought sorrow to God's Holy Spirit, and so I resolve to have nothing further to do with these. Below are the names of those I choose to confess my sins to:

3. **Confess your sins to God.** Dear Father God it's with a great sense of remorse that I approach your throne and confess my sins to you. I confess that I have knowingly and unknowingly committed the sins of

Father, I know I have deeply hurt your heart by my filthy deeds. Please forgive me as I too learn to forgive those who've sinned against me. I now renounce this wickedness and pray that you will deliver me from the evil spirits that pursue me. I plead, Father God, for an infilling of your Holy Spirit to give me victory against every evil spirit that oppresses, torments, pursues, hounds and defiles me. I pray Holy God that your Holy Spirit would cleanse my spirit, mind, emotions and body from the consequences of my sins and that I would be healed of every sickness, disease, affliction, allergy, curse and troublesome emotion. I pray: Holy Jesus, make me holy; I pray; Holy Father, make me holy; I pray; Holy Spirit, make me holy. And I pray; Holy God, heal me and make me whole.

Thank you, Father-God, for forgiving me and for reaching out restoring and healing me, let it be for the glory of your precious Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

4. **Reflecting upon the teachings of the Lord** is a priority in maintaining Christian integrity. Read, memorize and meditate on God's Word. 'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.'²⁸¹ We either let the Word percolate within or we'll stagnate from without. Let the practice of Bible meditation become the daily activity that replaces past sins that dogged your life.

280 NIV Js 5:16

281 NIV Ps 1:1-3

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I _____ (name) commit to the daily reading and study of the Bible.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

5. Now **commit yourselves to a prayer lifestyle**. It's only as we pray that we'll get to know our Lord better, understand more fully the hope to which we have been called, and experience His power and unlimited resources available for daily victory. 'Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.'²⁸² 'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.'²⁸³ But: 'in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'²⁸⁴ 'And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the son may bring glory to the Father.'²⁸⁵

I _____ (name) commit to a time of daily prayer

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

6. **Join a church** and ensure regular attendance: 'And let us not give up meeting together...'²⁸⁶ Sitting in the pew isn't enough; get involved in small care groups and 'have fellowship with each other.'²⁸⁷ No fellowship means no blood protection, and therefore no cleansing from sin. Now also 'fan into flames the spiritual gift god gave you'²⁸⁸ by involving yourself in Kingdom work through volunteering for a ministry in your church.

I _____ (name) on the _____ (date) hereby commit to joining a Gospel preaching church, and a Cell or Bible Study Group, and will actively seek to be involved in Christian ministry. _____ (signature)

7. Keep yourself free from sin by recognizing the necessity to **separate yourself from worldliness**. 'Do not love the world... if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'²⁸⁹ The ruler of this world uses the trappings of this world, to entice our sinful nature, awaken the lust of our eyes and trip you in pride. 'I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'²⁹⁰ 'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.'²⁹¹ Now: 'put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.'²⁹² The breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of readiness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit are ours in Christ Jesus to secure continual victory against the devils schemes. Consciously dress yourself every day with the armour of God.²⁹³ Keep free from sin by keeping Christ central. Keep free from sin

282 NLT Col 4:2
283 NIV Eph 6:18
284 NIV Phil 4:6
285 NIV Jn 14:13
286 NLT Heb 10:25
287 NLT 1Jn 1:7
288 NLT 2Ti 1:6
289 NIV 1Jn 2:15
290 NIV Jn 16:33
291 NIV 2Co 10:4
292 NIV Eph 6:13
293 Eph 6:10-18

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Mending Broken Lives

by pursuing holiness by: 'offering your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship.'²⁹⁴

I _____ (your name) on the _____ (date) hereby offer myself: spirit,
mind, emotions and body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. So help me God.
_____ (signature)

Today's Verse: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Lk 19:10 (NIV)

Conclusion

'God was also pleased to bring everything on earth and in heaven back to himself through Christ. He did this by making peace through Christ's blood sacrificed on the cross.'²⁹⁵

Peace will only come to this transient world through love and biblical ethics as hearts are transformed by the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. So it is that Jesus-followers are urged to demonstrate the love of Jesus to a dying world: to be the salt and light of the world; to teach truth and confront evil; to pray for nations and world peace; to pray for leaders and those in authority; to pray for the unity of the church; and to pray for Christ's love to prevail in every relationship.

So it is that the Jesus-followers' healing ministry is holistic in the very widest sense of the word, calling for an impact in every aspect of our world's brokenness. The western church has for too long been contaminated by a philosophy that teaches a dualism which sees the physical and spiritual worlds existing independently of each other. This is not the case; Christ came to redeem '**everything on earth and in heaven**': His healing touch is far more substantial than we have allowed and can perfect every imperfection in our calamitous world, including political, economic and social structures.

No Jesus-follower is excluded from the call to bring healing to our disordered world. Through our unique spiritual giftings and prayers, we can all become powerful catalysts for change. We can nurse the sick to health. We can pray for Jesus' curative touch. We can proclaim the Gospel and encourage the lost to be reconciled to Christ. We can play pivotal roles in restoring tattered lives; our discernment, words of prophecy, wisdom and encouragement can mend perplexed minds and splintered personalities. Our acts of mercy can lift street children out of gutters and provide dignified lives. We can confront the monstrous evils in society by speaking up, crying out in prayer and acting courageously.

Jesus-followers have an important personal role in the reorientation of a disorientated world, but it must start with the reordering of our own disordered lives. It has been my prayer that Jesus would journey with you as you read through this book, exposing and repairing your brokenness. If in some small measure this is accomplished in your life, I urge you to give careful consideration to how you could facilitate the healing of others.

There is no reason that you can't perpetuate God's healing through establishing or participating in a care-and-cure ministry similar to the one you have just been through.

Allow the Holy spirit to be your guide.

295 GW Col 1:20



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Ezra and Nehemiah

~ Dr Bill Cooper



1

Background of Ezra and Nehemiah

Lesson Purpose

- Acquaint the student with the political situation in that part of the world at that time.
- Acquaint the student with the spiritual climate at the time of the writing.

Lesson Outcome

- The student will understand the political power structure and how Israel fit into it.
- The student will have a grasp of the idolatry of the time and place and how it affected Israel.

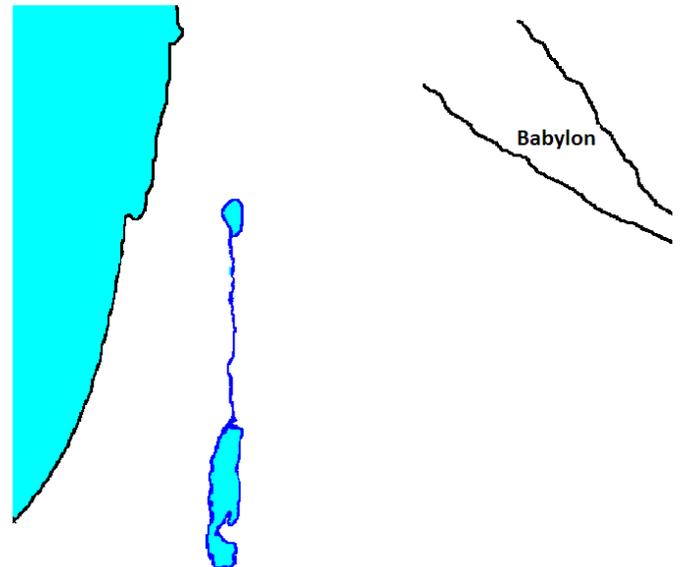
Any study of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah requires some awareness of both Babylonia and Assyria. We will look first at these two great kingdoms and then at the backgrounds of these two great men. Only then will we begin the study of these two great historical books of the Bible.

Babylonia

The earliest known settlers in Babylonia were probably Semites – some of the descendants of the eldest son of Noah. This kingdom was located East of the desert and between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It is an area that today is known as Iraq.

Even in most ancient times, the style of government was a powerful king whose power was supported by local rulers whom he appointed. At this time, Babylonia and their powerful neighbor Assyria were the dominant political forces of that day. Most of the time, there was an uneasy truce between these two great super-powers.

Their ancestor – Shem – had seen the display of the power of Jehovah in the saving of his family at the time of the flood. A long period of time had passed since the days of Noah. His descendants were now deeply involved in idol worship. They not only ceased to worship Jehovah, they also viewed the people of Israel, their relatives, as enemies to be conquered and enslaved.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course Ezra and Nehemiah

Again, though their ancestors had worshipped Jehovah, over the decades they had become involved in the idolatrous worship of the tribes people around them. There are two forms of idolatry that seem to have permeated the whole area – the worship of kings - as seen in Pharaoh and later in Caesar. This becomes visible in Babylonia in the requirement to worship Nebuchadnezzar. The second area of idol worship was that of Baal and his consort Ashtarte in the vile sex orgies they considered worship. Though a number of identifying names were used, the experiences were the same.

In 586 B.C., the people of Judah were carried into captivity in Babylonia. As indicated earlier, the founders of the Babylonian empire traced their lineage to Noah. After a long period of their history, these people were deeply involved in idolatrous worship. Like most practitioners of idolatry, they were afraid to allow any people group to participate in any form of worship other than their chosen idols. This was because they feared the anger of their god if everyone in the realm did not worship the chosen idols. This is one cause behind the law commanding every person in the realm to worship at the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. This resulted in the three men being thrown into the furnace. In most instances, this resulted in the Jewish people totally participating in the idolatry of their captors.

The Babylonians, like many area nations, took advantage of their victories over enemy nations. They forced the population of captive people into severe, unrelenting servitude. This was Israel's experience in Babylon for a long time.

Assyria

As indicated earlier, Assyria was a neighboring super-power located on the northern border of Babylonia. The Assyrians were a very different people from the Babylonians. They were not native to the area. Centuries before the time of their conquest of Babylonia, these tribes people immigrated from a northern, barren area we now refer to as southern Siberia. They moved into the Asian area but had no near-eastern roots in their lineage.

The kingdom was founded by Cyrus II. This kingdom flourished from 539 – 331 B.C. The Assyrians were known for their advanced contributions to law and order. They codified their laws in such a way that it made a serious impact on the legal positions of other nations down through the ages.

The Assyrians were idolaters, but their attitude toward the gods was completely different from that of the Babylonians. The Assyrians had their gods, but allowed other national groups to worship the gods of their choice. In fact, they not only worshipped their gods, but Accepted and worshipped the gods of the peoples they conquered. This is evidenced by the fact that though Cyrus was an idolater, still he recognized Jehovah the God of Israel and at his own expense paid for the restoration of the temple of God in Jerusalem.

When the Babylonian army conquered a nation, the captive people were brought back to Babylonia as slaves. This was the experience of Israel. Again, Assyria was quite different. They allowed their captive people to remain in their own land and pay tribute to Assyria. This was behind their granting permission for the Jews to return to Israel from the captivity imposed upon them by the Babylonians.

Ezra

Ezra was a priest from the tribe of Levi. He was highly trained as a scribe and teacher of the law.¹ He is considered responsible for the revision of the Biblical text of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

In 458 B.C., the King of Persia commissioned Ezra to return to Jerusalem to bring order among the people who were either left behind or had returned by his permission. Artaxerxes gave Ezra a royal letter granting him civil and religious authority. He also gave Ezra the finances necessary to complete and furnish the temple. We can explain the king's generosity concerning the temple. We cannot explain the fact that the king chose a priest and scribe to be governor and reform leader in his homeland. It had to be an indication of just how outstanding Ezra was in his abilities. There is common agreement that this is the case.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was the son of Hachabiah of the tribe of Judah.² Because of his position in Persia, it is assumed by some that he was a prince of the royal family in Israel. Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the Persian king Artaxerxes I, who reigned from 465 – 424 B.C. The position of cupbearer was one of great honor and responsibility. In that era, kings usually came to power in one of two ways: 1. They inherited the throne from their father at the time of his death. 2. More often, a contender killed the king and took his throne by force. One of the ways a pretender to the throne used to kill the king was to poison his food and drink. It was the responsibility of the cupbearer to make sure that the food and drink which the king partook were free from dangerous poisons. He would oversee their preparation; pour the wine himself and then in the presence of the king eat a bit of the food and drink from the royal cup before presenting it to the king. This was the honored position which was held by Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was named Governor of Jerusalem by Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah held this position for 12 years. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem about 13 years after Ezra came. In 445 B.C., Nehemiah learned of the deplorable conditions of the exiles who had returned to Israel under the permission of the Persian king.

As so often happens, when a good authority attempts to make a tremendous improvement in the land, there are those who will do everything possible to cause his efforts to fail. Nehemiah experienced this kind of opposition from Sanballat – a Samaritan; Tobiah – an Ammonite and Gesham – an Arab. Nehemiah dealt skillfully with the adversity created by these three men. At the same time, he skillfully led his people in monumental social, religious and political reforms. Some people tend to be preoccupied with the leadership skills of Nehemiah and overlook the great spiritual reform in which he led the people of Israel.

1 R. El Younglood –editor; The New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TE 1995: Pages 434, 435

2 Philip Schaff-Editor: Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Volume Chronicles – Esther: Zondervan



2

Inductive Study - Ezra 1 - 6

Lesson Purpose

- The student needs to know the structure of the book of Ezra
- The student needs to know the spiritual situation of king Cyrus
- They need to carefully discover the identity of the returnees
- They need to know the attitude of these captive Jews
- They must discover that the evil attempts to destroy God’s work will be overturned.

Lesson Outcome

- They will discover the structure of the book of Ezra
- They will discover the spiritual life of Cyrus
- They know the identity of those who returned and why this is important
- They understand the attitude of Jews who lived in captivity for decades
- They will see, first hand, that evil attempts to destroy God’s work will be overturned.

We must keep in mind as we study that four volumes were apparently all written by Ezra – I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. If you look at the last paragraph of II Chronicles and the first paragraph of Ezra, you will observe that they are nearly identical.

In the opening chapters of the book of Ezra, he wrote about the return of about 50,000 Jews, some 80 years earlier, under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It appears obvious that when the people of Israel refused the opportunity to return to their homeland, it is probable that they had become comfortable in their captivity in Persia.

Ezra probably gained some of his information from court records. There are two divisions of the book – Chapters 1-6 deal with the return under Zerubbabel. Chapters 7-10 deal with contemporary situations that Ezra also experienced. It is important to gain an overview of the material we will consider. This can be accomplished by preparing a brief summary of each of the chapters of this historical Biblical book.

1	Cyrus released jews to return to israel
2	Returnees counted
3	Construction begins
4	The opposition begins
5	The temple work resumed
6	The temple was completed

Chapter One – Cyrus Releases Jews To Return To Israel

We should be aware that the last three verses of II Chronicles and the first four verses of Ezra are nearly identical. This is obvious on the following table.

<p><i>Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up. II Chronicles 36:22, 23</i></p>	<p><i>Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:1-4</i></p>
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As you can see, II Chronicles 36:22, 23, are word for word identical with Ezra 1:1-3A. This is one of the reasons that many scholars believe that the books we call I, II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah were written by Ezra the outstanding scribe.

There are two paragraphs in the first chapter of Ezra. A brief summary of each paragraph is reported on the following table.

1:1-4	Jehovah stirred Cyrus to release Jews
1:5-11	Gifts given to returnees

1:1-4 – Jehovah Stirred Cyrus To Release Jews

In 1:1, Ezra made it clear that this was an act of the Lord. The word translated “Lord” is Jehovah (**hwhy**). This name for God was used in Old Testament situations where justice was being portrayed. This was not the product of the generosity of Cyrus. Jehovah moved the king to do this. Observe also that this was in the first year of his reign. It could not be the result of his favorable experience with Israel. The fact that he put it in writing meant that there were no possible conditions under which he could change his mind and prevent the return of the captives.

Observe, in 1:2, that King Cyrus gives God credit for his victories in battle. Cyrus also admits that his decision to rebuild the Jerusalem is a divine appointment.

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Ezra and Nehemiah

In 1:3, Cyrus gave blanket permission for every Jewish person to return to rebuild the temple. He also, in 1:4, encouraged their fellow Jews to present gifts to facilitate the temple construction.

1:5-11 – Gifts Given To Returnees

This paragraph, 1:5-11, reports the results of the invitation Cyrus offered the Jewish slaves in his country. Observe that Ezra reported in 1:1 that the Lord ‘stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.’ In 1:5, Ezra reported that the Lord “stirred up the Jewish slaves to return to their homeland. This entire movement has been stirred up by God. Observe also that the Jewish people responded with very valuable gifts for the returnees just as Cyrus encouraged them to do.

Observe in 1:5 that the group that was returning came from two basic tribes –Judah and Benjamin. In this verse, Ezra also includes people from the priests and Levites. He did not mention any of the other nine tribes among those who were going to return.

Cyrus encouraged the Jewish captives to return to rebuild the temple; he also, in 1:8-11, did the unthinkable. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the gold and silver temple utensils and brought them to his treasury. These were more than valuable pieces. They were trophies of conquest. Cyrus carefully returned each valuable piece taken from the Jerusalem temple. The gift outpouring and returned pieces made a surprisingly valuable gift that the returnees would never have anticipated.

Reflection

God does the seemingly impossible. We must learn to expect God to do the impossible because He does not change.

Chapter 2 – Returnees Counted

2:1-2A	Zerubbabel Leads Returnees
2:2b-35	41 families/Communities; 24,153 returnees
2:36-39	4 priestly families; 4,289 returnees
2:40-42	9 Levite, singer, porter families; 341 returnees
2:43-54	35 returnee families of Nethinim
2:55-58	10 Solomon servant families– 392 returnees
2:59-63	5 unregistered communities, 3 families – 652 returnees; 3 priestly families return
2:64-67	total returnees
2:68-69	Returnees give gifts for temple
2:70-3:7	Returnees dispersed; sacrificial system restored

2:1-2A – Zerubbabel Leads Returnees

We are reasonably certain that Ezra was not present when the Jewish people took advantage of the edict of Cyrus to return to Israel. It appears that Ezra may have had access to court documents to gain this information. It is clear that very careful records were kept. Ezra carefully reported the details of this exodus. If you look carefully, at verse one, not everyone went to Jerusalem – each went to his own city. This does not necessarily mean they did not work on the temple.

In 2:2A, Ezra lists eleven men who were leaders of the returnees:

- ZERUBBABEL – He was the son of Shealtiel and grandson of King Jehoiachin. Zerubbabel was a prince of the tribe of Judah and legal successor to his grandfather – Jehoiachin, an evil king. Jehoiachin was the king in Israel when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel. Zerubbabel did some very good things in Jerusalem, but he was not mentioned at the dedication of the temple.
- JESHUA – He was a priest and became the chief priest in Jerusalem after the temple restoration. He built an altar to God at the temple and strongly opposed the Samaritan attempts to halt the reconstruction.
- NEHEMIAH - This is not the man after whom the Biblical book is named. He was a clan leader among the Jews in Persia prior to his return to Jerusalem.
- REELIAH – who was also called Raamiah. He too was an Israelite chief in Persia before returning to Israel.
- BIGVAI – he was a family head who returned with Zerubbabel. In 2:14 he was mentioned as the head of a family who returned.

There are several of these leaders of the return for whom we have no extensive information: Seraiah who was also called Azariah; Mordecai; Bilshan; Mispar; Rehun who was also called Nehum and Baanah. All of these men held positions of great respect both before the people of Israel and before the Persian leadership.

2:2B-35 – Forty-Two Families; Communities 24,153 Returnees

It is probable that this information came from official records and not from Ezra's personal counting. It should be noted that throughout most of this long paragraph, the record is listed in the name of the father of the family – "The sons of Elam, 1,254." We must keep in mind that in the Hebrew culture, lineage is always recorded in the name of the father. This is true of several cultures. You will also notice that there is a different kind of record which is evident in 2:21-23, 28 and 34. In these five verses, it is the record of men from a given city rather than being recorded in the name of their fathers. The text does not explain this change. It is possible that the information is recorded in this manner because they were not Jewish or their ancestry was not traceable. One thing stands out, however, in this record. The records were kept with unusual care.

2:36-39 – Four Priestly Families – 4,289 Returnees

It is not surprising that Ezra, himself a priest, chose to record the priests separately. Though the Levitical families were dispersed throughout several tribes, they were always separate. Two things stand out as you view these four families: (1) One of the fathers, Jeshua, was listed with the eleven leaders in 2:1. He would be

the chief priest. (2). Out of all Israel, only four priestly families were willing to return to rebuild the temple of God; the place where their energies were supposed to be invested. This gives us a glimpse into the thinking of the Jewish people who lived in Persia.

2:40-42 - 9 Levite; Singer And Porter Families – 341 Returnees

We seldom if ever use the term “Levite” with the care with which the Jews used the term. There were two types of Levites: 1. The descendants of Levi who served as assistants to the priests. 2. The other Levites were not directly descended from Aaron. These men assisted the priests, but in more menial tasks. This is the reason that Ezra in this paragraph, includes the singers and porters. Again, two facts stand out: (1). Out of all the levites, of this category, only 341 were prepared to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple where they were supposed to be working. Again, this indicates the attitude of the Jewish people concerning their return to the promised land. (2). You will notice that in 2:40, Ezra lists the Levites who were sons of Jeshua. This appears to be the same man listed as a leader in 2:1. He had sons who were priests and sons who were second level Levites. The text does not explain this. It is possible that this priest had two wives: one a daughter of the tribe of Levi and one who was not.

2:43- 54 – 35 Families Of Nethinim

The word “nethinim,” used elsewhere in this study, describes men in Jewish families whose mothers were not Jews. These men were one step beneath the second level “Levites.” Their father was a priest or Levite, but they were not really counted as Jews; not counted among those who returned. They may also have been prisoners of war who were eventually given to the temple as workers. You will observe, that in this paragraph, for the first time, the numbers of men involved was not reported. The text does not explain this fact.

2:55-58 – 10 Solomon’s Servant Families – 392 Returnees

Royalty tended to take members of conquered royal families as their servants. We see this with Daniel and the others who served in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace.

Though they were slaves, they had a level of prestige that other captives did not enjoy. This may account for the classification recorded in this paragraph. We cannot account for the fact that their numbers were recorded when it is clear that they were certainly not Jewish.

2:59- 63 – Five Unregistered Communities; Plus 3 Families -652 Returnees Plus 3 Priestly Families

In 2:59, the author listed, without numbers, the families of five men who could not establish, from the records, that they were Jewish. He then proceeded to list three other families who apparently could establish their lineage, though the text does not make this clear.

Ezra then gives a number for those mentioned in these two verses. In verses 61-63, which are surprisingly a part of this paragraph, he dealt with a serious problem which should not have existed at all. Three priestly families were unable to establish their priestly lineage. With the families of Habaiah and Hakkoz, it appears that these men took wives either from other tribes or more probably from other nations and thus neither of these men nor their sons could serve at the altar. With the family of Barzilli, the situation is more obvious. This

man took a wife from the family of Barzilli who came from the tribe of Gilead. This was so open that he even took the name of his father-in-law. This is what is involved in Ezra's statement, "he was called by their name." 2:61

2:64-67 – Total Returnees

This paragraph is a summary statement concerning the reports in the rest of the chapter. It gives one an idea of the huge size of the group who were going to make this thousand mile trip from Babylonia to Canaan. By the way, this was roughly the trip made by Abraham. The Jews would be keenly aware of this fact.

- 42,360 people
- 337 – men and maid servants
- 200 – singing men and women
- Horses – 736
- Mules – 245
- Camels – 435
- Asses – 6,720

Though this is a group of nearly 43,000 men, in most instances it does not count the women and children. The total group would probably be nearly 100,000.

Throughout the chapter, Ezra has carefully recorded the numbers for most of the men. When you consider the number of the people of Israel who were in Babylon, the number of people who returned was a very small percentage. They were not as excited about the freedom to return as one might think. One must assume that the people who remained did not believe the message of the prophet concerning the future of Israel. They must have felt that their situation under Persian control was still slavery, but probably much better than if they returned to Israel and then were taken captive by a less considerate conqueror.

2:68-69 – Returnees Give Gifts For Temple

In 1:6, the Jewish slaves who were not going to return to rebuild the temple gave gifts to those who were returning. Ezra wrote, "All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold..." Here in 2:69, the returning Jews upon their arrival at the Jerusalem temple site gave large gifts for the reconstruction of the temple:

- 61,000 gold drachmas – a drachma was equal to two days wages
- 5,000 silver minas – about 12 ounces each
- 100 priestly garments

The question naturally arises, How could slaves present such gifts as recorded in 1:6 and 2:69? The text does not explain. It is possible that the Persian slave system allowed the slaves to earn a living like any citizen, but at a lower rate. We do not know if that is true or not. If that were true, it might help to account for the Jewish reluctance to leave Persia when their freedom was offered.

2:70- 3:7 – Dispersion Of Returnees In Israel

Upon their arrival back in Israel, the returnees each returned to the city from which their ancestors had been taken captive. This would create some problems because we know others had moved in and spread out in the land. The Israelites had been in the land seven months, but nothing had been done to begin the reconstruction. After seven months, Jeshua, the chief priest, and his brothers, built an altar to God in order to reestablish the regular sacrifices as called for in the “Law of Moses.”

Motivation is always important. The priests (3:3) set the altar on its foundation and prepared to make sacrifices to God because, “They were terrified of the people of the lands.” Fear motivates. It is one thing when the people of a nation defend themselves against an outside enemy. It is a very different matter when you live among the enemy and must defend yourself. This was the situation for the returning Jews.

They also reestablished the celebration of the “feast of booths” which celebrates the faithfulness of God in bringing the people back from Egypt. This is a parallel. They were now being brought back from Persia in the same way. They immediately began ordering materials with the money that Cyrus had given them for the reconstruction. Notice in 3:6 it reports, “...but the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid.” This is not repairing an occasional hole in the temple walls. This is like starting all over again.

In 3:1, Ezra indicated that the priests had erected the altar and on the first day of the seventh month they began offering burnt offerings. In the second month of the second year construction began. (3:8) There is no explanation as to why no construction was done for over a year. One could surmise that they were collecting materials but the text is silent at this point.

Reflection

Recurring theme – It was possible for every Jewish captive to return:

- Very few priestly families chose to accept their freedom.
- Most of the Jewish families chose not to accept the offer of their freedom by Cyrus. The status-quo is more comfortable than taking the risk involved in growth and advancement. It is a shame when spiritual leaders do not lead their people to trust God for the impossible.

Chapter Three – Construction Begins

Ezra 3:8 – 13 – Temple Reconstruction Begins

In 3:8, 9, construction is ready to begin. The first thing Ezra reported was the very detailed organizational structure they initiated before any work was done. Responsibility and accountability are essential. One of the important observations in this paragraph is the fact that they were very united in their efforts.

These men started from the beginning. The first thing they did was to lay the foundations for new temple walls. This will be a totally different temple from what Solomon built. 3:10, 11, make it clear that this is more than a construction project. This is the picture of a religious celebration. They have laid the foundations and

are now praising God for His lovingkindness because they had been able to lay the foundation. In fact, this was a great achievement.

You see a reaction to these events in 3:12, 13. Remember, the Jews had been in captivity for about 70 years. Solomon's temple was huge and magnificent. The smaller foundations made it clear that this was not going to rival the greatness of the previous temple. There were very old men present who had seen Solomon's temple and remembered its grandeur. They could tell from the much smaller foundations that this would be humiliating. They wept so loudly people could hear a long ways off.

At the same time, there were a number of young men present who had never seen the grandeur of Solomon's temple. For them, it was cause for praise and shouting that the foundations were laid and there would be a temple. The sound of the mourners was as loud as the great sound of those who rejoiced.

Reflection

The old men wept bitterly when they saw the size of the new temple. One could worship as effectively at this temple as they could at Solomon's temple. The mourning was a result of their preoccupation with the physical beauty and grandeur of Solomon's temple rather than the spiritual opportunity of having the gift of a new temple which was not intended to compete with Solomon's temple beauty. This is always a danger we must studiously avoid in the church.

Chapter Four– The Opposition Begins

Ezra 4:1-5 – Local Adversaries Hinder The Work

Judah and Benjamin were neighbors and were located closest to Jerusalem.

The people who lived around them were not Jews but had been brought into the area from which the Jewish ancestors had been removed. The neighbors resented the Jews crowding into what they considered their land.

We must keep in mind that these Gentiles are enemies of Judah and Benjamin and have no scruples to hinder their attempt to get rid of these Jews. In 4:2, these enemies approach Zerubbabel with a false request. They lied in an attempt to become a part of the construction project. Remember, Israel had been back in the land for more than a year. It was clear to the Jewish leaders that these people did not really worship Jehovah.

Zerubbabel refused their request giving the following reasons: 1. "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God.": 2. We will build as Cyrus king of Persia has commanded us.

Having failed to join the Jews in this project, the enemies turned to harassment. (4:4) They worked hard to discourage and frighten all the Jews. In 4:5, they also hired legal counsel to approach the king of Persia to attempt to frustrate the project.

Ezra 4:6 – Political Moves To Discredit The Jews

These enemies were very persistent. They appealed to Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes, kings of Persia in their attempts to discredit the Jews. Because of these dishonest attempts, the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of the city took decades to complete.

Ezra 4:7-16 – Letter Sent To Xerxes

If you read 4:7-10, you will observe that these enemies of Judah and Benjamin have aligned themselves with every possible official in order to appeal to the king with these accusations. Ezra incorporates their letter to the king bringing accusations against the Jews. The accusation touches on an important issue – They claimed that if the walls were completed, the Jews would no longer pay tribute to the king. There is no basis for this accusation. As evidence of their claim, they reminded the king that the Jews had been a rebellious people and that court records should show this to be true. The fact that Ezra has a copy of the letter probably indicates that they had to defend themselves before the King of Persia. It is interesting that these enemies accuse the Jews of the worst, but personally claim to be looking out for the interests of the king.

Ezra 4:17-22 – The King’s Response To The Accusation

The king investigated court records as these enemies had suggested. He discovered that indeed, Israel had been rebellious. On this basis, he ordered the work on the temple to be stopped.

Ezra 4:23-24 – Enemies Carry Out King’s Command

When the king’s reply reached the enemies of Judah and Benjamin, the enemies greatly rejoiced. They had won, at least for the time being. They quickly hurried to Jerusalem and stopped the construction with the force of arms.

Verse 24 gives us one of the implications of this deceitful attack by Israel’s enemies. This put a stop to the construction until the second year of the reign of Darius – 520 B.C.

Reflection

- Enemies of the work of God are not above using deception and dishonesty to thwart the work of God. We must be on the alert for this and seek God’s guidance to keep us from being deceived.
- When Satan could not get Jesus to worship him, he did not give up. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, he persisted in opposing His ministry. This was true for Zerubbabel and it will not be different for us. As long as we serve the Lord, the opposition will be persistent. The good news is that the Lord will never allow the enemy to ultimately win.
- When the dishonest innuendos were sent to Cyrus, it caused a long interruption in the work of restoring Jerusalem. This was not a defeat. God sometimes allows such delays only to miraculously accomplish His purpose as He did in the reconstruction of Jerusalem.

Chapter Five – The Temple Work Resumed

Ezra 5:1-5 – Haggai And Zechariah Prophecy About The Temple

Both Haggai and Zechariah prophesied during the time of the return from Persia. Both of these prophets prophesied to the people who had been building the temple. In the opening chapter of his prophecy, Haggai wrote,

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Haggai 1:7, 8

Zerubbabel and his leaders heard the message from the Lord and begin the work once more. No permission was given by the king. They just obeyed the command God gave through the prophets. One wonders why these men were not listed in Hebrews chapter 11.

When work began again, another enemy governor Tattenai confronted the leaders asking who issued the decree to rebuild.

Verses four and five describe Israel's reply to this confrontation. First they gave the governor the information he required of them concerning the names of the men doing the work. Notice, however, that Ezra recorded, in 5:5, that the "eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews..." This is another instance where Ezra portrays the confrontation between God and the political forces.

Ezra 5:6-17 – Governor Tattenai Also Wrote To Darius

We need to be clear about Tattenai. He was the governor of the area called "beyond the River" (Euphrates). This area included Babylonia and had lesser officials located in Damascus. The enemies of the Jews appear to be soliciting cooperation from every possible official in their harassment of the Jews. Observe that Tattenai is writing to Darius. Darius is not the king who initiated the rebuilding project, but is the one now in control and receiving these annoying attacks. The governor presents himself as looking out for the best interests of the king.

Ezra presented a copy of Tattenai's letter to Darius. In 5:9, 10, the governor reported his meeting with the Jewish leaders. He had asked two questions, both of which could prove to be damaging. First, he asked who had issued the decree to rebuild the temple. His assumption could be that no decree had been issued. Second, he asked for the names of the men who had participated in the reconstruction work. In 5:4, Ezra reported that Zerubbabel had given Tattenai the names of the men involved.

Zerubbabel's answer concerning the decree was carefully presented. He began by identifying his allegiance to Jehovah. He honestly reported that they were rebuilding the temple that a great Jewish king (Solomon) had built long ago. He admitted that Israel's failed obedience to God led to His allowing Nebuchadnezzar to capture the nation and destroy the beautiful temple.

In 5:13, Zerubbabel answered the question, saying that Cyrus had issued the decree to rebuild. He continued by reporting that Cyrus had also returned all of the gold, silver and brass utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had

taken from the temple. It appears that in disbelief, Tattenai asked Darius to check the documents to see if this was all true.

Reflection

- God simply spoke through two prophets and this stirred up His people to begin the work again. They did not hesitate because they did not have the permission of the king. They just started. Had Haggai and Zechariah been unwilling to speak for God, the work would have been delayed even longer. Many times our faithfulness to God's assignment will be what is needed for others to put their trust in Him and act in obedience.
- When Zerubbabel and those with him courageously restarted the work of rebuilding, the enemy, Tattenai, also became active. He wrote a deceptive letter seeking the king's condemnation of the work of the Jews. When we act in faith, we can be very sure that the enemy will spare no efforts to destroy what we are trying to do.
- When confronted with the question about receiving permission to build, Zerubbabel simply told the truth. He made no effort to build a case for what they were doing. God will always defend faithful people. He did then and He still does. To be faithful, however, requires the courage to act when we cannot see all the details.

Chapter Six – The Temple Was Completed

Ezra 6:1 – 5 – The Decree Was Found

In 6:1, Darius required a search of the records. Nothing was found. In 6:2, Ezra mentioned "Ecbatana" which was the summer palace of Cyrus. The documents were finally found there. In 6:3-5, Ezra reported the content of the edict that was found. It was just as Zerubbabel had said. This discovery was going to be a cause for great rejoicing for Zerubbabel and his leaders.

Ezra 6:6-12 – Darius Responded To Tattenai

In 6:6, 7, Ezra recorded the warning made by Darius to Tattenai. The tone of this message(6:6-12) is strong and harsh. His warning consists of three parts: 1. "Keep away from there." 2. "Leave this work on the house of God alone." 3. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders rebuild this house of God. That would be a frightening message for Tattenai to receive.

Darius had some new instructions for Tattenai: 1. The full cost of construction must be promptly paid from the royal treasury-the tax money from Tattenai's area of rule. In 6:9, a new demand appears. Everything necessary for the ongoing sacrifices at the temple are to be regularly paid by Tattenai's part of the royal treasury. King Darius attached a threat to his edict. He promised death to anyone who violated this edict and implores God to destroy any nation who might attempt to destroy this house of God.

As indicated earlier, Ezra repeatedly presents the confrontation of power on one side and God on the other side. There is a scenario here. In each of these confrontations, God not only wins, but He does so with little effort. This, of course, is the true expression of extremely great power. God honors those who trust Him even when the outcome seems impossible.

Ezra 6:13-15 – The Temple Was Completed

This brief paragraph is a study in contrasts. 6:13 is a picture of Tattenai after receiving the reprimand from Darius. This is a picture of total, urgent obedience in dismantling fear. 6:14, on the other hand, is a picture of overwhelming joy in victory. They expressed this joy by just finishing building the temple in record time when everyone else in the area was determined to destroy it.

Ezra 6:16-18 – The Celebration Of Dedication

This is a celebration, but it is celebration of the dedication of the temple. It is not a celebration of the defeat of the forces of opposition. Observe that 6:17 is part of their celebration. In this verse, they sacrificed 12 male goats, “corresponding to the number of the tribes in Israel.” Most of the people in this return of the exiles came from three tribes – Levi, Judah and Benjamin. We are not told if there were people present from any of the other nine tribes. Nevertheless, the goats were sacrificed on behalf of the 12 tribes. These people built and celebrated on behalf of all Israel, not just for their own tribes. This joyful occasion is not a political gathering to thank Darius for his intervention. It is rather an expression of the worship of God. It is an acknowledgment that this is God’s doing, not Darius. It is clear in 6:18, that they would immediately begin to use this gift of God for its intended purpose – initiate an intimate relationship with His people on a daily basis.

Ezra 6:19-22 – The Celebration Of Passover

These people celebrated the Passover. The parallels are amazing. Israel left the slavery of Egypt to return to the land of promise. These people left the slavery of Assyria and travelled around the desert to return to the land of promise. When Israel left Egypt, they observed the Passover celebrating the preservation of the first-born in every family and their freedom from slavery. These people were released from slavery and protected from the wrath of their neighbors. When Israel came from Egypt and entered Canaan, God delivered the idolatrous nations into their hands. When these people returned to Israel, God delivered them from the oppression of the enemies who otherwise occupied the land. These people were overjoyed to celebrate the Passover as their gratitude to God for His intervention on their behalf. Much of the joy of this Passover came from their keen awareness of God’s faithfulness – what God had done for their ancestors, He had done for them as well.

Reflection

- Tattenai urged the king to search to see if a decree had been written granting permission to build. This was a deceptive attempt to destroy what the Jews were doing. Darius decreed the search and found the decree of Cyrus. Darius sent a command to Tattenai demanding that he stay away from Jerusalem. Darius also commanded Tattenai pay for all the reconstruction that was done in Jerusalem. God repeatedly takes the evil acts of the enemy and turns them around to bless His obedient people. The enemy tried to get rid of Jesus. In the process, our redemption was secured. This is the way God loves to work.
- In these chapters, Ezra has reported the events that took place in the lives of his countrymen. He was not present. In his reporting, however, we see what he realized – God’s people were helpless. Though great military and political power rose up against them, still God overcame otherwise impossible forces on their behalf. It is a celebration of God’s faithfulness, compassion and irresistible power.



3

Inductive Study of Ezra 7 - 10

Lesson Purpose

- They must discover the tremendous benefits of excellent personal preparation
- They need to discover the danger for spiritual leaders to weaken – few priests volunteered to go.
- They need to discover the strong importance of fasting.
- They need to be reminded of the severity of any disobedience, especially by leaders.
- They must be reminded of the unusual importance of religious leaders being good examples.
- They must be reminded that victory will always be followed by enemy attack.
- They must learn that disobedience must be confronted with integrity and mercy no matter what the cost may be.
- They must discover the tremendous impact a personal sin can have on the whole community

Lesson Outcome

- They have seen the benefits of excellent personal preparation.
- They have seen the results of what happens when spiritual leaders weaken in their faith.
- They have seen the most thorough results of fasting – this is the best example in Scripture.
- They have seen the consequences of spiritual failure in leaders.
- They know the importance of a good example in spiritual leaders
- They have seen the fact that severe attack always follows victory and can be prepared.
- They know that spiritual failure must be confronted with integrity and mercy.
- They have learned the great impact personal sin has on the whole community.

7	The king sent ezra to israel
8	Preparations for the journey
9	Ezra's confession over israel's intermarriage
10	The foreign wives are put away

Chapter Seven – The King Sent Ezra To Israel

Ezra 7:1 – 10 – Ezra Prepared To Go To Israel

In the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes (458 B.C.), Ezra was given permission to return to Israel. The trip of nearly 1,000 miles took exactly four months, which is much shorter than usual. Ezra was a priest and traced his lineage 16 generations to Aaron.

It was unusual, but Ezra was both a priest and a scribe. He purposed in life both to practice and teach the holy Scriptures of which he was an outstanding scholar. Artaxerxes had even given Ezra everything he requested. This gift will be detailed later in the chapter. This is the second Persian king who opened the royal treasury to the returning Jews.

Ezra 7:11-26 – The Decree Of Darius

In this paragraph, Ezra included a copy of the decree King Artaxerxes gave to him. The decree began with an invitation for any of the Jewish slaves to accompany Ezra on this trip. The king delineated three areas of responsibility for Ezra:

1. THE GIFTS – He was to take the king’s offering of gold and silver to Jerusalem. He was to bring the gold and silver given by the people of the province of Babylonia and that by the priests and people. He was to use these funds to secure the needs for sacrifices. He was to take utensils for the temple and to buy “whatever seems good to you” and “whatever else the temple needs.”
2. PAYMENT FOR NEEDS – The province “Beyond the River” was to pay the entire cost (Tattenai) The King listed generous financial limits for Ezra’s purchases. He essentially gave Ezra a blank check. The King gave Tattenai an instruction that the people at the temple were to pay no tax, no tribute and no toll.
3. NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EZRA – He was to appoint magistrates and judges. He was to teach the laws of God to all the people. He was to carry out imposed judgments upon those who disobeyed the decree of the King.

Ezra 7:27, 28 –Ezra Responded To God’s Blessing

Ezra responded to the King’s decree with intense praise for God. He blessed God for four benefits: 1. God put it into the heart of the king to give generously to beautify the temple. 2. God extended lovingkindness to Ezra by giving him entrance before the king. 3. According to God’s actions, Ezra was given power and responsibility to use on behalf of the temple and the people. 4. He was enabled to gather leading men to make the trip with him.

Ezra looked upon the events that took place and acknowledged that it was because God acted on his behalf. Ezra was a gifted man. The cause for these wonderful events, however, was what God had done on his behalf.

Lesson Learned

1. Outstanding talents and preparation increase one’s usefulness to God.
2. Ezra was a very talented man, but it was very clear that God was the one who moved the king to be so generous to him. The beautiful part here is that Ezra was keenly aware of this and gave God thanks for it.

Chapter 8 – Preparations For The Journey

Ezra 8:1 – 14 – People Who Accompanied Ezra

With characteristic pinpoint accuracy, Ezra recorded each name and family along with the number of men from that heritage who would make the trip. There is record of 1,514 men who were going to leave Persia and go to Israel. You may have noticed that Ezra has given us no tribal name for any of these men. Again, observe that he has listed only the number of men in the group. This means that there would be more than 3,000 people making the trip. Out of all the thousands of Jewish slaves in Persia, this is a very few who claimed their freedom and prepared to return to the land of promise.

Ezra 8:15 – 20 – Additional Religious Leaders Needed

The more than 3,000 people met at the River Ahava where they stayed for three days. As Ezra surveyed the group, he realized that there were many gifted people there, but the group was sadly lacking in people associated with temple worship. There were some priests, but none were mentioned. There were no Levites in the group. Ezra sent for nine specific Levites who were family heads. This would provide a goodly number of Levites if they would join him in the return to Israel. Observe that Ezra also sent for two specific teachers. He was determined to do everything that God was calling upon them to do.

Ezra knew that they needed many more temple servants to conduct the services of the temple in the proper way. He sent men he had recruited to confront Iddo – the chief temple servant.

As you read these paragraphs, some information stands out. Repeatedly, Ezra mentions some of the men who were persons specially gifted. He was not only taking a large group of people; he was taking gifted people because only the most gifted were sufficient for the service of God. With the addition of the group pressured in this paragraph, an additional 700 to 1,000 people were added to the returning group.

Observe that some priests, temple servants, Levites and many leaders only agreed to come when a personal, pressured invitation was presented to them. We should be the leading volunteers. Sometimes the people we lead on behalf of God demonstrate a greater commitment to serving God than those who were supposed to lead the way.

Again, of all the thousands of Jewish slaves who were offered their freedom to return, probably fewer than 5,000 were willing to trust God and return to the land of their fathers. This is a poor commentary on the spiritual strength of God's people in a most difficult situation.

Ezra 8:21 – 23 – Ezra Proclaimed A Fast

The "fast" means to go without food and/or water for spiritual reasons without being required to do so. It is not for purposes of being seen as holy. It is an expression of deep concern.

When the travelling group was complete, Ezra proclaimed a time of fasting for the whole group. In verse 21, Ezra wrote, "that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey..." They were embarking on a very long trip – nearly 1,000 miles. They were a very large group of people carrying a valuable

cargo of gold and silver. This was an easy target for thieves. Such groups usually needed troops to guard them as they travelled. Ezra had a dilemma. He had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him..." (8:22) If Ezra went to the king requesting troops to accompany them, his witness to the pagan king would have been lost. Ezra determined to trust God to protect them on this dangerous journey. Their fasting was an intense expression of their need for divine help.

Notice how Ezra concluded the paragraph, "He was entreated by us." This is an expression of great faith that God had heard their prayer and was answering even before they began the journey.

Ezra 8:24-30 – Ezra Entrusted Gifts To 12 Priests

Ezra took 12 leading priests from two families – Sherebiah and Hashabiah – and divided the gifts among them. These were gifts of gold, silver, bronze as well as utensils. These 12 men were charged with the security of these gifts. Their responsibility was only complete when they delivered these gifts to the Jerusalem temple.

Verses 28, 29 describes the way Ezra viewed this responsibility

And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. Ezra 8:28, 29

Observe that Ezra said that the 12 men were "holy" and these gifts were "holy." He used the same word for "holy" in both instances. The word translated "holy" means to be set apart for God. These 12 men have been set apart for God to do or consider no other concern until these gifts are delivered to the temple. In the same way, the gifts these men are to carry are set apart for God and can be used for no other purpose.

Ezra 8:31 – 34 – Gifts Delivered To The Temple

In two brief verses, Ezra covered the 14 week travel through semi-desert, dangerous areas to reach Jerusalem. Notice the possible dangers he mentioned:

Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the liar-in-wait by the way. Ezra 8:31

This is a lot of people moving through unfriendly territory. Especially in the last half of the journey, they passed through territory occupied by groups who did not want these people to reach Jerusalem and did not approve of what the Jews were doing in Jerusalem. Ezra also mentioned the "ambushes." This was the greatest danger because the thieves had good reason to believe this large group carried much more than their food supply.

There is an air of confidence in Ezra's reporting of their travel experience. He wrote, "The hand of our God was over us and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way." (8:31b) It is like

saying we prayed that God would be our protection and it is no surprise that He has met our need though it might seem impossible.

Observe that in verses 33 and 34, Ezra gave some detail of the delivery of the gifts. These gifts had been carefully recorded when they were given to the 12 priests to transport. Now, when they are being delivered, everything is being weighed and reported again. Remember, in 8:28 these 12 priests were set apart to carry these gifts. In these two verses Ezra is reporting that the task for which the 12 priests were set apart had been successfully completed.

Ezra 8:35, 36 – Sacrifice To God; Edict Delivered To Tattenai

It is not surprising that when the gifts had been deposited at the temple, the whole group gathered to worship God at the temple. It is a way of joyfully acknowledging that it was God who brought them safely to their destination. They did this by the ritual sacrifice. Observe that these were “burnt offerings.” The “burnt offering” was so called because it was completely burnt to ashes. It acknowledged their uncleanness, for they had just come from a pagan country and had passed through several places that were idolatrous as well.

Observe also that the 12 bulls were sacrificed not just for this group, but “for all Israel.” They viewed what they were doing was not just their action, but a part of all Israel. In the 12 goats that were offered as a sin offering, they acknowledged that they and all Israel had sinned against the Lord.

Having cleansed their lives before the Lord, they were ready to carry out the responsibility placed upon Ezra by the King. They carried the king’s edict to Tattenai as directed. The closing statement in the chapter though stated without emotion is loaded with emotional baggage. Imagine the tension released when Tattenai read the edict presented to him by Ezra. Nevertheless, he had to support the people of Israel and the construction which he thoroughly despised but was required to pay for. It is amazing how God moves upon the hearts of rulers to accomplish His will on behalf of His people.

Reflections

1. The king’s edict gave every Jewish captive the freedom to return. Still, only 3,000 to 4,000 people were initially prepared to accept this offer. So few of God’s people were/are in tune with what God is doing and join Him in that quest. What they don’t realize is that they miss serious blessing from God in the process.
2. Of the 1,514 men listed, none of them were identified as priests. The theme of weakness of the spiritual leadership plays often in this book. Strangely, Jesus faced exactly the same issue with the Pharisees. If the enemy can get the spiritual leaders to be lax, it will have a similar effect upon the laity.
3. Ezra began their mission with a time of fasting. He was seeking God to do for them what they would not be able to do for themselves. We need to be seeking God to do much more through us than we would otherwise be able to accomplish.
4. They trusted God, amid impossible circumstances, to bring them safely to Jerusalem. God proved Himself faithful. He will do no less for us, but we must first put our trust in Him with no reservations.

5. When the gifts were delivered to the temple, they worshipped God. If we expect God to meet our needs and work through us, it is incumbent upon us to respond in praise and worship of His faithfulness.
6. God allows what appears to be a devastating defeat (Tattenai) in order to clearly show the greatness of His power and faithfulness. In order for this to be displayed, we have to be willing to go through these seemingly impossible situations.

Chapter 9 – Ezra’s Confession Over Israel’s Intermarriage

Ezra 9:1 – 4 – The Sin Of Intermarriage Confronted

It is important to realize that as soon as spiritual victory is celebrated, there is always a confrontation with evil. That is the case here.

Observe that it was the princes who approached Ezra. There is no mention of the religious leaders being disturbed by this disobedience. Indeed, when the princes approached Ezra concerning the intermarriage, they identified the guilty as, “the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites.” Those who approached Ezra about the sin of intermarriage made it clear that the hands of the princes and rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness. (9:2) The text records three things that Ezra did upon learning of the intermarriages: A. He tore his clothes. B He pulled hair from his head and beard. C. He sat down appalled. The word translated “appalled” means to be totally devastated; to be horrified; this is sheer horror. The Jews are very visual, graphic people. They express their deep emotions verbally, but their descriptive actions are far more telling.

If Ezra’s reaction was one of horror; the reaction of the common people was one of debilitating fear. One might wonder why they experienced such fear. This was not new to them. That is the point. This situation had been around a long time and with a large number of people in important positions. The shock for them was that it had become common and acceptable. Suddenly someone dared to point out the tragedy of this sin.

Ezra 9:5 – 15 – Ezra’s Prayer Of Confession

We must keep in mind that Ezra is not dealing with his own guilt. He is making confession because he is a priest. It is his task to intercede, but he makes no attempt to justify Israel and does not plead with God to forgive and restore. The outline of his confession looks like this:

- 9:6,7 – He recounts Israel’s earlier sins and punishment.
- 9:8, 9 – God has really blessed them even though they are slaves
- 9:10-13 – They have forsaken God’s command and intermarried.
- 9:14, 15 – They were guilty and deserve far worse than they have received.

In this confessional prayer Ezra addressed God by name 13 times. The names for God always have special significance. The names used in this prayer have a definite personal flavor- “My God,” “Our God,” “God of Israel.” The names he used were variables of the names translated in English as “Lord” and “God.” These names stress the divine qualities of justice and mercy.

Ezra is stunned with the fact that God has been so merciful as to cause Gentile kings to give them total freedom and in response Israel totally disobeyed God's command to the nation. To make matters worse, the leaders and even religious leaders were the worst offenders in this rebellion against the mercy of God.

Lessons Learned

1. When Ezra experienced astonishing victory (their safe arrival in Jerusalem), he was immediately confronted with an impossible situation – the problem of intermarriage. This is a pattern of spiritual living. We should not be surprised when it happens in our lives and ministry. Every victory will be followed with an increasing challenge.
2. Ezra was a true priest. He did not confess "**THEIR** sins," he confessed "**OUR** sins." He did not just complain about the failure of the people. He acknowledged his own weakness and prayed for mercy upon all. This is our ministry. We must be 'one' with our people and seek their restoration, not their punishment.

Chapter 10 – The Foreign Wives Are Put Away

Ezra 10:1 – 4 – Shecaniah Seeks Covenant With God

While Ezra poured out his heart in confession to God, a very large group of Jewish people gathered around him to support him in this most difficult time. Shecaniah, the son of one of the leaders Ezra enlisted to go with him, spoke for the group. He admitted that Israel had been unfaithful, though it is not clear that he was one of the guilty ones. Interestingly, Shecaniah viewed this as a time for hope. Few if any others could see the hope he saw. Ezra does not explain this hope. It appears that the hope is tied to their deciding to cease their disobedience and begin to obey God.

Shecaniah asked Ezra to establish a covenant with God. The terms of the covenant (10:3) would be as follows:

- They would put away the foreign wives and children.
- These divorces would be done according to the law.

Shecaniah was not finished. He challenged Ezra to take the necessary but difficult action. He also did the unusual; he promised to support Ezra in all of these actions.

Observe that this is one more situation in this book where the lay people challenge the powerful to do what is right. This was not because Ezra was reluctant to do this, but one could understand if Shecaniah might think that this was involved. The silence of the other priests and Levites at this point is deafening.

Ezra 10:5 – 8 – Ezra Begins To Take Action About Intermarriage

Bolstered by the support of the large group gathered in support, Ezra began by insisting that the Priests, Levites along with all Israel take the oath of this covenant. Those who were present took the oath. The text does not indicate if any of these people were involved in intermarriage. Ezra was mourning this whole situation. It is highly possible that the use of the word "mourning" means that he was fasting because of it. In 10:6, Ezra indicated that he went to the priestly chambers of Jehohanan. The text, however, does not explain

why he went there. Immediately following this report, however, the proclamation is made to all the returned Jews. The proclamation demanded that all the Jew come to Jerusalem within three days. Failure to gather in Jerusalem would cause forfeiture of all property and being separated from the assembly of Jews. Ezra is going to deal with every Jewish family concerning this serious violation of God's command.

Ezra 10:9 – 15 – Ezra Confronted All Israel

Everyone In Israel knew what this gathering would be all about. A huge number of them would be directly involved in the disobedience and this was an issue that could not be hidden. It would be hard to imagine, but everyone in Israel came within the three day period. This is a crowd of thousands, sitting in the open square in the driving rain of rainy season. In these unfortunate conditions, Ezra confronted all Israel with this very obvious disobedience to the command of God. It is amazing that 'all the assembly' agreed. One must assume that this also includes those involved in intermarriage.

The whole huge assembly understood three things: 1. They must deal with this issue. 2. This was not a thing that could be accomplished in a short period by saying, "we will obey." 3. They could not just sit in the driving rain of rainy season until it was all settled. The people offered a workable solution: 1. They wanted the heads of families to represent all the people. 2. All of the guilty would meet with the elders and judges of their city and arrange for these divorces – being sent away. This is a huge, devastating task. How does one send away their spouse and children? The consequences would be great. The families from which the non-Jewish spouses would be furious. Still, almost all of the guilty agreed that it must be done. There were only four men who disagreed. One of the four was a Levite who knew better than to take such a stand. Could these four have been some of the guilty ones? The text does not say, but one wonders.

Ezra 10:16, 17 – All The Intermarriages Were Dissolved

The exiles not only agreed that this must be done, they carried out the decision that they suggested. In accord with their request, Ezra chose leaders who were the heads of very large families to carry out this action. One must assume that these men whom Ezra chose were not involved in the intermarriage, but the text is silent concerning their involvement. It took two full months for these heads of families to work out the family separations for every guilty family within their city. This means that they dealt with more than two families each day during these two months. This is a huge, and very difficult task, but it was carried out in a most efficient manner. One can only imagine the tension that existed in these communities as one family after another was separated from each other.

We are very careful to note every situation where Israel failed or faltered. This is one situation where Israel did everything they were supposed to do efficiently and in a timely manner. It is amazing that they could accomplish this in only two months.

Ezra 10:18 – 24 – The Temple People Involved In Intermarriage

In these next two paragraphs – 10:18-24 and 10:25-44 – Ezra will list 112 families where there was intermarriage. In this paragraph, he will list the families of men who were Priests, Levites and singers in the temple. In this group there are 32 men who have foreign wives. This is more than one in every three men who are guilty of intermarriage.

The shocking thing about this statistic is that these are people who served in the temple. They know better. They are supposed to be people with a deep and unusual commitment to be obedient to God. That gives one a meaningful view of the spiritual condition of the people who serve in the temple. It is not accidental that Ezra lists these people first.

Ezra 10:25 – 44 – The Common People Involved In Intermarriage

In this paragraph, Ezra identified eight family households in which there were 76 men who had intermarried. This is two out of every three men who were involved in intermarriage. It would be hard to miss the fact that 27 of the men involved in intermarriage came from one family. This is more than one in 3 of the common people involved in intermarriage. This says a lot about the examples that are set in the family.

Lessons Learned

1. When he was confronted with the people's sin in intermarriage, Ezra dealt with the sin directly, but mercifully. Our temptation is to deal with blatant sin in one of two ways:
 - A. We are tempted to pretend it never happened. People will like us much better.
 - B. We are tempted to deal with blatant sin very harshly and judgmentally. We must remember that God is the judge. We must deal with them as God has dealt with us.
2. 27 of the sons of Bani intermarried. This means one third of the common people who intermarried were in one family. We must be extremely careful of the example we leave for our children. They will duplicate both our strengths and our weaknesses.
3. Ezra was direct and honest both before God and the people. Ultimately the problem of intermarriage was solved. We, also, must deal with problems directly and honestly and the presence of mercy will move us in the direction of a solution.
4. Out of all the returnees, 112 men intermarried. This relatively small group of people can create a situation where God will judge the whole community. We have a great impact upon each others lives in the church



4

Inductive Study - Nehemiah 1 - 7

Lesson Purpose

- Students must learn the structure of the book of Nehemiah
- They must learn that leaders must identify with the people – spoke of “our sins” not “your sins.”
- They must discover that service must be bathed in prayer in order to be successful.
- They must know that it is essential to be bold and ready to risk in order to do God’s will.
- They must discover the great importance of informed leadership – Nehemiah checked out the wall before meeting with the people.
- They must learn that political support is valuable, but it is God who moves the people.
- They must learn that leaders must learn to be as obedient as they would like the common people to be.

Lesson Outcome

- They know the structure of Nehemiah
- They have seen the evidence of what happens when leaders identify with the people, even in their sins.
- They have seen the results of service bathed in prayer.
- They have seen beautiful examples of people who boldly took risks to be obedient to God and were victorious.
- They have seen the importance of a leader being well informed as to the issues at hand.
- They have seen what happens when a person trusts in God and not in political power.
- They have seen, repeatedly, how important it is for the leader to be as obedient as he would like his people to be.

As indicated earlier in our study, the book called Nehemiah was probably a part of a single volume which included I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. This single volume was probably penned by Ezra, the Scribe. You will note that though there are first person references to Nehemiah, the writing style is precisely the same as the book of Ezra.

Chapters 1-7 and 11-13 are written in the first person about Nehemiah. Chapters 8-10, however, are the memoirs of Ezra. As previously noted, there are two divisions of Nehemiah as there were in the book of Ezra. Chapters 1-7, though written in the first person dealing with Nehemiah, deal with the reconstruction of the walls. Chapters 8-13 contain memoirs of Ezra and overall deal with the restoration of the people of Israel. There is a strong emphasis on both prayer and courageous leadership that is evident throughout the book.

Nehemiah Chapter 1 – Nehemiah Prayed For Forgiveness And Restoration

Nehemiah 1:1-3 – Nehemiah Received A Discouraging Report

The Author said that these are “the words of Nehemiah.” He did not say that Nehemiah did the writing. As stated above, it appears that Ezra did the writing.

Note that 1:1 claims that this took place in the twentieth year, but does not identify the king in whose reign this took place. Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes all reigned more than 20 years. It is safe to assume that this is Artaxerxes. If that is true, then this took place in 445 B.C.

The text indicates that Nehemiah’s brother, Hanani, came from Israel to visit his brother in the palace. This tells us something of the freedom of the captives in Susa as well as for the freed captives who were in Jerusalem.

In 1:2, he gives us an impression of the concern on the part of the captive Jews in Susa concerning the conditions in Jerusalem. Hanani’s report was in two parts: 1. The people in Jerusalem experienced great distress, which means they had adversity and life was disastrous. They also experienced reproach which means to be disgraced and insulted. Life was most debilitating for them. 2. The city walls were broken down and the gates of the city had been burned. The city had no defenses whatsoever.

Nehemiah 1:4-11 – Nehemiah Prayed For God’s Help

Nehemiah reacted to his brother’s report in four ways: 1. He wept many days. This is deep sorrow. 2. He was in mourning. The word “mourned” is usually saved for reporting the reaction to the demise of a loved one. 3. He fasted – he went without food as an expression of his deep desire and concern. 4. He used the eating time to pray to God.

Nehemiah 1:5-11a, is a report of his prayer. There is a definite design to his prayer. It looks like this: 1. He worshipped God (1:5) 2. He confessed his sins and those of Israel (1:6, 7) 3. He reminded God of the covenant He made with Moses- (1:8,9) 4. He made his petition for God’s intervention as he approached the king.

In 1:5, Nehemiah worshipped God by his description of who God is: He is “the Lord God of heaven.” This name celebrates God’s merciful justice over all creation. He spoke of Jehovah as the “great and awesome God.” This places strong emphasis on the omnipotence of God. He spoke of God as the one who “preserves the covenant.” God is faithful to His word. He is the God who extends “lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments.” He has described God as extending love and intimacy to those who love Him.

In his confession, 1:6,7, Nehemiah did not seek forgiveness for “**THEIR** sins,” but for “**OUR** sins.” As we saw With Ezra, Nehemiah identified with all Israel and acknowledged the sins of all and sought divine forgiveness.

Nehemiah reminded God of His covenant with Moses with good reason. He mentioned the terms of the covenant: "If you are unfaithful I will scatter you..." That is where Israel was at that very moment. The covenant continued, "If you return to Me and keep My commandments...I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause my name to dwell." Nehemiah is asking God to fulfill the last part of that covenant. His petition indicates that he has already decided to take action so that the second part of that covenant will begin to take place.

The closing statement in this chapter is astounding. We learned in chapter one that the cup-bearer to the king was the most trusted individual in the kingdom. Now, a captive of war holds that position.

Reflection

1. If we are disobedient, we should be sure that God will allow us to suffer the consequences of that choice.
2. The fact that we sin and suffer consequences is not our only alternative. If we confess our sin and obey His commandments, God will restore us even though we do not deserve it.
3. Good leadership is never above the people whom they serve. They are servants. They intercede for their people, but carefully identify themselves with the failures as well as the successes of the people.

Nehemiah Chapter 2 – Nehemiah Returns And Initiates Reconstruction

Nehemiah 2:1 – 8 – Nehemiah Given Permission To Return

God had placed Nehemiah in an unusual position enabling him to be useful in what God was doing concerning His people. Nehemiah's concern and sorrow made it possible for the approach to be made without him having to initiate the conversation. This was an important point.

Observe that in 2:4, Nehemiah was asked what he was requesting. He prayed as he answered. It is clear that he knew he must depend upon God to do this impossible thing.

In 2:5, Nehemiah answered the king's question. He asked boldly and at great risk. He asked the king to enable the rebuilding of a city which an earlier king had demolished. Conquered people added to the treasury of the conqueror rather than the conquered asked for the conqueror to pay for the rebuilding of his country. We should carefully note that in this verse he carefully included the fact that the queen was present. In almost every instance, the queen would only be at the throne on very important state occasions. That would make this an awkward time to make such a request of the king. The queen's presence also meant that there was a witness and in such instances the king would not be able to change his mind once he has spoken.

Nehemiah acknowledged, in 2:8, that the king granted these huge requests "because the good hand of my God was upon me."

Nehemiah 2:9 – 16 – Nehemiah Secretly Assessed Wall Damage

The king had sent “Officers of the army and horsemen” for Nehemiah’s protection. The problems of ambush were still a problem as were the enemy officials.

The king had given Nehemiah letters confirming the mission he had sanctioned for Nehemiah. The new governor of Jerusalem had to present these letters to the enemy officials. This is another instance where the city guards were very important.

Observe in verse 11 that Nehemiah was in Jerusalem for three days, but nothing is said about his activities during that time. Though the text is silent, it seems reasonable to believe he was sizing up the entire situation.

In verses 12-16, Nehemiah was going out secretly at night to evaluate the condition of the city walls. In both verse 12 and 16 he emphasized the fact that he did not tell anyone what he had in mind to do. In verse 12, he only took a few men with him on his first trip at night. He apparently did not tell them what he had in mind. The text does not mention if any of this caused any consternation in the city. It is doubtful if the population knew of the nightly trips around the wall. It is possible, however, that the word had gotten out through one of the men Nehemiah initially took with him. It seems certain, however, the enemies of Israel did not know.

Nehemiah 2:17 – 20 – Nehemiah Announced His Plan To Israel

Having completed his evaluation of the condition of the walls, Nehemiah then called the people and officials of the city together and urged them to rebuild the walls. Observe that the reason he gave was, “that we may no longer be a reproach.” Having shared what was on his heart, he then shared all the events that showed how wonderfully God had favored him. Though the text does not say so, it appears that the people and officials whole-heartedly supported Nehemiah’s plan.

It would not be possible to keep this action from the attention of their enemies. When they discovered what was happening, the enemy officials confronted Nehemiah. They accused him falsely of rebelling against the king. |

In the final verse of the chapter, Nehemiah stood up to the enemies of Israel. Observe, however, the authority to which he appealed. He did not remind them of the letter from Artaxerxes which he had shared with them when he arrived. He rather said, “The God of heaven will give us success. He informed them that the Jewish people would do the work and these officials would have no part in it.

Reflection

1. Nehemiah’s deep concern opened the door for him to ask for what he needed. Sometimes our concern over the problem is as important as our actions to find a solution.
2. Things were going well for Nehemiah, but he was very careful to point out that it was the good hand of God that made his mission possible. We may be very active, but it is the good hand of God that moves on behalf of His people.

3. God moved the heart of the king. We sometimes see situations that seem absolutely impossible. God still moves the hearts of those in authority to accomplish His will.
4. Though Nehemiah had visible authority (2:17-20) from the king, still he placed his trust in God. It is good when officials are supportive of what we are doing in the kingdom of God, but we must keep our trust only in God.
5. Good leadership evaluates all aspects of their situation before they announce directions. This they do WITH the people, rather than private declarations.

Nehemiah Chapter Three – Some Reconstruction Projects Completed

Nehemiah 3:1 – 2 – Reconstruction Begins

It is not accidental that the report of the High Priest's reconstruction work is the first to be reported. Throughout the rest of these two books, the religious leaders were always behind the involvement of the common people. It is interesting that twice in verse one the author mentions that the reconstruction work was "consecrated." The word translated "consecrated" means to regard as holy; it is to dedicate to God. This is beautiful, but if you look at the work of the other people reported in this chapter, these are the only two that are mentioned as "consecrated." It is possible that it is understood that every reconstruction task was consecrated. There is no way to confirm this one way of the other.

Nehemiah 3:3 – 5 – Some Repairs Completed

One is immediately struck with the carefully planned division of labor for the project. There is an air of immediacy about the report. He listed the laborers and then the job that they completed. Up to this point, it seemed as though everyone was excited and eager to do the task the officials assigned to them. Verse five changed that impression. The people from Tekoa were assigned to do repairs, but no location is listed. When the author wrote, "their nobles did not support the work of their masters," It was a sudden change in the report. The way the Hebrew text is worded, it appears that the ones called "nobles" (a ruling class, but at a lower level) were unwilling to accept the direction of the ones called "masters" who were the top authorities of the project. In spite of this awkward situation, the men from Tekoa continued with the reconstruction work assigned to them.

Nehemiah 3:6 – 12 – More Completed Repairs

One of the things that surfaces in this chapter is that people from a whole variety of vocational skills were doing the construction work. In 3:1, the priests built the Sheep Gate while in 3:8 the goldsmith was busy doing heavy construction. The perfumer was working alongside the goldsmith.

The officials had leadership responsibilities to perform, but this did not keep them from their assigned construction tasks.

In 3:11, as in some other places, you have two large families assigned to the same repair responsibility. In 3:12, this man apparently had no sons. He therefore worked with his daughters to accomplish their assigned repairs. These are pictures of people finding a way to get the job done no matter what it takes to do it.

Nehemiah 3:13 – Assigned Group Repaired Valley Gate

These people came from Zanoah which was located about 15 miles west of Jerusalem. They not only had to travel this distance many times, but had to live in temporary dwelling places all during this lengthy project. Notice that this is a community project. The name of Hanun is mentioned, but it also says, 'and the inhabitants of Zanoah.' We do not know the size of this group. It must have been large because they repaired the Valley Gate as well as rebuilding 1,500 feet of the wall.

Nehemiah 3:14 – The Refuse Gate Completely Restored

Malchijah was the leader of this group. He was the son of the district official in this very important community just two miles south of Jerusalem. They were assigned to a task very near to their home on the south side of the city. The fact that he was from an important family did not keep him from leading his people to completely restore the Refuse Gate.

Nehemiah 3:15 – 27 – The Reconstruction Moved Ahead

It appears that these groups and their areas of responsibility are recorded one after another as though one was walking around the city. There are 16 groups and responsibilities mentioned in this paragraph. Five of these groups were led by the son of the district official in which they lived. The fact that one came from an important family did not diminish their responsibility to take part in the hard work. Observe also that three groups (3:17, 22, 26) were led by Levites, priests and temple servants. One's position in Israel was not significant when the assignments were made. Note that in 3:27 the Tekoaites were in charge of one section. You may remember that in 3:5, the leaders of the Tekoaites, who lived about six miles south of Bethlehem, did not support the leadership of Israel in the reconstruction. Nevertheless, they were busy caring for their responsibility.

Nehemiah 3:28 – 32 – All Reconstruction Assignments In Action

In the five verses of this paragraph, The author identified seven working groups. In 3:28, the priests were the construction crew. The author pointed out, in 3:30, that two major families undertook the same construction responsibility. The text is silent about the reason for this. There is one possible clue. In this verse the author indicated that one family was led by the "sixth son of Zalaph." This is unusual. The position of family authority was usually given to the first-born son. There are several possibilities here. One possibility is that the other five sons have either died or failed to return to Jerusalem.

Reflection

1. Within the Jewish community, there was very clear delineation of responsibility. In that same community the position of responsibility had a low level of effect upon one's importance in the community.
2. Our menial tasks are holy.
3. In the best administration, religious leaders work alongside common people.

4. Careful planning is as important as the actual work involved. We are doing this for God.
5. Our vocational skills do not restrict what we can do on behalf of God.
6. People who serve need very specific assignments.
7. Leaders can never assume that anything is impossible for God to accomplish through His people.

Nehemiah Chapter Four – Aggressive Enemies Fail To Intimidate

Nehemiah 4:1 – 6 – The Fury Of Israel’s Enemies

We are reminded in 4:1, that confrontation will always follow success. The author used three words to describe Sanballat’s displeasure:

1. Furious – It is the height of being enraged.
2. “Very angry” – This is one of the strongest forms of displeasure. It is to be so angry that scorn is one’s only release.
3. Mocked – It is to scoff or ridicule. It is to speak so as to disparage and degrade the object of one’s scorn.

This man is beside himself; a condition that no leader can permit himself to entertain. His fury is aimed at what he felt was the stupidity of their attempt to rebuild.

In 4:3, Tobiah joined Sanballat in ridiculing the quality of the attempted reconstruction. This would be a very difficult atmosphere in which to dare to serve God.

In 4:4, 5, the author blurted out his prayer of response to this angry ridicule and disparagement. One can understand this outburst, but just how much does it differ from the statement of Sanballat. The prayer the author recorded seeks revenge and asks God to violate His holy nature by refusing to forgive the terrible attack by their enemies. We must be reminded that in the New Testament we are counseled to love our enemies.

In 4:6, the author stressed the fact that they were succeeding despite the worst thing that their enemies could do. The closing statement in the paragraph requires our attention. For the first time in either the book of Ezra and thus far in Nehemiah the credit for success is focused on the people’s “mind to work” rather than the blessing of God upon them. Their attempt to intimidate Israel had failed miserably. The enemies were not about give up, but conspired to increase the pressure on the Jews by military confrontation.

Nehemiah 4:7 – 14 – Enemies Devise New Strategy

In 4:7, 8, the Gentile enemies observed that the reconstruction work continued and they were very angry. Their attempt to intimidate Israel had failed miserably. They were not about to give up. They conspired to increase the pressure on the Jews by military confrontation. Israel’s response in 4:9, 10, was beautiful. They prayed to God and they set up a guard detail. In verse 10, the author frankly admitted that the carriers were tired and the trash was so great that they could not work on the wall. In 4:11, the author quoted the thinking of the enemies of Israel. They were planning a military surprise. This was foiled, however, because Jews who lived in the Gentile areas heard of the plan and shared it with Nehemiah. This is what prompted Nehemiah to begin the guard details as reported in 4:13.

All of these events caused fear and consternation among the workers on the wall. Nehemiah spoke with the local leaders (4:14) and emphasized two things: Remember that the Lord is great and awesome. 2. We must fight to defend our families.

Nehemiah 4:15 – 23 – Plan For Reconstruction And Defense

Nehemiah wisely saw their conflicting needs – the need to continue to rebuild; the need for defense and protection. The plan to work and at the same time be vigilant was effective. The enemies would hope that the completion of the reconstruction could not be accomplished if they focused completely on defense. The failure of the enemies plan to deter reconstruction had to be extremely frustrating to them.

Reflection

1. Good leadership will prepare their people to remember that when God gives victory, confrontation will always intensify.
2. Good leadership will help people to realize that they must depend completely upon God while at the same time working with all their strength to serve Him.

Nehemiah Chapter Five – Nehemiah Dealt With Usury

Nehemiah 5:1 – 5 – The Cry For Justice

It is difficult to focus one's energies on justice when one's life is totally threatened. It does not mean that the frustration with injustice goes away. Once the danger of annihilation becomes manageable, the frustration with injustice will surely come to the surface. That is what happened here. They came to Nehemiah with five valid complaints: 1. They were hungry. 2. The price of grain was beyond their ability to pay. 3. The tax was too high. 4. They had to sell their sons and daughters into slavery in order to survive. 5. The rich had become predator to the poor.

Nehemiah 5:6 -13 – Confrontation With Usurers

Not surprisingly, Nehemiah was very angry. He took the time to carefully consider his response. He confronted the leaders with their evil actions. For the first time, it was out in the open. He pleaded with the guilty to end their usury, which is the act of lending money at a rate of interest that is excessive and unlawful.

The leaders promised to end the usury and to return what they had taken. This was appropriate. Nehemiah called upon God to judge those who failed to keep this promise. This is appropriate for the powerful tend to forget such promises.

Nehemiah 5:14 – 19 – Importance Of A Good Example

It is good to require justice and mercy. It is only effective if accompanied by an appropriate example.

Nehemiah's financial demands upon the treasury were just the opposite of those who served before him. He entertained dignitaries as befitted his position, but he did not allow this to burden the people. It is one thing to do this initially, but he continued to do this for 12 years – 444-432 B.C.

Abruptly, in verse 19, Nehemiah blurted out his petition to God. He wanted God to remember the good deeds that he did. The problem is that he knew that God observes every action.

Reflection

1. Evil will ultimately surface
2. Evil must be confronted, but graciously
3. Only personal example will validate our confrontation with evil
4. Remember, it is God who makes change for good, not us.
5. Justice and mercy are inseparable. We only fulfill our task as Christian leaders as we become the example of both for our people.

Nehemiah Chapter Six – Conspiracies Against Nehemiah Abound

Nehemiah 6:1 – 9 – Sanballat Sets Trap To Kill Nehemiah

Sanballat and the other enemies of Israel discovered that the wall was completed. He, therefore, devised another plan to invite Nehemiah to a meeting, but the real purpose was to kill Nehemiah. They thought their plan failed because of Nehemiah. They felt they could solve the problem by killing Nehemiah. Nehemiah saw through this plan and sent word that he was too busy to attend.

When that plan failed, Sanballat prepared a plan which placed much more pressure on Nehemiah. If Nehemiah refused to meet with them, they would tell the king that Nehemiah was rebelling against him. Nehemiah sent a return message saying that the proposed message was a lie which Sanballat had invented.

In verse nine, Nehemiah indicated that these plans were produced to frighten Israel and thus halt the reconstruction. He pleaded with God to make him strong. He did not ask God to take the problem away.

Nehemiah 6:10 – 14 – Another Attempt To Frighten Nehemiah

This plan is based upon deception. It is intended to convince him that it was for his protection. They wanted him to hide in the temple. The plan was very dangerous. 1. It would give Israel a false impression of Nehemiah as being frightened. 2. You can't lead a defensive military action hidden away in the temple. 3. If he was in the temple, he would be easy to find and kill.

Nehemiah realized that this was contrary to himself and his office. Officials must not flee their people when danger comes. A leader must not think of himself at the expense of his people. In 6:12, Nehemiah realized the crippled man was not sent from God, but hired by Sanballat. (There is no record of Nehemiah punishing

this man) Had Nehemiah given in to this ploy and fear, he felt it would have been a sin and bring reproach upon him and his leadership. The paragraph closes with Nehemiah's prayer to God – remember all our enemies, even the religious ones.

Nehemiah 6:15 – 19 – Conspiracy Uncovered

The wall was completed in 52 days. This is two months. The eight days difference are the Sabbaths on which they could not work. In 6:16, the author recorded the reaction of their enemies – they lost their confidence because it was clear that God had been the help of Israel.

In 6:17-19, Nehemiah reported a conspiracy that had been going on along with all the other events that were reported. There were regular communications between Tobiah and the nobles of Judah. Many of these nobles were under oath to help Tobiah because they were family through intermarriage. These nobles talked with their people about the good things that Tobiah had done. This was to undermine both Nehemiah and his administration. These nobles also reported everything that Nehemiah. Thus, Tobiah could send many threatening letters to Nehemiah. There is no record of any punishment for this treason.\

Reflection

1. It is easy to ask God to take the problem away. It is more beneficial to ask God to make us strong to face it.
2. Real leadership takes courage.
3. A leader must focus on the benefit of those who follow him, not on himself.
4. Our faithfulness will enable the unbelieving and the enemies of God to sense His greatness not ours.
5. There are no depths to which our enemy will not stoop in order to thwart the work of God in our lives.

Nehemiah Chapter Seven – The Census Recounted

Nehemiah 7:1 – 4 – Nehemiah Gives Others Authority

It is important to note that in this brief paragraph, Nehemiah did some very important things: He gave authority to other people. At this point a lesser man would have kept that authority for himself. 2. Note that the people with whom he shared authority were members of his own family. That was most common in his culture as it is in many cultures today. 3. He did not assume that the walls and gates would make the city secure. He therefore established a guard system among the people of the city. People were living in sub-human conditions, still he treated it as though it was a prize.

Nehemiah 7:5 – 7A – God Instructed Nehemiah To Take Census

God did not send a vision; Nehemiah did not hear God speak. Rather, God “put it into my heart.” It is a strong inner feeling that this is what one ought to do. The vision or voice would be more persuasive. The inner feeling that this is what one must do takes more dependence upon God.

In Scripture, most calls for a census were for the purpose of determining military, human strength rather than trusting God. You may remember that this is one place where David failed in his obedience to God. That is not what Nehemiah is dealing with here. Nehemiah does not explain why the census was to be taken. From the context, one might assume that it was marking the beginning of a new phase in this miraculous turn of events.

Nehemiah 7:7B – 38 – Earlier Census Recounted

Please note, the census report in Nehemiah 7:7B-69 is a report of the members who were reported in Ezra 2:1-65. If you compare the report in Ezra and this one in Nehemiah, see appendix, you will note that there are 21 differences (marked by an *) in the 45 entries. In the reports of this particular paragraph there are 16 changes among the 31 reports. It is possible that this is the result of the translation of different manuscripts in both books.

As observed in the study of Ezra, the author has identified the people counted in two ways – 1. There are 23 of the 31 groups identified in this paragraph represent single, major families. 2. The remain eight groups are identified by the cities or areas from which they come. **The locations identified are found in Israel.** It should be noted that these counts represent only the number of men. He accounts for 25,406 men in this paragraph. This means that this paragraph accounts for at least 50,000 or 75,000 people. As you can see, he has not identified the vocation of any of these people.

Nehemiah 7:39 – 45 – The Temple People Numbered

In this brief paragraph, the author has recorded the number of men from four different groups: 1. Priests – 4,289. 2. Levites – 74. 3. Singers – 148. 4. Gatekeepers – 138. This is a total of 4,644 men. This represents between 10,000 and 14,000 when you add their families. The author gives no indication as to why he separated the people in this paragraph from those recorded in 7:7B-38. As pointed out above, all the men mentioned in this paragraph were vocationally identified with temple service. That is the probable reason.

Nehemiah 7:46 – 56 – The Temple Servants Are Identified

In this paragraph, the author has recorded the temple servants as found in 32 major families, but he has not recorded the number of men involved in this report. For these people, the recording of the family name would be much more important than the number of people involved. It is as important to record the temple servant families as it is those who are priests. It took all of these people to run the temple in the way that is appropriate. The author has identified this by the way he has presented this record.

Nehemiah 7:57 – 60 – Solomon’s Servants Who Returned

This paragraph identifies the families of “Solomon’s servants” who were among the returnees. The group known by this name served as forced labor during the reign of king Solomon. These people did hard labor in the stone quarries and did most of the difficult jobs in Solomon’s construction of Jerusalem and the temple. The people listed here are the descendants of those Canaanite workers. They thought of Canaan as much their homeland as the Jews did. They went into captivity along with the Jews and were now

returning to their homeland as well as the menial tasks their forefathers did in the temple of Solomon. Again, they were as essential to the proper use of the temple as the priests and Levites.

Nehemiah 7:61 – 65 – Some More Of The Jews Who Came

In verse 61, the author lists five cities from which returnees had come. All of these cities were located in Babylonia, but all of them have Jewish names. They are as follows:

1. Tel-Melah – This is a city in Babylonia populated by Jewish people.
2. Tel-Harsha – This is a city in Babylonia where the Nethinim temple servants lived.
3. Cherub – This is a city in Babylonia where Jewish people lived. Most of these people were Jewish, but they could not prove their lineage. This usually means that there is a Gentile mother involved and they technically could not be considered Jewish.
4. Addon – This is a city in Babylonia with a Jewish names. It appears that the people of this community were Jewish but could not prove their Jewish ancestry. These cities were located in Babylonia, but the names of the cities are Jewish.
5. Immer – This was a city in Babylonia where priestly families lived. This gives us an idea of just how acclimated these Jewish people were to live in Babylonia.

Granted, these people had lived in captivity a long time. Now, the Jews knew that God had given them the land of Canaan and that they were now free to return to the land God had given them. They also knew that they had become quite accustomed to pagan Babylonia and felt quite at home there. In this verse, the author said, "They could not show their father's houses or their descendants, whether they were of Israel." In most cases, this meant that a Jewish son had married a Gentile wife. In such cases, their seed would not be considered Jewish. Though no number of Jewish returnees was mentioned in verse 61, the next verse clearly states that 642

In verse 63, the author listed the names of three priests – Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai. Notice that he gave special attention to the name Barzillai. In this verse, he gives us specific information about this man. His real name is not Barzillai. He took the name of his wife's father – Barzillai. The text does not explain why he changed his name. The man was a priest, therefore it is clear that he came from a Jewish priestly family. Jewish families were extremely attached to the family name. During the time that most of Israel was in captivity and the temple had been destroyed, being from a priestly family was not a particular benefit. He married a Gentile wife, and in this condition, he could not be a participating priest when the temple was rebuilt. Seeing no real hope of being able to serve in a temple, he may have wholeheartedly joined his wife's family and vocationally did whatever they did. Whatever the case may be, he was not an obedient son of Levi and this is the reason that the author pointed his situation out.

Verse 64 gives further information. These three priests could not validate their heritage. It does not mean that they did not know the name of their father. This almost always means that the man's father had married a Gentile wife. This would mean that Barzillai did not really qualify as a priest though he is addressed in this way. This also gives us information about how lax things had become in Babylonia. Now that these pieces of information were important, again, these men were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood. One suspects that there were quite a few men who were in this situation.

In verse 65, observe the Governor's approach to this situation. He did two things:

- He took a stand for what the Scriptures declared to be right. (he declared them to be unclean as the law required.) This however, was an interim decision. It left room for God to indicate otherwise. Good Christian leadership always leaves room for God to intervene in ways that do not fit our logical reasoning.
- He set the stage for the decision to be validated or overturned by God- by means of the urim and thummim.

In the final verse of this paragraph, the author reported that the governor forbade these men to eat from "the most holy things" because these foods were reserved for the qualified priests. Notice that he said "until a priest arose with urim and Thummim." The Urim and Thummim were stones kept in the ephod – (a vest like garment worn by the High Priest when serving at the altar.) The High Priest used these stones to determine the will of God on important matters. It is important for a leader to be prepared to take the Godly stands even though it may not be understood by some, but is essential to their obedience to God.

Nehemiah 7:66 – 69 – Census Report Of Possessions

In the four verses of this paragraph, the author has given us more details of this census. He indicated the total number of "the whole assembly" as 42,360. He then added the number of male and female servants (7,337) and the 245 male and female singers. The servants were certainly not Jews and they were one servant for every six Jewish people. If these servants served Jews in Babylonia, then you have a high level of economic wealth throughout the captive community. The author does not indicate why he does not include these servants and singers in the total of the "whole assembly." The singers, however, would have to be Jewish.

To complete the census, the author also lists four different kinds of animals:

1. HORSES – 736 – These were animals of value both in war and commerce. They were almost always imported.
2. DONKEYS – 6,720 – This is a short animal (About four feet tall) These animals appear somewhat like a horse. It is used as a work animal carrying heavy loads over long distances.
3. MULES – 245 – This is an offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. Jews were not allowed to crossbreed these animals, but they obviously had some. They were imported at least in the time of David.
4. CAMELS – 435 – These animals are native to hot, desert like areas. They stand over six feet tall and can carry hundreds of pounds over hot, dry areas. Like the collection of gems and precious metals, camels were also a way to maintain and increase wealth.

Nehemiah 7:70 – 72 – Large Special Gifts Were Given

In the four verses of this brief paragraph, the author talked about the gifts the leaders and the people gave for the reconstruction work. The gold and silver weights are recorded in drachmas and minas. The value of these precious metals changes frequently.

In verse 70, the author reported that the Governor contributed about 1,000 drachmas of gold. This, in modern currency would be worth about \$308,000 (U.S.) He also contributed 50 basins and 530 priestly

garments. We have no way to estimate the value of these last two gifts. Needless to say, this is a very large total gift.

In verse 71, the author has recorded the gifts that were given by the heads of different families. The 20,000 gold drachmas. This would be worth about six million dollars today. These families also contributed 2,200 minas of silver which would be worth about \$653,000 in modern currency. We can not give an accurate evaluation of the total value of these gifts, but it is a very large total.

In verse 72, the author reported the gifts of the rest of the people. They gave 20,000 gold drachmas. This would be worth about six million dollars in U.S. currency today. They also contributed 2,000 silver minas which would be worth about \$592,000 in modern U.S. currency. They also contributed 67 priestly garments. Again, we cannot accurately evaluate the values of any of these gifts, but they were very large.

Verse 73 changes the direction of the author's report. Before being carried into captivity, the people of Israel lived in cities all over the land of Canaan. The author is here reporting that by the beginning of the seventh month after their arrival from Persia all of these returnees were spread out again into the communities where their ancestors had lived.

Reflection

1. Seek God's help, but also be watchful.
2. God's work is carefully ordered. We must plan carefully, but always depending upon His guidance..
3. It is as important to seek God's help in the use of what God has provided as it is to seek His help in securing it.
4. There are levels of responsibilities among the people of God, but there must be no levels of importance among these people. God values them equally, we can do no less.
5. Like Israel, God has blessed us abundantly. They expressed their gratitude and praise in several ways, but one was with the gifts that they brought for the reconstruction. We can do no less.



5

Inductive Study - Nehemiah 8 - 12

Lesson Purpose

- Observe the way to change their lives and start over.
- Observe the essentials of good leadership in action
- Be reminded again of God's faithfulness in impossible situations
- Observe the essentials of spiritual growth in action

Lesson Outcome

- They have seen how lives were changed
- They have observed good leadership essentials in practice
- Reminded of God's faithfulness; they have seen it once again
- They have experienced the essentials of spiritual growth

Nehemiah Chapter Eight – The Feast Of Booths Was Celebrated

Nehemiah 7:73B – 8:8 – People Gathered For Reading The Law

The Jewish people who returned, though spread out through Israel, gathered in Jerusalem in the first day of the seventh month. The purpose of the gathering was to hear the law.

Observe that in verse two, this was for all who could listen with understanding. He does not explain this, but he will before the end of the paragraph. The author mentions this again in verse four.

In verse three, the reading was long – from sunrise until noon. Again, he mentioned that the reading was for those who understood, but without explaining what he meant. He also indicated that everyone was very attentive.

In verse four, the author described the scene – Ezra stood on the platform with a podium for the scroll of the law to be placed upon it. He is supported on the right and the left by the leaders of Israel.

In verse five the people stood for the entire time to hear Ezra read from the law. This is respect and awe. Verse six is a picture of their worship – They gave praise to God. They bowed before Him; they humbled themselves. They worshipped with their faces to ground – an expression of acknowledging that God is all powerful.

In verse seven, the leaders of Israel "explained the law to Israel" This indicates that these people were unfamiliar with the law of God. They had not heard the reading and had not been practicing reading or obeying the law. This was foreign information for them.

Verse eight explains the question which has been going through the entire paragraph. Notice that it says, "Translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading." These people could hear the Hebrew reading, but needed someone translate it for them. They had become totally Persian. Granted they had to learn the Persian language and use it with the Persian people, but they could in their homes and fellowships speak and read their Hebrew language. They set that aside to join the Persian culture. We as leaders of God's people must help our people to see that God's people are always pilgrims and strangers in every cultural setting. We will do that best by showing them an example of how that looks in our lives.

Nehemiah 8:9 – 12 – A Mixed Emotion Celebration Followed

We must keep in mind that in 8:2, the author told us that this gathering took place on the first day of the seventh month. Indeed, though some of the Jews did not realize it, this is the time of the year for two celebrations which the Jews should have been observing, but were not. The celebrations are:

1. The Day of Atonement – This took place on the tenth day of the seventh month. It was a time of confession and sacrifices for their sins. That, of course, is what actually took place when the people realized how disobedient they had been and were filled with sorrow.
2. The Feast of Tabernacles – This was a time of reflection on how powerful God had been in delivering Israel from the control of Egypt and watched over them as they travelled through the desert.

Apparently the leaders realized that this was the time for the feasts, though some apparently did not remember. This would move the leaders and Levites to remind them that this was a holy day. At the time of the Feast of Booths, it would be a time of joyful celebration and mourning would not be appropriate. Nevertheless, the people were still weeping.

The Levites finally began to chide the people because they would not cease their mourning and weeping. The people finally went to the places where they were staying while in Jerusalem. Remember, these folks lived all over Israel and they had no house in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 8:13 – 18 – Feast Of Booths Reinstated

The leaders, Priests and Levites met with Ezra to gain insight into the law. We must remember, however, that Ezra was an outstanding Scribe. To have that honor, he had to be able to write the entire first five books of the Bible flawlessly and from memory. This would be a discovery time for all the others, but not for Ezra. He simply used this situation to let the leading people discover for themselves what they were failing to do rather than for him to command them to do so. There is a difference between a leader and a dictator. The people God placed in leadership over His people led God's people in obedience rather than dictating the way people should conduct themselves.

In verse 15, the author reported that when the leadership discovered what they had failed to do, they promptly made arrangements to reinstate this great feast. In verse 16, he indicated that the people were as eager to obey as their leaders had been. It is hard to imagine how crowded Jerusalem was with all Israel living there in booths.

The author indicated that Israel had disobeyed this divine directive since the time of Joshua – a very long time. In the final verse of this brief paragraph, the author indicated that this feast lasted seven days. Each of these days was devoted to careful reading of the Law.

Reflection

1. We must keep in mind that the people of God are always pilgrims and strangers, no matter where they might be.
2. The knowledge of scripture is essential if one would be obedient to God
3. We must learn the difference between a leader and a dictator. God uses leaders, but opposes dictators.

Nehemiah Chapter Nine – Their History In Praise

Nehemiah 9:1 – 4 – The People Confessed Their Sins

As the paragraph begins, the Jewish people have been in Jerusalem for 23 days. Whether spontaneously or by direction, they had prepared for confession: They fasted (show the intensity of their desire). They were dressed in sackcloth and had thrown dirt upon themselves (indicating intense sorrow and remorse.) They had cleansed themselves by separating from all Gentiles. This, in some instances, meant separation between husband and wife. (Cleansing was a part of their preparation for making their sacrifice on the day of atonement.) Repeatedly throughout Scripture, God's people are called to holiness and purity of life. We, as leaders of God's people, must set the example here as well as in every other aspect of life.

In their time of confession, there were two specific concerns to which they directed their attention: 1. They confessed their sins. 2. They confessed the sins of their fathers. This may seem strange. The sins of their fathers would have involved their participation, though by the father's direction. This gives us an idea of the intensity of their confession.

In typical Jewish fashion, their worship was highly organized. The fourth part of a day is about 3 hours. They stood for three hours as Ezra read and interpreted the law. Then they would confess and worship for an additional three hours. The text does not say, but it appears that their confession involved the law that they had heard in the previous three hours. In verse four, the author pointed out that the eight Levites stood on the platform in support of Ezra. While the people confessed their sins, these religious leaders were interceding on their behalf. The text does not explain, but neither the Priests nor the Chief Priest stood on the platform with Ezra.

Nehemiah 9:5 – 8 – God Faithful To Covenant With Abraham

This short paragraph is a brief history of Israel to remind God of His covenant with Abraham to give his sons the land of promise. The paragraph is divided into two parts. Verses five and six are simple praise to God for creation and the affirmation that He alone is God. The second part of the paragraph is a brief report of the relationship between God and Abraham. God chose Abraham and brought him from Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham proved faithful and God covenanted with him to give his seed the entire land of promise. They are praising God for having done that.

Nehemiah 9:9 – 15 – Four Expressions Of God’s Faithfulness

In verses nine and ten, they praised God for his power and faithfulness to deliver from Pharaoh. In verses eleven and twelve, they celebrated God’s faithfulness in delivering them at the Red Sea and protecting and guiding them with the pillar of fire. In verses thirteen and fourteen they celebrated God’s clear provision of the law to guide them in their relationship with Himself. In verse fifteen, they praised God for His provision of manna and bringing them faithfully into the land of promise. Praise is both an intellectual and an emotional response to God’s goodness to us. That is what the author was leading Israel to experience in this paragraph.

Nehemiah 9:16 – 25 – Israel’s Sin And God’s Forgiveness

There are two basic parts to this paragraph of praise. In 9:16-17A the author recited the sins of the people. They were arrogant(9:16). They were stubborn (mentioned twice)(9:16, 17A). They would not listen – mentioned twice (9:16:17A). They did not remember God’s wondrous deeds (9:17A)., They even established a leader to return to captivity of Egypt. 9:17A

The second part of the paragraph is 9:17B-25 which gives us a summary of God’s mercy. In 9:17B and 18, the author described the qualities of character God displayed: Forgiving, gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, Loving kindness, faithful and patient. Imagine what it would be like if God did not have these qualities.

In 9:19-25, he cited instances of divine actions from the Exodus that show who God is:

V 19 – He did not forsake them	22 – Gave them kingdoms
19 – Pillar of cloud to lead them	22 – Took possession of Sihon
19 – Pillar of fire – light the way	23 – they had many sons
20- God’s Spirit instructed them	24 – Brought them to the land
20 –He provided manna	24 – Subdued kingdoms before them
20 – He provided water	25 – Enabled to capture of fortified cities
21 – provided for them 40 years in desert	25 - Gave them great possessions

This is what their praise was all about. It takes time to carefully reflect on the wonderful things God has done on one’s behalf. It is extremely important that we take that time. Israel forgot to do that and the consequences were very severe.

Nehemiah 9:26 – 31 – Israel’s Rebellion In Promised Land

In this paragraph, Ezra continued to review Israel’s history. He presented it in the form of a contrast. This is what Israel did VS this is what God did. It looks like this:

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Ezra and Nehemiah

ISRAEL	GOD
26 - They were disobedient, rebellious, rejected God's law, killed the prophets and blasphemed	27 - God delivered them into the hands of their oppressors
27 - Israel then cried unto God	27 - God heard in compassion and delivered them
28 - Israel did evil again	28 - God abandoned them to their enemies
28 - They cried to God again	28 - God rescued them repeatedly and admonished them to change
29 - They acted arrogantly; they did not listen , but sinned against God's ordinances. They turned stubborn shoulders and stiff necks. They would not listen	29 - God bore patiently with them for many years.
30 - They would not listen	30 - God gave them into the hands of the pagans
	31 - Still God's compassion did not totally destroy them.

You have two pictures here. 1. It is a picture of Israel bent on sinning and only turning to God when the consequences of their actions caught up with them. 2. It is a picture of God using pain to draw people back to Himself and patiently showing compassion when they sinned over and over.

Nehemiah 9:32 - 38 - Seeking Relief, They Wrote A Covenant

This paragraph, like the previous one, presents God's goodness and Israel's flagrant disobedience in juxtaposition to each other. The result is a clear picture of the goodness and power of God along with an equally clear picture of human sinfulness. This picture is the foundation for the covenant they are writing. (by the way, this is one of the only instances where people seek covenant with God.) They want relief. It is like starting all over again. The picture looks like this:

**The CCP Pastoral Training Course
Ezra and Nehemiah**

GOD	ISRAEL
32 – God is great, mighty, keeps covenant and lovingkindness	32 – remembering our hardship
33 – God is just and faithful	33 – we act wickedly
	34 – leaders did not keep law, commandments, admonitions
35 – God gave them a wonderful land	35 – Israel did not serve God
	36 – we are slaves in the land God gave us
	37 – The abundance, others enjoy because of our sin
	38 – We are writing a covenant – starting over

The author explained what lead them to write the covenant, but at this point has not specified the terms of that covenant. Some information will come later.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen repeated presentations describing God’s goodness in the midst of human rejection and failure. We must keep in mind that in Scripture, repetition is the strongest form of emphasis. (see Psalm 136)

Nehemiah Chapter Ten – Covenant Written And Sealed

Nehemiah 10:1 – 27 – Leaders Signed The Sealed Covenant

This sealed covenant with God was signed by at least 84 people. Nehemiah, the governor signed it along with 22 priests, 17 Levites and 44 leaders of the people. It indicates that they were taking this covenant very seriously. This certainly was not a random group of signers. They probably represented the leadership people from every area where the Jewish people lived. The fact that we have all these names helps us to remember that the recording in Scripture is very carefully done and is further evidence that it can be trusted. The people listed provided an example for the all the people of God. That is one of the responsibilities of every leader.

Nehemiah 10:28 – 31 – Opening Terms Of The Covenant

10:28-29 Detail the kinds of people who joined with their leaders in making the covenant with God. In these same verses the author again mentioned the fact that all these people had separated themselves from the Gentiles. This is the author’s way to add increasing emphasis.

This is a very orderly presentation of the content of their covenant with God. Nehemiah 10:29B to the end of the chapter contains the content of the covenant. Verse 29B is a general statement of the content. They took an oath to walk in all God’s law and observe the commandments, ordinances and statutes.

In 10:30 f.f. they become more specific. In verse 30, they promised they would no longer participate in intermarriage with Gentile peoples. In verse 31, they also promised that they would no longer make purchases on the Sabbath or any holy day. In verse 31, they also vowed to let the fields rest in the seventh year, and to use great care concerning the payment of debts. Now, Israel had known about all of these divine instructions, but had ignored them for centuries. Now they have taken an oath to obey these commands.

Nehemiah 10:32, V33 – Vowed To Provide Temple Needs

In verses 32 and 33, they detailed their vow to provide the necessary supplies for temple services. In verse 32, they accepted the obligation to pay the 1/3 shekel for the services of the temple. In verse 33, they detailed some of the things that must be secured to carry out the ministry of the temple.

Nehemiah 10:34 – 39 – Other Gifts Brought To The Temple

Verses 34-37 detail the different kinds of gifts the people should bring to the temple. They cast lots by households to identify the times when each family was to bring wood for the sacrifices. They were required to redeem their first-born. They should also bring the first fruits of the ground and trees, the new wine and oil as well as a tithe of their grain harvest. The fact that they gave from the “first-fruits” indicates that they were giving in faith. They gave from the first-fruits, not the left-overs. They were to bring these gifts to the temple for all those who worked in the temple area.

Reflection

1. Confession always take place against a background of God’s faithfulness.
2. People who are very serious are prepared to covenant with God.
3. Our covenant with God always involves our wallet.
4. Obedience always carefully involves trust in God.

Nehemiah Chapter Eleven – Places Of Residence Assigned

Nehemiah 11:1 – 2 – The Basic Allocation Of Residences

All the leaders of Israel would live in Jerusalem. Of the remaining people of Israel, one out of ten would be chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem. The people of the cities blessed those who **volunteered** to live in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 11:3 – 6 – People Of Judah And Benjamin Living In Jerusalem

As you can see on the map, Benjamin and Judah are located right next to Jerusalem. In these verses, the author identified the families and their numbers – 468 – who would be living in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 11:7-9– Others Living In Jerusalem

In these verses, the author identified the families of Benjamin who would live in Jerusalem – 928 in number. This is almost twice the number as came from Judah. As you can see on the map, the land of Benjamin is not

u8even half the size of the land of Judah and the population was much smaller as well. The author does not explain this situation.

Nehemiah 11:10 – 14 – Priestly Families Living In Jerusalem

In these verses, the author identified the priestly families who were to live in Jerusalem – 1,064. These did not have an area belonging to the tribe of Levi, but came from cities in a variety of tribes, for no land was restricted for the sole use of Levi. There were also 128 outstanding warriors whose tribal background is not identified. One might assume that they came from Judah.

Nehemiah 11:15 – 19 – Levite Families Living In Jerusalem

In these verses, the author identified the families and leaders of the Levites who would be living in the city of Jerusalem. There were 284 of these men.

In verse 19 the author identified the families of the gate keepers who would be living in Jerusalem. There were 172 of these men. Again, this does not indicate whether this includes the wives and children of the men involved. It should be assumed that it does not.

Nehemiah 11:20 – 21 – Pinpointing Residences Outside Jerusalem

In verse 20, the author wrote that the people not previously mentioned were spread out in the cities of Judah. He continued saying that they each had their own inheritance. This does not mean that the only returnees were from Judah, Benjamin and Levi. It does mean that on a temporary basis, at least, they were all staying in Judah where few of the enemies lived.

He continued in verse 21, by indicating that the temple servants lived in three small communities on the east side of the temple mount. They would be very close to the place where they would work.

(Nehemiah 11:22 – 24 – The Leaders Of People Were Identified)

This is a continuation of the listing of those living outside the walls. Uzzi, a Levite, was the overseer of the Levites. He was the overseer of the singers who apparently also lived just east of the temple mount.

This paragraph is a parenthesis in the midst of the lists of where people lived. The author interjects a note about special instructions from the king concerning the care of the singers. The author then identified the fact that Pathahiah, from the tribe of Judah, was responsible for the locating of all the people.

Nehemiah 11:25 – 36 – Some People Of Judah, Benjamin And Levites Assigned

In 11:25-30, the author identified 15 cities and their villages where the people of the tribe of Judah were located. These people were located in the area which was allotted to the tribe of Judah. The first mentioned is Kiriath-arba which is Hebron.

In 11:31-35, the author identified 16 cities and their villages where the people of Benjamin were located. (The villages mentioned here are unprotected, small gatherings of families who provided the food and supplies for those who lived in the secure cities.) These cities are located in the territory assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. The list begins with Geba which is located 10 miles north of the city of Jerusalem.

The wording of verse 36 leaves us with some questions. It appears that the author is saying that some divisions of the Levites who should be living in the territory of Benjamin were placed in areas of Judah.

This chapter reveals some very careful planning on the part of the leadership. Good leadership, however, only works well when there is good following by the rest of the people. One is as essential as the other. Observe that in each paragraph the assignments were made and the people accepted them

Reflection

1. God's plans are always in an orderly manner.
2. Good leadership works well when there is equally good following.
3. Poor leadership is a greater problem if there is good following.

Nehemiah Chapter Twelve – The Wall Completed And Dedicated

Nehemiah 12:1 – 7 – Listing-Priests Who Returned With Zerubbabel

In the four paragraphs, 12:1-26, the author identified the people involved in temple service who came with Zerubbabel. In 12:1-7, he listed 23 priestly families who came with Zerubbabel. The people mentioned here held leadership positions within the Levite community. Other Levites were under the direction of those mentioned here.

Notice in verse seven, the author mentioned "and their brothers." In the culture of that day, and in that part of the world today, leaders chose members of their own families to hold second level leadership positions. This is because family members were bound to be supportive of their brother who was the leader.

Nehemiah 12:8 – 11 – Levites Who Returned With Zerubbabel

There are two parts of this paragraph – 12:8, 9, present a list of eight Levites and families who came with Zerubbabel. In verses 10, 11, however, he changed his way of reporting. He identified one priestly family mentioned in verse eight – Jeshua. He then identified the names of five of his lineage who were born to his son and his son's sons. The other members of the family of Jeshua were, apparently, born after the return to Israel.

Nehemiah 12:12 – 21 – Priestly Families Who Returned With Zerubbabel

In This paragraph, the author has reported 19 priestly families who were part of the return with Zerubbabel. One of the important factors here is that this report is totally verifiable; it can be traced.

Nehemiah 12:22 – 26 – Priests, Levites And Gatekeepers Who Returned

This is a record of four major priestly families; three major Levite families and six major families of gatekeepers. Again, it is comforting to note the great care with which the author recorded each family. This speaks well for the accuracy of the record. It is interesting to note that in the same paragraph of the report he included both priests and gatekeepers. There is a great difference in their responsibilities, but not in their mutual importance in the community.

Nehemiah 12:27 – 30 – Preparing To Dedicate The Wall

The Levitical families lived throughout the area. They would come to Jerusalem when it was their time to serve. It was now time to dedicate the wall of Jerusalem which the people had built. For this great occasion, all the families gathered in a gigantic chorus in Jerusalem to present a joyful musical service as they dedicated the wall to God, for this was His city.

Nehemiah 12:31 – 37 – Levitical Families Divided Into Two Choirs

Nehemiah divided the Levitical families into two great families. This paragraph describes how one of these choirs went to the top of the wall and walked toward the City of David. He also indicated that some of the officials accompanied the choir as they walked along the wall in preparation for the service. (It is interesting that he did not indicate where this procession began) The choirs standing on top of the wall to conduct the service of dedication gives us an insight into what they were doing. There were two audiences for this holy service of dedication. One audience was the Jewish people who had gathered for the celebration. The second audience was the enemies of Israel who lived outside the wall of the city.

Nehemiah 12:38 – 43 – The Second Choir Processed On The Wall

This paragraph deals with the second choir. They also are on top of the wall and proceeded to the left, which is apparently the east side of the city. According to the text, this was a procession that ended in the temple itself. Did they sing while on the wall? I suspect so, but the text is silent on this issue. Part of the purpose of this procession on top of the wall was to announce to their enemies that God had helped them complete the wall.

In verse 41, the author identified seven priests who played the trumpets. This is unusual. Most of the time, the priests are not involved in temple music.

In verse 42, the author lists the names of eight men, probably heads of families, who along with Jezrahiah and his singers were involved in the singing on the wall and in the service of worship which took place in the temple.

In verse 43, the author attempted to describe the intensity by adding that even the women and the children joined in the rejoicing. This was not usually the case.

Nehemiah 12:44 – 47 – Financial Responsibility Reinstated.

The temple service had been carefully supported and the funds administered in the time of David. Since that time and particularly during the captivity, that responsibility was abandoned. Now, Nehemiah is reinstating the exact same rules and administration. Observe, the funds did not all go to one person, but several individuals were charged with the responsibility of seeing that the funds and goods were properly dispersed and no one was overlooked. As Christian leaders, we must be alert to the fact that sound financial accountability is essential if our service and praise are to be acceptable to God.

Reflection

1. There is no alternative to financial accountability. here was careful attention to the recording the valuable things that were sent back to Israel as well as an accounting when they arrived. The notable negative example of poor accountability was Judas.
2. It is as important to give God praise as it is to seek His help.

Nehemiah Chapter Thirteen – Nehemiah Corrected Evil Situations

Nehemiah 13:1 – 3 – All Foreigners Excluded From Israel

These people, though they had the law, were not accustomed to reading the law. We are quite sure that they did not know the language in which it was written. As they heard the law read aloud, they discovered that Ammonites and Moabites were forbidden to enter “the assembly of God.” This was news to them.

The reason for this prohibition was because when Israel returned from Egypt, these nations did not help them by providing bread, water and passage for them, but hired the prophet Balaam to curse them.

When these Jews heard this message from the Law, they immediately excluded all foreigners from Israel. This means that there were foreigners present. These were probably husbands and wives that should not have been married in the first place, if the parents had known about this law.

Nehemiah 13:4 – 9 – Tobiah Ejected From Temple Dwelling

There are two men by the name of “Tobiah” in Ezra and Nehemiah. In Ezra 2:60 a man named “Tobiah” was mentioned with six other families who could not prove their lineage, that they were “of Israel.” In Nehemiah 2:10, a man named “Tobiah” was identified as an Ammonite official who had caused serious trouble for the Jews in Jerusalem. Our text does not identify which of these two men is being mentioned in this case. One would assume that it is the one mentioned in Ezra. Whichever it is, neither one would qualify to stay in the temple. The text, however, indicates that Eliashib was a priest and also a relative of Tobiah. This means that Eliashib was also unable to demonstrate that he was a member of the tribe of Levi in order to become a priest and should not have held that position.

Though Tobiah was not able to demonstrate his lineage, still he was allowed to dwell in the temple which was only permissible for those who were priests. Either those in charge of the temple did not know that only a priest could stay on the premises of the temple, or they paid no attention to a rule that should have been well known to Eliashib and all the other priests.

Nehemiah 13:10 – 14 – The Tithes Restored; The Temple Workers Returned

When Nehemiah returned from Persia, he surveyed conditions in Jerusalem. He discovered that the people working in the temple were not paid. They had left their temple responsibilities to go home to support themselves and their families.

Nehemiah confronted those responsible for this work. The text does not indicate what happened to the persons who had failed their responsibilities. In verse 11, he indicated that Nehemiah gathered the temple workers to their posts. In verse 12 he indicated that when he gathered the temple workers to their appointed tasks, the people brought the required tithes needed to pay these temple workers. Verse 13 identifies the reliable people into whose hands he had placed the responsibilities for the conduct of the temple services. These are not the same people whom he confronted in verse 11. There are consequences when those in leadership positions fail to do their task in the way it should be done. Observe that as a leader, Nehemiah insisted that there be a system of accountability in terms of financial matters. This had not been done and it led to abuse. Nehemiah solved this problem by establish a line of accountability.

Verse 14 appears to be a brief, spontaneous prayer. Everything that could go wrong seems to have done so. He had now done the right thing in the right way and was reminding God that at least his efforts to clean up these wrongs were conducted properly. Every leader will have days like this.

Nehemiah 13:15 – 18 – Abandoning The Sabbath Confronted

Israel had been captives in Persia for decades. During that time, they had become part of the Persian culture. Most of them no longer spoke or understood Hebrew. Indeed, they had to have someone interpret when the Law was read. They had forsaken the Law requiring the tithe. Again, we do not know if these people either did not know the Law regarding the Sabbath, or if they had abandoned it as unimportant in their lives. Clearly, however, they violated the law. They performed work on the Sabbath. They were treading the winepress; loading burdens on their donkeys; they brought food to sell into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Other Jews purchased these goods from them on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah was the Governor. He confronted the Jews who violated the Law of God. He identified their actions as evil and of profaning the Sabbath. He reminded them that their ancestors had done exactly the same thing and that this accounted for the fact that they were captives in their own land. Every leader must confront the evils with which their people were willing to live.

Nehemiah 13:19 -22 – Merchants Attempt To Circumvent Sabbath Enforcing

The merchants mentioned here were Jews. They knew that their efforts to find a way to sell on the Sabbath were disobedient to God's law. This did not hinder them. They stayed just outside the wall in the hope that the buyers would come out and buy their wares.

Nehemiah knew what they had done and made the necessary arrangements to prohibit the continued violation of the Law. He promised to use force to remove the merchants from outside the wall. He ordered the city gates closed for the entirety of the Sabbath. He ordered the gate keepers to be present to insure that his order of gate closing was strictly enforced. The natural human inclination is to find a way to circumvent divine rules that inhibit our ways. The leader must confront the evil attempts to circumvent the law of God in order to practice their disobedience. People in leadership are responsible to not only make the rules that enable obedience to God; they must also see to it that these rules are enforced. Such efforts are often unpopular, but it is still the leaders responsibility to carry out God's will.

The frustration we observed in verse 14 is present again in verse 22. Some think of these two prayers as Nehemiah's boasting. It appears that he is responsible to move the people to obey God and his sincere efforts are frustrated by their unwillingness to be obedient. He is asking God to remember that he was trying to do right, but that the people were unwilling to do so.

Observe that Nehemiah sought to correct one evil at a time, but he did challenge each area of disobedience, one at a time. Note also that when he reminded them of their disobedience he pointed to a similar situation in their Scriptures.

Nehemiah 13:23 – 27 – Nehemiah Confronted Their Intermarriage

Upon his return, Nehemiah also discovered that Jewish people had intermarried with women from Ashdod, Moab and Ammon. This, however, was not a recent event. He mentioned that the children were no longer taught the Hebrew language, but spoke the language of their mothers. This means that it had been going on for years.

Nehemiah's confrontation with this evil was the same as he had with the violation of the Sabbath. He confronted the people with their error. He even used physical punishment. He reminded them of how God punished Solomon for the same evil. He even expressed great shock to realize that they committed this sin when they knew exactly how God would punish those who refused to obey.

In this chapter you see a leader confronted with several very difficult situations that required his serious attention. Only by experience do we realize that the difficulties we face are a means whereby the power of God becomes clearly visible.

Nehemiah 13:28 – 31 – Nehemiah's Closing Prayer

This paragraph is basically the prayer of a servant of God who was experiencing shock and dismay. He knew the Law and was responsible to lead the people in obedience to that Law. That had not happened. He tried to bring about obedience, but Israel's disobedience was painfully obvious. His prayer was like saying, "I know we have been really disobedient, but I am taking steps to correct that failure, and it isn't going that well, that quickly."

In this paragraph there is a second theme that fits in with his prayer. He learned that members of the priesthood

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Ezra and Nehemiah

were also guilty of intermarriage. The priests were the spiritual leaders of the people and are required to be an example of obedience. That is just the opposite of what happened. When Nehemiah discovered this, he distanced himself from these priests. There is a common error that is sometimes evident among Christian leaders. Some feel that as Christian leaders, they are important people and live by a different standard than the rest of the people of God. There are not two groups of people within the family of God. Every person is important and every individual, regardless of their position, is required to be obedient to the will of God. This will not be popular, but it will be important in their relationship with God.

Observe that each of these confrontations came about after the Law had been read to all the people. We need to know the scriptures if we are to know God's will for our lives and the fellowship.

Reflection

1. There are consequences when leaders fail to do the task they were to perform.
2. When there is no financial accountability, abuse is certain to follow.
3. Because culture invariably becomes sinful, God's people, if obedient, will always be in conflict with that culture.
4. A good leader will confront each form of disobedience, but in an orderly fashion. He will have integrity, but also mercy.



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Spiritual Gifts

~ Randy Spacht



1

Spiritual Gifts

Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the function of the spiritual gifts in fulfilling the ministry of Christ today through the church, the Body of Christ.

Lesson outcomes:

- Students will be able to identify the purpose of the spiritual gifts in the church.
- Students will be able to identify the role of the Holy Spirit in giving the gifts and generally understand the nature of the spirit-filled life.
- Students will know the three main lists of gifts and will understand the difference between the three lists.

Table of Contents:

- General Principles
- The Spirit-filled life
- Lists of gifts
- Questions for discussion

General Principles:

The Apostle Luke wrote two books of the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts 1:1 he says, *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.* Because he says the first narrative, The Gospel of Luke, is about what Jesus *began* to do and teach, we can believe that the book of Acts is about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach.

But Jesus doesn't appear physically in the Book of Acts *doing* and *teaching*. Instead His disciples *do* and *teach*. This teaches us that today the church, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12; 5:30; Col 1:18), carries on Jesus' ministry on the earth.

In each of the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament, the primary image presented to explain the gifts is that of the body. God gives gifts to the Church, the Body. But the only way God can give the Church gifts is through the individual members of the Church. This is very important to understand. God gives gifts to the

Church through the various members of the Church. He does not want us to use those gifts outside of the ministry of the church. We are to use those gifts *for* and *through* the ministry of the church. Each Christian must recognize that God gives gifts to the Church through them, and they should not use that gift for their own benefit or gain.

Every Christian has a spiritual gift. I Cor. 12:7 says,

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

I Peter 4:10 – 11 says,

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

These verses don't say *if* we have received a gift; rather they say each Christian has received from the Holy Spirit a gift, even though he or she may not realize it. It is the responsibility of each Christian to discover his or her gift, then to use it for the good of the Church.

The fact that God has given you a spiritual gift does not make you superior to other Christians. I Cor. 1:7 says **"Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed"**. The Corinthian church had spiritual gifts and they used them in the church. But in 1 Cor. 3:1, Paul called that very same church a "carnal church." We must learn as Christians to use our gifts well, to support each other and not to advance ourselves.

We cannot choose which gift God gives us. If we could, we might all choose the gift of leadership or of pastor. Rather God gives the church exactly the gifts that the church needs. 1 Cor. 12:11 says, **"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines"**. We are given different gifts, but we are called to work together, as our body has many different parts, but they all work together. I Cor. 12:15 -20 says,

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

In this passage we learn that there's no one gift that every Christian must have. Nor does any one Christian have all of the gifts. We might think that the pastor of a church would do all the ministry of that church, but we would be wrong. The church works best when each member performs its own function, just like the members of our bodies perform different functions.

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Spiritual Gifts

The Christian is called to imitate Christ. The gifts are given to the church through individual Christians to allow the church, the Body of Christ, to fulfill Christ's ministry today. God wants us to become Christ-like (John 13:12-15; Gal 4:19-20; Rom 8:28-29; 1 John 2:6; and many other passages). But through God's grace, this is not simply a goal that we can never reach. God has given us the Holy Spirit so we can become like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet 1:3-4; Rom 8:10-11, 13). The Holy Spirit produces in us the character of Christ through the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit produces the mind of Christ in us through the sword of the Spirit (Eph 4:20-24; 6:17). The Holy Spirit produces the ministry of Christ in us through the gifts of the Spirit (Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:8-10).

Since the gifts are the primary means whereby Christ's ministry is fulfilled in the world today, we must also recognize that the gifts are the primary means whereby Christ brings the world of lost people to reconciliation. We cannot plant churches without Christ's gifts. The gifts are necessary for church planting. God gives gifts to the church so that it can grow and reproduce.

The Spirit-filled Life

One reason the church does not grow is that we have not allowed the Holy Spirit to completely fill us and allow us to grow Christ-like. We must allow the Spirit to fill us and change our character with the fruit of the Spirit. We must allow the Spirit to fill us and change our minds through His word. And we must allow His Spirit to fill us and prepare us for ministry through His gifts.

And so, the gifts of the Spirit must be used in the context of a Spirit-filled life. There are three errors we should know and reject:

- That we must speak in tongues in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is wrong. Although there are three times in the book of Acts that the disciples spoke in tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6), there are many times in which the disciples did not speak in tongues. In the rest of the New Testament, whenever we are told to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we are never told to speak in tongues.
- That at salvation one receives Jesus (as Savior) and later one receives the Holy Spirit. Again, although this appears true in Acts 8:16; 10:44-46; and 19:6, it is not taught to be the norm in the New Testament. In these three cases, it appears that the coming of the Spirit is shown so the apostles know that salvation is for the Jews (2:1-4), the Samaritans (8:16) and the Gentiles (10:44-46). The final case shows that it is the norm to receive the Holy Spirit at salvation (19:6). Titus 3:5-6 says, **"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."** The Spirit is present from our salvation to wash and renew us.
- That the Spirit is not a person, but a "power." There are several places in scripture where the Spirit is referred to as God (Mt 28:19; 2 Cor. 12:14; Tit 3:4-6). Scripture teaches us that we receive the Holy Spirit at salvation (Tit 3:5-6). If we continue to live in sin as Christians, this makes God's Spirit in us sad (1 Cor. 2:10-3:3). The Spirit works in us to cause us to desire to live a life without sin (James 4:5). So we should allow the Spirit to fill us, and change our character, our mind and our ministry.

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Lists of Gifts

In this lesson we will learn more about the gifts of the Spirit. There are three lists in the New Testament:

Romans 12:6-8

Prophecy
Serving
Teaching
Encouraging
Giving
Leading
Showing mercy

Ephesians 4:11-12

Apostles
Prophets
Evangelists
Pastors
Teachers

1 Cor. 12:8-10

Word of wisdom
Word of knowledge
Faith
Gift of healing
Effecting of miracles
Prophecy
Distinguishing of spirits
Kinds of tongues
Interpretation of tongues

These three lists treat different types of gifts. The list in Romans 12 is called a list of “functions” (12:4) and uses action words. The list in Ephesians 4 is called a list of “ministries” (4:12) and identifies church leaders. The list in 1 Cor. 12 is called a list of “manifestations” (12:7) and refer to miraculous events.

In 1 Cor. 12:4-6, this classification is emphasized. Now there are diversities of gifts (Rom 12:6), but the same Spirit, and there are differences of ministries (Eph 4:11), but the same Lord... And there are diversities of operation (1Cor. 12:8-10) but the same God.

In the introduction of each list there seems to be a different use of that list. The list in Romans 12 presents gifts that every Christian may have. Romans 12:6 indicates that every Christian has one of the gifts listed in Romans 12. These gifts are permanent in the life of the Christian.

The list in Eph 4:11 presents the gifts that God gave to men (Eph 4:8). The men are leaders who God gave to the church for the church’s growth. These gifts are long-lasting but not permanent. They may change.

The list in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 presents miraculous manifestations of God’s presence and power (12:7) which the Spirit gives to whom He wishes, when He wishes (12:11). These gifts are given for specific situations and may not be claimed as a permanent gift, though God may choose to send a manifestation to an individual more than once.

Because of this, it seems wise to encourage Christians to identify the “functions” which they possess (Rom 12:6-8). He should accept the ministries that God has given him (Eph 4:11) as the church recognizes his leadership (as in 1 Tim 4:14 and 2 Tim 1:6). The Christian should recognize that the ministry given him should be exercised only as the church recognizes God’s gift in him. The Christian should then exercise those “manifestations” (16:12) that God gives. Specific manifestations should not be pursued, but identifying and exercising one or more “functions” is encouraged (1 Cor. 12:31 and 4:1).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Describe ways in your church in which the different members work together for the church's growth.
2. What can you do to help the Holy Spirit form Christ's character in you? What can you do to help the Holy Spirit form Christ's mind in you? What can you do to help the Holy Spirit form Christ's ministry in you?
3. In John 14:12-14, Jesus says, **"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"**. In what sense can we do "greater works" than Jesus? How do spiritual gifts allow us to do "greater works" than Jesus' works?
4. What are some ways in which we can explain and understand the Spirit-filled life?
5. As you have seen people come to the Lord Jesus have you observed them become aware of sin in their lives? Have you been aware of the Holy Spirit speaking to them and calling them to a holy life? When and how has this happened in your church? How would a Spirit-filled life resolve this?



2

Functions

Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the purpose and definitions of the gifts listed in Romans 12.

Lesson Outcomes:

- Students will be able to define each of the seven gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8.
- Students will be able to identify each of the gifts in Romans 12 in the life of Jesus and in the early church as recorded in the book of Acts.

Table of Contents

- The functions
- The definition of the functions
- Questions for discussion

The functions

The “functions” in Romans 12:6-8 are:

Prophesying
Serving
Teaching
Encouraging
Giving
Leading
Showing mercy

For each gift, in this lesson, we will examine scripture to see what it says about the gift. We will try to summarize what we discover in the New Testament. Since the gifts help us perform Jesus’ ministry in the world, we will try to identify that function in Jesus. Then we will search for an example of the gift from the book of Acts. And finally, we will see that the New Testament actually tells us to do each of these functions. We are commended to do all of them but one. But when we discover which of these is our own gift, we’ll discover that God works through that gift in a powerful way.

Just before this list, Paul says,

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. Romans 12:3 – 6

This is the only list of gifts that uses the word for gift. They are also called “functions” of the body. In this context, Paul plainly says that each Christian has one of these gifts. We should discover that gift by considering our self “with sober judgment.”

Definitions of the Functions

Scripture defines them as follows:

Prophesying

- John the Baptist is called a prophet (Mt 11:9), Mt 14:3-5 says, **“Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet”.**

1 Cor 14:24 also says, **“But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all...”**

From this we gather that prophesying is the ability to use scripture to reveal sin.

- Acts 15:32 says, **“Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers”.** And 1 Cor. 14:3 says, **“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort”.**

From this we gather that prophets are frequently preachers, and when they preach, the church is encouraged, strengthened and consoled.

- 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, **“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.**

From this we gather that the prophet frequently preaches, but should always take care that his interpretation of scripture is confirmed by other leaders in the church.

In conclusion, the prophet speaks publically and privately to men and women. They exhort and edify believers, and convict unbelievers of the sin in their heart so that they may become believers. Prophecy is frequently a good way to evangelize.

Jesus was called a prophet in Luke 24:19. In the book of Acts, Judas and Silas were prophets (Act 15:32) and exercised the gift through public speaking. Paul says he would like all believers to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1).

Serving

- Luke 22:26-27 says, **“But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves”.**

From this we learn that Jesus identified himself as a servant, and he cared for the disciples’ physical needs.

- Acts 6:1-6 says, **“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them”.**

From this we learn how important it is to know our gift and allow people to use their gifts. The apostles were trying to serve the church, but they made mistakes. Their gift was preaching – the gift of prophecy (Acts 6:2, 4). So they appointed seven men with the gift of service to “wait on tables” (6:2) and serve the widows well.

In conclusion, the gift of service demonstrates Jesus’ love by meeting the physical needs of those around us. Jesus calls himself a servant frequently (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27; Jn 3:5). In Acts, Stephen was an excellent model of a servant (Acts 6:1-4) who also preached (Act 6). We are commanded to serve each other in Gal 5:13.

Teaching

- Acts 18:24 – 28 says, **“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ”.**

Priscilla and Aquila had the gift of teaching, and they “explained the way of God more accurately” to Apollos. From this we gather that the teacher understands, organizes and presents God’s Word accurately.

- 2 Tim 3:14-17 says, **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.**

From this we learn that the teacher investigates scripture carefully and then instructs others.

In conclusion, teaching is the ability to investigate, clarify and communicate biblical truth. Jesus was known as a teacher that none compared with (Mt 7:28-29). In the book of Acts, Priscilla and Aquila were teachers (Acts 18:24-26) who explained the way of God carefully. The Great Commission calls all of us to teach as we spread God’s Word (Mt 28:20).

Encouraging

- The Greek word for “encouraging” literally means “to stand beside someone.” It was used to describe a lawyer, who stands beside someone in a court of law. It was used to describe a mourner, who stands beside someone who has lost a loved one. It was used to describe a counselor who stands beside someone to encourage him. The Holy Spirit is called “the counselor.” (Jn 14:16).
- Acts 11:23 says, **“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts”.**

From this we learn that encouragement helps believers remain true to the Lord. See also 1 Thes. 3:2. In conclusion, encouragement is the ability to stand beside someone to encourage them to a deeper faith and more biblical actions. Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit “another Counselor” (Jn 14:16). This means that Jesus saw himself as the first Counselor or encourager of the disciples. The book of Acts says that a man named Joseph was such an encourager that the church called him “the son of Encouragement,” Barnabas (Acts 4:36). Later in Acts his ministry is called an encouragement to the believers (Acts 11:23; 14:22). We are commanded to encourage each other (1 Thess 4:18; 5:11; Heb 3:13).

Giving

- John the Baptist told us, **“The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same”** (Lk 3:11). The one who gives has a desire to meet real needs of others.
- Eph 4:28 says, **“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”** Again, the one who gives will give from his own resources – the work of his own hand.

- 1 Thess 2:8 says, **“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us”**. Sometimes the one who gives is willing to give all that he has.

In conclusion, the one who gives has been blessed by God with enough goods to share with his friends and neighbors. He selflessly gives his earthly possessions and earnings so God’s church can grow.

Jesus gave all that He had for His disciples (Lk 22:19). In the book of Acts, many brothers and sisters, including Barnabas, gave to support the church and the needy in the church (Acts 4:34-37). We are commanded to share with the brothers who are in need (Rom 12:13).

Leading

- Paul talks of those who lead the church. **“Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you”** (1 Thess 5:12). **“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect”** (1 Tim 3:4-5). **“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching”** (1 Tim 5:17).

Here we learn that leaders manage the church and their own home. They are to be honored and respected.

- When Paul speaks to the leaders of the church in Ephesus, he says, **“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock”** (Acts 20:28-29). The leader of the church is a shepherd who cares for his flock, protects his flock, and directs his flock.

In conclusion, leading is the ability to coordinate many activities in the church to pursue a goal. The leader sees the goal, helps others see the steps needed to accomplish the goal and coordinates the church’s activity to accomplish the goal. Jesus led the apostles as he sent them out with clear instructions (Mark 6:7-13). In the book of Acts, Paul led the activity of his missionary team (Acts 16:6-10) but only as God led him. We are not all commanded to lead.

Showing Mercy

- The Greek word for showing mercy means sharing God’s compassion on others. It is the gift of friendship. The gift of mercy is the ability to identify with and befriend those around us, to win them into God’s kingdom.

Jesus saw Mary’s sadness at Lazarus’ death and showed compassion by weeping (Jn 11:32-35). In the book of Acts, a woman named Tabitha showed compassion for the widows in Joppa.

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter

was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them" (Acts 9:36-39). We are commanded to "put on compassion" in dealing with each other (Col 3:12).

Questions For Discussion:

1. You have seen descriptions of the "functions," the list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8. Which of these gifts do you think God has given you? Why? Which characteristics of this gift do you have? How do you use your gift?
2. Identify one of the other church planters you are training with. Which of these gifts do you think God has given him? Why? Which characteristics of this gift does he have? How do you think he should use his gift?



3

Ministries

Lesson purpose:

- To understand the purpose and definitions of the ministries listed in Ephesians 4.

Lesson outcomes:

- Students will be able to define each of the five ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11.
- Students will be able to identify each of the gifts in Ephesians 4 in the life of Jesus and in the early church as recorded in the book of Acts.
- Students will recognize the seven essential roles of the ministries of the church.
- Students will understand the importance of the church's recognition and authorization of the use of ministry gifts in the church.

Table of Contents:

- The ministries
- Definitions of ministries
- Summary of essential ministries in the church
- Secondary ministries
- The authority of the church in recognizing ministries
- Questions for discussion

The Ministries:

The ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11 are:

Apostles
Prophets
Evangelists
Pastors
Teachers

Again, we will look at scripture to discover what it says about each ministry in turn. We will summarize what we find in the New Testament. Since these ministries extend Jesus' ministry in the world, we will attempt to discover that ministry in Jesus. Then we will look for a further example of that ministry from the book of Acts.

It is interesting to notice that this list is a list of church leaders. Ephesians 4:11 – 13 says

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

According to this passage, the purpose of the leaders God places in the church is to help the church prepare to do the ministry (works of service), and that when the body of Christ works together, the result is that we reach unity in faith and unity in the knowledge of Christ, and then we become a mature church. The leaders of the church are not the primary means that God has for doing His work in the world. Instead, the leaders of the church prepare the rest of the church to accomplish God's work.

Definitions of Ministries

Apostle

The apostle has three roles:

1. Missionary or church planter – the word "apostol" in Greek means one who is sent out with a mission. Matthew 10:2 says, **"Jesus sent out these 12 after giving them instructions."** Their mission was to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. Likewise Paul and Barnabas were apostols (Acts 14:14) because in Acts 13:2-5, **"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper".** Jesus was the first person that the Father sent out in this way. **"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" (Jn 20:21).** See Heb 3:1. **"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."**
2. Theological guardian – the apostol is also called to guard God's church against theological heresy. In this sense, Jesus was an apostol (Gal 1:19). In Acts 15, James spoke to protect the entire church from the heresy of the Judaizers (Acts 15:12-21). Because of this it was important that the apostle originally was an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:21-26; 1 Cor. 9:1). This is what Jesus does when He warns the disciples against the theological teaching of the Pharisees (Mk 8:14-15).
3. Caring pastor – the apostol is also a loving pastor who cares for the flock and preaches to see it grow. The apostles preached evangelistically (Acts 2:39-40) and then oversaw the well-being of that new church being formed. **"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere**

hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41-47). In the same way, Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd of His sheep (Jn 10:11).

Prophet

The prophet is called by God to proclaim God’s Word (Acts 15:32). This is very similar to the function of prophecy, but not everyone in the ministry of prophet necessarily has the function of prophecy. When John the Baptist was a child, his father Zechariah predicted he would be a prophet, **“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins”** (Lk 1:76-77). Jesus was recognized as a prophet (Mt 21:11) Lk 24:19).

Evangelist

The evangelist evangelizes – shares the good news of God’s salvation to the world. Philip is the only person in the Bible who is called an evangelist (Acts 21:8). In Acts 8, Philip evangelized through abundantly sewing the gospel by speaking to large groups:

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ {5 Or <Messiah>} there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. (Acts 8:5-6).

He evangelized one-on-one with the Ethiopian.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road-- the desert road-- that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:26-39).

And finally Philip evangelized village-by-village (Acts 8:40). Jesus, too, spread the gospel (Mk 1:14-15). We are all called to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).

PASTOR

The pastor has three roles he plays in the church:

1. Theological guardian – just like the Apostol, the pastor is called to guard his flock against theological error. Paul called the pastors together in Ephesus to address them before he left for Jerusalem. He told them, **“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears”** (Acts 20:28-31).
2. Caring pastor – in that same passage, Paul calls the pastors to “shepherd the church of God.”
3. Leader – And, again, in that passage, Paul calls the pastors to “oversee.” This means to lead the church’s activities. When Paul tells Timothy how to identify a pastor, he tells him that the pastor must “manage his own household well” so he can manage the church well (1 Tim 3:4-5).

Summary of essential roles in the church

We can summarize the basic roles of leaders in the church in the following diagram.



Secondary Ministries

1 Cor 12:27-28 says,

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

From this we learn that although there are essential ministries that must always take place in the church (those seven listed above), from time to time God brings “secondary ministries” to the church. Here he lists the ministry of miracles, the ministry of healing, the ministry of helping (serving), the ministry of leading and the ministry of tongues. There may be other ministries that develop in your church.

The authority of the church in recognizing ministries

It is very important that as ministries develop in the church, it is the church that authorizes their use. It was the early church who sent out Paul and Barnabas as apostles (Acts 13:2-3). When Paul writes Timothy, he tells him: **“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you”** (1 Tim 4:14). And also, in 2 Tim 1:6, **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands”**.

The church recognized gifts and ministries in Timothy and laid their hands on him to authorize him to be an apostle – a missionary – a church planter.

You may be authorized to the work of a church planter by your church denomination. They sometimes call that “ordination” or “licensing.” This is their way of presenting you to the world with their approval to plant churches.

In the same way, you should identify the ministries that your church needs, pray for workers, train them, and then your local church should authorize them to do that ministry as well. But Paul warns Timothy: **“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure”** (1 Tim 5:22).

We should make sure that the person we are authorizing to do the ministry is worthy of the church’s support.

Questions For Reflection And Discussion

1. You have been called to raise a church in your village. Your basic roles have been to evangelize, to lead that church, to guard it from theological error, and to care for the church members. Which of these roles is most difficult for you? Which is easiest? Do you think God is raising up people who can help you in raising the church?
2. You have been called to raise a church in your village. What essential ministries from the list on page 18 does that church need right now? Who might God be calling to that ministry? How can you prepare them for this ministry? Who in your church should you talk to in order to see if the church believes they are ready for that ministry?
3. On page 19 there is a short list of 'secondary ministries.' There may be other ministries that exist in the church today. What other secondary ministries have you observed? What secondary ministries does your church need?



4

Manifestations

Lesson purpose:

- To understand the purpose and definitions of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

Lesson outcomes:

- Students will be able to define each of the nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8 - 10.
- Students will be able to identify each of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 in the life of Jesus and in the early church as recorded in the book of Acts.
- Students will understand common abuses of some of these manifestations and know what to do if they observe an abuse.

Table of Contents:

- The manifestations
- Definitions of the manifestations
- Questions for discussion

The Manifestations:

The manifestations of 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 10 are:

- Word of wisdom
- Word of knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healing
- Working of miracles
- Prophecy
- Discernment of spirits
- Kinds of tongues
- Interpretation of tongues

Since each manifestation is the spirit's activity, reproducing Christ's ministry, there is provided an example of the manifestation in Christ's life and in the life of the early church. In addition, common abuses are mentioned which we reject.

Before the list, Paul says,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Cor 12:4 – 7)

This seems to make the same distinction we have made between the list of functions in Romans 12; the list of service (ministries) in Ephesians 4:11; and the list of “kinds of working” or manifestations of the Spirit listed in 1 Cor 12:8 – 10.

After the list, Paul says, **“All these [gifts] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”** (1 Cor 12:11) This states clearly that the Spirit determines to whom He should give these gifts, just when the time is right.

Definition of Manifestations

The “MANIFESTATION” gifts are to be defined as follows.

Word Of Wisdom

The divine provision of “just the right word of counseling.” Jesus illustrated the gift of word of wisdom in Matthew 22:15 -46. After Jesus’ opponents tried to trap him publically in verbal arguments, Jesus responded so wisely that in verse 46 Matthew write, **“No-one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no-one dared to ask him any more questions.”** Also in Matthew 13:54 we read, **“Coming to his home town, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.”** In the book of Acts, Stephen showed the gift of word of wisdom when he spoke publically to the Jews. In Acts 6:8 – 10 we read,

Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

Abuses of “word of wisdom” include attributing the same level of authority to these revelations as that attributed to canonical revelation. They may have the same level of authority as the preached word, necessitating constant evaluation and examination in concert with Scriptures.

Word Of Knowledge

The word of knowledge is the divine provision of facts which would not otherwise be known Acts 27:33-36). Jesus showed the gift of word of knowledge when he knew what the scribes of the Pharisees were thinking before he healed the paralytic. Matthew writes in Matthew 9:3-4, **“At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming! Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?”** In the book of Acts, Peter shows the gift in Acts 5:1 – 11 when he states that Ananias and Sapphira sold a property for one price, gave part of the money to the church but told the church that what they were giving was the full price. Peter says in Acts 5:3, **“Ananias, how is it that**

Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”

Abuses of “word of knowledge” include attributing the same level of authority to these revelations as that attributed to canonical revelation. They may have the same level of authority as the preached word, necessitating constant evaluation and examination in concert with Scriptures.

Faith

The manifestation of faith is the divine provision of faith meant to encourage someone to the accomplishment of some miraculous happening. Jesus shows the gift of faith in Mark 5:35-42 when he encourages Jairus, the synagogue leader whose daughter had just died, to believe that He could raise her from the dead. Mark 5:35 – 42 says,

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?” Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.

In Acts 27:33-36, Paul speaks to the sailors whose boat was about to shipwreck, and told them,

“For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food--you haven’t eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.

Gifts Of Healing

Gifts of healing is the divine provision of a miraculous recovery from an illness or physical deficiency. Jesus healed frequently. In Matt 8:1-4 we read,

When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.

In the book of Acts we see many healings too. In Acts 3:1-10 Peter and John healed a lame man in the temple. In Acts 3:7 – 9 we read,

Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Abuses of "gifts of healing" include the teaching and expectation that it is always God's will to heal immediately. Another abuse is the teaching that when God's healing has been claimed, but is not visibly seen, the person has been healed and must simply wait for God to manifest that healing. A further abuse is the teaching that if a person is not healed, it is directly related to that person's lack of faith in God's healing power, or to hidden sin or other spiritual inadequacy in that person's life.

Working Of Miracles

The working of miracles is the divine provision of suspension of natural laws in any way, shape or form. Again, Jesus performed many miracles. In Matt 17:24-27 we read,

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes--from their own sons or from others?" "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.

In the book of Acts 28:3-6 Paul performed a miracle when

Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.

Abuses of "working of miracles" include the concept of "seed faith" -- that God must perform a miracle if I have sufficient faith. This is tantamount to attempting to manipulate God. Another abuse is the working of miracles by demonic powers.

Prophecy

The manifestation of prophecy is the divine provision of foreknowledge of some future occurrence. Jesus was recognized as a prophet. In Matthew 26:31-35 Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times.

Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.

In the book of Acts, Agabus was known as a prophet. Acts 11:27-30 says,

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman

world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Abuses of “prophecy” include attributing the same level of authority to these revelations as that attributed to canonical revelation. They may have the same level of authority as the preached word, necessitating constant evaluation and examination in concert with Scriptures. Another abuse of prophecy is speaking a word of prophecy from God in the first person, in which the prophet speaks as if he were God. A further abuse is the delivery of a direct revelation from God for another individual Christian. This in no way takes away from our firm belief that God continues to speak to us today leading and guiding through the Bible, through wisdom of other Christians, and through impressions from the Holy Spirit.

Discernment Of Spirits

The manifestation of the discernment of spirits is the divine provision of recognition of the nature of certain spiritual occurrences. In Mark 9:38 – 40, the disciple John told Jesus,

“We saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No-one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us.” But Jesus did recognize and expel demons when he saw them. Mark 9: 25 – 27 says, “When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Paul and Barnabas recognized that a girl they had never met was demon possessed. In Acts 16:16-18 we read,

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned round and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

Not everything that happens to Christian is directly attributable to demonic powers. While we do not negate the reality, validity, and necessity of spiritual warfare, we do not identify with teachings, which are overly dependent on subjective phenomenological manifestations (inclusive of such manifestations as “barking, howling, laughing, yelling, dancing, jumping, swooning, swaying, and slaying in the spirit”), rather than Christocentric theology and biblical methodology.

Tongues

The gift of tongues is the divine provision of ability to speak another language (not seen in Christ’s life; Acts 2:4-12). Abuses of tongues are numerous in today’s church, as they were in the early Corinthian church. While all the other gifts are illustrated in Christ’s life and the life of the early church, the gift of tongues is not seen in Christ’s life, and the gift of interpretation is never illustrated in Scripture. This makes an exact and certain understanding of the gift very difficult. Any apparent manifestation of the gift of tongues will be one

The CCP Pastoral Training Course

Spiritual Gifts

of three forms of manifestation:

1. It may be one of those rare but truly wonderful manifestations of the biblical gift of tongues.
2. It often is a human, psychological manifestation.
3. It may be a demonic delusion.

Therefore, there are several abuses of tongues we wish to reject:

- That tongues must be indiscriminately accepted as valid. Scripture includes several guidelines for the validation of the manifestation of tongues. Tongues should never be used by more than one person at one time. At most three should speak in tongues in one service. Tongues should never be used without interpretation. Any manifestation of tongues should be validated through discernment by the leadership of the local church. Any manifestation of tongues which does not conform to these Biblical restrictions should be considered a non-valid manifestation and should be corrected through personal counseling.
- That tongues are a necessary sign of salvation. That is, all Christians must speak in tongues. Generally, this argument is based on a superficial reading of evangelism in Acts, where the normal experience is that the new believer speaks in tongues. But that was not the experience of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Paul (Acts 9), Lydia (16:14-15), or the jailer (16:31-32).
- That tongues are the sign of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. That is, if one does not speak in tongues, one is not filled with the Holy Spirit. This argument is normally based on an observation of the filling of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6). But in Acts 8:18 the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit, but do not speak in tongues. Also the grammatical form of the question of 1 Cor 12:30, "Do all speak in tongues?", requires a negative answer.
- That the gift of tongues is one which should be sought. Although Paul does say "I would that you all spoke in tongues" (1 Cor 14:5), he also tells us to "desire the greater gifts" (1 Cor 12:31), and "greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues" (1 Cor 14:5). The list of manifestations of 1 Cor 12 are totally up to the will of God, and our own personal desires for those gifts cannot bring us any of those gifts."
- That tongues are used today to communicate "prophecy" to the church. That is, today God's normal way to communicate a special word to the church is by sending this message through the use of tongues and interpretation of tongues. But nowhere in Scripture is a prophecy given by the use of tongues. They are separate gifts, and are not meant to be dependent on each other.
- That tongues are a mark of spirituality. It is obvious that the Corinthian church spoke in tongues, but in 1 Cor 3:1-2, Paul says "**I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it.**"
- That tongues ceased in the apostolic age. This is stated on the authority of 1 Cor 13:8, "if there are tongues, they will cease". But not only tongues are mentioned in that verse, also prophecy and wisdom. It is obvious that Paul did not consider the gifts to have ceased in his own time (1 Cor 14), nor would they soon cease, since he gave rules and regulations for their use. It is more probable that the verse be understood in light of 1 Cor 13:9-12, i.e., that Paul is speaking of the second coming of Christ, when the perfect is come. Once Christ comes, there will be no need for the gifts.
- That tongues may only be human tongues, or the ability to communicate in a human language one would not know through normal means. Again, there is much evidence in the New Testament that tongues were human tongues, but there are also several references to "angelic tongues" (1 Cor 13:1, 14:2) which would not be earthly.

Interpretation Of Tongues

The gift of the interpretation of tongues is the divine provision of ability to understand another language. There are no examples of the gift of interpretation of tongues in Scripture.

Abuses of “interpretation of tongues” include attributing the same level of authority to these revelations as that attributed to canonical revelation. They may have the same level of authority as the preached word, necessitating constant evaluation and examination in concert with Scriptures. A further abuse is the delivery of a direct revelation from God for another individual Christian. This in no way takes away from our firm belief that God continues to speak to us today leading and guiding through the Bible, through wisdom of other Christians, and through impressions from the Holy Spirit.

Questions for discussion:

1. What manifestations have you observed in your church? How was God glorified through the manifestation? How did the church benefit?
2. Have you seen a manifestation abused? How was the church damaged? What should we as leaders do when we see a manifestation abused?



5

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift

Lesson Purpose:

- To begin to identify and understand the gift that God has given the student.

Lesson Outcomes:

- Students will understand how to identify their spiritual gift.
- Students will begin to identify their own spiritual gift.
- Students will understand how to enhance their own spiritual gift.

Table of Contents:

- How to identify your spiritual gift
- Understanding what scripture says about spiritual gifts
- Practicing the identification of spiritual gifts in others
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses of spiritual gifts
- Sensing God's call to a particular ministry
- Using the gift God has given us
- Questions for discussion

How to identify your spiritual gift

As we stated before, gifts are given to the church through individual Christians. Because of this, the best way to identify your spiritual gift is through its use in the church. But there are ways to begin to identify your gift before you begin to use it.

The first step in identifying your spiritual gift is to understand what scripture says about spiritual gifts. It is impossible to understand what gift you have if you do not understand what the Bible says about the gifts.

The second step in identifying your spiritual gift is to practice identifying spiritual gifts in others. Many times it is easier to recognize God's gift in someone else than it is to recognize His gift in you.

The third step in identifying your spiritual gift is to recognize its strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes it is easier to see the weaknesses of a gift than it is to see its strength, at least initially.

The fourth step in identifying your spiritual gift is to clarify our own sensitivity to a particular ministry in the church. We recognize that when we have a sense of call to a specific ministry, that ministry might be related to the gift God has given us.

And finally, and most importantly, we should recognize that we will only truly identify the gift God has given us when we practice that gift within the church, and the church recognizes God's power through our gift.

Understanding what scripture says about spiritual gifts

Although the entire lesson has been about understanding what scripture says about spiritual gifts, here we will summarize quickly the entire subject. Paul presents three lists of spiritual gifts: Romans 12:6 – 8; Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 11. Each of these three lists present gifts, but the lists present different types of gifts. The list in 1 Corinthians are gifts that are given by the Spirit in exactly the moment of need. It is not possible to seek these gifts and it is not proper to ask for these gifts outside of an extreme need in the church. The Spirit gives these gifts to whom He pleases when he pleases.

The gifts in Ephesians 4:11 are people whom God has given to the church to help the church do the work of ministry. Because these are leaders in the church, not only does God have to give the gift for the successful completion of this ministry, but the church must also recognize and authorize the use of that gift.

The gifts in Romans 12:4 – 7 are a list of functions. Every Christian has one of these gifts. It would seem appropriate then for us to focus on this list when we try to discover which gift God has given us.

You will always have the function that God has given you as a Christian. God may also place you in a ministry, but that ministry might change from time to time. God may also send you a manifestation, but the manifestation will change according to the need of the church.

Practicing the identification of spiritual gifts in others

Many times it is easier to recognize God's gift in others, but recognizing God's gift in us is harder. Practicing the identification of spiritual gifts in others might make it easier for us to see His gift in us.

We can try to identify God's gift in biblical people of the New Testament. For example, we can look at Peter to try to identify the gift God had given him. Even if we limit our study to the book of Acts, we can identify God's gift to Peter

Look at the following list of passages and try to determine from them what Peter's function was: Acts 1:15 – 22; Acts 2:14 – 40; Acts 3:11 – 26; Acts 4:5 – 12; Acts 8:14 – 24; Acts 10:34 – 43.

Look at the following passages and try to determine from them what Peter's ministerial gift was: Acts 2:37 – 41; Acts 4:1 – 4; Acts 10:44 – 48; Acts 11:1 – 18; Acts 15:6 – 11.

And look at the following passages and try to determine from them what manifestations of the Holy Spirit God gave to the church through Peter: Acts 2:4; Acts 3:1 – 10; Acts 5: 1 – 11; Acts 9:32 – 35; Acts 9:36 – 43; Acts 12:1 – 19.

On the next page, we'll try to identify the functions, ministries and manifestations that Peter had. Please go to the book of Acts and try to identify them before you turn the page.

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In Acts 1:15 – 22, Peter stood and addressed the body of believers and told them that they needed to replace Judas with a twelfth disciple. We see that Peter knew how to interpret scripture and that he led the small group of believers, but we see little else. In Acts 2: 14 – 40, Peter addresses the crowd with an evangelistic sermon. He interprets scripture well, and challenges the crowd at the end with an invitation to repent and be baptized, and to receive the Holy Spirit. In Acts 3:11 – 26, Peter again preaches a long sermon. These evangelistic sermons are a characteristic of the function of prophecy.

In Acts 4:5 – 12, Peter stands before the leaders of his day and boldly spoke of Jesus as the Messiah. When the leaders told Peter to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, Peter responded, **“we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”** This boldness is also characteristic of the gift of prophecy. In Acts 8:14 – 24, Peter recognizes Simon the magician’s sin and again boldly accuses him. Simon’s response is to repent. And finally, in Acts 10:34 – 43, Peter again preaches a sermon to Cornelius’ house, and the result is that Cornelius and his entire household come to know Jesus. This again is characteristic of the function of prophecy.

In Acts 2:37 – 41, Peter uses his prophetic sermon to evangelize a crowd of Jews. As a result, 3,000 people were converted. Then again in Acts 4:1 – 4 Peter spoke and 5,000 came to know the Lord. This is the ministry of evangelism! In Acts 10:44 – 48, Cornelius’ house accepted the Lord. In Acts 11: 1 – 18 Peter confirmed this before the Jewish leaders. Then in Acts 15:6 – 11 Peter told the story one more time. While some maintain the Peter was a key leader in the early church, the book of Acts seems to say that Peter was one of the primary evangelists in Acts.

The list of manifestations that God sent through Peter is wide and varied. In Acts 2:4, Peter spoke in tongues. In Acts 3:1 – 10, God used Peter to heal a lame man. In Acts 5:1 – 11 God gave Peter the manifestation of word of knowledge. In Acts 9:32 – 35, Peter healed a paralyzed man. Then in Acts 9:36 – 42 God used Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead, a gift of miracles. Then in Acts 12:1 – 19, God again performed a miracle in Peter’s life, freeing him from prison before he was to be executed.

In the same way, we can practice identifying spiritual gifts of Paul, of Barnabas, of John, and of other New Testament characters. We can also practice identifying each other’s gifts.

Identifying strengths and weaknesses of spiritual gifts

Sometimes it is easier to see our weaknesses than our strengths. Hence, we might identify any of the following weaknesses in our self and thus the presence of the gift.

Strengths of the gift of prophecy:

1. The gift of prophecy is for the edification of the church through speaking to men for edification, exhortation and consolation (I Cor. 14:3,5).
2. Prophecy can disclose the (sinful) secrets of the heart, convicting men so that they glorify God (I Cor. 14:24f).
3. Prophecy is involved with the public interpretation of scripture (II Peter 1:20-21).

Weaknesses of the gift of prophecy:

1. Prophets tend to be extremely sensitive to sin, and feel the compulsion to correct it when they see it. As a result, they can be very negative. They can develop a condemning spirit easily. It becomes common to see them jump to conclusions about words, actions and motives, and lack caution and tactfulness in expressing opinions.
2. Prophets can fall to the temptation of judging and exposing an offender rather than restoring the offender.
3. The prophet needs to be careful of pride in his rhetoric.

Strengths of the gift of serving:

1. A servant is very sensitive to the physical needs of others, and possesses the “stick-to-it-iveness” necessary to see a specific job through to the end.
2. He is willing to overlook personal discomfort (i.e., long hours) in order to accomplish a job.

Weaknesses of the gift of serving:

1. The servant tends to emphasize the physical needs of others over the spiritual needs.
2. In his sensitivity and compassion, a servant tends to take on too many jobs at one time. This can cause him to neglect the responsibilities of his own home life. He also tends to work so hard that he wears himself out.
3. Because of his “productivity” mentality, he can also go around the proper channels in an effort to “get the job done.”
4. Since he is such a good worker, he tends to exclude others from helping on a job.
5. The servant is easily hurt by the ungratefulness of those who were helped.

Strengths of the gift of teaching:

1. The teacher is adept in the systematic accumulation, comprehension, and organization of biblical truth. As such, he is a good student and generally well read.
2. The teacher is also generally very capable in the communication of Biblical truth. Nevertheless, he must fight the tendency to de-emphasize the communication of truth in favor of pure investigation.

Weaknesses of the gift of teaching:

1. Teachers tend to take pride in their knowledge. This pride can cause them to despise the practical wisdom of uneducated people.
2. Perhaps more than any others, teachers tend to communicate skepticism toward their own teachers and toward new ideas in general.
3. Because of the great amount of research done, the teacher can tend to give information which lacks practical application. If the research is tedious, the teacher may still bore listeners with the details of his research.

Strengths of the gift of exhortation:

1. There are two emphases in this gift: that of counseling, and that of discipleship. The exhorter tends to specialize in one or the other. Both emphasize the one-to-one contact.
2. Both emphases stimulate believers to a more mature and consistent walk with the Lord.

Weaknesses of the gift of exhortation:

1. Since there is an emphasis on personal contact, it is possible for the exhorter to encourage others to depend on them rather than God.
2. The great need of counseling may cause the exhorter to take “family time” to counsel others. They may also cause him to jump into new projects without finishing existing ones.
3. There may be a temptation to treat family and friends as “projects” rather than persons.
4. Exhorters may neglect proper emphasis on basic Bible doctrines.

Strengths of the gift of giving:

1. The giver is generally blessed by God with a “business sense” which enables him to accumulate wealth for use by the church. He is an original, creative thinker.
2. He selflessly gives his earthly possessions and earnings for the furtherance of the church’s ministries.

Weaknesses of the gift of giving:

1. The giver can easily fall to the temptation of manipulating others by his gifts.
2. His business sense may lead him at times to listen to unscriptural counsel on money management. In general, he may fail to discern God’s promptings for a gift.
3. In his fervor to see ministries totally funded, he may put pressure on people who have less to give.

Strengths of the gift of leading:

1. The ruler sees the overview, can help others see the major objectives, and coordinate the facets of an objective.
2. He can instinctively see blind spots.

Weaknesses of the gift of leading:

1. There is a tendency for the ruler to use people to accomplish personal ambitions. In his effort to accomplish a certain project, he can delegate too much work to others.
2. He can tend to show favoritism to those who appear to be more loyal. As a result he may overlook serious character faults in valuable workers.
3. He can be unresponsive to other’s suggestions and appeals.
4. He can fail to give proper explanations and praise to workers.

Strengths of the gift of showing mercy:

1. The gift of mercy is very sensitive to the emotional and mental well-being of others, and can sense when something is wrong, disturbing a person.
2. The person with the gift of person identifies with the feelings of others. He empathizes and comforts those in distress.
3. This is the gift of friendship.

Weaknesses of the gift of showing mercy:

1. This gift tends to fail to be firm and decisive when necessary. He tends to base decisions on emotions rather than on reason.
2. The gift of mercy easily takes up offenses for those who have been hurt.
3. They can tend to cut off fellowship with those who are insensitive to others.
4. Although this is the gift of friendship, they can become possessive of friendships with others.

Sensing God's call to a particular ministry

There are times that we have sensed a direct call to a particular ministry. Many times this is because God has given us that particular gift. A call to preach could be the gift of prophecy. A call to teach could be a gift of teaching. A call to counseling could be a gift of exhortation.

Sometimes if we see a specific need in the church, that can indicate the presence of the gift that would respond to that need. In Acts 6 when some members of the church indicated that the apostles were not distributing the same amount of goods to the Greek widows as the Hebrew widows received, the apostles invited the Greeks who brought this to their attention to select men who could distribute the goods. This was because their gift made them sensitive to that need.

In other occasions, we may think that a particular ministry is the most important of the ministries in the church, because they have the gift that would perform that ministry. For example, a person with the gift of teaching will think that the church needs to understand scripture to grow. A person with the gift of prophecy will think that the church needs strong preaching. A person with the gift of service will think that the church needs to attend to the physical needs of the church. A person with the gift of giving will think that the church needs to learn tithing before it can grow. A person with the gift of showing mercy will think that the church needs to learn to pray for each other and show friendship to each other. And so, we should think about those ministries that seem to us to be the most important ministry in the church. What gift does that indicate for us?

Using the gift God has given us

Once we have an idea of the gift God has given us, we should put that gift into practice in the church. The ultimate proof of the presence of a gift is when the church responds positively to the exercise of a gift.

Prophesying – The gift of prophesying can be used through public and private exposition of scripture. A prophet can share a sermon, or preach to a small crowd. A prophet can share a testimony or an experience he or she has gone through. But the prophet will always speak! As a result, the church will be challenged, exhorted, cautioned and the church will be blessed. The prophet should practice his sermons and testimonies. If you have the gift of prophecy, you should study homiletics, the art of preaching.

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Serving – The gift of serving can be exercised in many different ways. It can be through building, farming, sewing, cooking, cleaning, repairing and a number of other ways. But each way will attend to a person's or a group's physical need. The servant should learn how to do a wide variety of practical things. People will feel cared for when you serve them. They will see Jesus' love in you.

Teaching – The gift of teaching will focus on two different areas: study and delivery. A teacher will be a good student, and will enjoy reading and studying, especially the Bible. The teacher will also be interested in details. Sometimes a teacher is more interested in the details of his lesson than he is in his students. But when the teacher teaches, the church learns deeply and feels challenged. A teacher should study pedagogy, the art of teaching.

Exhorting – The gift of exhorting also focuses on two different methods of exhorting: through counseling and through discipling. The counselor helps someone address specific issues that the person being counseled brings up. The discipler helps someone grow spiritually by bringing up issues they need to address in their life. An exhorter also enjoys studying the Bible, but will always be interested in how the Bible is to be applied to his life. The exhorter should study counseling methods.

Giving – The gift of giving is generally accompanied with a "business sense." The person knows how to make money. The person with the gift of giving needs to constantly focus on the church's needs and make sure that he is being a means whereby God blesses the church through his gifts.

Leading – The gift of leading should only be practiced when the church recognizes that a person has the gift. If you think you have the gift of leading, you might volunteer to be involved in small projects the church has, like an evangelistic campaign. The gift of leading will help organize the event and carry out much of the detail work that needs to take place for the campaign to take place. You should study administration.

Showing mercy – The gift of showing mercy is normally exercised with needy people. The gift will be used by visiting the sick, praying with people with needs, helping those who have no one to look after them, and such.

Questions for discussion

1. One way to learn more about spiritual gifts is to practice identifying spiritual gifts in others. Pick three of your classmates and try to identify the spiritual gifts they have. Why do you think they have this spiritual gift? What strengths of this spiritual gift do you see in them? What weaknesses of this spiritual gift do you see in them?
2. What gift do you believe you have? What strengths and what weaknesses of this gift do you see in yourself? How do you plan to enhance that gift? What will you study to enhance that gift? How do you plan on using that gift in your church?
3. Think of three key leaders in your church? What gift do they have? What strengths and weaknesses do they have? How can you teach them about their spiritual gift? How can they use their gift in your church?



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1 John

~ Dr Bill Cooper



1

Introduction

Lesson Purpose For The Introduction

- Provide a foundation; a background with which to build a meaningful study of the epistle.
- Give the student a glimpse of the author as this tends to color the things he wrote.
- Give the student a glimpse of the people to whom the epistle was written.
- Acquaint the student with some of the tools for understanding an epistle.

Lesson Outcome For The Introduction

- Upon completion of this introduction, the student will have sufficient background information concerning the author, the recipients and the initial tools for studying an epistle, especially I John.

The Introduction

The Background Of The Apostle

John was known as the "apostle of love." He and his brother, Andrew, were sons of Zebedee, a wealthy fishing business partner with Peter's father, Jonah. Zebedee's wife, Salome, was one of the women who ministered to Jesus and His disciples. (Matthew 27:55, 56) Salome and Mary the mother of Jesus were sisters. Thus, Jesus and John were first cousins. John had a strong, zealous personality. We gain an insight into his personality when we remember that he was known as one of the "sons of thunder." (Mark 3:17) This identified John and his brother as being men of quick and volatile temper.

John was a man of some wealth. His family owned a rather prosperous fishing business. He owned a home in Capernaum where his family lived, but he appears to have also owned a home in the elite section of Jerusalem where the High Priest lived.

John had been a disciple of John the Baptist. He was one of those Jews who felt strong opposition for the religious leaders of Israel. After the death of Jesus, he was the leader of the church in Ephesus. He was a very vocal church leader. When Roman officials could not silence him, they banished him to the island of Patmos. This did nothing to control John. Eventually Roman officials removed John from Patmos. Tradition indicates that during the reign of Trajan, John was forced to drink Hemlock, a terrible poison and he died a horrible death in about 98 A.D. In contrast to his friend Peter, John was much more philosophical. His writing style is deliberate, concise and aggressive. You will note that he frequently uses strong contrasts to make his point. Like the apostle Paul, John was very Jewish and you will find some of the Jewish cultural elements in this epistle.

The Background Of The Recipients

John does not specifically identify the recipients of this epistle. It has been suggested by some that this epistle might be addressed to the congregations John mentioned in the book of Revelation. (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea) The kind of opposition described in the epistle would support that position. There are a number of statements in the epistle that would have special meaning for Jewish people, but would have no meaning for persons of Gentile origin. If there was a large group of Jewish believers in these congregations, it is possible that they had suffered persecution in Jerusalem and fled to this part of Asia where they were undergoing persecution once again. It seems that the recipients of this epistle have been Christians for quite some time, but like the recipients of the Hebrews epistle, their level of maturity has not grown past infancy, even though they are suffering severely for their faith. As the writer of Hebrews wrote

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:12-14

(In this epistle, John will deal very carefully with two very dangerous forms of a heresy that was troubling the recipients of this epistle.) The heresy is GNOSTICISM - The name "Gnostic" comes from the Greek word which means "knowledge." It made serious attempts to infiltrate the church throughout the Roman provinces where Greek thought was dominant. They considered knowledge to be the supreme end and purpose in life. As knowledge increased, there developed a division between those of great knowledge and those with less. This gave rise to serious arrogance. This is loveless intellectualism. DOCETISM is a form of Gnosticism which focused on a rejection of the Sonship of Jesus. They would acknowledge that deity could take over the body of Jesus and then left it, but would never accept the idea that Jesus was a totally human being and still the Son of God.

They thought that the incarnation of Christ was inconceivable. This is because they viewed God as absolutely holy; ultimately unknowable and all human flesh to be eminently evil by nature. Some of them held that Christ entered the body of Jesus at His baptism and left His body at the moment of the crucifixion.

For Gnostics, evil is the normal human condition. Redemption is not deliverance from sin or the removal of guilt. It is a result of the person's attempt to escape from the clutches of the flesh which is evil.

As we study this epistle, you will observe John's repeated attacks on these beliefs. We will attempt to highlight each reference that John made to these issues.

The Authorship Of This Epistle

There is general agreement among Christian scholars that the apostle John did, in fact, write this epistle. A possible date for the writing is 95 A.D. +/-

The Exhortations In This Epistle

An epistle is a letter, a message sent to a person or group in a different area. Every epistle in the New Testament was written to give instructions concerning one or more problems that were causing distress for the recipients of the epistle. In every New Testament epistle you will find a number of exhortations the writer commanded the recipients to obey in order to deal with the problem(s) they faced in the church. If you study the commands in an epistle, you can determine some of the issues that caused the author to write. This is especially obvious in I Corinthians.

In the epistle of I John, there are 15 exhortations. They are as follows:

1. Do not love the world – 2:15
2. Do not love the things of the world – 2:15
3. Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning – 2:24
4. Abide in Him – 2:27
5. Little children, abide in Him – 2:28
6. Little children, let no one deceive you, one who practices righteousness is righteous – 3:7
7. Do not marvel if the world hates you – 3:13
8. Let us not love with word – 3:18
9. Let us not love with tongue – 3:18
10. Let us love in deed – 3:18
11. Let us love in truth – 3:18
12. Do not believe every spirit – 4:1
13. Test the spirits to see whether they are of God – 4:1
14. Let us love one another – 4:7
15. Little children guard yourselves from idols – 5:21

In Scripture, emphasis is achieved by repetition. (look at Psalm 136. On 26 occasions in the 26 verses the author wrote, "For His lovingkindness is everlasting." that is what the Psalm is about) Note that in the above list of exhortations, numbers 8-11 and 14 all deal with loving one another. It is quite certain that this was a problem with which these believers needed to deal. Numbers one and two both deal with their relationship with the world because this was a point of struggling for these Christians. Exhortation numbers 12 and 13 deal with spirits. This is because these believers were dealing with issues involved in spirit worship. Numbers four and five deal with a relationship that these believers knew little about, though they should have. Observe that number seven deals with the hatred of the world for believers. It would not be necessary to mention this if it were not an issue for them. John closed the epistle on a somber note – "Guard yourselves from idols." If this was not an issue, it would have been possible for him to say his final farewell in happier tones.

An Outline Of The Epistle

An epistle follows the rules of good writing. There is one basic idea in a paragraph. The paragraphs are identified in the Greek text and we will deal with those in the study of each chapter. The individual sentences in a paragraph will provide information about that central idea. An initial study of an epistle involves identifying the paragraphs and then summarizing the content of each paragraph.

Chapter One –

1:1-4 – John Defended His Apostleship
1:5 – 10 – God is Light

Chapter Two –

2:1-6 – Christ our Comforting Advocate
2:7-14 – Abiding is Evidenced in Obedience
2:15-17 – Do Not Love the World
2:18-25 – Warning against Antichrist
2:26, 27 – Instruction – Abide in Christ
2:28 – 3:3 – Little Children: Abide and Purify Yourselves

Chapter Three –

3:4-10 – Flee from the Practice of Sin
3:11-18 – Brethren, Love One Another
3:19-24 – Love: The Basis of Our Divine Relationship

Chapter Four –

4:1-6 – Test The Spirits
4:7-12 – Love others – the Evidence of Knowing God
4:13-16A – God’s Love Evidenced in Redemption
4:16B-21 – The Results of Loving God

Chapter Five –

5:1-5 – Obedience, the Evidence of Love
5:6-12 – The Evidence that Jesus is God’s Son
5:13-15 – The Benefit of Believing on Jesus
5:16, 17 – The Sin Not unto Death
5:18 – 21 – The Things we Know

Lesson Purpose For The Study Of Chapter One

- Help the student understand the importance of establishing the apostleship of John.
- Establish the foundational truths of the epistle: God is absolutely holy, but all human beings are ultimately sinful.
- Help students grasp that John is dealing with a basic problem – the people claim to have fellowship with God, but at the same time involve themselves in sinful practices.
- Help students see how John presents the good news- though all men are sinners, Christ is the only one who totally forgives.

Lesson Outcome

- The student will understand the importance of John’s apostleship.
- The student will have a grasp of the basic theological truth of the epistle
- They will understand the basic problem that John addresses and how he presented both the teaching and the instruction.
- The student will be able to understand John’s presentation of Jesus as the holy redeemer.

I John 1:1 – 10

God Is Holy; Man Is Sinful

The Study Of The Passage

There are two paragraphs in I John chapter one. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

1:1 – 4	John Defended His Apostleship
1:5 – 10	God Is Light

You may remember from our previous part of the study, that we mentioned some information about the people who lived in the area where these believers were living. The dominant people in this area were warlike, idolatrous tribes people who had immigrated from the area we now call France. More recent immigrants to the area consisted of two large groups of Jewish people: One group was believers in Christ. The other group was enemies of the gospel. This last group had infiltrated the body of believers and were now challenging the authority of the apostle John. The reason for this is understandable. If, in fact, John was an apostle, then they would be expected to obey his instructions. If they could prove that he was a fraud, then they could ignore his instructions. In this first paragraph, John repeatedly explains why his apostleship was intact and thus they should obey his instructions.

I Peter 1:1 – 4 – John Defended His Apostleship

That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life I John 1:1

In this verse, John gives four substantial reasons why he was a credible apostle and thus they should heed his instruction:

- **“That which was from the beginning”** - john was not a “late-comer” to the ministry and example of Jesus. He could claim to have been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry right up to the time of the Ascension.
- **“That which we have heard”** – john could claim that he had heard just about everything that Jesus ever taught. He could say, with confidence, “Jesus said...” and no one could discredit his word.
- **“That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld.”** He could say, I saw Jesus give sight to the man born blind; I saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. He could say he had seen Thomas place his finger in the wounds of the risen Christ. John could say, “I saw with my own eyes” and no one could refute his claim because they did not see Jesus and John did. This was extremely important in this instance since some of these people did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
- **“And our hands handled”** – again, this was important because john could honestly say, “I took a basket and picked up one of the 12 baskets full of left-over food when Jesus fed nearly 10,000 people with a little boy’s lunch.”

The words translated “concerning the Word of life” appears to be a reference to Jesus. John was using his discipleship with Jesus during the entirety of His earthly ministry as a defense of his apostleship and his authority to speak on behalf of the Lord.

(and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); I John 1:2

Verse two is a parenthesis and a continuation of the message of 1:1. The reference to the “word of life” is a reference to the life and especially the resurrection of Jesus. The word translated “manifested” means to reveal or to make known. Jesus lived His life, ministered to people, died and rose again. John was saying that he demonstrated his apostleship when he said, “we have seen and bear witness.” He claimed to be an eye witness as well as an evangel who tells what he saw. It is more than reporting an event. It is to be a reputable witness recounting the event. He also said, “(we) declare unto you.” He was claiming to accurately report to them the message of eternal life. In this verse, John claimed that the message of eternal life was revealed to him. Again, both verses one and two are strongly emphasized claims that his apostleship was real and should be obeyed.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: I John 1:3

In that day, emphasis was achieved by repetition. In this verse, John again mentioned, “We have seen and heard declare we...” This is the ministry of an apostle. Again, the apostle emphasizes the things he had seen and heard in an effort to emphasize his credentials to speak on behalf of the Lord. This is third time in this paragraph, John told them he is simply reporting the things he has seen and heard. This is a very strong emphasis. In this verse, he explains the purpose of his apostleship. He identified the intimate fellowship made available to every believer - fellowship with the Father, the Son and with each other.

And these things we write, that our joy may be made full. I John 1:4

In verse four, John describes his motives for asserting his apostleship. He writes because this results in his joy and nothing more. It is a gentle way to affirm that he has no ulterior motives for wishing to use his apostolic authority to give them direction for their lives in Christ. He receives great joy in pointing people to a harmonious life of grace in Christ Jesus.

I John 1:5-10 – God Is Light

And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. I John 1:5

The initial statement in this sentence continues the apostle’s idea from the first paragraph. It is an appropriate defense of his apostleship. He simply said he had announced to them, what he heard Jesus say. That gives him the right to be heard.

The statement, “God is light” and the images of “light” and “darkness” were very important in Israel. The priests, who opposed the corruption at the temple went down to the Dead Sea and established the Essene Community. They used these images repeatedly. The image of “light” was a way to describe righteousness and holy living.

Darkness, on the other hand, was an image which described every form of evil. When you view the paragraph, 1:5-10, with this in mind, John's message is clear and direct. In verse five he said, "God is light" it was a strongly emphasized way to say that God is absolutely holy. He continued, "In Him is no darkness at all." It is a way to say that there is no evil; no unrighteousness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: I John 1:6

Verse six and seven form a complete sentence. In 1:6-10 there are five conditional statements. (A conditional statement contains two parts: a condition which is usually identified by the word "if"; a statement of consequence which is usually identified by the word "then" either written or understood.) Each of these statements grows out of the principle announced in verse five.

The conditional statement in verse six is clear. The condition is, "IF we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness." The word "then" is understood. The consequence of this is that we are false both in word and action. This is a dynamic way to say that if we have fellowship with God, then our life must be characterized by purity and holiness. The word translated "fellowship" means to share in common: to partner; to share.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. I John 1:7

The use of the word "but" indicates that what he just wrote is a total contrast with what is coming. The condition mentioned in verse seven is this, "IF we walk in the light as He is in the light." John was saying that if we claim to follow the example of Jesus; if we claim to be righteous and our actions support that claim, the consequence is this: "The word "then" is understood. John proceeds to list two consequences: 1. "We have fellowship with one another." The word translated "fellowship" is exactly the same word we saw in verse six. This idea of fellowship means that we are in perfect harmony with each other. If the believers indulge in evil practices, they should not be surprised when their fellowship with each other is destroyed. 2. The second consequence is that "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." His statement is very strong. Being cleansed from all sin requires evidence of a life which is free from evil. Observe that in this sentence John refers to Jesus as redeemer for the first time. This will prove to be very important to one of the main teachings in this letter.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. I John 1:8

Verse eight is a complete sentence. Again, the condition is, "IF we say we have no sin." In verses five through seven John presents Jesus as sinless. In verse eight, he deals with people who claim to be sinless. The import of such a claim is to suggest that they are as righteous as Jesus is. There were some in that area that held such a position. The consequence John suggested is two fold and very strong: 1. "We deceive ourselves." This word is very strong and means much more than simply being wrong. It is to seduce ourselves. 2. The second consequence means to be void of truth. To deny the deity of Jesus is to be doubly wrong: They deceive themselves and earn the reputation of total dishonesty.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9

Verse nine is also a complete sentence. Having addressed in this verse, the fact that we are all sinners, John turned his attention to God's dealing with our sin. Again, it is a conditional statement. The condition is "IF we confess our sins." The process of redemption can only begin with our confession of our sins. Notice the consequences John mentions. He begins by identifying the character of God – "He is faithful and righteous." This faithfulness and righteousness express themselves in forgiveness and cleansing. The word "forgive" means to pardon; to no longer hold one accountable for their sins. The word "cleanse" means to purify; to wash thoroughly. The forgiveness deals with the past. The cleansing deals with the present.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:10

Verse 10 is the concluding sentence in this paragraph. This is also a conditional statement. If you look carefully, you will note that verses eight and 10 are similar, but not identical. A better translation of verse eight might be, "we are having no sin" (present tense.) On the other hand, in verse 10 he described completed action – "we have not sinned." In both instances, John is dealing with participation in evil. The consequences in verse ten are two fold: First, we make God out to be a liar. The second part of this consequence is that God's word is not in us. It is a way of saying that we are at odds with His word and teaching.

Reflections For Our Times

1. There are some who are called and prepared to speak on behalf of God. It is extremely important that those who are called take this as seriously as they expect of those who hear their message.
2. Every human being, including us, is a sinner. All of us, therefore, are candidates for the message of forgiveness God has emphasized in John's writings.
3. There are consequences for our actions and choices. Our cultures would like us to think that there should be no consequences. Repeatedly in both the Old Testament and the New the consequences for wrong conduct and right conduct are emphasized.
4. Righteousness is the essential evidence of our relationship with Christ. We lose our permission to speak on behalf of Christ when our message and our conduct no longer match.



2

Dangers of Loving the World

I JOHN 2:1 – 3:3

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the student to understand how John dealt with very crucial issues:

- Encourage people not to sin, but to point to a remedy if they sin.
- Understand that the evidence of knowing God is obedience to His commands.
- Dealing with serious lack of love between Christians
- Point out the dangers of loving the world
- Identifying the forms of worldly practice
- Strong warning against antichrist.
- Reaffirm the things they were taught when they believed.

Lesson Outcomes

Upon completion of this study, the student will:

- Understand how John dealt with these crucial issues.
- Know how to deal with these same issues in the modern church.

The Study Of The Passage

There are six paragraphs in this portion of the book of I John. On the following table, you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

2:1-6	Christ Our Comforting Advocate
2:7-14	Abiding Is Evidenced in Obedience
2:15-17	Do Not Love The World
2:18-25	Warning Against Antichrists
2:26, 27	Instruction- Abide in Christ
2:28-3:3	Little Children: Abide and Purify Yourself

I John 2:1 – 6 – Christ Our Comforting Advocate

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: I John 2:1

In the first paragraph of chapter two, there are three sentences. Verses one and two form the first sentence. In this epistle, John addresses groups of people apparently identified by age. Actually, he is identifying people not by physical age, but rather by the level of their maturity in the things of God. He used the images of the family to make these designations. When John used these designations, it was a way to draw attention to a very serious warning.

He begins, "my little children." This is a way to identify a very young child; in this case he has used it as a term of endearment and to highlight their lack of spiritual growth. He said, "I am writing to you that you might not sin." The way he has written this it is possible that they will not sin, but without due caution they might sin. You will note that he proceeded by suggesting what they could do if they did sin.

This is a conditional statement – "IF any man sin." The word "then" is understood. The consequence is "we have an advocate with the Father..." The word translated "advocate" is the word used to describe an attorney who represents a person in court. It describes His intercession on our behalf before the Father. It is the same word the New Testament used to describe the Holy Spirit. John states that Jesus Christ is the advocate who intercedes for us before the Father. Observe that John again highlights the righteousness of Jesus. This was essential since there were some in these congregations who did not believe in the total righteousness of Jesus.

And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. 1 John 2:2

Verse two is the conclusion of this first sentence in the paragraph. The word "and" indicates that this is a continuation of the thought in 2:1. The use of "He HIMSELF," in the Greek text, indicates that this is a statement of strong emphasis. John said that Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins." Every Jew among the recipients would know exactly what John meant. The word he used means that which makes atonement; the means of reconciliation. Jesus is the means whereby our sin is covered and thus forgiven. Notice that John makes this a universal offering – "for the whole world." (as we go through the epistle we will note the many ministries and qualities John ascribes to Jesus. We will speak carefully of this shortly.)

As indicated in the first lesson, this letter was addressed to a group of believers made up extensively of both Jews and Gentiles. John continued, "Not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." His use of the word "ours" makes it plain that the preponderance of his audience were Jews, but contrary to the thinking of many Jews, this release from guilt was made available to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 1 John 2:3

This verse is a complete sentence and actually begins with the word "and." This indicates that he is continuing the thought of the previous verse. In this verse, the word "know" appears twice. In the New Testament there are three different words that are all translated "know." 1. Ginosko – (ginwvskw) means to be increasing in knowledge. 2. Oida (oi^da) means to know absolutely. 3. Epiginosko (e*piginwvskw) means superior knowledge. John carefully used the word "ginosko" in both instances. It was important that he use the term which means increasing in knowledge since Jesus is all knowing and we are not.

Verse three is a conditional statement written in reverse. The consequence appears first and then the condition. The word translated “keep” means to guard; protect; keep intact. This is more than simply obeying the commands. John made a subtle point the Jews would sense immediately. He spoke of Jesus’ instructions in exactly the same way they would speak of the Ten Commandments. Obedience is the key. It tells us whether we “know” Jesus or not. Only if we obey His commandments can we honestly say we “know” Jesus.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. I John 2:4

The balance of this paragraph, verses four through six, form a single sentence. In this verse, John will essentially repeat the message of verse three, but in different format. Repetition always signifies emphasis. He presents this truth in a pair of contradictory statements. A person says that they “know” Jesus, but they do not obey and defend His instructions. This would be a contradiction. John used repetition to add serious emphasis to his statement. He first said that such a person is a liar. He then said the same thing, but in different words. Such a person does not have the truth in him. This is about as strongly emphasized as John could make it. He is building a case to show just how important it is to obey the commands of Jesus.

But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. I John 2:5

The use of the word “but” indicates that we are in the midst of a contrast. The contrasted elements are: 1. Those who do not keep God’s commandments as mentioned in verse four. 2. Those who keep God’s word as described in verse five. John said, “whoever keeps His word.” The word translated “keeps” is exactly the same word we saw in verse four. It means both to obey and to defend. The word translated “word” is a way to describe Jesus’ life and teachings. John spoke of “the Love of God.” This is that quality of God which characterizes everything God is, says or does. In the believer, it is a quality of character that enables him to be Christlike. The use of the word “truly” adds serious emphasis to the statement. John said that in such a person the love of God is “perfected.” This word means to make complete; to qualify one to stand before God and dwell in His presence. It does not mean sinless perfection. You see this repeated in Hebrews 7:19 and 10:14. John concludes the verse by saying that in this obedience we know that we are in Him. The word “in” usually designates a place or location. It is also used to identify an intimate relationship as it does in this instance. It is a relationship in which we are in harmony with what Jesus is and does.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked. I John 2:6

Two words in this verse need clarification in order to understand what John was trying to say. The word “abide” or “dwell” means to take up residence. David used this idea when he wrote in Psalm 27.

One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4

Guests were welcomed to stay for three days, but only family could stay indefinitely. Remember, David lived in the most beautiful palace, but God's house was a tent. David was not talking about a place to live, but about his desire to be family with God. John dealt with the same idea. Only those with whom you agree and are at peace may even enter one's house much less dwell there. John was saying if anyone is at peace, like family, with God, then that person should walk as God walks. The word "walk" is the second word which needs clarification. It is also to be fascinated, preoccupied with the greatness and wonder of God. To "walk" does not mean to just put one foot in front of the other. It is a description of the way you live your life. We should live our lives as Jesus lived His life.

I John 2:7-14 – Abiding Is Evidenced In Obedience

Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. I John 2:7

John begins by referring to his readers as "beloved." This word identifies love that has no limits or prerequisites. It is to be loved just because you are. There is a New Testament pattern which John has used. When an author is about to present a very important, but difficult issue, the identifier "beloved" or "brethren" will often appear. This is particularly important as John will point out later. There is a problem in terms of loving each other among these people.

This verse is John's way of saying that he is reminding them of something that he had taught them from the beginning of their walk with God.

Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. I John 2:8

The word translated "again" identifies a turn of thought concerning a previous statement. The words "I am writing a new commandment" seem like a contradiction of his statement in verse seven. How does one view this? First he said he was not writing a new commandment. Now he writes that he is writing a new commandment. The mention of "old" and "new" are a means of adding emphasis to John's instructions. Whatever else is true, he is giving them a commandment. They are "old" commands which they had been taught when they first believed. They are "new commands" in that they have not focused their attention on them in a long time.

John begins by affirming that this is true "in Him." John added the words "in Him" because the apostolic commands do not make sense by worldly standards. Yet, these commands are reasonable from a heavenly vantage point. John continued, "Which thing is true in Him and in you." It is a way to say that the command he is about to give is considered reasonable both for God and for His people.

The word translated "because" is usually translated "so that" and indicates that a statement of purpose is coming. The reason he gave is, "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." We must keep in mind that John has used two images in this statement which he has used before. "Darkness" is an

image that reminds us of evil. The “light” is the opposite image, righteousness and goodness. This assertion is the basis upon which he will build his instructions in the rest of the paragraph.

He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. 1 John 2:9

In this verse, John uses the images of “darkness” and “light” again. He was saying, if a person is in the light; if he claims to be righteous, and at the same time he hates his brother, that person is in the darkness; he is evil. In this instruction, John was saying that the claim to righteousness and hatred for a fellow believer is a contradiction. This is not a new commandment. He has given it earlier in this chapter and certainly had taught them this when they became Christians.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. 1 John 2:10

This is a contrast with verse nine. In this verse, John demonstrated that he had listened carefully to the teachings of Jesus. Often Jesus would teach them what the message was not before telling them what it is. In verse nine, John told these people what Christians should not be. Now in verse ten he told them how the Christians should conduct themselves. Here, John carefully included an additional piece of information to his teaching. First he said that those who love their brother with unconditional love are righteous. He then added, that such a lifestyle would provide no occasion which would cause someone else to stumble in their walk with God. This is very important because we will be held accountable if we do damage to someone else’s walk with God.

But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes. 1 John 2:11

The use of the word “but” indicates that we are in the midst of a strong contrast. The things he contrasted were: 1. Those who love their brothers as mentioned in 2:10. 2. Those who hate their Christian brother as mentioned in 2:11. In this verse, John lists four consequences of hating one’s brother:

- A. He is “in darkness” which is a way to describe evil.
- B. He walks in darkness. The word “walk” is a description of the way one lives their life. He said they were in darkness – Evil.
- C. They do not know where they are going. You may remember the report of three words that are all translated “to know.” The word here means to know absolutely. It is a way of saying the person who hates his Christian brother lives a life of total confusion.
- D. Darkness has blinded their eyes. There are consequences which occur when one disobediendly hates his brother. One of those consequences is that one becomes unable to discern the difference between good and evil. Indeed, a person or culture may decline to the point where they think that evil is good and good is evil.

John has gone to great lengths to deal with the issue of hating one’s brother. This is simply because this was a serious issue in the churches to whom John was writing. Too often, Christians feel perfectly free to allow themselves to sustain a hateful relationship with a fellow Christian. John is carefully pointing out that this is the epitome of evil.

Our question is: Has John given a new commandment or not? Earlier we pointed out his command was not new. Apparently, John taught them this when they became Christians. On the other hand, in verses eight and following, John has added a depth of explanation that the command did not have previously.

I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I John 2:12

In this first epistle, John addresses three age groups. He did not explain this presentation. It appears that John is addressing three groups on the basis of their Christian maturity. In verse 12, he addressed those whom he called "little children." It appears that though these people had been Christians for a long time, their maturing in the faith had hardly begun. If you look at his message to these people, it seems appropriate for their understanding. He talked about their forgiveness. Notice, however, that he adds, "for His name's sake." Names had a far different meaning for them than they have for us. One's name was the symbol of his authority. When we pray "in the name of Jesus," we pray in His authority because He invited us to pray. John was saying to these new believers that they had been forgiven on account of the authority of the name of Jesus.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father. I John 2:13

Keep in mind that verses 12 – 14 are written in a style much like one of the Psalms. Indeed, the last part of verse 12 is a quotation from Psalm 25:11.

John wrote, "I write you fathers." These are apparently a group of believers who have followed Christ for a long time and are very mature in their Christian life. To these people he wrote, "Because you know Him who is from the beginning." The word translated "to know" is the word which describes knowledge which is constantly growing. He wrote these people because they are knowing God.

John then addressed a group he called "young men." Again, John did not clarify this designation. We can assume he was directing his remarks to people who are young in their faith, but not beginners. Notice the reason that John offers for this contact – "Because you have overcome the evil one." As indicated in lesson one, the recipients of this epistle were undergoing severe persecution. John was saying that these believers were victorious over their enemy of their souls.

Finally, John addressed a third group whom he referred to as "little children." In the Greek text, the words in verse 13, "I have written to you little children because you know the Father," are the opening statement in verse 14. We will deal with them in that order. Again, when he addressed them as "little children" it was a way to refer to their failed maturity in the faith rather than their age.

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. I John 2:14

Again, it appears that the words that are at the end of verse 13 in the English texts are the opening statement in verse 14 in the Greek text. When John spoke of “little children” it appears that he was addressing a group of new believers. His affirmation of their relationship with God is fascinating. He said, “You know the Father.” The word translated “know” is the same word we saw in verse 13 where John was speaking to the “Fathers.” It is to increase in knowledge. This statement makes it abundantly clear that these “children” are believers whose relationship with God is quite real.

John addressed the “young men” group a second time. The author gave us three pieces of information about these “young men:” 1. He said, “You are strong.” This is a spiritual descriptive rather than a physical one. This kind of strength is essential in situations such as the one in which these believers lived. 2. He said, “The word of God abides in you.” The use of the word “abides” describes a relationship, not a location. Again, two people in that culture would not associate with each other unless they were in total agreement. John was saying that these “young men” were in peaceful agreement with the word of God and practiced it. 3. He said, “You have overcome the evil one.” We are reminded that John is writing to believers undergoing severe persecution. He was saying that these “young men” were standing true to their faith in Christ despite intense temptation and severe persecution.

As you review the content of this portion of the book, it is clear that their struggle is many-sided. There is a tension that increases between people who are enduring nearly impossible situations. These tensions and emotions tend to increase as pressure rises. A second form of opposition arises for tense, struggling people. God’s word instructs them to love each other, but their relationships are anything but loving. This adds disobedience to their struggle with persecution. There will be more, but at this point, John has highlighted these problems.

I John 2:15-17 – Do Not Love The World

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I John 2:15

In this paragraph, John is further explaining his claims from the previous paragraph. You will note that the language is much stronger.

This is a strong command – “Do not love the world.” Literally, John said, “do not **be loving** the world.” He described a lifestyle; a way of life that loves the world unconditionally. The word “world” is used in two different ways in the New Testament. It describes all creation. It also identifies that way of life which is contrary to God and His will for His people.

Having given a very strong command, he proceeded to make it even stronger and broader – “nor the things of the world.” This would include worldly values – possessions, position, acclaim, power, etc. He is essentially saying do not make a lifestyle for yourself which is governed by the cultural rules which are contrary to God.

John wanted to make his statement even stronger by saying essentially the same thing in a different way. This adds very serious emphasis to the statement. He used a conditional statement to produce this tremendous emphasis. The condition is very clear – “IF anyone loves the world.” A better translation might be, “if anyone may be loving the world.” He has described a lifestyle.

The consequences of this condition are equally clear, “(then) the love of the father is not being in Him.” He is saying one cannot be a child of God and love the ways of the world which some were apparently trying to do.

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

The word translated “for” is usually translated “that.” John, however, liked to use this word to give deeper explanation of an announced principle. (see John 11:13). In this verse, John continues to describe the difference between the people of God and the people of the world. He is describing the things that are a part of the world and their values. He lists three characteristics that are central in the values of the world:

- 1. THE LUST OF THE FLESH** – The word “lust” is unrestrained desire for something forbidden. The reference to the flesh is often used as a descriptive of the sexual or procreative drive.
- 2. THE LUST OF THE EYE** – Again, the word “lust” is exactly the same as in the previous description. The word “eye” was used to identify envy or greed for the forbidden in a variety of areas.
- 3. THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE** - this is false pride, conceit and arrogance.

Observe that all three of these characteristics are descriptive of characteristics that can be good, natural desires. John had to mention these because they were primary drives in that culture and not used in a righteous way. John tells them first what these things are not – they are not from God and thus God’s people must have no part in these extremes. He then told them what they are – They are of the world. The reference to the “world” is a reference to the enemies of God. John includes all the values of “the world” in this denunciation. He draws a clear line of separation between those who follow after God and those of the world. He wants these people to see that they cannot indulge in any of the things of the world and then claim to be people of God.

And the world is passing away, and also its lusts: but he that does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:17

The use of the word “and” ties the content of this verse to that of the two previous verses. In these verses, John has identified the evil of the world and he will now give an additional piece of information in the form of a contrast. The contrast is between the world and those determined to do the will of God. John said, the world and its forbidden lusts are passing away. On the other hand, those who are doing the will of God abide forever. The point of the argument is that the world is being defeated and the obedient are becoming victorious.

1 John 2:18 – 25 – Warning Against Antichrists

Children, it is the last hour: and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18

John’s argument will now take a drastic change of direction. He addressed these remarks, in 2:18-25, to the group called “children.” As explained earlier, it is appropriate to think of these people, whatever their age, as believers in terms of their lack of maturity. In the previous paragraphs, he spoke of the sharp difference between the world and those obedient to God. He now turns his attention to events surrounding what he called “the last hour.”

John's statement here is very emphatic. He said, "As you heard that antichrist is coming." These believers have been taught about antichrist. Earlier it was explained that these believers were being attacked by docetists who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. This is an antichristian position. John's point is that there are many antichrists at this point. These docetists were certainly antichristian. John continued his line of thought saying that this fact is evidence that these believers "know" that this is the "last hour." We must look at what John meant by "last hour." The word translated "know" is the one that speaks of increasing knowledge. John does not describe "last hour" in great detail. The evidence he points to is that the teaching of the "last hour" includes the opposition of antichrist. Now, there were many who pressed strongly on their antichristian belief and persecuted those who did not agree with them. There is difference of opinion among believers about whether there is just one "last hour" or if there have been several.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us: but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. I John 2:19

The statement, "they went out from us," is a way of saying that these people who no longer believe that Jesus is the Son of God were once a part of the church, but are no longer. The use of the word "but" indicates that we are in the midst of a very strong contrast. The contrasted elements are: 1. These people were a part of the fellowship of believers. 2. But, they were not "from us" – believers. John followed this very strong contrast with a conditional explanation. The condition is, "IF they had been of us." He was saying if they had been believers. The consequence is "(THEN) they would have remained with us." He was saying their absence from the fellowship is evidence that they are not children of God. In the balance of the verse, he repeated the reasoning in order to place strong emphasis on the point. Again, the use of the word "but" indicates we are in the midst of a very strong contrast. The contrasted elements are, again: 1. "They would have continued with us." 2. "But they went out."

The use of the word "that" indicates that a statement of purpose will follow: That statement is, "It might be shown they are not of us." As John points out the fact that these Gnostics, by their flight from the Christian fellowship, have demonstrated that they are not believers, he is also conveying another message. It is not appropriate for believers to compromise their faith in Christ because they are exposed to life-threatening persecution.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know. I John 2:20

The word translated "but" is almost always translated "and." The word "and" indicates a continuation of the previous thought. The Gnostics believed they had a special anointing which gave them increasing knowledge. John said that these believers had an anointing from the "holy one" – God. This is one of the ways both Paul and John refer to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. John further described their situation by saying, "you all know." The word "know" means absolute knowledge of everything. He was describing their superiority to the Gnostics. They have a ritual anointing; but you have an anointing by the Holy Spirit. They have increasing knowledge, but you have total knowledge. Their situation is far superior to that of the Gnostics.

I have not written to you because ye do not know the truth, but because ye do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. I John 2:21

In good Jewish teaching style, he told them why he was NOT writing to them in order to emphasize why he was writing to them. John's writing in this verse is intended to add strong emphasis to what he wrote. His purposes are to emphasize the reasons he wrote. They are: 1. He wrote them because they know the truth and are therefore accountable for it. 2. He wrote them because certain falsehoods were circulating and one can not deal in truth without confronting them.

Who is the liar but the one that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22

The way John wrote this verse was intended to add serious emphasis to the content. The word translated "liar" means one who speaks what is not true. In his gospel record, John used this word to speak of the devil. (John 8:44) The word translated "but" would be better translated "except" or "if not." In forceful terms, John states the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. Notice, he did not say this person was in error. He is ascribing intent to mislead to such a person. The person was saying something he knew was not true.

When he said "this is the antichrist," he is saying that "antichrist" is a movement; a way of thinking rather than a single person. The one who is "antichrist" is the one who denies; or repudiates both the Father and the Son. This, of course, is the position of the Gnostics.

Whoever denies the Son, does not have the Father: the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. 1 John 2:23

This verse is a continuation of the idea in verse 22. It is repetition in a contrast for the purpose of intense emphasis. He stated the negative position first. Though the words "IF...THEN" were not used, both parts of this contrast are presented in cause and effect form. The cause of the negative statement is "Whoever denies the son." This is a primary Gnostic concern. The effect part of the negative statement is, "does not have the Father." This is a very serious statement. He was saying that such a person is not a Christian; a child of God. On the positive side of this contrast, the cause is "The one who confesses the Son." It is a way of affirming that indeed, Jesus is the Son of God, our redeemer. The effect part of the positive statement is, "Has the Father also." It is a way of saying that this person is a believer; a child of God; redeemed by the Son.

As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 1 John 2:24

Up to this point, John has stated these principles in general terms. He will now make it personal; apply it to his recipients. He began the process by saying, "What you heard from the beginning." This is a way of saying from the time you accepted Christ you were instructed that Jesus is the flawless Son of God. He then commanded them, "Let that abide in you." John followed this command with a strong promise. This promise is in the form of a conditional statement. The condition is, "IF that which you heard from the beginning abides in you." This is a reference to their instruction that Jesus is the Son of God and their savior. The consequence of this promise is, "You also shall abide in the Son and in the Father."

And this is the promise which he Himself made to us: eternal life. 1 John 2:25

The use of the word “and” indicates that this verse is part of John’s message in 2:24. John said, “this is the promise which He Himself (GOD) made.” The use of the word “Himself” is a way to add very strong emphasis to the statement. This is made in the form of a covenant which cannot be changed. The promise is that those who accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Savior; they have eternal life. The other side of this promise is that for those who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God; they do not have eternal life.

1 John 2:26, 27 – Instruction: Abide In Christ

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 1 John 2:26

This verse is an explanation of John’s intent in this epistle. He wrote them concerning those who are deceiving them. The Greek text does not say, “those who are trying to deceive you.” It says, “Those who are deceiving you.” This is actually happening and John wants to stop it. This is an accusation. He is saying that the Gnostics know that they are deceiving these believers.

And as for you, the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as his anointing teaches you; about all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in him. 1 John 2:27

The use of the word “and” indicates that verse 27 is a continuation of the thought from verse 26. The word “anointing” was used in the Old Testament to symbolize one’s appointment to a task. It was also used to identify the empowerment for a specific task. In the New Testament, it is referred to as an enabling by the Holy Spirit who enables and teaches. John is telling his recipients that they have an anointing; an enabling by the Holy Spirit that never leaves them. This enabling teaches them everything they need to know in this very crucial time. There is a brief contrast in this sentence. The contrasting elements are: 1. the teachings of this enabling are true. 2. The teachings of this enabling are not a lie. This is a thinly veiled pointing at the Gnostic opposition which he has already said is a lie. This contrast is followed by a very strong command. Just as the Spirit has taught you, abide in Him. He is commanding the believers to continue in their early teaching of discipleship; never abandon it. This involves the development of a very intimate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

1 John 2:28 – 3:3 little children: abide and purify yourselves

And now, little children, abide in him; so that, when He appears, we may have confidence, and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 1 John 2:28

The words “and now” indicate that there is a change in direction of his thought. First, he addressed his instructions to “little children” which we earlier referred to as believers who have not matured in their faith. This is a very strong command. He commanded his recipients to abide in Christ. The use of “that” or “so that” tells us that a statement of purpose is coming. They were commanded to abide in Christ because Christ will be revealed. When that becomes true, then they would be embarrassed for having rejected Him. Indeed, they would have boldness in His presence. They would not be ashamed to stand in His presence. When Jesus appears, this would prove the Gnostic position to be false.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also who practices righteousness is born of him. 1 John 2:29

This verse is a conditional sentence. The condition is "IF you know that He is righteous." The word translated "know" means to know absolutely everything. The thought that Jesus was totally righteous contradicted everything a Gnostic believed. The consequence of this conditional statement is, "(THEN) you know that everyone who also practices righteousness is born of Him." Here, however, the word for "know" means increasing in knowledge. In fact, the form of the word is such that you would need to translate it, "you are knowing." Every person who never stops doing righteousness has been born of Him; is a child of God. This would be infuriating to the Gnostics because they thought of human beings as being incapable of righteousness.

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 1 John 3:1

Chapter three begins in the middle of a paragraph in the Greek text. The word "see" is literally a command. It should be literally translated, "you look," which was strongly emphasized. The words "how great" describes the unconditional love the Father has bestowed upon us. This statement is beautiful, but not yet very specific. John continued, "that we should be called children of God." This statement does two things: 1. First, it tells us how great that love really is. 2. It flies in the face of the Gnostic belief. For them, the thought of an absolutely evil person being the child of an absolutely pure and holy God was unthinkable. The foundation of idolatrous, demonic worship groups is that humanity is irreparably evil. John is taking a very strong stand against this false teaching which was working its way into the church fellowship. John's next statement was short and strong – "and such we are!"

The words translated "for this reason" indicates a purpose is being established. The word translated "know" means to be gaining in knowledge. John said that the world did not know us because they did not know God. The word "know" is the same in both instances. Being the child of a father, in that culture, had many facets, one of which was the child was required to emulate the father's character. This is what Paul meant in Ephesians 5:1 when he said, "be imitators of God." When the Gnostics saw a child of God they would know what God was like. The problem was that they did not believe that this was possible because of the total sinfulness of mankind. There is a subtle message involved when John said, "it did not know Him." The Gnostics pretended to be a part of the Christian fellowship. John made it very clear that they did not know God and they were unable to see the body of believers as His children.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2

John, again, begins this sentence calling the recipients' beloved." This involves two things: 1. He has strongly emphasized their need to love each other in the midst of persecution. 2. This is a term he used repeatedly when dealing with a most important issue.

Christians, characteristically, should be becoming increasingly like Jesus. We do not yet know how much like Him we will become in this life. What we do know for certain is that we shall be like Him. The word translated "like" means we shall be of the same nature; we shall resemble Him. That is outstanding. John followed this

statement with another that resonated with every Jewish person who read this letter. It was none other than Moses who pleaded with God, "Show me your glory." (Ex. 33:18-20) John said to his recipients, "we shall see Him as He is." Many people long for the heavenly streets of gold. The real promise has not so much to do with metallic streets as it does with the presence of the absolutely holy God. It is awe inspiring to think that we shall be like Him.

And every one who has this hope fixed on him purifieth himself, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:3

In verse three, John continued the idea of the previous verse. There are some people who talk about the hope of heaven, but they are not busy becoming purer than they were before. People who really have a hope of God's presence are busy making themselves pure. He then made it much clearer. They made themselves pure just as He is pure. They are busy becoming more and more like Jesus. This is the evidence that such people are really children of God.

Reflection For Our Time

1. We all do sin even after being forgiven. It is essential to seek forgiveness each time.
2. We can know for certain that we are forgiven
3. There are some absolute essentials in the Christian life.
4. Obedience is an essential evidence of abiding
5. Love of the brethren is an absolute essential in Christian walk
6. We can have; must have victory over evil in our lives.
7. We will always be under attack
8. We must be alert to shun the appeal of the world
9. The forces of antichrist are real and always present to attack our faith
10. The enemy continually resorts to lies and deceit in an attempt to destroy us
11. Jesus is the Son of God – this is a primary Christian belief which is not negotiable.
12. We have hope of the eternal presence of Jesus. This strengthens us in serious trial.



3

The World Hates Believers

I JOHN 3:4 – 24

Lesson Purpose

- Enable the student to delineate between the righteous – who practice righteousness and the worldly who practice sin.
- Enable the student to discern that loving each other is primary obedience.
- Enable the student to understand our basic relationship with the world – they will hate us just as they hated Jesus. This is normal Christian living.
- Enable the student to grasp the importance of obedience to answered prayer.

Lesson Outcomes

Upon completion of this study, the student will:

- Understand the drastic difference between the righteousness of the believer and the sin of the unbeliever.
- He will understand just how important it is to love the fellow believers.
- He will be prepared to face the hatred of the world vented against serious children of God.
- He will be able to understand the link between obedience and answered prayer.

There are three paragraphs in this portion of our study. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each paragraph.

3:4 - 10	Flee From The Practice of Sin
3:11-18	Brethren, Love One Another
3:19-24	Love: The Basis of Our Divine Relationship

I John 3:4 – 10 –Flee From The Practice Of Sin

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. I John 3:4

There is a contrast that exists between verses three and four. Verse three describes people of hope. Verse four describes people who practice sin. As we study this verse, we must keep in mind that the New Testament presents a serious difference between a single experience of sin and a person who practices sinfulness as a lifestyle. This difference usually expresses itself in the tense of the verb involved. In this verse, John literally

said, "everyone who sins and keeps on sinning. This is sinning as a lifestyle not a single act. He continued, saying that such a person also practices lawlessness as a lifestyle. The word "lawlessness" literally means not lawful; it is wickedness. John was describing sin as a lifestyle. It is to conduct oneself in a way that rejects the limits of all law. This is what the writer of Judges meant when he wrote, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25

And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 1 John 3:5

John used the word "know" on six occasions in chapter three. We will highlight each use of the word and identify which of the three words so translated that he used in each instance.

John said, "And you know." The word "and" indicates that John is continuing the idea that he dealt with in verse four. The word "know" is the word which describes absolute knowledge. The form of the word describes action which is completed. John said, "He appeared." The word "appeared" means to be revealed. We must note that two statements in this verse are a direct attack on the beliefs of the Gnostics. John said, "He appeared in order to take away sins." Gnostics did not believe that Jesus could "take away" or "lift off" sins as the text literally says. John is saying you were taught at the time of your forgiveness that Jesus took away your sins. He highlights the difference between what God's children believe and what the Gnostics taught.

John continued the contrast saying, "In Him (Jesus) there is no sin." The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus was sinless. Gnostics believed that human flesh itself was sinful. Therefore they would contend, as a human being, Jesus was totally sinful. John is confronting that false position.

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 1 John 3:6

Verse six is the statement of a principle and is stated in absolute terms. The principle is this, "No one (all) who abides in Him sins." This principle requires clarification. Every Jew would understand his use of the word 'abide.' A guest could remain in a Jewish home for three days whether he agreed with the family or not. Otherwise, no one even entered to home unless he was in total agreement. This is the reason the Pharisees challenged Jesus for eating with tax collectors. A person could not "abide" there if he was not family. This is what David meant when he wrote,

One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4

John was saying that as God's children we are required to emulate our Father's character and lifestyle. Some have used this verse to say that Christians must be sinlessly perfect. That is not what John said. He said children of God do not sin and keep on sinning.

In the balance of the verse, John relates the principle from the negative perspective. John said, "No one who sins has seen Him or known Him." The word "sins" is literally translated "sins and never stops sinning." Three times in the first paragraph of this epistle (1:1-4) John defended his apostleship saying that he had seen and heard the ministry and teaching of Jesus. When he said such people have not seen the Lord, he was saying

that they have no apostolic credentials that people should obey their instructions, but John did have. John also said that these people have not “known” Jesus. The word “know” means to increase in knowledge.

Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. I John 3:7

In this verse, John again addresses the “little children” as believers who have not matured in their faith. He began with a command, “Let no one deceive you.” The word “deceive” means to cause to wander to lead astray. John had to say this because it was happening and it needed to stop. He was literally saying, the one who never stops doing righteousness is righteous. The word “righteous” means to be upright; to be just. It has to do with integrity.

John concluded the verse with the words, “as He is righteous.” The righteousness of Jesus is the pattern for the lifestyle of the children of God. We must follow the example of Jesus and be upright and just as He is.

The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil. I John 3:8

Having described the way children of God conduct themselves, he will now describe the opposition. He presented this as a principle. The principle is, “The one who practices sin is of the devil.” Observe, again, that he did not speak of a person who committed a sinful act, but one who practices and goes on practicing sin. He identified these people as “of the devil.” It is a way to describe one’s allegiance. The previous, righteous group was “of God.” This unrighteous group is identified as “of the devil.” This, also, is a stunning attack on the Gnostic practitioners. The use of the word “for” indicates that the author is going to present a reason for saying, “the one who practices sin is of the devil.” His reason is, “the devil has sinned from the beginning.” In the Genesis account, satan lied to our first parents and attempted to mislead them into rebellion against God’s specific command. His name, which means “accuser” and “slanderer” is well deserved. John presented additional information concerning the ministry of Jesus. He said, “that He might destroy the works of the devil.” This statement emphasizes the state of war that exists between the people of God and the forces of evil. The recipients needed to be reminded that this is the background of the struggle for their minds and hearts over the issues John has raised.

No one who is born of God practices sin, because his seed abides in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. I John 3:9

In this verse, John reiterates a principle he has previously emphasized. People who are born of God do not live a sinful lifestyle. This is one way one can tell whether a person is born of God or not. There were those who believed that once a person was born of God they could live a sinful lifestyle because they were free from the law.

The use of the word “because” indicates that an explanation is coming. His explanation is, “his seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” Again, every Jewish person among the readers of the epistle would completely understand what John meant. In that culture, every child was required to live a lifestyle that reflected the values of his father. When John wrote, “his seed abides in him,” he was saying that this person was a child of God and was required to live a life which reflected his father’s values.

Instead of “he cannot sin,” a better translation would be, “he is not able to be sinning.” He cannot live a sinful lifestyle. John concluded the verse by repeating a previous statement, “Because he is born of God.” This is a repeat of the emphasis on family conduct.

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:10

Verse 10 is an application of the principles John has already established. The words “By this” refer to the principles in verses eight and nine. John is saying that on the basis of these principles, the children of God and the children of the devil are clearly distinguishable from each other. He again spells out the difference between the two. He said, “Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God.” One can discover two truths from this statement. 1. A person who does righteousness is a child of God. 2. A person who does not do righteousness is not a child of God no matter what he may think or say. The second application is, “Nor the one who does not love his brother.” Again, there are two truths here: 1. The person who loves his brother is of God. 2. The person who does not love his brother is of the devil. He may be a leader of the church; he may give generously to the needs of the congregation; no matter what else he does, if he does not love his brother, he is not of God.

1 John 3:11 – 18 – Brethren, Love One Another

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: 1 John 3:11

The use of the word “for” indicates that John will now provide a reason. Both the word order and the forms of the words indicate that this is a very strongly emphasized statement. He said, “This is the message you have heard from the beginning.” This is not a new teaching. The other side of this statement is that they have been being taught this from the time they accepted Christ. The fact that John mentioned it repeatedly makes it clear that though this has been taught since they believed, still it was a command they were not obeying. Love must be the essence of their faith.

Not as Cain who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. 1 John 3:12

Having strongly stated the principle, he will now illustrate it by his reference to Cain. This is a negative illustration. John spoke very carefully. He listed two facts about Cain: 1. He was of the evil one; the devil. 2. Cain committed murder, which is a sin. Now, when people think of Cain, they think of his sin as murder and it is, but it is more than that. He did not have a right relationship with God that expressed itself in his relationship to his brother.

He continued forcibly with his explanation. Cain slew Abel because his own works were evil and Abel’s actions were righteous. John has illustrated the relationship between the children of God and the children of the devil. The children of God are righteous; loving. The children of the devil are unrighteous; hateful. This always leads to jealousy.

Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. 1 John 3:13

Observe that in the midst of his further explanation, John again refers to his readers as “brethren.” Each time this occurs you will find John in the midst of a very difficult, but extremely important teaching. This one is no exception. Having explained the confrontational relationship between the righteous and the unrighteous, he now applies it to the situation where these people live. Their persecution is the natural result when their righteousness encounters the unrighteousness of their persecutors. This is extremely important because under the pressure of life threatening persecution, people tend to miss the fact that this is the natural result of their righteousness confronting the unrighteousness of their persecutors.

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. I John 3:14

John continued his instruction about love, “We know that we have passed from death unto life.” The word translated “know” means absolute knowledge. The form of this word indicates that this is totally completed action. The New Testament uses several images to describe one’s spiritual condition. Previously, John used the image of light to describe one’s salvation and the image of darkness to describe spiritual lostness. Here he has used the image of death to describe one who is unsaved and the image of life to identify one whose sins have been forgiven. He makes the statement twice for emphasis. First, he said it positively saying, “we are absolutely sure we moved from being unsaved to being saved because we love the brethren. He then presented it negatively, saying, ‘the ones who do not keep loving their brethren keep on abiding in death – being unsaved. The ultimate assurance of our salvation is not a positive feeling, but the very visible presence of love for the brethren.

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. I John 3:15

This verse is written as another principle, but it deals with an issue which he has covered more than once in this chapter. In this verse, John repeats Jesus’ message from the sermon on the mount. He said, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.” This is not a new teaching for these suffering Christians. It adds a whole different level of importance to the command to love each other. His closing statement adds even greater emphasis. He is frankly saying that anyone who hates his brother does not have eternal life.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. I John 3:16

The word translated “know” is the word that expresses increasing knowledge. The form of the word represents action which is absolutely complete. There are three words which are translated “love.” The first is unconditional love that has no prerequisites. It is to love just because the person is. There are no limits. The next word might better be translated “like.” It is love with definite limits. It is a responsive form of love. The third expression of love is sensual. In this verse, the word “love” means unconditional love; an active form of love, not reactive. John was saying we have an increasing knowledge of love as we observe the way Jesus laid down his life on our behalf. John continued by saying that we should follow His example and lay down our lives for each other. This is a message that is seldom emphasized in our time.

But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? I John 3:17

The use of the word "but" indicates a contrast is in process. The contrasted elements are: 1. In verse 16, the willingness to lay down one's life for a brother is highlighted. 2. The preparedness to share your belongings with those in need when you don't know where you could get a replacement. John was saying that these are similar expressions of love which are required of us but the two are quite different.

In this verse, John states the principle in a different way. He was saying that if we have worldly possessions and see a brother in need and close our hearts (literally the stomach which they considered the seat of tender emotions.) Then there is no way the Love of God abides in us. This was obviously a problem within this fellowship. It is not surprising that Luke chose to include the way the believers shared with each other at great cost in the midst of their life-threatening persecution.

Little children, let us not love with word, or with tongue; but in deed and truth. I John 3:18

Again, John addressed these believers as "little children." As in each case, it signals a very important issue is under consideration and he wants them to take it seriously. Once again he dealt with the need for love within the body of believers. There are two statements in this verse. In good Jewish style, he first told them what it is not and then told them what it is. They are not to love simply in the things they say. They are to love in deed and truth. The inclusion of the word "truth" is a way of saying it is dishonest to talk lovingly and then do nothing which shows that these words are real.

I John 3:19 – 24 – Love: The Basis Of Our Divine Relationship

We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: In whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things. I John 3:19-20

It is essential to consider these two verses together. The use of the word "know" means increasing in knowledge. The words "by this" are a reference to John's statement in 3:18 to the effect that our love is clear in our actions, not our words. He is saying that when our love is in our actions not our words, it makes it clear that we are what we claim to be.

The word translated "assure" means to convince or persuade. He was saying that before God we will convince our hearts to the point that IF (conditional statement) our heart knows something against us; some place where we were less than we know God wants us to be, (then) we need to remember that God is greater than our heart. John continued with emphasis, "He knows all things." This is an important addition because these believers were painfully aware of their failures. The Gnostics and docetists were quick to remind them about every little fault. John is reminding them that even if we do fail, God is greater than our feeling of guilt and enables us to stand before God as though we never faltered at all. This would be a direct confrontation for the Gnostics who believed that no human being could stand before God without unimaginable fear.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; I John 3:21

Having established that God is all knowing and enables us to stand before Him without fear even if our heart condemns us, he then turned to deal with what happens when our heart does not condemn us. John teaches that we have boldness. Perhaps a better translation would be “confidence.” Observe that he again begins the verse with the word “beloved”. Once more, he is speaking of a very crucial issue when he used this term to identify his readers.

And whatsoever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight. I John 3:22

This is what the Psalmist dealt with when he wrote, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18. Obedience to God’s commands is the key to answered prayer. In the context of our heart not condemning us, John is saying God will give us what we ask.

He is going to repeat the reason he has just mentioned. First he said, “Because we keep His commandments.” He continued “(We) are pleasing in His sight.” Though he used different words, the message is precisely the same. Repetition produces emphasis. So often in the church the emphasis is on the fact that God will grant our prayers, but nothing is said about the condition of obedience.

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. I John 3:23

Having established what God does when we are obedient, John now identifies a command that God intends for us to obey. There are two commands in this verse which John repeatedly mentions together. The first is “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” You may remember what was written earlier about their use of “name.” John used the word as a description of the authority of Jesus Christ. The second command is, “Love one another.” In the church there is ample teaching on obedience, but one seldom hears anything about the required love relationship which must exist among the children of God.

And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.. I John 3:24

This verse begins with the word “and” as did verses 22 and 23. This indicates that 3:21-24 deal with the same idea – the blessing of obeying God’s commands. Verse 24 is a conditional statement. The condition is, “The one who keeps His commandments...” This is a plain statement about obedience. The consequence of this condition is, “Abides in Him and He in him.”

We mentioned earlier about the intent of “abiding.” Obedience is the vital condition to a harmonious family relationship with God. It means we are at peace with God. John continued, “and He in him.” God is also at peace with the obedient individual. What a blessing! John, however, was not finished. He said, “And we know by this...” The word “know” is again increasing in knowledge. The form of this word further stresses this increasing knowledge. This is the eighth time John has used the word ‘know’ in this chapter. (28 times in the epistle) This is hardly coincidental when he is instructing people struggling with the problem of Gnosticism. John said, “We know this...by the Spirit whom He has given us.” There were people in that fellowship who did

not believe that we can know beyond a doubt that we are children of God. John has shown them how they can be certain that they have eternal life – he mentioned obedience and love of the brethren. He has now given them a third proof – the witness of the Holy Spirit which confirms that eternal family membership. There is a fact here that some might miss, but every Jew would realize it immediately. Any one of these of these three pieces of evidence would have been convincing. The Jew would remember, however, that two or three witnesses establish truth. (Deuteronomy 17:6) It is on this note that John finishes this part of the message.

Reflections For Our Lives

- There is a difference between a sin and a sinful lifestyle
- Jesus is the sinless Son of God
- Jesus came to take away our sins. This is our basic message.
- Righteous action is the evidence of a righteous life.
- The world will hate believers. This is a normal condition.
- Love is our basic relationship
 1. If we hate our brother it is a sin – no eternal life
 2. Jesus is the example of love we must follow.
 3. Loving believers is essential to answered prayer
 4. Loving believers is essential to abiding in Christ.



4

Loving God and Others

JOHN 4:1 – 21

Lesson Purpose

- Establish a basis for testing the spirits.
- Enable the student to understand love – both God's and ours.
- Explain the nature and benefits of the love we are commanded

Lesson Outcomes

Upon completion of this study, the student will:

- He will know how to test the spirits that appeal for his attention and allegiance.
- He will have an understanding of the nature of love without limits
- He will have an awareness of the benefits; the consequences of obeying the command to love.

There are four paragraphs in this passage of Scripture. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

4:1-6	Test the Spirits
4:7-12	Loving others – evidence of Knowing God
4:13-16A	God's Love Evidenced in Redemption
4:16B-21	The Results of Loving God

I John 4:1 – 6 – Test The Spirits

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. I John 4:1

Again, John begins the paragraph calling these believers "beloved." This is interesting. This is a body of believers who have caused John no end of distress by their spiritual weakness and faltering stand against serious persecution. He repeatedly urged them to love each other and here, again, calls them "beloved" the fourth time – six times in the entire epistle. As previously indicated this term is used to introduce serious comment about the most important issues.

John does not explain the background of his instructions concerning the spirits. Because he gave the commands concerning false spirits, it is safe to assume that there were problems concerning evil spirits. John said, "Do not believe every spirit." This suggests that there were not only evil spirits, but also a problem knowing which spirits were of God and which were of the evil one. This verse contains a contrast. The contrasted elements are: 1. The warning not to believe every spirit. This is important because evil spirits present themselves as angels of light. 2. The second element of the contrast was the second command to examine, to test every spirit to see whether they are from God. He states as a fact that, "many false prophets have gone out into the world."

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. 1 John 4:2

In this verse, John explains to his readers how they can examine each spirit. He began by telling them how to identify the Spirit of God. He said, "Every spirit that confesses (bears witness, acknowledges) that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." This is a direct attack on the Gnostics who claim that Jesus could not be Messiah come in the flesh because all flesh is evil. This is the absolute test whether a spirit is of God or satan.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 1 John 4:3

The use of the word "and" indicates that verse three is a continuation of the teaching in verse two. John told them how to identify a spirit which is not of God. He said, "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." He then identified those who do not confess Jesus as being the spirit of antichrist. First he told them what these spirits are not and then tells them what they are. John added an additional piece of information. He said, "You have heard that it is coming." This tells us these believers had been taught concerning the attack of antichrist.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4

John again addresses the recipients as "little children." He said, "you are of God." In view of his statement in verse three, he is saying that these people still do confess Jesus. John also said, "(You) have overcome them." The Gnostics tried to destroy their faith in the divinity of Jesus, but at this point had not been able to complete that goal.

John then explained why these people had been able to overcome their persecutors. He said, "Because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Their stand was due to the power of God and not in their own strength.

They are from the world: therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 1 John 4:5

John is teaching these new believers about the forces of evil and those of God. In the process, he stressed the fact that these are opposing enemy forces to each other. He emphasizes this fact by serious repetition.

John intensified the emphasis by saying, 'THEY THEMSELVES are from the world.' This identifies their nature and allegiance. The word translated "therefore" is almost always translated "through" and this would be a more accurate translation. John said, "They are speaking from the world." He was saying that these people of the world say the things the world believes and teaches.

John frankly asserts that the people who are not "of God" "are hearing them." The word translated "hearing" means hearing the sound, but there is more. By "hearing" John also meant that they understood and obeyed the message they heard.

We are from God, he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. I John 4:6

Verse six is a strong contrast to verse five. The contrasting statements deal with those "from the world" in verse five and those who are "of God" as described in verse six.

The opening statement in verse six is very forceful. "We are from the God." The addition of the word "THE" emphasizes the fact that there is only one God. Speaking to believers who are struggling with Gnosticism, which means "knowledge," John again said, "the one **knowing** THE God heareth us." Again, the word translated "knowing" means increasing in knowledge. The inference is that those who do not hear John do not know God. The word "knoweth" means increasing in knowledge. When John said, "Does not listen to us" he meant more than the ability to hear sound. It means both to hear and to accept. The next statement adds even greater emphasis, saying literally, "He who is not from THE God, heareth us not." This is repetition which intends to add serious emphasis.

John concluded the verse saying, "By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The word translated "know" means increasing knowledge. In this statement, John has emphasized, again, the serious division between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. He wants them to know that this is much more than simply a difference of opinion. It identifies whether or not one is identified with God or with satan.

I John 4:7-12 – Loving Others – Evidence Of Knowing God

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. I John 4:7

This is the fifth of six times that John refers to his readers as "beloved." He was practicing what he was teaching. The believers in this area had been difficult to lead and teach. These believers had serious problems with the lovelessness that was so obvious for all to see. He is giving them a very serious command, but he did it in such a way that it appears to be a gentle encouragement. The word "for" indicates an explanation is coming. He said they ought to love each other, "Because the love is from the God." Gently hinted in these words are several important truths: 1. Love does not come because people take special care to be loving. Love finds its

origin in God because God is love. They can not create love, but they can be open for God to express His love: His character through them. 2. Because every person who loves is born of God, it means that the ability to love one another is a unique quality that is a part of being a child of the one who is love. No one else is really capable of this quality. It is part of the heritage of those who emulate the character of their Father – God. 3. Loving each other is an essential element in knowing God. (here, the word “knowing” describes increasing knowledge.) This is a serious charge. These people are having a problem with loving each other. He was inferring that if they cannot love each other, then they also cannot claim to know God.

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:8

In this verse, John will strongly emphasize what he said in verse seven. This is the way emphasis is added to the scriptural statements. He said, “the one who does not love does not know God.” The word translated ‘know’ means increasing knowledge. “Knowing God” is more than an intellectual exercise. It involves practicing His nature and character in our relationships with each other.

He explained, “For God is love.” This statement is in the form of a definition, but it does not define God. It rather defines love. You might say it another way, Love is what you see God being and doing.

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 1 John 4:9

John continued his explanation saying, “by this the love of the God was manifested in us.” John was preparing his readers for a description of God’s love. This would be a shock to people who were being told that God was an angry God who delighted in punishing people. They were being told that Jesus was not the Son of God and certainly not their savior. To these people, John said, ‘God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.’ Imagine this being written to people who were otherwise being told that Jesus is not divine and not our Savior. Though this is a passage dealing with love, John is being quite confrontational with these believers.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

John’s intent in this verse is to give his readers an image of what the love of God is like. He did that in good Jewish teaching style – he first pointed out what love is not and then proceeded to tell them what love is. The word translated “love” describes a form of love that has no boundaries or limits. It is an active form of love, not a responsive form. God loves just because He loves, even when we reject and rebel against Him.

It is difficult to say that we love God with this kind of love. Our love, in this life, is a response to all the love He has shown us in giving us life, provision, protection and even forgiveness of our sins against Him. That love on our part is at best a response to His selfless love. This is a different kind of love.

John then pointed out what this love is. He said, “He sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. This is sacrificial love and very costly to God. Our love for Him, however, is not that costly at all. There was no compelling

reason for His sacrifice except the fact that He loved rebellious people. John used the word “propitiation” which means to reconcile alienated people. Our sin alienated us from God. Sacrifices would not, could not bring reconciliation. There was a price; a penalty to be paid. He sent His Son to pay that penalty which we could not pay. That is sacrificial love. That is what John wants to see displayed among these children of God toward each other.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. I John 4:11

This is the fifth time that John addressed his readers as “beloved.” In each instance it was at a point where he was drawing attention to a very important issue. It is not different here. This is a conditional statement. The condition is one he has repeated several times, “IF God so loved us.” The consequence of this condition is that we also ought to love one another. The fact that God loves us unconditionally is sufficient reason why we should love each other in exactly the same way.

Again, we must keep in mind that John is writing to people for whom the only issue that really counts is how can we survive this life-threatening persecution? Nevertheless, John is saying to them, In this dangerous situation John is still saying, we must demonstrate our love for each other even though our natural inclination is to focus uniquely on survival.

No man has beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us: I John 4:12

John began the verse with an affirmation, “No one has beheld God at any time.” This is true. John then built upon this truth by means of a conditional statement. The condition is, “IF we love each other.” (this is unconditional love) John stated the consequence in two parts: 1. **“GOD ABIDES IN US”** The word “abides” means to take up residence. Again, the Jews would fully understand what he meant. Only family takes up residence and no one even enters who is not in full agreement with the head of the family. This is what John had in mind. He is saying, IF we love each other, the consequence is that God abides with us. He is family to us; he is in perfect harmony with us. 2. **“HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US”** - John spoke very carefully. He did not say, “Our love will be perfected.” As we love each other, His love is lived out through our lives. Even more, “His love is perfected in us.” The word “perfected” means to bring something to its goal; it is to be complete; not flawless. The term comes from the market place. They had problems concerning receiving full measure for one’s purchase. They placed a container in the grain sack. When it was filled to the top and running over on all sides; it was perfect; filled to the top. That is what His love is in us when we love each other unconditionally.

I John 4:13 – 16A – God’s Love Evidenced In Redemption

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. I John 4:13

The words translated “by this” are literally, “in this.” These words are a reference to verse 12 where he said, “if we love one another.” He continued, “We know...” The word translated “we know” describes increasing knowledge. He said, “We know that we abide in Him.” This is exactly the same image John used when he said, “He abides in us.” He continued, “And He in us.” Now, he made this statement in verse 12. This is intended to add strong emphasis to his statement. When John said, “We abide in Him and He in us,” he was saying there is

a mutual harmony between God and each of us when we love each other, even though we live with the great stress of serious persecution.

John continued, "Because He has given us of His Spirit." The word "given" means to entrust; it is a transfer of possession. Think of this! When we love each other unconditionally, God entrusts His Spirit into our lives. We may not stop to think about it, but the opposite is just as true – if we do not love each other unconditionally, then He will not entrust His Spirit into our lives and experiences. Indeed, the Holy Spirit would not be comfortable to be in an atmosphere where love is lacking.

And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. I John 4:14

John continued, "we have beheld..." This is a reference to the fact that John was an eye witness of the life and ministry of Jesus. He said, once again, as he did in chapter one, "I bear witness." This is a part of his defense of his apostleship. Apostles were eye-witnesses who proclaimed what they had seen of the life and ministry of Jesus. There were those who challenged John's apostleship. This was no casual situation. If he was indeed an apostle, then they were required to believe and practice as he instructed. If he was not an apostle, they could completely ignore what he said. The message John was reporting was, "the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world." This was a direct confrontation with the Gnostics in two respects: 1. Jesus is the Son of God. The Gnostics strongly disagreed saying that if Jesus is a man, then he had to be sinful and could not possibly be deity. 2. John contested, Jesus was sent to be the savior of the world. The Gnostics demanded that if Jesus is a man, then he had to be sinful. If He suffered, it had to be for His own sins and not for the sins of the whole world.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. I John 4:15

John begins to draw a conclusion. It is a blanket statement. He said, "whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." There were readers who would not confess that Jesus is the "son of God." The word "confess" means to declare; it is to solemnly bear witness. As he moves through this letter, John gives a description of what the person looks like who has this mutual abiding relationship with God. He was saying that wherever we are; whatever is happening in our lives, God is a part of every suffering and every sorrow. The other side of this is that whatever God is doing, He is doing it through those who love each other and confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

As he did so often, John made this blanket statement so strongly that one must consider the opposite situation. He was really also saying, "whoever does NOT confess that Jesus is the Son of God; God does NOT abide in him and he does NOT abide in God. The statement is all inclusive, but very true.

And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. I John 4:16A

John continued with an affirmation on behalf of those who confess that "Jesus is the Son of God." John's words are strong and conclusive. He said, "we have come to know and have believed." The word translated "know" means increasing knowledge. The form of this word makes it necessary to translate it, "We absolutely know and have absolutely believed." He was talking about his strong conviction about the great love that God has in

us. Having said this, he is inferring that this is the same kind of love we are required to share with each other. Can you imagine what the relationship within the church would be like if we really did express to each other the great love that God displays in our lives?

I John 4:16B-21 – The Results Of Loving God

God is love; and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. I John 4:16B

This is the second time in this epistle that John has written, "God is love." (see 4:8) Again, this is not a definition of God. He is beyond any possible human definition. It is, again, a definition of love. Love is what we see God doing and being. As we observe God with our limited resources, we see love as the primary expression of his nature. He is greater than this love, however. We need to look closely at the words "abides in love." The word "abides" is the same as he has used earlier in the epistle. To talk about "abiding in love" is to be totally at peace and harmony in that love we see characterizing the life and ministry of Jesus. John really said, "When our love is at peace and harmony with the love Jesus showed to all mankind, the result is a mutual abiding relationship dwelling in God and He dwelling in us. This makes us a part of everything God does; the means whereby God does His will in the world. The opposite side of this is that if we do not take up residence in love, then we, in fact, do not take up residence in God. This alternative is frightening.

By this love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in the world. I John 4:17

John continues to attempt to describe the loving relationship we are offered to share with Jesus. He said, "by this love is perfected with us." When he said, "by this..." he was referring to what he said in verse 16, "he that abides in love abides in God." This, again, is because "God is love." The use of the word "that" indicates a statement of purpose is being given. He said, "That we may have confidence in the day of judgment." We must keep in mind that when John makes one of these positive statements, the negative is also true. The positive statement is, "we may have confidence in the day of judgment if we abide in God as we abide in love." The negative statement is also true. We do NOT have confidence in the day of judgment if we do not abide in Him as we abide in love. The basis of this confidence is what John gives his attention to next.

John wrote with special care when he said, "as He is so also are we in the world." He is present in the world as ultimately holy and the epitome of sacrificial love. At the same time, He is presented as being rejected, opposed and misunderstood. His power and position are denied and looked down upon. John was saying that this is exactly the position and relationship we will experience in the world. A problem is that we want to view these as exceptional when they are really quite normal.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment; and the one who fears is not perfected in love. I John 4:18

In the balance of this chapter, John will present additional descriptive information concerning what love is really like. He begins by saying, "There is no fear in love." This is an important piece of information for these people. They live in a place where they are surrounded by people who worship idols. These idol worshippers are attempting to love their idols because they are afraid not to do so. John claimed that these efforts are not

really loving. One of the natural characteristics of love is that there is no trace of fear in its nature.

John contrasts two statements about the nature of love: 1. "There is no fear in love." 2. "Perfect love casts out fear." Observe that in the second statement he wrote "perfect love." The word "love" appears three times in this verse and each one is unconditional love. When he added the word "perfect" it means complete or mature. As indicated earlier, it does not mean flawless, but being complete, mature. Real love "casts out fear." The words translated "casts out" mean to beat something down to destroy it. Love deals with fear so as to get rid of it. Fear and love are incompatible with each other. He explained the reason that love destroys fear when he wrote, "Because fear involves punishment." God designed His relationship with us to be an outgrowth of love and joy. The worship of God is out of joy and gratitude, not fear. If our choosing to obey God was out of fear, then one must question whether it is a free choice to be obedient. The second reason John gives is, "the one who fears is not perfected in love." As indicated earlier, love and fear are incompatible. As love matures, fear is displaced.

We love, because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

This verse contains very strong emphasis and needs careful understanding. The word "love" appears twice in this verse and in both instances it is unconditional love. John wrote, "we love because He first loved us." He is saying our love for each other is a response to His love for us. This requires clarification. When he wrote, "we love" he used the word that is active, not reactive. If you think carefully, it becomes clear that John is saying that our unconditional love for each other is not a reaction because others have loved us. It is an active love. It is to love each other just because we are. In another sense, however, our love is a reaction. We both love each other unconditionally because God loved us. It is an admission that if God had not loved us, there would be no love between any of us. This is always true. We always love others in response to God's love for us. Our love for those persons, however, is to love just because we love.

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20

This is a conditional statement. The condition is, "if someone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother." The consequence is "he is a liar." Having made this very plain, John proceeds to give an explanation. The assumption is that it is more difficult to really love someone whom you cannot see or interact with physically than it is to love someone you can see and interact with physically. The word "love" appears four times in this sentence and in each instance it is unconditional love. He is say, If you are incapable of loving someone you can see and interact with physically, then it is impossible to love God whom you cannot see and interact with physically.

And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4:21

This verse is a complete sentence, but it is a continuation of verse 20. In this extended passage, John is teaching them about their need to love each other unconditionally even though they are undergoing life-threatening persecution. He has explained this through careful logic as in the previous verse. Now, John presents the case from a different perspective – this is a command of God, but it is most emphatic. He could have simply

presented it as an imperative; a command. He made it much stronger by saying, this is a command and spelling it out in careful detail.

Reflections For Our Times

1. It is essential to test every spirit because evil spirits are deceptive.
2. There is serious separation between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
3. Love is an important ingredient in the Christian life
 - Our love for each other finds its source in God, not in our increased determination
 - Jesus is the pattern for our love for each other.
 - God abides in us when we love each other. No love; no abiding.
 - Love results in confidence at the judgment.
 - Love removes fear.
 - One cannot love God and hate his brother.



5

The Nature of Believing Jesus is the Son of God

I JOHN 5:1 – 21

Lesson Purpose

- Establish the importance of believing that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Establish the basis for believing Jesus is the Son of God
- Explain the results of believing Jesus is the Son of God
- Delineate the sin which is “not unto death.”
- Describe our encounter with the world.

Lesson Outcomes

At the conclusion of the study, the student will:

- Understand the great importance of a conviction that Jesus is the Son of God
- Be keenly aware of the results of believing that Jesus is the Son of God
- Come to grips with the “sin not to death”
- Be well advised of our confrontation with the world

There are four paragraphs in this passage of Scripture. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

5:1-5	Obedience, The Evidence of Love
5:6-12	The Evidence That Jesus Is God’s Son
5:13-15	The Benefit Of Believing On Jesus
5:16-17	The Sin Not Unto Death
5:18-21	The Things We Know

I John 5:1 – 5 – Obedience: The Evidence Of Love

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of him. I John 5:1

This is stated as a principle, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” The way John has written this makes it more than an accepted doctrinal statement. One might literally say, “Everyone who is always believing that Jesus is the Christ,” John has presented this as a certainty; a basis upon which one makes every decision in life. No matter what others may say, this is the central principle of his life.

In the second portion of this verse, John has drawn a vital application of this principle. It is like saying if you really believe that Jesus is the Christ, then you are a child of God and if you love God you will also love Jesus, His Son. Remember, John is writing to congregations in which there is a significant group who were Gnostics and did not believe that Jesus could be both human and deity because all human flesh is evil. John is seriously confronting these people. His presentation is logical. If one loves God, he must also love the Son. Every Jew who heard this would briskly nod in agreement. The logical other side of this principle is that if you do not love the Son unconditionally, then you do not love God unconditionally either.

**By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe his commandments.
1 John 5:2**

One of the things we learn about the people to whom John wrote is that there were those who were not certain that they were part of God's family even though they had confessed their sins. John addressed this issue as he continued to teach about the need to love their fellow believers. John began this statement with the words "We know..." This is increasing knowledge as we have seen in several instances. The form of this word should be literally translated "we are knowing." Again, he is confronting the Gnostics who claim that knowledge is the means of our salvation. The words "by this" are a reference to his statement in 5:1 where he wrote, "Whoever loves the child born of Him." The question follows, "How do we know we love the Son?" He is dealing with essentially the same issue he dealt with in 5:1. He laid down two criteria: 1. When we love God. 2. When we observe His commandments. The truth is that we cannot keep His commandments unless we love each other. John is saying if a person does these two things, he can be absolutely certain that we are children of God. In his statements, John has placed our salvation and loving each other on an equal basis. Think about this. Do we focus as much attention on loving each other as we do on being certain of our salvation?

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome 1 John 5:3

The author begins this sentence with the word "for" which means that an explanation is forthcoming. Observe how carefully he wrote. He did not say "the will of God." He wrote, "This is the LOVE of God." We must ask what he meant by "The LOVE of God"? For some, when you speak of the "Love of God" it seems to be a strong emotional experience. This is not John's intent. Note that he linked "The love of God" with obedience. His commands are clear that there is no alternative to obedience. John added an important statement to this principle. He wrote, "And His commandments are not burdensome." The recipients lived among and were impressed by idolaters who thought of their idols as harsh and frighteningly demanding. John wanted to impress upon them that this was not true of our God. God is just, but His justice is tempered by His love.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. 1 John 5:4

Verse four is essential at this point. When believers face stiff opposition and life threatening persecution, as these people did, they need encouragement that they can win this struggle. A better translation for the

beginning of this sentence is, "For all those having been born of God overcome the world." If they are certain that they are born of God, then they have the absolute conviction that they will overcome the world no matter how it appears at this point.

There is a second essential at this point. It is important to be reminded that victory is assured. It is equally important to be reminded of the source of this victory. John said, "This is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith." It is not the product of our struggle, though we must struggle. It is produced by faithfully placing our situation in His hands and, in obedience, allowing Him to win that victory through our weakness.

And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? I John 5:5

Once more, John confronts the Gnostics who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, our Messiah. As John has done so often in this epistle, he states a principle, but his unspoken emphasis is the opposite of what he has written. His words were, "Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." This dramatic statement accomplishes two things: 1. It is a strong source of confidence for those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 2. At the same time, it is a devastating blow to the Gnostics who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That is exactly what John set out to accomplish.

I John 5:6 – 12 – The Evidence That Jesus Is God's Son

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. I John 5:6

There are some passages in this chapter that we do not have total clarity about. In each case, we will present the two major positions concerning them. In this instance, John spoke of the witness of water and blood. One basic understanding is that the water is a reference to the baptism of Jesus. The blood is a reference to the crucifixion. A second understanding of the "water" is the cleansing a priest must undergo before serving in the temple. The reference to the blood points to the sacrifice the priests made for the sins of the people. We cannot speak with certainty, but it appears that the prior possibility has the most to suggest it. We will explain this shortly.

And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. I John 5:7

In verse six and here in verse seven, John refers to witnesses. Here he said the Holy Spirit is a primary witness to Jesus Christ. John continued, "Because the Spirit is the truth." It is a way of saying that the witness of the Holy Spirit is dependable. John's reference to the Spirit is interesting because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are referred to in Scripture as truth: 1. Father – John 17:17; 2. The Son – John 14:6; 3. The Holy Spirit – I John 5:7 We must keep in mind that throughout this passage, John is dealing with the Gnostics who said that Jesus was not the Son of God. As he neared the end of the epistle, he took a strong stand against their belief.

For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. 1 John 5:8

Again, every Jew would know exactly what John was referring to when he spoke of witnesses. In Deuteronomy you find these words,

At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. Deuteronomy 17:6

John has provided the three witnesses that Scripture requires to establish truth. As you can see, our text identifies the three witnesses as, "the Spirit and the water, and the blood." Our best ancient documents however, read, "the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit." This appears to be our best translation. We will see more evidence in the following verse.

John continued, "The three are in agreement." The Jews understood that it was not just the presence of three witnesses that established truth, but three witnesses who agreed with each other that established truth. Keep in mind that the agreement here is that Jesus is the Son of God. If the Gnostics claimed that Jesus was not the Son of God, then they would be disagreeing with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he has borne witness concerning His Son. 1 John 5:9

John again appealed to logic in the form of a conditional statement. The Jewish recipients would understand the verse in these terms, "If we received the witness of men (and we do, then) the witness of God is greater. Because God is truth, His word is more dependable than that of three agreeing witnesses. John continued by explaining, "for the witness of God is this, that he has borne witness concerning His Son." This is a serious attack on the Gnostic position because these people were believers. They had been taught and believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Now, that position was being seriously challenged by the Gnostics.

The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself: the one who does not believe God has made him a liar; because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning his Son. 1 John 5:10

John really wrote very forcefully in this verse. One might better translate this verse, "He that believes and keeps on believing on the Son of God, he has the witness in himself." John was saying, the Spirit, who dwells within every believer, bears witness to this truth. Having stated the positive position, as he often did, John then turns to spell out the negative position. He said, "The one who does not believe and keeps on not believing in the God, has made him a liar." This would be shocking to these believers. They would not realize the consequence of what they were accepting from the Gnostics. John went on to explain, "Because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son." He was saying that if you do not believe the witness of God concerning His Son, Jesus, it is the same as calling God a liar. They would not think of saying such a thing, but this is the consequence of their position. They would really feel that it was just two different positions that would have no other consequences.

And the witness is this, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 John 5:11

Verse 11 is a continuation of the thought presented in verse 10. John has stated that the Father gave witness concerning the Son. In this verse, he will spell out exactly what that means. If you read the verse carefully, John has identified two things in this verse: 1. He has frankly stated that Jesus is God's Son. 2. He also stated that God has given us eternal life in Christ. This is a declaration that Jesus is not only God's Son, but also our "Messiah," our redeemer. This is another direct confrontation with the Gnostics.

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 1 John 5:12

Verse 12 provides further explanation for verse 11. He explained, if a person really believes that Jesus is the Son of God and has the Son in his life; that person has eternal life. Again, having stated the positive position, he will now state the negative one – If a person does not have the Son; that person does not have eternal life. The truth so delicately stated is this, you cannot be a Christian or have eternal life if you do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Again, these believers would be shocked to think that such consequences would come from what they believe. He is again directing his remarks to "You who believe in the name of the Son of God."

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13

As he nears the end of his letter, John explains why he has written. He is again directing his remarks to, "You who believe in the name of the Son of God." To many Christians, "The name of Jesus" is something one must say at the end of a prayer. This is not Biblical. The use of a person's name means an appeal to their authority. That is the way John uses the term here. He said, "I wrote to you that you might know." The word translated "know" means to know everything; to be absolutely certain. The thing he wants them to have certainty about is, "You are having eternal life."

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

Though verse 14 is a separate sentence, it is a continuation of the idea from verse 13. In this verse, the translation is a bit stronger than the original text, though it does no damage to John's intent. It reads, "And this is the confidence which we have toward Him, that if what we might ask is according to His will, He hears us." As happens so often, John's positive statements leave the implication for the negative. That is true in this instance. The negative would be, If we do not have this confidence toward God, if what we ask according to His will, He will not hear us. We will deal with this more intently shortly.

And if we know that he hears us whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from him. 1 John 5:15

Again, though verse 15 is a separate sentence, it is a continuation of the idea from verses 13 and 14. This very strong statement is made in the form of a conditional statement presented in logical terms. In this verse, the word “know” appears twice. Up until 5:2 most of the usages of the word “know” meant increasing in knowledge. Both of the uses of the term “know” in this verse mean to know absolutely. The condition is, “IF we know (absolutely) that He hears us whatever we ask.” This is repetition as well as the statement of condition. The consequence of this condition is, “(THEN) we know (absolutely) that we have the requests we have asked from Him.” John is emphasizing, by way of repetition, the fact that if we know Jesus as the Son of God, He will answer our requests. On the other hand, if we do not know Him as the Son of God and savior, he will not answer our requests. This is another strong confrontation with the Gnostics.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. I John 5:16

We must approach this verse with great care. There are things we can say with great certainty, but other things are not as certain. In such an instance our statements will indicate it. In verse 15, John wrote about the assurance of prayer. He now moved to the ministry of intercessory prayer.

We must first deal with the idea of two kinds of sin: 1. Sin unto death. 2. Sin not unto death. In contrast to this thought, we remember the words of Scripture, “The soul that sinneth shall surely die.” Ezekiel 18:4 There is widespread difference in understanding of these issues. First, John does not define the meaning and issues surrounding this text. The Greek words that he used are not helpful in this understanding. Dr. Glenn Barker in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, volume 12, Page 355, reminds us that John was a very knowledgeable and obedient Jew before he began to follow Jesus. We know that Judaism made a clear distinction between rebellious, intentional sins which were punishable by death-*ie.* Murder; sin against the Holy Spirit; violation of the Sabbath (Numbers 15:35) on the one hand and sins of ignorance or as the writer of numbers 15:22 wrote “unwittingly” or “unintentionally.” This understanding carried over into first century Judaism and John knew it well. We must also add that the Jews in his readership were just as knowledgeable of this as he was. Is this what John had in mind? We do not know, but it would not be surprising. Again, others have suggested that praying for the forgiveness of the unrepentant sinners when they have committed intentional sins, but have not sought forgiveness and adoption into the family of God is not acceptable. On the other hand, to pray for the repentant sinner who was guilty as the one John had in mind here would be heard by God. Again, we can not be certain of John’s intent.

All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. I John 5:17

Again, verse 17 is a separate sentence, but continues the idea of verse 16. As usual, John states his position as a principle. He wrote, “all unrighteousness is sin.” Throughout the epistle, he has steadfastly maintained that righteous obedience is the only acceptable lifestyle for the member of God’s family. This is one more affirmation of that position.

He went on to repeat, “there is a sin not leading to death.” This repetition is to add emphasis. We know that children of God are not sinlessly perfect. They do not deliberately sin, but they do sin. This is what Paul referred to in Romans chapter seven. It appears that this is what John has in mind in this verse.

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but he who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. 1 John 5:18

Again, the word “know” means to be absolutely certain. We must be reminded that there were those who did not believe one could be certain of their salvation in this life. John takes a very strong stand on this issue. He is saying one can be absolutely certain that you are born of God. He continued, “no one born of God sins.” This can be misleading. It looks as if he was talking about sinless perfection. The Greek text is clearer. It should be translated, “Everyone having been borne of God does not make a lifestyle of sinning.” That is a very different statement.

The word “but” indicates a contrast. The contrasted elements are: 1. Those who have been born of God do not make a lifestyle of sinning. 2. The one having been born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.”

We must clarify what John has in mind with this statement. He wrote, “the one who is born of God.” This is another reference to Jesus as the Son of God. The word translated “keeps” means to preserve or protect. John continued, “The evil one does not touch him.” “The evil one” is an obvious reference to the devil. The word translated “touch” means to take hold of or to harm. This is also the way in which the author of Job dealt with the encounter between God and Satan.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:19

Again, the word “know” means to be absolutely certain. John wrote, “We are from God.” The word translated “from” can also be translated “belong to.” The word identifies allegiance and identity. That is John’s intent in this statement – “We are absolutely certain we belong to God.”

John was also saying, “(We are absolutely certain) that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” This is just the opposite of; a contrast with one’s belonging to God. These people are keenly aware of their struggle to be faithful to their commitment to God in Christ. John wants them to realize that this is not unusual. This is the situation for every child of God; all the time.

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John 5:20

Once more, the word “know” means to be absolutely certain. John’s absolute certainty has to do with the fact that the Son of God has come. He was talking about Jesus. The Gnostics, however, felt very certain that Jesus was not the Son of God. This is the battle the believers fought against the Gnostics. John continued, “we are absolutely certain that, “God has given us understanding in order that we might know Him.” The Greek text is a bit more precise. It reads, “the Son of God is coming and He has given us the understanding.” The use of the word “that” indicates a statement of purpose is coming. John continued, “That we might know Him who is true.” The word translated “know,” however, is increasing in knowledge. This is appropriate since our finite human minds will never completely know the infinite greatness of God in this life. Though our knowledge of God will never be complete in this life, it is always increasing as He dwells in us and shares every experience of our lives. John spoke of God as “the one who is true.” This is a far cry from the way the Gnostics spoke of

God. John continued, "In His son Jesus Christ." Because God is infinite and we are finite, we have no way to know Him better unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us. This He did in Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus was dealing with when He said, "...He who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9

John concluded his statement about Jesus when he said, "This is the true God and eternal life." In these closing words of the sentence, John gave his most direct challenge to the Gnostics. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. John pointedly spoke of Jesus as deity. Because Jesus had a totally human body, the Gnostics also did not believe that He was our redeemer.

There is a lesson here for us. Throughout this entire epistle, John has kindly but aggressively confronted the Gnostic belief concerning Jesus. We will always be confronted with one form of heresy or another. We must follow John's excellently example and very kindly, but directly present the truth of Scripture even though others may not be open to receive that message.

Little children, guard yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:21

This is a very emphatic statement. Again, John refers to these believers in loving terms. The verb form emphasizes that this is a strong command. The word translated "guard" means to protect oneself. In every culture, all the time, idols are a crafty threat to the faith of every believer. Throughout the epistle, John has identified things that these people should consider idols though they are not man-made creatures. The affirmation of the people in the local culture is an idol that was a serious threat to them. The allure of the things that their early training classified as sin was also a serious form of idolatry for them. The things we would least expect will always become the enemy's greatest tool to bring about our downfall.

Reflection

John wrote to recipients who were facing serious attack from the enemies of the Gospel. John's primary purpose in writing was to encourage and give direction to these discouraged Christians. The number of times an issue is raised will give us some idea of how important that issue is in the mind of the author. The list is as follows:

TIMES ISSUE APPEARS	THE ISSUES
21	The need to love fellow believers
17	Intense conflict between believers and the world
16	Jesus is the Son of God
12	Jesus forgives and cleanses
8	Our witness and walk must be Christlike
7	The need to abide in Christ
5	Obedience is essential to Christian life
4	Every human being is a sinner

If you compare this list with the list of exhortations that John used in the epistle, you will find that they match each other. At one point or another, those who obey the commands of Jesus will find themselves in confrontation with the world. Jesus said,

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you.” John 15:18

Observe that John warned these believers about this reality and then exhorted them about concerns that always come along with the tensions we experience when persecution is intense. We tend to think of persecution as unusual. Both Jesus and John looked upon it as normal. In such times, our focus tends to be on survival. John wanted them to be reminded that it is more important to love each other than it is to survive. It is more important to be obedient to the commands of Jesus than it is to survive. People will threaten and challenge our belief in Jesus as Messiah, but we must stand firm in what we know to be the truth. Pain may come, but we know that in that moment our lives are pleasing to our Lord. This epistle is most helpful when people find themselves in the midst of serious opposition.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Ethics

~ Dr Wally Marais



1

Christian Ethics and the Life of Holiness

Lesson Purpose

- To understand the meaning of Christian Ethics and its application to the life of Holiness.

Lesson Outcome: Upon completion of this course the student will

- Understand the meaning of ethics
- See the need for a holy life
- Be able to teach others how to live obedient to God

Table of Contents

- A holy heart is the fundamental condition for living a life of Holiness
- Ethics explained
- The Bible, the source of Christian ethics
- It was the Reformation that taught that faith in Christ is followed by good works.
- The law of liberty.

A holy heart is the fundamental condition for living a life of holiness.

The Word of God specifically states that, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

Dogmatics gives attention to doctrines, and answers the enquiry, what ought we to believe? Ethics seeks to answer the question, what ought we to do?

Ethics explained

As theology is the science of God and the mutual relations of God and man, so ethics is the science of deity and has to do with the end, the principles and the motives of obligatory conduct. The Word of God reveals to us a certain lifestyle to be lived out by God's children which God makes known to them through the Holy Spirit.

It is more than the natural law that all men have written upon their hearts that teaches them good or evil. History and experience both teach us that all men have this natural revelation and are also conscious of certain common principles of mortality.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not lose all of the Image of God in which they were created. They still had consciousness of God and were able to communicate at an intelligent level. They knew they had sinned and looked for a way back to God. As the Spirit of God, who is the source of life, light and power, withdrew from their moral and spiritual lives, they died spiritually and morally, and brought their lives under the influence and control of Satan and his world of evil spirits. In his subtleness, Satan had Adam to believe that he was now his own god when, in fact, Satan was his god. God provided for man to come back into fellowship with Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon being born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, he can live a life that is pleasing to God.

In his fallen state, man was still a human being, created in the Image of God, even though much of his humanity was marred by this spiritual death. Man was still aware of a missing dimension to his being and he became a seeker. God had explained clearly how He had wanted Adam to live and God still reveals to man the way in which He has ordered man to live. More than that, God has also made provision for anyone to believe and live according to His revealed will. What God has revealed is what every Christian must take seriously because no Christian can live a life pleasing to God purely by his own conscience alone; that conscience has lived too long under the control of the self which has changed God's laws to suit itself. Every Christian must know and understand what God's requirements are for holy living and choose, with God's help, to live by them. Many Christians say that they are no longer under the Laws of the Old Testament and ignore its requirements and live only to please themselves.

The Bible the source of Christian ethics

The first question which arises is, are the sources of Christian Ethics to be derived solely from the New Testament or are the Old Testament writings considered a part of the Christian revelation? It suffices to say here that the Old Testament, insofar as it is applicable to the Christian Life, is still binding upon men. Speaking to this, Wiley says,

"Certain portions of it (OT) however, especially the types or shadows of better things to come, had their perfect fulfilment in the great Antitype; while others of a ceremonial or political nature were abrogated (annulled) as belonging only to the Mosaic economy. But as to the moral law of Moses, the substance of which was embodied in the Decalogue, (10 Commandments), this was not superseded, but referred to by our Lord as abiding authority without any special re-enactment. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. He said, (Jesus) I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, or jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach man so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:17-19). (Wiley : 12).

The ethical teachings of the Gospels centre in the idea of the Kingdom, entrance to which is solely on the ground of repentance and faith. No one enters the Kingdom by doing good works, but once in the Kingdom, under the rule of King Jesus, that disciple is under obligation to live by the laws of His Kingdom. The acceptance of the call of God into the Kingdom involves the subordination of all other loyalties. "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed . . . but seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:31, 33. The description which Jesus gives here is not of certain acts, but of a certain type of character. It is the person who loves God and His Kingdom who obeys these Kingdom laws, who really

finds the essence of Life. "For whoever will save his life will lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:24.

When a person discovers the motivating power of Divine Love, he will have discovered how to live in all his areas and relationships to others. He will also know that he is a child of God because in his own strength, he cannot live like this. As he learns to grow in living out this fruit of the Spirit – love – he finds that he is growing in Christlikeness. Why does God want us to obey His will? Because it is the only way to grow in becoming like Jesus.

During the first century, the interests of the Church were primarily concerned with practical conduct rather than rational reflection. "The dominant note of the early church was that of divine love manifesting itself in the care of the poor, hospitality to strangers, avoidance of sensuous luxury, and vices of pagans, and devotion to the purity of life set by Christ and the apostles. Not until the latter part of the second century was there serious reflection on ethical problems." (Ibid. 13).

In the East, the scholars added to the Greek philosophy, bringing to completion the Greek ethical principles which were assumed to be grounded in universal reason. The Western Fathers maintained that Christian Ethics was entirely new, and must only come from Christ.

During the Middle Ages the conversion of Constantine in the fourth Century brought about changes that made for an easy form of Christianity. Freed from persecution of the State, the church rose to a place of prestige and power, and they began to persecute the pagans and heretics. The Church became worldly and many Christians seeking for a way of sacrifice and separation from this worldliness withdrew to a monastic life. This gave rise to a different and distinct type of ethics. Ambrose 340-397 gave the Church the first Manual of Christian Ethics. He recognised two levels of morality, one obligatory to all men, the other as including works done beyond the requirements in order to a higher degree of perfection.

Augustine 354-430. Here the central and dominating idea of the Christian life is union with God, an experience of perfect peace and blessedness which can be achieved only in the life to come. He placed the emphasis on the will, and says that man must surrender his will in love. But he conformed to what had become current, that of what was required by all, and what was counselled as going farther, thus making for perfection. This led to an emphasis on supererogation.

Richard Coates says, "Supererogation; works of supererogation, according to the Roman Catholic moral theology, and voluntary works besides, over and above which God commands. . . . The conception is based upon a distinction between works which are necessary and those which are voluntary. . . . Hence the so-called treasury of merit and the possibilities of indulgences." (Harrison : 507). His idea of self-surrender, however, led to the ecclesiastical suppression of individual liberty. The Church now had the authority over everyone and demanded submission to what it taught as truth. When anyone resisted, the Church called in the State to subdue them and compelled them to surrender to the Church.

Monasticism grew and provided its conception of ethics. Ascetism. "From the Greek *askesis* (exercise or training) denotes the practice of self discipline, now particularly in relation to the body. It normally

takes the form of renunciation e.g. fasting, celibacy and sometimes been given a more active form in such excesses as self-flagellation . . . the surrender of possessions or withdrawal from various aspects of intellectual or cultural life in the interests of spiritual edification or service . . ." (Ibid : 68).

The chief reason assigned to the failure of the mystics to develop a true ethics is the lack of a proper concept of personality. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) said that the ultimate end for which man acts he called "true blessedness", which when attained is all-sufficient.

As the dominant note of the Middle Ages was the subordination of the earthly life to that of the life to come, so it was followed by Humanism, which placed upon the individual life and present world. But it produced no widespread ethical theory; in fact, it was irreligious. It gave rise to new thinkers in Christian circles who became forerunners of the Reformation; men like Wycliffe 1324-1384, Huss 1373-1415, Erasmus 1536, Savonarola 1452-1498 and others, opposed the moral corruption and worldliness of both the secular and ecclesiastical leaders.

It was the Reformation that taught faith in Christ, followed by good works.

Out of the teachings of Luther and Calvin came the emphasis of the "just shall live by faith." They reemphasized the Decalogue as a statement of the fundamentals of the moral law engraved on the minds of men. "Hence in the Reformed Churches, it became common practice to attach great value to the legal elements of the Old Testament, and to combine these into an ethical system in connection to the Decalogue." (Wiley : 21).

Other writers of this period which contributed to Christian Ethics were John Bunyan who emphasised redeeming grace, George Fox, clear in his judgment on great moral issues, Jeremy Taylor – who taught purity of intention, William Law, gave an exposition of Christian ethics, along with many others. In the late 1500's to the end of the 1700's there arose many men and movements who emphasised Christian Ethics as distinct from Dogmatics. Especially of note are Pietism and Methodism. Arminianism gave great promise to the ethical side of Christianity. The modern period has seen the emergence of many writers.

Experience, if it is to be maintained, must always issue in Christian living. God is a Person and man is a person, hence all their relationships must be ethical. The dominant note of Christian Perfection being that of full devotion to God, becomes a fundamental principle in Christian Ethics. As Creator, God's law is written in the nature and constitution of man, commonly known as the law of conscience.

As Redeemer, Jesus' whole life and history furnish a satisfaction to the Divine Will. He fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and the requirements of God who governs His creation in righteousness. Having learned this obedience, Jesus presented Himself as at once the perfect law giver and the perfect example of His own precepts. In His death to sin, He secured for us forever the law of liberty by which we are delivered from the principle of sin and also freedom to have the law of love as a motive to righteousness. "The oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Luke 1:73-75.

The Law of Liberty

The new freedom provided by the death of Christ unto sin is called by James, "the perfect law of liberty" James 1:25, and again he calls it "the royal law" which according to the Scriptures is, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" 2:8. St. Paul calls it, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes us free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:2.

The external law ceases to be the law of sin and death, for the consciousness of sins is removed in justification, and the inner law of the Spirit of life by the Spirit furnishes the motive and the strength of obedience. This is the foundational fact of the New Covenant, "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts." Heb. 8:10. Wiley says that "this inner law, therefore, amounts to self-government restored." (Ibid : 29).

The Law of love and holiness are closely related in the nature of God. Holiness is the divine nature interpreted from the standpoint of self-affirmation while love is that same nature viewed as self-communication. Both are equally the essence of God. God Holiness requires that He always acts out of love and love seeks to always impart Himself.

It is clearly seen that Christian Ethics has to do with wanting to live right and pleasing to God, in order that the person may grow in his love for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in his love for others. The Christian who loves does something to others; it is not all mysticism or invitation for the sake of measuring up to a standard. It is in order that the person becomes what God has in mind for him now and in the new world.

"Sanctified people must act like it. Furthermore, the responsibility for seeing to this is squarely theirs. While the grace within is sufficient to enable one to accomplish this, it is not an automatic cause and effect mechanism. If experience is to be validated by ethics, if faith is to be translated into daily consistency and Christlikeness, there must be the acceptance of responsibility, and deliberate systematic attention must be given to this task." (Taylor: 187).

Class Discussion

Why is ethics so important in building Christian relationships?
Are we free to live as we like when we are Christians?



2

New Testament Christians and Old Testament Laws

Lesson Purpose

- To help the student understand the practical application of God's moral law in the life of the Christian in this day and age.

Lesson Outcome:

Once having completed this lesson the student will;

- understand the different kinds of laws of God
- appreciate the truth taught in the Ten Commandments
- will begin to apply the life giving laws of God to his life
- be able to share these truths with others

Table of Contents

- New Testament Christians and Old Testament laws
- The commandments are given by Grace
- Is it really possible to obey the 10 commandments?

New Testament Christians and Old Testament Laws

How do we deal with Old Testament laws in Christian Ethics?

Matt. 5:17 taught that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it.

We need to look at the Old Testament laws under three categories to understand them better : the moral principles of the law, the judicial precepts and the ceremonial laws.

There are the moral principles, which we find in the Ten Commandments, (Exod. 20, Deut. 5). These commandments are binding on the people of the old and new covenants as we have seen in Jesus' explanation of those laws in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7, also known as the Laws of the Kingdom of God. But these are universal laws and not only for the Church. They represent the Will of God for all people, everywhere for all time.

The Judicial precepts are based on the Ten Commandments as given by God to Moses. They have a special meaning to the times of Moses, when they were addressing specific problems of those times. They are not binding on us. They can be read with the view to seeing how they applied to those times only but it remains with the Church to re-interpret God's laws for these times and to apply their truths.

Ceremonial laws, like the laws governing the building of the tabernacle, laws regarding the sacrifices, fasting and the festivals are not binding on Christians today. According to the New Testament these laws found their fulfilment in the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They have been “filled up” by Jesus and therefore are obsolete. Heb. 10:1-18.

For the purpose of studying Christian Ethics and the requirements of the laws of God it is needful to make an in-depth study of the Ten Commandments, for these are God’s moral law for all ages. Christian liberty in Christ does not set us free from obeying these moral laws in our hearts. In fact, God writes them on the tables of our minds and hearts and we do not only live by them, we live them out! They become the new law, motivated by God’s love in us. As someone has well said, “Nobody breaks God’s laws, they break themselves on His laws.” The Christian loves God and therefore lives by the values and the principles of these commandments.

When man fell he lost the presence and motivating love of God in his life, but he did not cease to be his own self. He now became his own god because his love now turned inward on himself. This became the operating principle in his life. This self was now being influenced by Satan because he had brought his life under Satan’s control. That is why God holds man accountable for his actions and what man allows to motivate him. God has provided for man to be reconciled to Himself and even has provided all the grace and faith needed to turn to God. The Father cleared the way for man, through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, on man’s behalf. God’s Holy Spirit draws man to seek for Truth and enables him to understand the Truth of the Gospel. Jesus has commissioned the Church to share this Gospel with everyone in the world, for it is His Will that everyone be saved.

The Commandments are given by grace,

For as men hear the commandments they acknowledge their sin and are driven back to God seeking His forgiveness. The prevenient grace (grace that goes before man is saved) works at the man’s sense of need, and his sense of right and wrong, drawing him to hear the gospel. The Holy Spirit is faithful in leading the man to truth, convicting him of his need to be saved by Jesus who died for him. The Holy Spirit also performs the miracle of the new birth in the person when he believes in Jesus to save him and the Spirit comes into that believer’s life and continues to illumine him and to empower him. This is why it is necessary for all men to hear the gospel and also to see the transformation which Jesus brings into the believer’s life. The Christian lives out the laws of God and is blessed by God.

Jesus brought the Kingdom of God by His Spirit into the lives of those who accepted His rule over them. He writes the commandments of God upon the hearts and minds of His followers. That is why it is important that Jesus sits on the throne of each Christian’s life, for from that centre, He will reign, always operating from the principle of God’s holy love. The moment the Christian yields to His Rule, the Holy Spirit expels the self love principle which controlled his life and fills that life with the Holy love principle of Jesus. Naturally the Christian has to learn how to appropriate this new law operating in his life, but because he loves God and His Righteousness first, he grows and becomes more like Jesus. He is now operating the way God created him to operate, from a heart filled with the perfect love of God.

Looking at some of the laws of the Kingdom given by King Jesus, one can see how Jesus takes the commandments and writes them upon the hearts of His disciples.

In His Sermon to his disciples, Jesus took the commandments and redefined them to what has been called “the beautiful attitudes”, which are evident in the life of the person who has acknowledged that he is poor without God and unable to save himself, and has opened his heart to the teachings of God’s Kingdom and Righteousness. He is filled and sees God through his now pure heart. Matt. 5:1-8. These people became salt (preservers of society) and the light (penetrators of darkness) and bring glory to God. 5:14.

Vs. 21, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said . . . You shall not murder, . . . but I say unto you that if you are angry with a brother or sister . . . and if you say, you fool, . . . you will be liable to the hell of fire.” Vs. 27 “You have heard it was said, “You shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery in his heart.”

Vs. 43, “You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy . . . but I say unto you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .”

In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus gives to His followers the very heart of Kingdom living when He says, “. . . Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .” 6:10.

Here God is addressing Kingdom people. They are to do His Will here on earth as He is faithful in doing His Will in heaven. Jesus sums this up by saying to all Christians in every age, “Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He operates from a basis of His holy love and it is this same principle of operation that He seeks to impart to His children. Perfect love is His, but He will reign from the believer’s heart from this principle. There is no place then for the sin principle to operate in the believer’s heart and life; he must be cleansed from this principle of operating because it puts self on the throne, the place God wants to occupy.

God will never force anyone to give Him first place; it is always by an invitation prompted by the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, Christians are urged to “present yourselves to God”. Romans 6:13, 15; “have become obedient from the heart” 6:17, “we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, . . .” 8:12, “Present yourselves as a living sacrifice . . .” 12:1, are but a few instances where man is encouraged to yield to God and to allow Him to cleanse the life of the sinful nature.

Romans 13:9-11, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. . . love does no wrong to a neighbour . . . love is the fulfilling of the law.” Notice how Jesus puts the law into the hearts and minds of His followers and, summing them up, it can be said that anyone who operates on God’s holy love first basis, will not want to murder or steal from others. They will not operate from a level of lust which is a natural human desire out of control, in fact, under the control of the self love principle. They will have the control of the Spirit of God to discipline their natural human desires which are not sinful but natural, and to satisfy them within God’s will. It all depends who controls the life – the sinful self which loves itself or the sanctified self who loves God first.

God’s will for all men has always been that they be a holy people but He never intended them to only separate themselves, as they did with the holy vessels and buildings, separating them aside for a holy use

when and where needed. He gave them His laws and corresponding with the laws already in them as moral beings, they knew in their hearts and minds what kind of life was pleasing to God. There was a faith remnant who obeyed God from their hearts and were counted righteous by God. So many Christians have this same way of looking at being sanctified – that they are only dedicated to God or set aside by God, as if they were vessels or buildings. Man is a moral and spiritual being and has to have something spiritual and moral happening to him. When he is saved and sanctified, he is forgiven, cleansed and filled with the new expulsive power of God's love, a whole new quality of holy love filling his spirit, soul, mind, feelings and choices. He becomes a true vessel carrying the love of God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to all men in the world.

Measure this new life against the Ten Commandments and it becomes obvious that He keeps them and God is pleased with him. The Holy Spirit enables the Spirit filled Christian to live out this new life given by Jesus and Jesus living within him is able to continue His Will and ministry through this Christian who is now part of His New Body.

Some Christians believe that as long as Jesus is Lord of His Body, the Church, He overlooks their individual lives because they are not that important to Him, and they defend their positions not to go on to be sanctified holy by being once saved always saved. This is dangerous living for Jesus has taught that He holds each one individually accountable to bear fruit, for God removes from the vine all those who do not bear fruit. John 15:2. As Head of His Body (the Church), Jesus gives ministry gifts to each member for the purpose of bearing fruit. He expects the whole Body to be functioning properly.

Is it really possible to obey the Ten Commandments? (Exd. 20:3f)

God says that He alone is God – in fact, there are some ideas that men have invented about other gods, but in reality, there is only one living God. He made it clear that all men must serve and love only Him. Of course, man since his fall has replaced God with himself and that is the worst sin anyone can commit. It is not money or position, or anything else that man serves which becomes the idol. All those things are there to serve man's ego and make him to believe that he is god.

Prof. Greyling makes a good point in the Timothy Training Institute lectures. He says, "The wonderful thing is that God does not want us to make images. He wants us to be images of Himself. In Genesis 1:26-27, we read how God made man to bear the Image of God." (F5:27). The only way God's image can be fully restored in man is when He is reconciled to God in Christ, and his heart is fully cleansed from the sin which mars God's image in him; then man can once again be the true image of God. Just as a child bears the image of his father and mother, so when we are born of the Spirit and filled with the Holy Spirit, people will see the resemblance.

God said, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God." 7. A Christian takes seriously how he uses the name of God. He wants the world to glorify the Name of the Father, the Name of the Son and the Name of the Holy Spirit because He loves God. He will not deliberately use God's Name in any form that brings discredit to His Holy Name. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Of course, Christians keep the Sabbath and every other day of the week as holy for in making them holy, Jesus has made every day a day that is holy. They set aside the Sunday for it is the Day to celebrate the Day Jesus rose from the

dead. There is a "Sabbath principle of rest" which applies and has shown that productivity remains at a high when one day of rest is observed. 8. This is what the Christian now calls "the Lord's day". This "rest of faith" is to be enjoyed every day by God's children. Hebrews 4:9.

Vs. 12. Honour your father and mother so that you may live long in the land.

Here is a commandment with a promise. But when a Christian operates from a holy love principle he will naturally love and honour his parents, even when they might not be responsive. He will want to work at honouring them.

Vs. 13. You shall not murder.

As Jesus interpreted this law, when you use God's love to build redemptive relationships with all men, you will only wish their best in life and it will change your attitudes towards others.

Vs. 14. You shall not commit adultery.

The Christian who is free from playing his own god will not seek to gratify self and allow himself to live on a lust level, whether it be to possess another's body, money or position; he will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, learn to control and discipline his natural human desires to be pleasing to God. He will show respect and dignity and worth for others; he will no longer see them as things to be used to gratify the sinful self. He will respect his wife and family and his extended family and friends. It will be his desire to please God in all his relationships.

Vs. 15. You shall not steal.

The Spirit filled Christian will have a growing conscientiousness of his work, his testimony in his recreational times, and even in his stewardship of money and time. He will learn time values and abide by them. He will be wise not to steal another's good name or character through gossip. He will not steal from either God or man. He might even be led of the Spirit to make restitution for past wrongs and he will learn to give and share even when not asked to. He will develop a spirit of gratitude to God for all His blessings.

Vs. 16. You shall not bear false testimony against thy neighbour.

In fact, the Christian will want to resolve all problems quickly in such a manner that does not bring unnecessary hurt to people in the Church of God. He will keep loving all involved but insist that sin be forsaken, discipline applied if needed, and the restoration of all involved.

Vs. 17. You shall not covet . . ."

A man of faith in God trusts God to supply all his needs, and He does. Therefore, he will not covet (to desire enviously); that means he changes his life not to desire or possess what his neighbour has, or even better, but rather he is content in the state in which he finds himself. This does not mean that it is wrong to work hard to upgrade one's living standards, self benefit and for the benefit of family and others. However, it is wrong to be motivated to possess things at any price, for appearances of success, motivated by greed.

If you work hard, discipline and control yourself to live a holy life, people will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16.

Remember God has a plan for every life and He will bring it to pass, if you follow Him.

Class discussion

Do you think that a sanctified Christian can obey God's Commandments?

How do Christians experience the blessings of God in their lives?



3

Biblical Perspectives on Marriage and Family

Lesson Purpose

- To lead the student into the understanding of the Divine origins of marriage and the family.

Lesson Outcome: Upon completion of this lesson the student will

- understand the Divine perspective of marriage
- will know Christ's teachings on marriage
- will see that the Christian marriage is monogamous
- will be able to counsel those seeking marriage

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- Biblical perspectives on marriage and family
- What constitutes a Christian basis for marriage?
- Submitting to each other
- What about different cultures?

Biblical perspectives on marriage and family

Marriage in the Bible means God joining man and woman and making them one. It was thought up by God and is ordained by Him. Gen. 1:27, 28, Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5, Mark 10:7-8, Eph. 31-33.
Marriage was founded by God

"And the Lord said, "it is not good that man should be alone, I will make him an helpmeet for him." Gen. 8:18.

Marriage was brought about by God for the purpose of human pleasure and satisfaction. Some people feel that God has other plans for them other than marriage. Whatever God plans for individual lives must be obeyed but the normal will of God is as revealed for couples in His Word. Here it teaches us that God's desire is that this union of two lives in love should be supremely happy and pleasurable.

Marriage is much more than just for pleasure; it is for human companionship and partnership, a help meet. Naturally, God created them male and female for the purpose of parenthood. "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," the Lord had instructed them. 1:38. Loneliness is not part of God's plan and He created Eve in such a way that she fulfilled his needs as a man. They were both created in God's image which is holy love and they functioned so well together on that basis. They loved each other. Love

has to reach out and be shared and God, who is love, made man the same. Man has to love and be loved, or else something will be missing from his life. Man has to love his own kind because only his own kind can return the human love he needs.

People may say that they do not need anyone to love because they have animals to love, but an animal cannot return love on a human level so cannot totally fulfil man's needs. God did not expect Adam to pour all his love on the animals. God created Eve, a flesh and blood human being, who could be loved and love in return as only a woman can love a man, and it was good. All of these, attraction to each other, respecting one's worth and dignity as a creation of God, respecting the respective sexual roles, companionship and that underlying sense of being alone and lonely without the other, all play a part leading up to a close union in marriage. It is also a commitment to one. God did not create many women for Adam, or many men for Eve. God made it clear in the creation of the first couple that He meant one man to be united to one woman for eternity.

God made an Adam suitable for Eve and an Eve suitable for Adam. There are many suitable people in the world and, with God's help, prayer and pastoral counselling, He will lead those who are seeking for Christian partners to find a suitable life partner. There is so much emphasis on finding ones "soul mate" today. That is a wrong emphasis, for God has created beautiful human beings who, even when they become Christians, must use all available helps before they make a final commitment to be married.

Someone will ask the question, "Do you believe that God selects one particular person for each Christian to marry and finally brings them together?"

James Dobson answers as follows, "No, and that is a dangerous supposition to rely on. . . . Anyone who believes that God pre-empts free choice and thereby guarantees a successful marriage to every Christian is in for a shock. That is not to say that He is disinterested in the choice of a mate, or that He will not answer a specific request for guidance on this all-important decision. . . . However, I do believe that God performs a routine match making service for everyone who worships Him." (Dobson : 328).

It is well to remember that marriage is a life-long commitment and it is a relationship that has to be worked on constantly; love has to be nurtured to grow. Too many marriages today are based upon "till love us do part," instead of the commitment, "till death us do part."

All our blessings are gifts from God, especially the marriage partner, and the relationship between the couple and God must always be one of showing gratitude for each other and God must always be the Lord of both the man and the woman. Someone has well said that you will marry the kind of people you go around with. God gives you the discernment to go with your own kind; remember the Bible warns Christians about being yoked together with unbelievers. 11 Cor. 6:14, and it is good advice to follow. If Christian young people frequent places where alcohol, drugs and permissive sex are practised, then they will marry into those types. These are not suitable for Christian relationships. Of course, Christian young people must not think that they are superior to those not yet Christians and should try to win them to Christ, but to go to such places is not conducive to finding a suitable husband or wife. This is why churches must encourage their Christian youth to attend youth camps, youth organisations, team outreaches and the like, so that they can meet Christian young people. It is in these groups that subjects will be discussed pertaining to Christian relationships in courting, sex and marriage, and other related areas. Sex should never be a taboo subject amongst Christian youth for sexuality is a wonderful gift from God. However, it must be understood and certain disciplines applied.

Christian young people must grow up in a home where they are encouraged to ask questions about themselves and their feelings of sexuality. No one should feel guilty because they have normal feelings. They must be helped to control and discipline themselves. They must also be taught how to handle themselves so they do not encourage situations that will cause them to feel guilty in any way.

Sex outside of marriage is sin before God, even when the culture may allow sex before marriage to test a girl's fertility.

What constitutes a Christian basis for marriage?

Marriage is not merely marrying someone you love; it is that but much more for a Christian. It is for the wellbeing of both partners and their extended families and also for the wellbeing of the Christian community. The couple must also be sure that their ministries will not be hindered. If God has called one of them to fulltime, for example, will that one still be able to fulfil his/her calling when married? A Christian couple will always want to put God first in their lives.

Included in their commitment to each other must be the commitment of each one to grow in knowledge of the Lord and His Word, along with each having a place of service in and through the church where they plan to be involved. They should seek proper pre-marital counselling and allow the church to be part of their lives. They must have Christian friends.

Submitting to each other.

Ephesians 5:21-31, "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, His body of which He is the Saviour. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by washing with water through the word and to present her to Himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. After all no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of His body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

The whole basis of this passage is not one trying to control the other or force the partner into change, but it is about working on forming a growing love relationship, based on mutual respect for each other. How lovely it is to see a wife giving the man the respect of husband and father in the home and to see the man give his partner the respect of wife and mother in their home. Especially when you see them working hard on keeping Christ as the head of the home, they find and fulfil the roles of partners and parents.

God's holy love flowing in and through their love to each other and from them into the family members, brings respect and caring as can be found nowhere else. They both sense their responsibility to each other and to the children as gifts from God, and they openly confess their need for God's guidance and help for them every day. They are really one and it never enters their minds to be apart; it is a settled way of life; they even have a growing sense of being together in eternity.

They communicate this love for God and each other to their children and extended family.

Through their faithfulness in church attendance, ministry involvement, stewardship of money and time and even in their private and family devotions, they build stability, love and security into the whole family unit. Everyone is aware of the presence and the blessings of the Lord and learn to give God the glory.

Sometimes Christians will come to the church already having more than one wife; a case like this requires that they be dealt with in love and in a Christian manner and always on the basis of love. It would do well for the student pastor to bring in the leaders of the church and allow them to minister to these people. Out of their experience will come help according to Biblical principles.

Class Discussion

If a leader (or any person) finds himself or herself in a “marital” relationship with another person that does not constitute a Christian marriage based on Biblical principles, how would you advise that leader to go about solving the problem?

What about different cultures?

The Bible people had different cultures especially when the New Testament Jewish Christians contacted the Gentile Christians. At first it took some adjustment because of the differing cultures. But the Christian principles can be practised in every culture, sometimes confronting them, but always keeping Christ as head of the home and the church. Christ brings love and respect and a caring ministry which uplifts individuals and thereby communities. There really is no Christian dress, or Christian food, or Christian way to sit or walk, or to play. It is the individual who is the Christian and who is loyal to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and this can fit any culture.

As we have seen, it is the father who is the family manager and that fits almost every culture. He should be the family provider and with his wife at his side, teach the children the true Christian values to live by. Both of them must be disciplined and set the example of being Christians. Although the father might lead, he and his wife will agree on those things for sometimes because of his work situation, he might be away. Their roles must always complement each other and they must stand together for what God says is right in their home.

Once they have decided together they will stand together, the wife allowing the husband to be the leader in the home and he will show that he supports his wife in carrying out her role as well. The children will soon realise that father and mother are a unit and act together for the good of the family. Anyone stepping out of line will be disciplined by the decision of the parents. The wife’s place of submission will not be seen as suppression or forced subjection; she is free to share her opinions and personal convictions, but once a decision is made and consensus reached, she will have the authority of her husband’s blessing

to carry out these decisions in the home. The husband and wife are God's chosen representatives to run the home for God and to bring up the family in the ways of the Lord. The loving husband who is wise will always seek these insights from his wife and they will make decisions together.

Women must be taught that it is not biblical for them to think of themselves as inferior to men in any way and they do not have to think of themselves as in subjection to men in general. Naturally, all men and women respect the various offices granted to men and women in their social lives and so it must also be in the Church. God does not only call men to be preachers or to hold positions in the Church.

Submitting to an unsaved husband can be very difficult for some Christian women but here, too, they have to learn to operate from a love basis towards the husband. She must put herself under his authority as the head of the home, but firmly and in a manner that does not compromise her commitment to Christ.

God's order for children is, "Children obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Col. 3:20.

It is not discipline that hurts the child but the lack of it. Delinquents come from homes where discipline is absent or weak. The child needs the security supplied by caring parents who have his/her interests at heart. Children are under strong peer pressure and it actually helps the child to take a stand against the peer pressure if needed, if they can honestly say that their parents are not in favour. Children know if they are being loved and respect that in their parents.

Class Discussion

Does the Bible teach that the husband is the boss of the woman?

Are women equal to men or do they have to be subject to men in all things? Can a Christian woman be a career woman?



4

Understanding Christian Ethics in all Relationships

Lesson Purpose

- To give the student an understanding of Social Ethics.

Lesson Outcome:

 Upon completion of this lesson the student will

- want to study further in the field of social ethics
- be more effective in his ministry
- be able to help others who have needs

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- Social ethics or the duties we owe others
- Violations of brotherly love
- Other violations condemned by the Word of God
- The institution of Christianity must be upheld by the pastor and the church
- Christians must neglect his relationship to himself.

Social Ethics or the duties we owe to others

As Christ summed up the first table of the law in one broad and comprehensive duty of love to God, so also, He did likewise with the second table in an equally comprehensive duty of love to man. Jesus said, "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. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. 22:37-40.

The commandment of God is not talking about more human love, for when one personally experiences the love of God in his heart, it is this love that is referred to by God. It is the love that wills the good of every man. Christians who love God can wish no ill on anyone else and must use all reasonable effort to provide the feeling of goodwill to all. That means that Christians are to love the unfortunate and distressed with the love of pity. This is enforced by our Lord and Paul when the Word of God says, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him to drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Psalm 12:20.

Jesus gave a new commandment to His disciples concerning loving each other, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34. This is more than love as a man for all other men; it is the love of a Christian brother or sister for another Christian brother or sister. This is the love that belongs to God's family for each other. It is not so much of more or less love, but deeper love, the love that is seen in the Cross of Jesus for everyone, a truly sacrificial

love. This is the love that feels so much for the other person that it goes beyond the call of duty, to do to the other what you would want them to do for you if you were in their place and they were in yours. Just imagine if every Christian practised this kind of love; there would be a large proportion of less privileged Christians going to bed hungry and cold. If Jesus said that enemies must be treated with dignity and respect as human beings, then how much more those who are family.

Violations of brotherly love.

The Bible gives a lot of attention to those emotions, passions and practices which violate both in spirit and in conduct; God's universal law of love. It speaks against wrath or deep violent anger and hatred; these are human emotions that have been influenced by injustice, greed, racial hatred or love of power and position. These natural emotions become evil only as they are so misdirected and uncontrolled as to contravene the law of love. Of course, there is anger which is a normal emotion of man and can be used constructively. It is motivated for the good will of all and so it is with all other emotions. Christians hate injustice and those things that steal the dignity, worth and goodwill of others. Paul writes, "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamour, be put away from you, with all malice." Eph. 4:31.

1 John 3:15 says that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and Jesus said "whosoever is angry with his brother without cause, shall be in danger of judgment." Matt. 5:22.

The Bible further speaks against malice i.e. spite, ill will, deliberate intent as in committing murder, variance, quarrelings, emulations – rivalry, to be in contest for selfish ends, wrath and resentments, rage, strife – struggle, conflict, discord accompanied with violence. Titus 3:10, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, having nothing to do with him, you may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned."

Other violations also condemned by the Word of God are :

- All evil speaking to be put away, Eph. 4:31, "Speak not evil of one another", James 4:11, especially when the view is merely to lower a person in the estimation of others. Paul says, "Lie not to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man and his deeds." Col. 3:9. Lying strikes at the very foundation of the social structure, sets man against man, and nation against nation.
- Revenge is prohibited by God, "Do not take revenge . . . but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay, . . ." Rom. 12:17. Brotherly love has positive assertions and must always have due regard for the rights and privileges of others. Every human being has the right to live. This does not apply simply to bodily existence but all that God interprets as life, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." John 10:10. This is God's will for everyone.
- "Human culture not only includes the enjoyment of the true and the appreciation of the beautiful. Hence society is under obligation to provide the individual with the opportunity to secure proper food, clothing and shelter, and also the opportunity for the cultural advantages of intellectual and spiritual development . . . the underlying principle postulated in all these cases is the doctrine of equality, equality of rights . . . every man has the same right to use the means of happiness providentially within his needs as any other man, these rights have respect for life, liberty and reputation." (Ibid :74).

- Man has a right to personal liberty. No one has the right to treat someone else as an inferior and to determine their position or class in a society, for God has created all men equal. Man is free to express himself, free to assemble as he chooses, has religious freedom to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience.
- All men have the right to private property. No one has the right to steal from another, whether individually, or at government level. "Thou shalt not steal" Exod. 20:15 and "Thou shalt not covet" Exod. 20:17. "... no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him, the Lord will punish men for all such sins..." 1 Thes. 4:6.
- The Church can open its doors to all men and help them to find these real values at work within true love but God's love goes further than this; it moves into the area of benevolence towards all men. It is that motivation of helping others because it brings cheerfulness to those being the channels of God's love, living is loving and true loving is living. They are becoming more Christlike through their involvement with others. They are literally living in God's world already and they see the living Christ at work in and through them. It produces a feeling of delight in the happiness of others. The person has a growing sense of sympathy and compassion; they also have a growing sense of wanting to do and give more; it fights in the place of the needy and oppressed for their freedom and betterment and wants everyone to experience this love of God in Christ. This is not ordinary living and this kind of living is outside the range of obligation. It flows from the quality of love that does not require any kind of recognition or return for they themselves are being filled to overflowing with God's love which has its source in another world.

Great care must be taken so as not to leave the impression that this is a cultural love from the Western world or elsewhere. It must also not make the recipients dependent in any way or enslave people to a system or organisation. Christians just share when they are being filled with God's love.

The institution of Christianity must be upheld by the pastor and the Church.

It has already been noted that marriage is primarily a divine institution. Christianity has to have its influence in society. It is not apart from it. Christians are the salt that preserves the society from becoming totally corrupt, Matt. 5:13-14, as salt does in preserving meat and fish, but they are also the ones who live what they teach from God's Word. They love to bring light where there is only the practice of darkness. Africa needs to hear that God has instituted marriage as the union of one man and one woman and Christians by example must live out this truth. God also made it clear that marriage is and ought to be a permanent estate, until the couple are separated by death.

The teachings of the Word of God allow marriage to be severed by adultery, Mk. 5:32 and through wilful desertion, 1Cor. 7:15, but the church understands this to mean desertion because of adultery.

As a public institution, marriage promotes the following benefits to society : the private comfort of individuals, the production of healthy children, their education and the due provision for their settlement in life. It also produces peace in the community with them participating in the sanction and protection of morality and law. The family unit functioning as an ordered structure brings this frame of mind to a society and teaches respect of leadership at all levels. It also encourages industry and employment, to be responsible in taking care of the needs of family and others. When one realises the influence of this institution on a community, it must be cherished and upheld. It is so closely tied to the

being of a family that when the family is functioning well, so will the community. It excites industry and economy, brings greater moral knowledge and civility, and early habits of submission to authority. This is the responsibility of the Christian Church. It is through God's love in action in and through Christians that slavery has been abolished, schools and hospitals exist, senior citizen homes built and the oppressed and needy are being ministered to. Take away the Church and Christian institutions and the world will plunge into

A Christian must not neglect his relationship with himself.

God has said that we must love others as we love ourselves. This does not mean in any way that we give way to vanity and pride for these attitudes actually hinder one from enjoying what God has planned for us to experience in the abundant life. True acceptance and love of who you are in Christ makes us channels through whom God can flow. Anyone not liking himself cannot really like others and if there is anything that you detest in yourself will always be evident in a wrong attitude.

"A negative self image will always be critical of others. Individuals who do not love themselves in a healthy way will find it impossible to develop genuine love relationships with others. Psychiatric practice bears out Scripture on two important points: (1) you cannot truly love others until you learn to love yourself in a healthy way; (2) lack of self worth is the basis of most psychological problems." (Meier, Minirth, Wichem, Ratcliff : 142-143).

Pleasing God means taking care of the body, which the Bible calls the temple of God. 1 Cor. 3:16. This means that the Christian must develop healthy eating and sleeping habits, plus adequate exercise and recreation. A proper diet can cure all sorts of depression and anaemia. Overeating can cause all sorts of physical problems and be detrimental to both physical and emotional health. It is a medical fact that high blood pressure, diabetes and heart attacks are related to being overweight. God gave sleep to bring healing and rejuvenate bodies and minds and is more important than just resting. Christian parents teach these principles about healthy living by example. Remember cleanliness is next to godliness and it is also important how Christians dress. The Bible warns against immodesty. There is always the appropriate dress for man and women for every occasion.

A person who is a Christian must think of himself as a Christian and teach himself to do Christian things. To always tell yourself that you are a sinner is to believe that and to live like one. You are a holy person, a new creation, and when you are walking in the Spirit, Jesus is there with you, loving you and through you, imparting His life to you. You know you are not the same old person who lives only to please yourself. You now belong to Him and you live to please Him. You are a Christian; then live the person you are in Christ. Love with the love He is giving you and as you live for Him and see the living Lord Jesus at work in and through you, you will be living the abundant life. Jesus will teach you to accept yourself as you are, to love yourself, to set goals and achieve them, to be a "beautiful person". Do not let anyone rob you of His plan for your life. You are either contributing to a better society or you are part of its problem.



5

The Role of Practical Christianity in Affairs of Everyday Life

Lesson purpose

- To understand and apply the role of practical Christianity in the affairs of everyday life.

Lesson Outcome: Upon completion of this lesson the student will

- enter his larger role to society as a Christian
- be part of the influence towards law and order
- will use every opportunity to bring God's laws into the society in which he functions

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- God's laws are present everywhere
- God appointed man to rule with Him
- God has built into the fine balance of His creations a rebirth
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- God has called man to a three fold responsibility

God's laws are present everywhere because He is the Creator of all things.

The world is not ruled by the laws of Mother Nature but by Father God. In all of God's creations there is order and harmony and everything works to a fine precision and balance.

God appointed man to rule with Him in looking after His Creation.

God gave to Adam special responsibilities which are called his cultural task. God made man different to animals, for animals do not have cultures as men do. Man marries, raises his children, builds houses and schools to teach his children and builds universities to prepare them for careers. He builds places of worship because he is God conscious. Unlike animals he does not act on instinct but is a free moral agent and can choose the course of his life. He can make beautiful things and beautiful music, he can appreciate beauty. When man is busy with his cultural tasks he is busy with the tasks God assigned to him and then is in partnership with God. If he had continued this way, treating the world as God's world, and his work as God's work, this world would be a beautiful place today for God would have given him insight into caring for His world. Much of the world still retains its beauty but so much of this beautiful planet is being marred

every year. Its air, rivers, oceans, land and its order are being polluted, to the detriment of all civilizations and inhabitants of this planet. When God appointed man to look after this world, He did not mean just Adam, but all men wherever they are. Man is responsible for keeping this world beautiful, clean and free from pollution and working in harmony with His laws. Man, however, is out of harmony with God's law himself and therefore abuses God's creation and uses what he can only for selfish gain.

God has built into the fine balance of His creations a rebirth law that operates and rejuvenates His creations.

Man, even though he has rebelled against God's laws, can be "born again" or rejuvenated by God. God has introduced the laws of grace, faith and obedience, and when man repents of his sinful ways, comes back to God on the grounds of the shed blood of Jesus and exercises faith by receiving the Spirit of Christ into his life, he is regenerated and recreated into the person God had planned for him to be when He created Adam. Now, with God's Spirit in him, empowering and teaching him, he can be part of the solution of building a better world for all to live in.

Some Christians become too evangelical in their thinking and believe that Jesus has come only to save men's souls, so do not get involved in making better living conditions for all. They are quite happy to allow them to drink the polluted water, breathe the polluted air, eat polluted food and live in a world that is filled with injustices and corruption, for they have been made to believe that nothing can be done to change the world. Quite rightly they look in hope for the new world to be brought into being at the return of Jesus to this planet.

The fact remains, though, that God is holding man responsible for the world in which they live and He has not changed His order. Man can be thankful that God does not change His mind every day or week or year but that He controls the entire universe by the Word of His power. It is not His fault in any way that man lives in such a diseased world in which he seems to be content. Considering the filth surrounding man, it is a wonder that he still exists on this planet, knowing that he possesses the power to destroy the planet. God loves this planet and He loves all men because they are His creations, and He promised it all as good.

God had given Adam a good system of operation and had he followed it, there would have been a God given order for society. Because he turned his love inward upon himself, he brought in another system, founded by man, which has resulted in an evil system operating in the world and in the individual hearts of all men outside of Christ; a system of "me first", which has built systemic evil into the world's system of doing things. In this world the haves get more and the have-nots get less and less. Many people say that this is the way the world is and it must be accepted as such. However, the fact is that the world is not as bad yet as it could be because of the strong godly influences of those who have faith in God and who live out their faith that God still changes people who, in turn, can change the systems and thereby change the world. Changes have happened for the good and changes can still be made because the Spirit of God is alive in all believers in this world today. Every Christian needs to be part of building a better world, for it to be safer, cleaner, healthier and more beautiful, to be enjoyed by all.

Christians do not just go to work to earn money to live but rather recognise that God gives them all those blessings in order that they can be good stewards of His blessings and through them, He can bless others. Even though Christians know that they are pilgrims on their way to the ideal world to come,

they acknowledge their responsibilities of managing all that God gives them, to bless their families and extended families and even the rest of the world. God wants that order which He has brought into your home, to be in the church where you are a member, to be in the streets, in shopping areas, schools and other institutions, for what is more pleasing than a beautiful world. Men living in such a world would not suffer from all the illnesses and diseases which are the result of a world living without God.

It was satan who got man to sin and he still controls man through his fallen spirit.

He is behind all the pollution and chaos in this world. God still has a large control over satan and his followers and restrains them; or else men would have ruined this world completely and brought an end to the human race by now. God is busy working out His plan in the hearts and minds of His children and each Christian has a responsibility to find God's plan for him in this world and to do God's Will.

God has called every Christian to a threefold responsibility in this manner.

He has made it possible for His people to stand between Him and the world; that includes all the people in it, their belief systems and their behaviour. Christians are the Priests – the bridge builders between God and the people of this world. When dealing with people relationships have to be built. Christians have to reach out to the world and demonstrate God's love to the world. God has chosen it to be this way for in so doing something good happens to the Christian. His character and personality are on the line to reflect God's Image through him to the world. Just preaching at the world is not going to bring about their salvation or change. They need to see Jesus in and through the Christian's life and love for them. Both what they say and what they do must point the world to a better quality of life than they have at present.

Christians are more than just God's priests in this world. God wants to reinstate His rule as King in the hearts and minds of all people. When the world sees Christians taking seriously the rule of God in their lives, they will believe what Christians are saying. At the moment, democracy is sweeping the world. It has its good points but it is not God's answer.

Christians are under the rule of God even now. Of course Christians must vote and must do so for a government which allows religious freedom and the freedom of peoples rights. Man is not the final answer to the world's problems; only God is. That means we measure all governments by God's will and laws and we must do all we can to bring them into living with His values.

Theocracy is when God rules as King. Democracy is when man rules by the will of the majority. Bureaucracy is governments by civil servants and dictatorship is one man ruling. It seems that democracy is the best choice at the moment and we vote trusting God to give us the best He can find at the moment. But Christians, even when they have to be involved with the politics of this world, walk in obedience to God first.

Looking at the temptation satan brought to Adam and then to Jesus, it will be seen that there is a similarity in those he brings to Christians today. Temptation to eat as the answer to all men's ills – Christians must beware that they do not fall into the trap of only supplying the physical needs of people thinking that only good changes will come about. Unless done correctly, it can become a means of enslaving people to an evil system which in reality will not solve anything.

The other temptation is to doubt God's way of doing things. Satan wanted Adam to believe that God was not giving him all that was due him and the devil thought he could get Jesus to short cut Calvary by doing something sensational. That is also not the way to go in winning the world because they have that something wrong inside of them which only Jesus can solve. They have to visit the cross and there die to self and allow His rule into their hearts and minds.

Another temptation is that of not seeing everything in such black and white terms, but to compromise. Adam fell for it and faced the harsh reality of life and death and Jesus knew exactly what the consequences would have been – He would have become the slave of Satan. Jesus chose the way of uncompromising obedience to the Father and set into motion the power of His Spirit which enables us to follow Him.

Adam and his offspring would have ruled this world in righteousness had he not fallen but when he obeyed Satan instead of God, his authority to rule this world was usurped by Satan who has now set himself up as king, and he does rule.

It was God's plan that man rule under His sovereignty for He is creator of all. Even though man lost his rule under God to rule under Satan, God has never lost His power of rule and has handed over His rule to His Son Jesus as King. Therefore, although having to acknowledge the laws made by governments of countries, Christians believe that Jesus is really in control of all history and that it will come out just as He has planned.

Christians are also God's prophets and have to speak to the governments and all those in authority on what God says about sin and salvation. God uses His Word to speak to leaders and thereby He shows them wrong from right. He appeals to His Image in all men and is able to restrain them and enable them to either choose His way or their own. As Christians witness, pray and obey the law, so God works. This is not God's perfect plan. That plan was replaced by Adam's and Satan's plan, but like it or not, God's preventing grace does not give man or the devil a free hand. God has built into His creation certain laws that bring His judgment and actions upon them now in preparation for the Coming Judgment Day. When those under judgment experience His wrath and see the blessings of God upon His people, God is able to speak to them about repentance and change. That is His love in action towards them, giving them grace to change. This He gives to all men everywhere. Christians believe this and live by this faith, no matter what.

"It is therefore the Christian's responsibility to respect the government that is ruling, to pray for it, to pay taxes and to obey all just laws of the government, because as Christians, we believe that governments receive their authority from God and because we believe they have to rule for our own good and for the good of the country as a whole." (Greyling :53).

Class Discussion

What is a Christians three fold responsibility to this world?
Is it possible to fulfil these roles today?



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Angels and Demons

~ Dr Bill Cooper



1

The Nature of the Angels of God

Lesson Purpose

- Describe, from Scripture, the nature of the angels of God

Lesson Outcome -

- They will know the Scriptural teaching about the nature of God's angels

The Bible mentions angels in both the old and New Testaments. We need to begin our study by describing the meaning of the terms that are used to identify angels in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The bulk of our information about angels is found in the New Testament. There are at least 179 references to angels in the New Testament and 114 references in the Old Testament.

In most instances, the Old Testament uses one Hebrew word to identify the angels. This word means to send as a deputy; a messenger; an ambassador. We must keep this in mind as we look at Old Testament passages.

The New Testament used two words to identify angels, but almost all of the references use a single term to indicate angels. This word describes one who brings tidings, a messenger an ambassador.

We want to look at some general information about angels before we become more specific. Many believe that Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-19 describe the fall of Lucifer. He was an angel created by God. He set about to make himself like the Most High God. Because of this he and all his angels were cast out of heaven and left to roam the earth. Luke 10:18 points to the fact that Satan, "fell from heaven like lightning."

Both Psalm 8:5 and Hebrews chapter two announce that angels are greater than mankind. Like men, angels are capable of both choice and sin. Lucifer did both. (II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6)

The Bible never gives a total number of the angels God created. Psalm 68:17 indicates that there are thousands. Matthew 26:53 indicates that Jesus had twelve legions (72,000) of angels at His disposal. Matthew 18:10 speaks of a little child's angel in heaven before the Father. In the Revelation, John spoke of "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." (Rev. 5:11)

Angels are spoken of as beings with great wisdom in I Corinthians 13 and II Samuel 14:20. This should be a source of great comfort for each of us as believers.

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Angels were sometimes invisible, but there are places in Scripture where it is made clear that they were visible – Hebrews 13:2; in Acts 10:3 Cornelius saw an angel; In Numbers 22:31 Baalim saw an angel.

A wonderful feature about angels is that when Jesus returns, they will accompany Him. What a blessed sight that will be. (Mark 8:38) See also I Thessalonians 1:7 where Paul wrote, "...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire."

We must keep in mind that angels are not physical beings as we are. They are spirit beings with no physical body. All angels, both holy and unholy, were created beings. The Scriptures do not indicate when they were created. We only know that like mankind, they are not eternal.

All angels were originally created holy. It would be inconsistent with the nature of God to create something that was unholy.

It is assumed that when the Old Testament speaks of the "sons of God" that it is a reference to angels. If so, Job 1:6 indicates that they gathered in God's presence. Psalm 148:2 indicates that at least part of their ongoing mission is to give praise to God. Angels are limited beings. They are not all knowing. (I Peter 1:11, 12) There is no reference in Scripture that would cause us to think that they are omnipotent. The book of Hebrews, however, does refer to them as being lower than Jesus. They are limited in location. They occupy a certain place. They are not omnipotent.

Though angels are spirit beings, they are intelligent beings. (I Peter 1:12) They are beings that experience certain emotions. Job 38:7 indicates that they "shouted for joy." In the famous passage in Isaiah 6:3, the angels expressed awe and humble reverence. These are characteristics of the angelic personality. Again, angels have a will by which some chose to follow Lucifer in his rebellion against God. Their choice was voluntary and their sin was pride. In Job 4:18, the author wrote, "He (God) puts no trust even in His servants; and against His angels He charges error." From the time of their expulsion from heaven, there have been two distinct groups of angels: one is holy, the other unholy; one serving God, the other following Satan.

Angels Of God Are Powerful

We must be aware of the fact that angels are powerful beings. In Hebrews, the author dealt with some people who worshipped angels. In chapter two, the author quoted from Psalm 8 saying,

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands: Hebrews 2:7

Angels are more powerful than human beings. Because Jesus became totally human, at least during His human lifetime, He was lower than the angels. At all other times He was and is more powerful than they are.

We know that angels protected God's people (Exodus 14:19). In II Kings 19:35, it is recorded that they killed the Assyrians. It was angels who saved the three men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:38) and shut the mouth of the lion which preserved Daniel's life. (Daniel 6:22)

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God sent angels to watch over the righteous (I Corinthians 4:9) and they take charge over us. (Psalm 91:11) We stress the fact that angels are servants of God and His people. That is true. We must not get the impression, however, that they are weak. In fact, the Scriptures present the angels of the Lord as being very powerful.

II Samuel tells of the events around the punishment of David for his sin. The text reads, "When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, "It is enough! Now relax your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." II Samuel 24:16 The angel of the Lord is carrying out the instruction of the Lord. It appears, however, that the angel is the one who brought pestilence upon Israel killing 70,000 men (II Samuel 24:15) The angel was about to destroy the entire city of Jerusalem. That is power.

In Revelation chapter five, John wrote, "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?'" Revelation 5:2. The word translated "strong" means mighty or powerful. It is a term used to describe a valiant warrior. In this verse, John affirms the power of this angel in the capacity where God has assigned him.

In Revelation 7:1, John wrote, "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree." Revelation 7:1 John described a situation where the powerful nature of the angels was evident. Mankind has demonstrated great power. They can use the forces of nature, but they cannot totally control them. We still have damaging hurricanes, tornados and floods and we are helpless to stop their deadly actions. These angels prevented the winds from blowing.

It is one thing to have great power. It is another thing to have the great authority to use that power. Power without authority to use it is frustratingly useless. In Revelation 18, John wrote, "After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory." Revelation 18:1 In this verse, John has described a powerful angel who has convincingly demonstrated that he also has great authority.

There is no doubt that power is important. The crucial issue, however, is whether that power is greater than one's adversaries. You see evidence of this in Revelation where John wrote, "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the keys of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time." Revelation 20:1-3 The gist of John's message is that the angel is more powerful than the forces of evil who war against him. He uses that power to accomplish the will of the Father.

The author of Hebrews was showing his readers that Jesus was superior to the angels. In his logical presentation, he wrote, "Thou hast made Him for a little while lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor..." Hebrews 2:7 He was contending that Jesus was superior to the angels. In so doing, he also pointed out that during Christ's time on earth, the angels were greater than He because He accepted human limitations. In this, the author was affirming the power of angels while also holding that prior to His birth and after His resurrection He was far superior.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that there is mortal combat between the angels of God and the forces of evil. Notice the report that John gives, "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world, and his angels were thrown down with him. Revelation 12:7-9. Observe also that John reported that Michael and his angels not only war with evil forces, but also defeat and removed them. One of the most important facts about the angels of God is that they always defeated the enemy. It is not surprising that in Revelation 21:12 John reports that the angels are the ones who guard the gates of heaven.

Angels Are Limited

There is a balance that must be maintained in our thinking about the angels of God. There can be no doubt that they are powerful, as we have just shown. At the same time, they are bound by limitations. There are several passages that identify these limitations.

In Matthew 24, Jesus was quoted as saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Matthew 24:35, 36 They cannot be said to be all knowing. This is important because there are those who worship angels.

Paul dealt with the Corinthian believers because they were taking their problems with each other before the pagan courts. In his strong challenge against this shameful activity, Paul said, "Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? and if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?..." 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3 There will come a time when believers will sit in judgment upon the angels and the entire world. In this message, Paul highlighted one of the limitations of the angels.

The writer of the Hebrews epistle dealt with people who were worshipping angels. In the first chapter, he presented a number of reasons from the Old Testament which showed the folly of such worship. He wrote, "Having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." Hebrews 1:4 It makes no logical sense to worship one being when another is more powerful. When he mentioned Jesus' more excellent name, these Jewish people understood completely. A person's name represented their power and authority. This, for instance, is the meaning of our praying, "In the name of Jesus."

This author also quoted from Psalm two to remind them that Jesus is God's Son while this is never said of angels. The author said, "For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee?' And again, 'I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me?'" Hebrews 1:5 as quoted from Psalm 89. We must keep in mind that in that part of the world, to be the Son was to be the most important and powerful person in the family. This is true in many cultures even today.

In Hebrews 1:6, the author offered another situation in the contrast between Jesus and the angels. He wrote,

“And when he again brings the first-born into the world, He says, ‘and let all the angels of God worship Him.’ And of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.’” Hebrews 1:6,7.

These people knew very well that the greater is worshipped by the lesser. That is exactly his intent in this quotation from the Old Testament.

The author of Hebrews finalized his message about the angels by saying, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” Hebrews 1:14. Here, in deliberate terms, the author has stated that angels are servants for God and His people. Though the angels are very powerful, which is a great benefit, still their main purpose in life is to be servant to God and His people.

The apostle Peter wrote to people living in the same area as the recipients of the Hebrews epistle, and perhaps the same people, saying, “It was revealed to them (prophets) that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look.” I Peter 1:12 Peter made a clear distinction between the information easily available to believers and the fact that angels did not have this opportunity though they longed for it. This is another instance where believers are greater than the angels who serve them. Peter wrote, “Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers have been subjected to Him.” I Peter 3:22 Peter acknowledged that Jesus held a position a little lower than the angels here on earth. He then hastens to affirm that in the heavenly realm, Jesus is more powerful than anyone or anything except the Father. Peter spoke in sweeping terms when he affirmed that all forms of power and authority were eternally placed under His control.

In Mark chapter eight, Jesus was teaching the people along with the disciples. He talked with them about the cost of discipleship. He said, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:38 He was saying there will be a measure of humiliation for those who choose to love Him and follow Him. He then added His blessing upon them saying that the Son of Man, Jesus, would be ashamed of those who do not commit themselves to Him. He concluded by identifying the time this would be – when the Son of Man comes “with His holy angels.” He made two points about these angels: 1. They will come with Him at the second coming. 2. They are characteristically HOLY. This is extremely important when you remember that the gods of the nations were evil; anything except holy.

In Luke chapter 15, Jesus was answering the question of the Pharisees and Scribes concerning their accusation that he received and ate with sinners. Jesus answered their accusation with three parables in one – the lost sheep; the lost coin and the lost son. Each of these parables stressed the fact that when the lost was found there was rejoicing. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus concluded, “There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents...” Luke 15:7 In the parable of the lost coin, Jesus said, “There is joy in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10 In this account, Jesus told us important information about angels. These angels are in heaven, where all is holy. He also described the values of the angelic host. Their joy was climaxed by a celebration that even one sinner repented and was adopted into the family of God. If you look at the religions of the nations you will see that they are deeply involved in every form of evil and deities are selfish, capricious and dangerous. Jesus stressed the holy character of the angels of God.



2

The Ministry of the Angels of God

Lesson Purpose

- Discover the many ministries assigned to the angels of God
- Help the student to see the strength that is available to us in Christ.

Lesson Outcome

- They will know the ministries performed on our behalf by the angels of God
- They will come to grips with the power God places at our disposal through His angels

As you study the passages that tell us about the mission of angels, there are a host of specific things that they have been reported as doing. We will focus on some of these in detail. In the story of Adam's expulsion from the garden, the text says, "He stationed the cherubim...to guard the way to the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24) Though this may seem to be a punishment, it is not. God used the cherubim, angelic beings, to keep mankind from an even greater tragedy than they had already created for themselves. Such a blessing!

In Genesis 16 and 21, the author recorded the story of Hagar. In 16:7 it says, "the angel of the Lord found her..." The word translated "found" does not mean to hunt for a person, but rather means to attend and watch over one's way. In Genesis 16:12 the author tells us the angel did three things: 1. The angel watched over Hagar. 2. The angel conveyed divine instructions to return to Abraham's tent. 3. The angel gave Hagar a prophetic message concerning the future of her unborn child. Here again, you see the angel serving God in dealing with the needs of people.

Again, in Genesis 21, when Hagar had come to the end of her strength and ability after fleeing Sarah once again, the angel called out to her, "And God heard the lad crying; and the angel of the God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, ' what is the matter with you Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.'" Genesis 21:17 Hagar was convinced that they could find neither water nor food. The angel intervened on God's behalf to rescue this poor woman in need. This is the nature of the angel's ministry.

In Genesis 22, the author tells the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. As Abraham raised the knife to kill his only son, the angel cried out, "and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' and he said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'" Genesis 22:11, 12 The angel spoke on behalf of God to prevent Abraham from completing the sacrifice. In Genesis 22:15-18, the angel spoke to Abraham on behalf of God to announce His blessing for Abraham. It was like God speaking to Abraham.

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In Genesis 24, Abraham sent his servant to secure a wife for his son Isaac. Abraham recounted God's message to him concerning Isaac. He said, "the Lord God...swore to me saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land. He will send his angel before you and you will take a wife for my son from there.'" Genesis 24:7. Abraham was speaking of both protection and guidance from God through His angel. Again, in Ecclesiastes 5:6, the angel is spoken of as "a messenger from God." Yet again, in Isaiah 63:9, it speaks of the angel as "an angel of His presence." When the angel speaks on behalf of God, it is as though God was there in very presence.

In Exodus chapter three, the angel spoke to Moses from the midst of the burning bush. The angel gave Moses God's call to lead His people Israel out of Egypt. Along with the call to lead Israel, the angel also gave Moses God's instructions concerning how to proceed on his new calling from God.

You may remember the story of Baalim's donkey which appears in Numbers 22:22. The angel appeared in the road and the donkey could not pass. God sent the angel to keep Baalim from making a terrible mistake. That is what God's angels do.

In Judges, chapter one, Israel began well, but soon abandoned God's plan for taking the land of promise. In 2:1, the angel of the Lord spoke to Israel on behalf of God to reaffirm His covenant with Israel and give them instructions on how to proceed. Again, this is the kind of thing God called upon angels to do repeatedly.

On some occasions, God chose to use angels in a prophetic role. You know the story of Samson. In Judges 13:3-5, the angel announced the birth of Samson and gave instructions concerning how they should bring him up to serve the Lord. This, again, is a ministry God called upon the angels to do more than once – see also Luke 1:11 where the angel spoke to Joseph about Mary; Luke 1:26, where Gabriel spoke to the virgin Mary; Luke 2:9 where the angel spoke prophetically to the shepherds.

The ministry of angels covers a host of services they perform on behalf of God and His people. Matthew 28:2 reads, "And behold a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it." The author of Hebrews wrote, "Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. In Luke 22:43, the angels ministered to Jesus as He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.

According to Revelation 1:1, God sent an angel to inform John of what would shortly come to pass. There are a number of occasions where this is reported in Scripture. In fact, in Revelation 14:6, John tells us that the angels have a message from God to the nations of the world.

John tells us that the angels in heaven are busy serving God. In John 7:11, the apostle presents the angels as fulfilling a servant role in heaven and worshipping God there. In 8:3, John presents the angels as serving in the heavenly temple. Again, in Revelation 21:12, John tells of the fact that the angels guard the 12 gates to the new Jerusalem.

There is a repeated report of the angels of God being in combat against the angels of Satan. In Revelation 12:7-12, John tells us that there is a battle being waged between Michael and the angels in his command against all the forces of evil.

The Angels Instruct

There is a long list of instances where angels gave instructions. For instance, In Exodus 3:2, an angel gave Moses instructions at the burning bush. The angel spoke with Samson's mother concerning his care. (Judges 13:3-21) In Matthew 28:5, an angel instructed the women at the tomb about the resurrection. In Acts 7:38 we are told that an angel guided Moses at Sinai. Again, in Acts 10:22, an angel guided Peter in the conversation with Cornelius.

In Acts 8:26, an angel gave Philip instructions concerning his ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch. These and several other passages help us understand that part of the angelic ministry is that of instruction.

The Angels Protect

One of the tasks that God assigned to angels was the responsibility to protect the righteous and thwart the forces of evil. When Joseph brought his two sons to his father for his blessing, Israel said, "The angel who has redeemed me from all evil." Genesis 48:16. The word translated "redeemed" is the word which identifies a kinsman redeemer. It is the word that describes the older brother who "buys back" his younger brother who is guilty of a crime.

When Israel was at Sinai, God gave them the law and explained their responsibilities. At that time God said to Israel, "Behold I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared." Exodus 23:20. God is always working in this manner. He sends His angels to protect and guide us to accomplish His will for our lives.

Following the experience of the golden calf, Moses was exceedingly angry with Israel. Moses talked with God. During that conversation, God said, "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." God was both just and merciful. He was saying that when Israel sins, I will punish. Still it is My will to bless and protect them. I will send My angel to protect them on their way to the place of their promised homeland. That, of course, is exactly what God did on the long trek to Canaan. In Exodus 23:2 you find these words, "And I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite." God kept that promise.

When David was among the people of Abimelech and in serious trouble, he wrote, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and rescues them." Psalm 34:6, 7 That is exactly what happened. He had been in danger of his life, but he was sent away safely. He affirmed in this Psalm that this was accomplished by the angel God sent to defend him.

Repeatedly the people to whom David did or meant no harm sought tenaciously to take his life. In Psalm 35, David affirmed that it was God's protection that preserved his life. He wrote, "Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them." Psalm 35:5, 6

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The story of the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel is well known. These three young men took a strong, dangerous stand on behalf of God. In his rage, Nebuchadnezzar overheated the statue furnace and ordered the three men to be bound and cast into the fire. They were not consumed. When the king observed that they were not destroyed by the fire, he ordered them to come out of the furnace. He then said, "...Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielding up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God." Daniel 3:28

Again, in the book of Daniel, you know the story of Daniel in the lion's den. On the morning after the king had to place the prophet in the cage with the lions, the king went to see what had happened. Daniel said to him, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, in as much as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime." Daniel 6:21

In the book of Acts, you have a similar report. Peter and John were arrested for preaching in the name of Jesus. When threatened lest they repeat their mission, they staunchly refused to promise to refrain from bearing their witness. The apostles continued to preach and to heal the sick. The religious leaders burned with jealousy. They took hold of the apostles and put them in prison. The very next verse reports, "But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, 'Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this life.'" Acts 5:19, 20

As Peter fearlessly proclaimed the gospel, he became a serious problem both to Herod as well as the religious leaders. The king had already arrested and killed James the brother of John. It so pleased some of the people that he then imprisoned Peter preparing to kill him as well. Luke then tells us, "And behold an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and roused him, saying, 'Get up quickly,' and his chains fell off. And the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and put on your sandals,' and he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.'" Acts 12:7, 8. Time after time, the angel of the Lord protected the righteous and delivered those who faithfully stood for the Lord. This is one of the beautiful ministries God has entrusted to His angels.

During the temptation of Jesus, Satan tried many things to challenge Jesus' authority and to get Jesus to bow before him. Satan even quoted from Psalm 91:11 where it is written, "For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways." Psalm 91:11. The author of the Psalm pointed out that God watches over His people by placing the responsibility for their protection upon His angels. An angel watches over every event in our lives to protect us from harm and the deception of the forces of evil. It does not mean that no difficulty will ever occur in our lives. It does mean that God has placed an angel to watch over us and only that which He allows will take place in our lives.

The Ministry Of Guiding God's People

God is all-knowing. One of the problems we face, however, is that we are limited; we are not all-knowing. There are many occasions and situations in which we need someone to guide us.

There are many passages of Scripture that indicate that God has appointed His angels to guide His people. We will observe some of these passages.

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In Genesis chapter 24, Abraham was concerned that Isaac should not be married to a wife from the pagan people among whom he lived. He sent his oldest servant to secure a wife from among his relatives for Isaac. As Abraham gave the instructions to the servant, he said, "The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land, He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.'" Genesis 24:7. God will guide even the choice of one's wife. God chose to send His angel to guide us when we are unprepared to guide ourselves.

The story of the Exodus is well known among Christians. As you know, God allowed Israel to appear to be trapped by the Red Sea in order to demonstrate His power and faithfulness to them. In Exodus 14 the author wrote, "And the angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night." Exodus 14:19, 20. The Israelites had grown up in Egypt. They knew nothing of directions in the desert. All through the Exodus experience God guided the people of Israel. This passage clearly states that the angel both guided Israel to this point and then protected them there from the massive Egyptian force.

Though God had instructed Israel to drive out the pagan people from Canaan, they did not always obey that command. In Judges chapter two, the angel of the Lord spoke to all Israel, "Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and he said, 'I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. And as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' but you have not obeyed me..." Judges 2:1, 2 The angel spoke on behalf of God to chide them for their disobedience and to guide them in the way God would have them take the land. God, through His angels, guides His people in every detail of their lives. In the gospels, Joseph was faced with a serious problem which was not of his making. The basic indicator of his character was that he was righteous. He learned that his intended bride, Mary, was pregnant, but they were not yet married. He knew that he had not been involved in this pregnancy. In that culture the wedding would be cancelled in such a situation. As Joseph pondered this situation, an angel of the Lord spoke to him, " But when he had considered this, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit and she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.'" Matthew 1:20, 21. Joseph would face shame and ridicule from family and neighbors, but God sent His angel to make the announcement and to guide him in what he should do. There are always situations in which we have no idea how we should choose to act. It is the ministry of the angel of God to guide in those situations.

Joseph's problems were just beginning. When the learned men from the East had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph again, " Now when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise and take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.' And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt.'" Matthew 2:13, 14 Joseph knew nothing of the jealousy for power that burned within the heart of Herod. God sent His angel both to inform Joseph of the problem and to guide him to a secure solution. This is a ministry to which God sends His angels. What the angel did for Joseph and his little family e will also do for each of us.

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When Joseph took his family to Egypt, he had no idea how long he would be there. The angel told him to go and he went. Notice what Matthew wrote, "But when Herod was dead, Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, 'Arise and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.'" Matthew 2:19, 20. The angel again appeared to Joseph to tell him of Herod's death and guide him to return to his home in Galilee. This is the ministry of guidance to which the Lord has appointed His angels. This is important because God is changeless: what He did, He does.

The fact that God does not change is demonstrated in many places in Scripture. In the book of Acts you see it again, "But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go South to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.'" Acts 8:26. Philip had no way to know that he would meet a man whose changed life would bring change to the whole future of the church. The angel guided and instructed. Philip simply obeyed and one whole area of the world was opened to the gospel.

Paul was no stranger to opposition and persecution. Nevertheless, he was always prepared to confront it. Thus, God could send His angel to announce to Paul what the future holds. There are not many of us who would be able to handle knowing the difficulties the future holds. Paul could deal with that and God sent His angel to that ship floundering in the Sea to tell His servant what the future holds. Of this event, Luke wrote, "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'" Acts 27:23, 24. God did this repeatedly for His servants in the Scriptures. God does not change. He wants to guide us by His angel as He did in the first century. Keep in mind, however, this was always a humbling experience and never a source of pride.

In seven different paragraphs in Revelation chapters two and three, John wrote, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus..." Revelation 2:1; Smyrna 2:8-11; Pergamum 2:12-17; Thyatira 2:18-29; Sardis 3:1-6; Philadelphia 3:7-13 and Laodicea 3:14-22. Each of these paragraphs evaluate the problems faced by that particular part of the church. It is one more illustration of the instructing ministry of the angels of God.

In the book of the Revelation, the angels instructed the apostle John to eat the little book. The apostle then reported, "And they said to me, you must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kingdoms." Revelation 10:11

At the time of Jesus' birth, the angels of God announced the event to the shepherds. They instructed the shepherds concerning where they would find the child. Luke 2:15. Again, at the resurrection of Jesus, it was an angel of God who announced the miraculous event to the women and instructed them to tell the disciples. John 20:12

In the Song of Deborah, she sang with great strength, "Curse Meroz said the angel of the Lord, utterly curse its inhabitants because they did not come to the help of the Lord." Judges 5:23

In Judges chapter six, the angel of the Lord visited Gideon. It sounds as though the Lord was the one giving the instructions. If you read the context carefully, it is clear that this is the angel of the Lord speaking on God's behalf. Judges 6:11, 14

When Elijah fled from Jezebel, he went to Beersheba. The angel of the Lord visited him and brought him food. The angel gave the prophet these instructions, "And the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived anoint Hazael king over Aram...' Again, the angel speaks in such a way that it sounds as though it is the Lord speaking. In II Kings chapter one, the angel of the Lord appeared to Elijah and instructed him to go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria. The angel said, "arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ekron?'" II Kings 1:3

The angel of the Lord appeared to the prophet Zechariah and instructed him, "Then I said, "My Lord, what are these?" and the angel who was speaking with me said to me, 'I will show you what these are.'" Zechariah 1:9 Again, "So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim saying, 'Thus says the Lord of Hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster.'" Zechariah 1:14, 15

Angels Are Intercessors

The ministry of intercession requires our careful scrutiny. The New Testament clearly teaches that Christ ascended to the Father and there intercedes on behalf of those whose sins are forgiven. Matthew 18 gives us another glimpse of the ministry of intercession. In this chapter, Jesus made several statements expressing His deep concern for children. Among these statements, He said, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." Matthew 18:10 This verse deals with some of the more defenseless people in the world. God has appointed angels to watch over the helpless little ones. Jesus did not detail the extent of the care they provide for little children.

There are many things about the future that we do not understand clearly. The apostle John recorded a conversation in Revelation that speaks to our topic at this point. He wrote, "And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.'" Revelation 7:2, 3 In these verses you see two things about the ministry of angels. First they intercede on behalf of believers. Second, they watch over and protect believers.

Angels Are Worshipers

The meaning of the word "worship" has been seriously blurred in recent years. In order to deal carefully with this issue, it will be necessary to deal with the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek terms the Scriptures use in order to gain a Biblical perspective on this idea.

In Psalm 148, the author, perhaps David, wrote, "Praise Him all His angels; praise Him all His hosts. Psalm 148:2 The word translated "praise" means to celebrate, to rejoice in achievement, to sing for joy because one is worthy such as you see in the song of Mary recorded in Luke 1:46-56 and the Song of Deborah recorded in Judges chapter five. The author, in Psalm 148, is commanding the angels to exult in the greatness and power of God. The truth of God's power on behalf of Israel is a great source of joy and rejoicing and the angels should be shouting and singing His praises.

In Psalm 103:20, David wrote, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!" Psalm 103: is a Psalm of reflection in which the author repeatedly calls upon all people and beings to "bless the Lord." The word translated "bless" means to kneel before. It is a sign of the greatness of the one before whom one kneels. By contrast, it is a sign of the significance of the one who is kneeling. It is the ultimate act of adoration. It is to laud the greatness and accomplishments of our God. It is the ultimate expression of thanksgiving one offers to God because of His power and greatness in dealing with the problems we face in life. In this Psalm, David alludes to the majesty of God and His sovereign rule over all the earth. He called upon the angels to bow down in reverence and sing rejoicing in the presence of His majesty.

In the New Testament, the theme is much the same. In Hebrews 1:6 the author wrote, " And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him...'" Hebrews 1:6. The word translated "worship" literally means to kiss. It describes the way a dog caressingly licks the hand of his master. It describes the way one prostrates himself before the greatness of God. It was the instruction to show deep reverence and adoration. This is part of the ministry of the angels of God.

In Revelation chapter five, John wrote, "And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.'" Revelation 5:11, 12 The instruction for the angels to worship does not appear in these verses. What you see in these verses, however, is an expression of the terms defined in this segment. The angels were participating in intense worship along with all the occupants of heaven.

Angels Are Comforters

The scene was the temptation of Jesus. The devil had tried to tempt Jesus in every possible way, but to no avail. At this point, Matthew wrote, "Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.' Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.'" Matthew 4:10, 11 The word translated "ministered" means to serve; to take care of someone in need; to provide support. Jesus had just undergone the most severe attack the devil was capable of administering. Now the angels came to comfort and console. That is part of their ministry to serve both God and His people.

Reflection

The Angels of God have a long list of ministries that they perform on behalf of God and His people. They minister to God and His people. They fight against the devil, his angels and his people. They are strong where we are weak and helpless against the devil and all his angels.



3

The Nature of Satan

Lesson Purpose

- We want the student to understand the nature and character of Satan.
- They must know what the Scriptures teach concerning the actions of Satan

Lesson Outcome –

- They will know what Satan is like.
- They will know what Satan does.

In any study of angels and demons, it is important to delineate Satan's nature and ministry. This is because the demons pattern what they are and what they do after what he does. In this lesson we will be setting the stage to present an awareness of what the demons are like and what they do in the next lesson.

We need to be clear about identifying names. The name "devil" is another name for "Satan." The name devil means slanderer or accuser. There is only one devil, but many, many demons. This one devil is identified in the Scriptures by several other names: "That old serpent" Revelation 12:9; "The evil one" Matthew 6:13; "The enemy" Matthew 13:25; "The murderer" John 8:44; "The deceiver" Revelation 20:10; "The ruler of this world" John 12:31

The Identification "Satan" appears in both the Old and New Testament. The Hebrew word translated "Satan" means an opponent, the enemy; an adversary, one who attacks and accuses. In the New Testament, the word translated "Satan" means the adversary. In the book of Job,(1:6) Satan came among the Sons of God where he once lived as one of them.

The book of Job gives us our most concentrated picture of Satan and his ways. In Job chapter one, God confronted Satan. He said, "And the Lord said to Satan, 'From where do you come?'" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.'" Job 1:7 Satan's answer to God gives insight into his character. He is unrelenting in his effort to subvert the will and purposes of God.

Though he knows that he is a defeated foe, he is undaunted in his attempts to devastate God's plans and people. In Job 1:9, Satan used a subtle question to attack the character of Job before God. He said, "Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have

increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.” Job 1:9-11 Satan’s not so subtle accusation is that Job serves God for what he can gain from God. This is an illustration of the accusative nature of the adversary.

Satan’s Power

In Job 1:12, the author wrote,

Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.’ So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.” Job 1:12

In His instructions, the Lord makes it clear that Satan has power. However, He also made it clear that He had placed limitations on what Satan could do and Satan could do nothing else. Having received these instructions, Satan was helpless to follow his own designs. When we think of Satan’s power we must always keep this in perspective – he has power, but God has placed limits upon it.

In the first chapter of Job, Satan failed to discredit Job with the power God allowed him. He returned in defeat to face God. Observe the difference between God and Satan as expressed in this exchange. “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.” Job 2:3 Observe that God asserts that Satan’s purpose was to “ruin him.” Satan replied, “And Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh, he will curse Thee to Thy face.” Job 2:4,5 God affirmed Job’s qualities; Satan attributed false motives to Job. This is part of the difference between God and Satan.

Again in chapter two, the author gives us another glimpse of the powers of Satan. He wrote, “So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.” Job 2:6 God allowed Satan some power over the life of Job. Still, God put definite limits on what Satan could and could not do. It is a picture of the limitations God placed on Satan’s power.

God’s Dealings With Satan

Down through history, there has been an ongoing battle between God and Satan. It is extremely important for us to know how God deals with Satan because we are called to be “imitators of God.” Ephesians 5:1

In Job chapter one, we begin to see how God deals with Satan. The author wrote, “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” Job 1:7 The import of this is that God is the one who initiated the conversation. God is always challenging Satan. You see this same picture in Job 2:2.

And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Job 1:8 This evaluation was honest; it was positive.

On the other hand, look at the way Satan evaluated Job. "Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.'" Job 1:9-11 Satan's accusation was false. He attributed selfish motives and accused God of dealing unfairly; of buying Job's allegiance. He accused Job of using God for his personal gain. This is Satan's normal way of conducting himself.

God never deals in terms of false claims, even though Satan does. Notice God's reply to Satan's false attack. "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.' So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord." Job 1:12 God gave Satan the opportunity to prove his point. Notice also that God placed definite restrictions on what Satan could do. God exposed Job to the attack, but He protected Job's life and person. If you look carefully at Job 2:3-10, you see the same scenario we viewed in 1:7-12. God is taking Satan's accusations seriously because God will not allow Satan's false accusations to go unchallenged.

In the prophecy of Zechariah, you see another expression of God's dealings with Satan. The prophet wrote, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not the brand plucked from the fire?'" Zechariah 3:1, 2

If you look throughout Scripture, you see God consistently dealing with Satan in the same manner. God confronts Satan's false accusations. God gives him opportunity to prove his accusations, but they are always false and intended to do harm. That is his nature.

Satan's Approach

The author of I Chronicles gives us an important insight into the approach of Satan. He said, "Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." I Chronicles 21:1 Observe the two things Satan did: 1. He stood up against Israel. He always stands against God and His people. 2. Satan tried to get David to do something that David knew he should not do.

Again in the book of Job, Satan showed his plan again and again. He said, "And Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin! yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh, he will curse Thee to Thy face.'" Job 2:4, 5 Observe that in Satan's reply, he did two things which he commonly does: 1. He falsely accused Job. 2. He sought to do Job harm. Throughout Scripture there is no report of Satan doing anything good or saying anything positive about any of God's people after his fall from grace.. This is Satan's style.

The Devil

The word "devil" does not appear in the Old Testament, but there are two Hebrew words that are translated in the plural form, "devils." Their meaning is as follows:

1. It means one who is abusive.
2. It is one who is insolent, devastating and arrogant.

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In the New Testament, there are two words which are translated “devil.”

1. It is one who accuses and slanders
2. It identifies an evil spirit; to be possessed with a demon. On occasion, this word is also translated “demon.”

To call him “devil” is not an expression of abuse or falsehood. When Luke recounted the story of Jesus’ temptation, he wrote, “And the devil said to him, ‘I will give you all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me and I give it to whomever I wish.’” Luke 4:6 That is a lie. “This domain and its glory,” have not been handed over to the devil. It is not his to give away. We must always remember that the devil can be counted upon to deal in falsehood. He may do it in clandestine ways, such as the serpents questions to Eve, but at root, he is dishonest.

The devil has shown himself to be most persistent. The story of Job is evidence of his evil tenacity. In the report of the temptation of Jesus, Luke wrote, “And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him UNTIL AN OPPORTUNE TIME.” Luke 4:13

The Devils Motives

Again, Luke reported the words of the devil to Jesus, “Therefore if you worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” Luke 4:7. The devil lost his heavenly home because of his insatiable desire to be worshipped; to take the place of God. In this encounter, the devil made a false promise he could not possibly keep. He did it in order to get Jesus to worship him. This is the devil’s ultimate goal in life – to be worshipped.

The devil delights to destroy. In the course of Jesus’ temptation, the devil said to Him, “And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written, ‘He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You,’ ‘And on their hands they will bear You up, lest you strike Your foot against a stone.’” Luke 4:9-11

It is not bad enough that he wanted to destroy Jesus. He even mishandled Scripture in order to accomplish his goal.

The Scriptures consistently present God as holy and faithful. In I John, the apostle wrote, “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” I John 3:8 John presented the devil as the ongoing sinner. He went further and declared that those who follow him are as sinful as he is. In his gospel record, John quoted Jesus in a much stronger statement, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.” John 8:44 These are strong words, but they are absolutely true.

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he wrote about people who give leadership to the church, “And not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.” I Timothy 3:6 The word translated “condemnation” means to slander or accuser. It is the word usually translated “devil.” It is unfortunate that in many places this instruction is not followed. It does present the fact, however, that it is the ministry of the devil to condemn those who are following Jesus. In the very next verse, Paul wrote, “And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the

devil." I Timothy 3:7 The word translated "reproach" means an insult or disgrace. Again, the word translated "snare" means a trap; a concealed danger; a deceitful trick and enticement. Paul was dealing with the nature of the devil as he attacks the followers of Jesus.

The Devil Has Limited Power

We need to look carefully at the words of the Hebrews author when he wrote, "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14 We must deal with what he meant by "the power of death." One of the consequences of the disobedience of Adam and Eve is that they died. The devil did not kill them, but because of his deception they died. When the devil was trying to get Job to curse God, he was told he could touch Job's life, but he could not take Job's life. The Hebrews author is not talking about the devil being able to strike us dead. He is talking about deceiving us into disobedience which results in eternal death.

We do not understand everything Jude had in his mind when he wrote, "But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'" Jude 9. It is appropriate to say Jude was claiming that the devil had power that Michael did not have because Jesus is the judge. The devil, to this extent, is powerful. At the same time Michael was able to say, "The Lord rebuke you." This is an affirmation that though Michael could not pass judgment, Jesus had the power to rebuke the devil. Jesus is greater and more powerful than the devil.

The book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus which uses some of the end times events to show His greatness. Part of that picture is His power over the devil and his angels. There is a description of the power of the devil over which Jesus will ultimately conquer. John quoted Jesus, saying, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." Revelation 2:10 The devil can and will manipulate deceived people so that they will cast some of God's people into prison where they will be tested and experience tribulation for a period of time. The ultimate picture of Jesus in the Revelation, is the ultimate victor over the devil and all those whom he commands.

Devil's Dealing With People

In John 13, the apostle wrote, "And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him." John 13:2 Many people think of the actions of Judas as the product of his own perverted thought process. This verse makes it clear that is not the case. The devil moved Judas to take this unfortunate action. This is one way in which the devil works with people to get them to do his bidding.

In the midst of 21 separate commands, Paul wrote, "And do not give the devil an opportunity." Ephesians 4:27. Paul gave them an important insight. The 21 commands identify a number of ways of conduct that people tend to think are not all that important. Actually they are as important as some of the commandments. The thing that escaped the Ephesian believers was that when a person allows one of these to go unchallenged in his life, it tends to open an increasing opportunity to work his evil designs in our lives.

Paul again wrote to the Ephesians about the way the devil quietly works his way into our lives and conduct. He wrote, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Ephesians 6:11 The word translated "schemes" means a strategy of deception. The devil pushes hard on a smaller issue to divert our attention away from a far more serious issue that he would use to destroy us. Paul said they should stand firm against this. He continued by pointing out the things that would help us take such a firm stand. The physical situations are relatively easy to be aware of, but he reminded them that they fight against the "forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places." They need to surround themselves with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the sword of the Spirit and prayer in perseverance. Paul has identified a very serious situation that demands our most careful attention.

In Acts 10, Luke described another way the devil deals with people. "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." Acts 10:38 The word translated "oppressed" literally means power against. It was used to describe the way the rich tend to dominate and exploit the poor. Oppression, however, should not be considered the same as possession. You often see a Christian oppressed by the devil, but never possessed.

The Final Results

The devil makes every effort to frustrate and disappoint the serious believer. In the midst of our struggle against temptation and every other tool of the devil, we need to keep in mind what the Scriptures tell us about the final outcome.

Luke provided some sobering, but essential information when he wrote, "And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time." Luke 4:13 The devil used every possible means to tempt Jesus, but was completely unsuccessful. The good news is that temptation can be successfully rejected.

James reminds us of an important piece of information concerning our struggle against the devil. He wrote, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." James 4:7 Observe that James mentions two requirements if we would have victory over the devil. (Some people only remember that James said "resist the devil.") 1. Submit to God. 2. Resist the devil. We must keep in mind that it is as important to submit to God as it is to Resist the devil. He then gave the promise, "And he will flee from you." In the midst of severe temptation, which sometimes disappoints us in failure, there is a way to be victorious.

In the Revelation, John wrote, "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Revelation 20:10 As we look around us, it sometimes appears that the devil and his evil companions are constantly winning the battle. John gives us real hope. Despite all appearances, ultimately the devil will be defeated and destroyed.



4

The Nature and Ministry of Evil Spirits

Lesson Purpose

- We must acquaint the student with the Scriptural teaching concerning the nature of demons.
- We must acquaint them with the Scriptural teaching concerning the ministry of demons.

Lesson Outcomes

- They will know for certain what demons are like
- They will clearly understand what demons do in relation to the believer.

Definitions

Demons are mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. There are three Old Testament words that should be translated "demons": One of the words means "demons." A second word literally means a "he-goat" the devil. The third word means insolent one.

In the New Testament there are two terms that are translated "demon:"

- Diabolos- means slanderer; accuser
- Diamon- Evil superior natural being.

At the same time, there are words translated "spirit" in both the Old and New Testaments. In both instances the word translated "spirit" is accompanied by the modifier "evil." In the Old Testament, the words are as follows:

- Ruach - means breath; it identifies a spirit.
- Obe - literally it means to mumble; it identifies a familiar spirit
- In the New Testament you will find these words:
- Pneuma - it means breath, a spirit, both holy and demonic
- Fantasma - literally to appear; a spirit

A demon is an angel of God who chose to follow Satan and participate in his rebellion against God. All of those so involved were expelled from heaven. In II Peter, the apostle wrote, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment." II Peter 2:4, you will find a corresponding statement in Jude 6. Demons are also referred to in Scripture as "Evil spirits."

In the seventh chapter, Mark tells the experience of the Syrophoenecian woman. He wrote, "But after hearing Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Mark 7:25 This gentile girl was definitely possessed by an evil spirit. In verse 29, Mark wrote, "And He said to her, 'Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" Mark 7:29 In these verses, Mark gives us at least two pieces of information: 1. Verse 25 deals with a possession by an evil spirit. Verse 29 deals with the same experience and Jesus called it possession by a demon. Both of these identifications appear in the same paragraph. It establishes that both identities point to the same group of fallen angels. 2. Jesus drove out the evil forces without even being in the presence of the little girl.

When the Scriptures mention "demons" or "evil spirits," we understand these are references to those angels who, along with the fallen angel Satan, rebelled against God.

Character And Personality Of Demons

It is essential to know what demons and evil spirits are like. In several places in Scripture, you gain a glimpse into the life of a demon or evil spirit. In his gospel record, Matthew gives us such an insight.

But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Matthew 12:43

It is important to keep in mind that these spirits have no regular place of abode. They had a place to reside, but because of their sin, they were evicted.

Evil spirits are persistent. Luke tells of the temptation of Jesus in these terms.

And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Luke 4:13

Notice, Luke did not say, "he departed from Him." He said, "He departed from Him **until an opportune time.**" If you study the life of Jesus in the gospels, you will see that the evil forces persisted in tempting Him even at the time of the crucifixion. All of us have a spiritual point of weakness. If you look carefully at your own experience you will see that our enemy persistently attacks the point of our greatest weakness.

On more than one occasion, the Gospel records clearly point out that the forces of evil frankly admitted that Jesus is the Son of God. Nevertheless, this did not deter them. Both Mark (1:24) and Luke give evidence of this.

And there was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! what have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy one of God. Luke 4:33, 34

They knew that Jesus was the Son of God. They also knew that He was far more powerful than they were. Still, this did not deter them in the slightest. Their longing to take His position and power away from Him so that they might have it blinded them to the greatness of God expressed in His Son.

James was a changed man. Right up to the time of the resurrection, it was clear that he was convinced that Jesus had become mentally unbalanced. The resurrection appearance of Jesus changed everything. He not only believed that Jesus was the Messiah; he became the leader of the church in its most difficult hour and died a horrible death because of his faithful witness. Disturbed at some of his fellow believers, he wrote:

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder.” James 2:19

He knew that Jesus was their Messiah and forcefully gave witness to this fact. In the process, he gave us a glimpse into the lives of the evil spirits who threatened the church. From personal experience of being attacked, he knew that the power of Jesus caused great fear in the demons who opposed Him.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus was accused of casting out a demon by Beelzebub when He cast a demon out of a man who had lost the ability to speak because of his demon possession. Jesus explained how evil spirits work in these words:

Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Luke 11:26

Jesus has indicated that the fact the demon was cast out does not mean he will not return. There is a persistence in their mission. The evil spirit was joined by seven other spirits. These evil spirits worked together to make the man's life far worse than it was before. This is part of their nature.

Though angels were initially created holy, they had freedom of choice as our forefather had. They chose to rebel against God and chose a totally foreign lifestyle.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world I John 4:1

The implication of John's statement is that some spirits are unholy and dishonest. It had become part of their nature. As the devil lied to Jesus about possessing a kingdom, so these spirits came to be known for their dishonesty.

Spirits Are Evil.

A "medium" is a person who is considered to have the ability to communicate and use the power of spirits. The Old Testament speaks carefully to this issue.

Turn ye not unto them that have familiar spirits, nor unto the wizards; seek them not out, to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God. Leviticus 19:31

Notice that the author pointed out that to seek them out is to be defiled by them. This being the case, such a person would not be permitted to go to the temple. The result of this is that on the day of atonement they could not make the sacrifice and their sins would not be forgiven.

The author of Leviticus wrote:

And the soul that turneth unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards, to play the harlot after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 20:6

People, like Saul, who seek out a medium, would not only be rejected from worship, but would also be cut off from God and removed from the people of Israel. This gives us an understanding of just how odious this was in the sight of God.

The author carefully described the sinful lifestyle of Manassah. He wrote:

And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practised augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. And he set the graven image of Asherah, that he had made, in the house of which Jehovah said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever; II Kings 21:5-7

The use of evil spirits and mediums is just one among a long list of evils this king of Judah did. He knew better. His father, Hezekiah, was a godly king, but Manasseh undid the good things his father had done and pursued a long list of evil deeds.

In Leviticus, the Lord spoke to Moses and said,

A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them. Leviticus 20:27

Again, the desperate measures the Lord commanded point to the fact that this is an evil situation which requires quick and severe action.

Luke gives us a careful report of the temptation of Jesus. He wrote,

And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. Luke 4:6

This is a report of the way Satan tempted Jesus. In this verse, Luke has reported a deliberate falsehood perpetrated by the devil. The demons or evil spirits are angels who rebelled against God along with the devil and share his character and mission.

The evils of the devil and his angels – the demons or evil spirits – are not confined to the ministry of Jesus. The book of Acts records on the same experience in the ministry of Paul. Luke wrote,

and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Acts 13:10

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Paul makes a terrible indictment upon this man. The word translated “guile” means to be deceitful; to be wicked and unscrupulous. The word translated “villainy” means slander. It is a word used to identify Satan because it is characteristic of his nature. The same would be true of his demons and evil spirits.

The book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus Christ. In the process of showing us the greatness and holiness of Jesus, it is also possible to see the serious evil of the devil and his angels. After the seventh trumpet sounded, Michael and his angels waged war against the dragon and his angels. The apostle John wrote,

And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. Revelation 12:9, 10

The dragon is identified as the devil. The word translated “devil” means the one who accuses. The word translated “snake” means one who is murderous; it has the characteristic of skulking. When the term was applied to the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:33) it highlighted their deceptive, destructive ways. The word translated devil means to slander or malign. Nothing good is reported about his character. Observe that John not only reports that the devil is an accuser, but he indicates this is something that he and his angels never stop doing. The crucial thing that John tells us about the devil and his angels is that they were cast down.

Like Peter, James, Paul and the author of the Hebrews epistle, John was writing to the people who lived in a culture deeply involved in idolatry and the worship of demons. John wrote,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. I John 4:1

When John instructed his readers not to believe every spirit, he was suggesting that there are spirits who lie. When he said, “whether they are of God,” he was also saying that they may not be “of God” and it would not be easily discernable. That, of course, is exactly the case. He further clarified his caution by frankly saying that there are “many false prophets who have gone out into the world.” His use of the terms “false prophets” is a way to speak of the deceptive mission of the evil spirits. Notice, he said “many,” not just a few.

On many occasions, Jesus was accosted even in the temple by the Scribes and Pharisees. On one occasion, following the confrontation over the woman taken in adultery, at the climax of the debate, Jesus said,

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth 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 thereof. John 8:44

Jesus accused the devil of being a murderer. He also did more than saying that the devil is a liar. He said that the devil is the father, the source of lies and that his lies are an evidence of his dishonest nature. This is important here because his angels, the demons, choose what he chose and become the kind of being his character expresses.

Spirits Cause People To Do Evil

In I Samuel 16, we saw the evil spirits disturb Saul. One of the characteristics of all evil forces is their persistence. Because of Saul's disobedience and refusal to confess and change his ways, God allowed the evil spirits to attack Saul. These evil spirits caused Saul to do terrible things.

And an evil spirit from Jehovah was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing with his hand. I Samuel 19:9

In this instance, Saul was moved by the evil spirits to attempt to kill David. Through several years and many experiences, Saul sought to take David's life while David was always being supportive of him.

Manasseh, king of Judah, had a wonderful example in his father, Hezekiah. However, it is as though he had never seen a righteous ruler. If you read II Chronicles 33:1-6, you will see a long list of evil which he performed. He rebuilt the high places his father had destroyed; he built altars to idols in the Lord's house; he sacrificed his sons to Moloch; he practiced witch-craft, divination, sorcery, dealt with mediums, and put idols in the temple. These are terrible evils which the evil forces urged him to do and for which he and all Israel suffered.

Spirits Do Harm

The gospel writers give us a substantial amount of information about demon possession. Matthew describes one particular experience in chapter nine of his gospel record.

And as they went forth, behold, there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. Matthew 9:32, 33

Matthew does not tell us the details of this man's demon possession. He does say that the man was demon possessed and unable to speak. He then said that when Jesus cast out the demon, the man was able to speak.

Again, Matthew tells of another instance where the demons who possessed a man did great harm to this man.

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David? Matthew 12:22, 23

We know no details about how all of this came about. We do know that the man was both blind and unable to speak. Jesus healed the man and he could then both see and speak. It is reasonable to assume that the man's condition was caused by the demons who possessed him. It was not a benefit to the man that these spirits took control of his life.

The apostle Peter wrote about the harm that evil spirits do to people.

Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, I Peter 5:8

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Peter attributes these activities to the devil. The apostle used the name for satan which means slanderer. The apostle also used an image to describe the actions of evil forces. This image is a comparison. Peter was saying that in the same way a lion prowls looking for something to destroy for his consumption, evil forces seek us out to destroy us for their own benefit.

When Jesus, along with Peter, James and John, came down from the transfiguration, they encountered a man whose son was demon possessed.

and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. Mark 9:18

And oft-times it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Mark 9:22

As you read these verses, observe the things the demons did to the boy: 1. Slam him to the ground. 2. Foams at the mouth and stiffens out. These indicate a loss of bodily control. 3. Thrown into the fire. 4. Thrown into the water. It clearly states that these things were intended to destroy the young boy. There is no mention of anything that would benefit the boy, just to destroy him.

The apostle John, in Revelation 16, described the judgment which will occur when the fifth angel pours out his bowl. John wrote:

for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. Revelation 16:14

This is great power. We mention this here because the evil angels/ the demons carry out the devil's mission; they kill on his behalf.

Spirits Have Some Power

In the first four chapters of Hebrews, the author emphasized that Jesus is superior – superior to Moses; superior to angels. In the midst of this worshipful picture of Christ's greatness, the author mentioned that the devil has power. He said,

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Hebrews 2:14

This is great power as well. We mention this here because the evil angels/the demons carry out the devil's mission; they kill on his behalf.

The apostle John, in Revelation 16, described the judgment which will occur when the fifth angel pours out his bowl. John wrote:

for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. Revelation 16:14

Notice that in this verse, John enumerated two great things the evil spirits/demons do:

- They perform great signs.
- They are able to gather the kings and rulers from all over the world to do battle against Almighty God.
- This is power: both spiritual and political.

In the book of Acts, Luke describes for us the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit. He also provides insight into the power of the evil forces. He wrote

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Acts 19:14-16

In this chapter, Luke reported an event dealing with the seven sons of the chief priest – Sceva. They attempted to cast out demons. The fact that the young priests were overpowered should caution us to remember that God is all-powerful, but we are not. The enemy is more powerful than we are, but subject to our God.

Spirit Power Is Limited

And when the devil had finished every temptation he departed from Him until an opportune time. Luke 4:13

This is an affirmation of Jesus' victory over the enemy. The text clearly points to the persistence of the spirit world, but they failed to destroy Jesus. This piece of evidence supports the contention that the powers of the spirit world are limited.

There is a prerequisite to resisting the devil. Notice how James puts it:

Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

One must "subject" himself to God as well as resist the devil before he will flee from you. The word translated "subject" means to subordinate; to bring under firm control, but voluntarily. The fact that the spirits can be resisted indicates the limitation of their power.

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. Revelation 12:11

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In this verse, John points out three sources of defeat for the devil and his angels: 1. The brethren defeated the forces of evil "because of the blood of the Lamb." 2. They defeated the forces of evil because of "the word of their testimony." 3. They defeated the forces of evil because "they did not love their life even to death." This being the case, one must conclude that their power is limited. The primary message in this is that we can be victors in the name of Jesus.

The great power of God is demonstrated in Mark chapter one.

And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him. Mark 1:34

Jesus refused to allow the demons to speak. You see this also in Acts 19:12 where the evil spirits were driven out. One of the greatest truths in this area is that God enables His people to be victors over the devil and his angels.

In the oft quoted story of the demoniac from Gadara, there is a clear picture of the power limitations of the demons.

For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him: and he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the bands asunder, he was driven of the demon into the deserts. Luke 8:29

In this particular verse, the great power of this man who is possessed by a demon. This fact is very important to the whole message of this paragraph.

And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, torment me not. Luke 8:28

It is very clear that the demon was not at all happy to see Jesus. Observe that the demon recognized Jesus and was pleading with Him. The evil spirit fell down before Jesus acknowledging His superiority; the spirit acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God.

And Jesus asked him, What is thy name? And he said, Legion; for many demons were entered into him. Luke 8:30

Jesus confronted the legion of demons and they were compelled to answer Him. Had the spirits had superior power, they would have challenged confronted that question. They could not do it.

For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him: and he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the bands asunder, he was driven of the demon into the deserts. Luke 8:29

Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them leave. Luke 8:32

It is one thing for Jesus to command the evil spirits to come out of the man. It is quite another thing for the evil spirit to be forced to obey the command. The spirits have power, but their power is definitely limited.

And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss. Luke 8:31

In this verse, the word translated “implored” means to urge; to implore or beg. They were begging Jesus not to send them into the abyss. The implication of this is that Jesus had the power to do this and the spirits knew it. It also indicates that the evil spirits knew they did not have the power to resist Jesus. If they did have the power, they would never have begged.

Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them leave. Luke 8:32

This is a picture of desperation. There is no place these spirits would rather not be so much as being sent into a herd of pigs. Luke used the same word translated “to implore” as used in the previous verse.

And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season. Luke 4:13

This is an affirmation of Jesus’ victory over the enemy. The text points to the persistence of the spirit world, but they failed to destroy Jesus.

Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

There is a prerequisite to resisting the devil – that is to subject oneself to God. Then, it is possible to resist the strong efforts of the evil one and his angels.

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Revelation 12:11

In this magnificent verse, John points out three sources of defeat for the devil and his angels: 1. The brethren defeated the forces of evil “because of the blood of the Lamb.” 2. They defeated the forces of evil because of the word of their testimony. 3. They defeated the forces of evil because, “They did not love their life even to death.” The primary message is that we can be victors in the name of Jesus. This great power of God is mentioned in Mark 1:34 where Jesus refused to allow the evil spirits to speak. You will also see this in Acts 19:12 where the evil spirits were driven out in the name of Jesus.

And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. Revelation 12:9

To be permitted to dwell in heaven was the ultimate benefit. To be cast out was the ultimate shame. If you look carefully at the verse, it is not just that Satan is cast out, but all his evil cohorts were cast out with him. If he had limitless power, this would never have happened.

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In Revelation 20:2, 3, an angel came down out of heaven and bound satan and cast him into the abyss. In Revelation 20:10, satan was cast into the lake of fire. In Matthew 25:41, the apostle describes the judgment. The evil forces were cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Again, the fact that each of these catastrophes took place indicates that they have some power, but it is severely limited.

And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. Mark 1:26

If you look carefully at this verse, you will note that the evil spirit did great harm and violence to the man, but in the end he obeyed the command of Jesus and came out of the man. There is some power here, but it is also very limited.

And one of the multitude answered him, Teacher, I brought unto thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. Mark 9:17, 18

This is a complete picture of demonic power. The demons were able to resist the commands of the disciples, but they were powerless when confronted with the power of Jesus.

As we review the section on the limited power of the evil spirits, we are warned that they have some power. At the same time, their powers are always subject to the command of Jesus. Paul's statement, "We are more than conquerors through Him who strengthens us."

They Can Be Cast Out

The Scriptures tell us that these evil spirits take up residence in the lives of specific individuals. The text does not describe how an evil spirit "possesses" an individual. There is no record in Scripture of anyone who has accepted Christ as their savior being possessed by an evil spirit.

In his gospel record, Luke wrote, "Who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured." Luke 6:18 Notice that Luke used two different words- "healed" and "cured." The word translated "healed" is "iathaenai" and means to be cured or made whole. The word translated "cured" in relation to the unclean spirit is "therapeuo" which means to restore. It is to return life to what it was before they were troubled with the evil spirits. Luke's choice of words makes it clear that he is not thinking of the relief from disease and the restoration from the presence of the evil spirit as being the same thing. Both are problems and troubles, but they are quite different.

Luke also wrote, "At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind." Luke 7:21 In this verse, Luke used the word "therapeuo" when speaking of both illness and evil spirit possession. They were restored to what life had been like before disease and before being possessed by the evil spirit.

Matthew wrote, "Now when the evil spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest and does not find it." Matthew 12:43 We need to understand what he meant when he said, "spirit goes out of a man..." There is not a single report in Scripture of an evil spirit voluntarily leaving a person. There are several passages which express their reluctance to leave. Matthew is talking about those times when an evil

spirit is cast out of a person's life. The importance of this is that though evil spirits have power, they can be successfully cast out of a person's life. In verse 44, however, there is an additional piece of information. He wrote, "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first...'" Matthew 12:44, 45

Mark tells the story of the possessed man from Gerasa. He wrote, "For He had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.'" Mark 5:8 Jesus' command expresses His disdain for the evil spirit. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man and the evil spirit obeyed. It is one thing to command an evil spirit to come out of a man. It is quite another to show the total restoration of that individual once the spirit has left. Mark speaks to this issue when he wrote, "And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the 'Legion' and they became frightened." Mark 5:15.

The Spirits Obeyed Jesus

In chapter five, Mark told of the experience in Gadara. He wrote, "For He had been saying to the man, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'" And He was asking him, 'what is your name?' and he said to Him, My name is Legion, for we are many.' And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. And the demons entreated Him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.' And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea. About two thousand of them and they were drowned in the sea." Mark 5:8-12 Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man and the spirits obeyed. Jesus asked the evil spirits questions and the spirit answered the questions honestly. The evil spirits pleaded with Jesus not to send them out of the country. Jesus gave the spirits permission and they entered into the swine who then perished. Each of these verses point out the obedience of the spirits to Christ though there were thousands of them. It also points out that Jesus was superior to them in terms of power.

In chapter nine, you have a similar situation. As they returned from the transfiguration, the father of a spirit possessed boy begged Jesus to deliver his son. Mark recorded, " And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, 'You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him, and do not enter him again.' And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead!'" Mark 9:25, 26 Jesus commanded the spirit to come out of the boy and never return. The spirit desperately tried to do violence to the boy, but he obeyed the command of Jesus and came out.

After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, Matthew gives this report. "And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed and He cast out the spirits **with a word** and healed all who were ill." Matthew 8:16. Observe that in the confines of this verse Jesus cast out the demons "with a word." In Scripture there is a specific way to describe power. It is power to **create** a universe. It is far greater power to "speak" the word and it is created. This is the idea being presented here.

In his gospel record, Luke wrote, "Who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured." Luke 6:18 The word translated "cured" literally means to restore. Observe that in this verse he deals with physical problems such as 'diseases' as well as the possession by evil spirits. In both instances, they were restored – the diseased were made free from their

disease and those 'troubled by evil spirits' were released from that trouble and possession.

Throughout the Gospels, there is a consistent picture presented of the unclean spirits. When Jesus questioned them, they had to answer Him. They were totally dependant upon Him for direction. They pleaded with Him for permission to go into the swine. They did nothing until He gave the permission. Jesus commanded them to leave possessed people alone and they carefully obeyed him. This is a beautiful picture of the limitless power of Christ in the face of dependence and powerlessness on the part of the unclean spirits.

The Spirits Obeyed The Disciples

It is one thing for Jesus, the Son of God, to be able to command unclean spirits to come out of possessed person. It is quite another thing for human beings who are not deity to command unclean spirits to come out of an individual. That is exactly what happened. Luke wrote, in the book of acts, "And it happened as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond servants of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.' And she continued doing this for many days, But Paul was greatly annoyed and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' and it came out at that very moment." Acts 16:16-18 The apostle commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the girl, "in the name of Jesus Christ." In Scripture, when they use the words, "in the name of...", it means "on the basis of the authority of..." We conclude our prayers, "in the name of Jesus" as a way of saying we have been invited to pray because we have His authority to do so. It was not that Paul in himself had the power and authority to command evil spirits. He had been given that authority by God to command evil spirits and they must obey him. Some believers make the very serious mistake of just commanding the evil spirits to do what they tell them to do. That is very dangerous and there is no biblical basis for such action.

In Mark chapter six, he reports Jesus' instructions as the 12 were being sent out to witness. He wrote, "And he summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs; and He was giving them authority over the unclean spirits." These 12 men were not deity, but Jesus had given them authority over unclean spirits. This gives us a picture of the power given to the 12 as well as a picture of the powerlessness of the evil spirits.

On another occasion, Jesus sent out 70 of his followers. Luke reports their return when he wrote, "and the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.'" Luke 10:17 Jesus had given them authority over the demons or evil spirits and they accepted that authority and used it. The evil forces were unable to resist the authority Jesus had placed in His servants.

Spirits Always Do Harm

There is no record of a single situation where an evil spirit or demon ever improved the life of a person with whom he came in contact. On the other hand, there are a number of passages that indicate just how devastating their encounter with evil forces had been.

Matthew tells of the encounter when Jesus along with Peter, James and John, came down from the mount of transfiguration. The father of the boy pleaded with Jesus to cast the spirit out of his son. He had asked the disciples to do this, but they were helpless. The text does not explain this except to say, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain,

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'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you." Matthew also quoted Jesus as saying, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:21 Matthew wrote of the father's explanation of the son's condition, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water." Matthew 17:14 In Mark's account of this situation, he quoted the boy's father, saying, "And one of the crowd answered Him, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute.'" Mark 9:17 In the very next verse, Mark recorded, "*and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able.* Mark 9:18 These experiences were not under the control of the boy. The evil spirit caused him to do things that were destructive to his life.

Luke added this information to the presentation, "And behold a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth, and as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him." Luke 9:39 Luke further reported the situation, "And while He was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground, and threw him into a convulsion, but Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father." Luke 9:42 The things the spirit did to the boy were intended to take his life. The contrast between Jesus' willingness to help the boy and the evil spirit's attempt to destroy the boy is very obvious.

Matthew reported another situation in chapter 12 of his gospel, "Then there was brought to Him a demon possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him so that the dumb man spoke and saw." Matthew 12:22 It is very clear that this man had not been born blind. Had that been the case, the apostle would have mentioned it. This is because the healing of a person born blind was one of the evidences that the person who did this was Messiah. There is another occasion where Jesus healed "A man born blind." That is not the case here. When the evil spirit entered this man, the man could see and he could speak. This man was not born with the inability to speak. That condition came when the evil spirit possessed him. The coming of the spirit into his life terminated both his ability to see and to speak. That is the kind of devastation an evil spirit brings into the life of one he possesses.

In Luke chapter 13, he tells the story of a woman, "And He was teaching in one of the Synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness by a spirit; and she was bent double and could not straighten up at all. And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your sickness.' And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God." Luke 13:10-13 Notice that the text says, "she was made erect AGAIN." This means that she had been able to stand erect prior to the time of being possessed by the evil spirit. The destructive power of the evil spirit was broken and she was released from his power. The presence of the evil spirit in her life certainly did not improve the quality of her life at all.

In Luke chapter eight, the author reported a very strange situation where a man was possessed with a demon. Luke wrote, "And when He had come out onto the land, he was met by a certain man from the city who was possessed with demons; (plural) and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs." Luke 8:27 Worse than being embarrassing, this is immoral. Still this is the kind of thing an evil spirit does to a person whom he possesses.

In Mark chapter five, he told the story of the Gerasene demoniac. Mark wrote, "who had his dwelling in the tombs: and no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: and no man had strength to tame him. And always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones. Mark 5:3-5 This kind of self destruction had not been a part of the man's life prior to being possessed by the evil spirit.

Again in the same report, Mark wrote, "And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down the steep into the sea, in number about two thousand; and they were drowned in the sea. Mark 5:12, 13 The text does not say the evil spirits did this. The text does say that prior to being possessed, the pigs were just "feeding on the mountain." It also says that when the evil spirits entered the 2,000 pigs, they, "Rushed down the steep bank into the sea." There is every reason to believe that the presence of the evil spirits caused the destruction of this huge herd. This destructive behavior is characteristic of the evil spirits presence.

Evil Spirits Control Possessed People

As we observed earlier, the man in Garasa was possessed by evil spirits. He had not always been that way. Now, however, he was possessed by evil spirits and his conduct changed. As the text indicates, this man broke chains he had previously been unable to break. The spirits caused him to cut himself with stones; to cry out day and night. His behavior was so difficult and dangerous that he could not live among his family and neighbors, but lived in the tombs by himself.

"And when He was come out of the boat, straightway there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs: and no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: and no man had strength to tame him. And always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones.

Mark 5:2-5

In the next few verses, Mark shows us more ways in which evil spirits control those they possess. He wrote,

And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him; and crying out with a loud voice, he saith, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not. For he said unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion; for we are many. Mark 5:6-9

This man had no way to know who Jesus was. The identifying of Jesus; the falling at His feet: these are actions of the evil spirits that possessed the man. Again, Jesus was not tormenting the man. Jesus was commanding the evil spirits to come out of the man.

The evil spirits have no voice of their own. They speak through the voice of the person they possess. I have heard evil spirits speak through a person's voice. On one occasion, an evil spirit spoke through a ladies voice. We could understand the words, but the sound was guttural and not like the sound of this ladies voice at all.

Now there was there on the mountain side a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. Mark 5:11, 12

This was not the man speaking. The legion of spirits spoke through this man's voice without his permission or choice. The evil spirits use the people they possess.

Reflection

Evil spirit possession is just the opposite of the divine plan for human life. God created human beings and gave them the opportunity to choose for themselves the direction of their lives. He also gave them the mental ability to make such choices. Evil spirit or demon possession works from the opposite direction. The evil spirit not only lives within the person; he takes control of that person's life. He does things in that person's life that the person did not and would not choose to do. He speaks through the person's voice and says things the person would not know or choose to say. The person becomes a servant to the spirit which resides within him.

Very often, people in the church do not know or are not aware of the power an evil spirit or demon has over the total life of the person he possesses. It is our responsibility to help our people become aware of this evil situation without making them afraid of it.

Evil Spirits Band Together

Evil spirits have no physical form. They do not take up physical space. Because of this, it is possible for huge numbers of them to take possession of a very small person's body. That is exactly what we see in the Scripture.

Luke reported on the way the ministry needs of Jesus and His disciples were met. Luke wrote,

and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out. Luke 8:2

There are a number of women that are included in this report, but Luke focused particularly on Mary Magdalene. There were seven evil spirits whom Jesus commanded to come out of her life. We are not told whether she was aware of this or not. We assume that she did know and will address this matter momentarily.

You will remember that we just looked at the story of the Gerasene demoniac. Mark recorded what Jesus said to the possessed man:

And he asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion; for we are many. Mark 5:9

The word translated "legion" identifies a military group of soldiers numbering 6,000 strong. The way the word is used in this context certainly indicates that there was a huge number of evil spirits possessing this man. Whether or not there are precisely 6,000 spirits is not their intent. This would not be unreasonable since these evil spirits have no physical form.

In Luke 12, Jesus was describing what happened when an evil spirit is cast out of a possessed person. Luke wrote:

And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Luke 11:25, 26

The presence of several evil spirits only reinforces and strengthens the control these spirits have over the possessed person. This fact, about the tendency of spirits to bond together within the possessed person, is evidence that they are keenly aware of their limited power.



5

Our Encounter with Demons/Evil Spirits

Lesson Purpose

- The student must understand how to recognize the activity of demonic forces.
- The student must understand how a demon gains control of an individual
- The student must understand how a demon is driven out of a person's life.
- Again, students must understand how the angels of God work in and for us.
- The student must understand how angels of God work in and through our lives and ministry.
- The student must understand how the ministry of the angels of God is applied to our lives.

Lesson Outcome

- The student will understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the activities of demonic forces
- The student will know how a demon gains possession of a person
- They will know how to drive a demon from a person's life
- They will know what the scriptures teach concerning the ministry of angels in their own lives.
- They will know what to expect the angels of God to do to enhance their life and ministry.
- They will not only know how angelic ministry affects their lives; they will have a basis to expect God to do the impossible in and through their own ministries.

How Does One Recognize Demons?

Demons are spirits and as such are not visible though on occasion they will take on visible form. The Scriptures do not say, "This is the way you recognize a demon." The Scriptures do, however, describe for us the way demons act. Though we cannot see them, we can recognize what they are doing in the world and in our communities.

We Know That Demons Do Harm To People.

This is what happened to the Garasene demoniac (Mark 5). It was also the experience of the young boy whose father pleaded with Jesus to deliver his son. This young boy was thrown into the water and into the fire by the demons. One of our seminary graduates started a congregation in a very dangerous part of town. The congregation grew very fast. In one family, three people became Christians, but the father remained deeply involved in voodoo. The son was sitting in their home and it suddenly burst into flames. The family moved in with relatives. One evening the son was just sitting in their new residence when his clothing suddenly burst into flames. It was not difficult to understand what was happening.

Evil Forces Attempt To Entice

If you look at the story of Adam and Eve, Genesis 3, you see the devil appealing to Eve's own selfish desires. This is enticement. It is one of the ways that the devil and his evil forces attempt to appeal to us.

Evil Forces Lie To Us

If you study the Genesis chapter three account very carefully, Satan was misleading Eve. If you study the temptation of Jesus, Luke 4, the offer Satan made was totally dishonest. This is one of the devil's very common approaches. He will mislead us in an effort to gain our attention and eventual allegiance.

Evil Forces Accuse Believers

If you study the opening chapters of Job, you see the enemy practicing this form of deception overtly. He made accusations against Job that were not true. In Zechariah 3:1, the prophet wrote, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan, STANDING AT HIS RIGHT HAND TO ACCUSE HIM." Revelation 12:10 speaks of our enemy in these terms, "for the accuser of the brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God both day and night." In my ministry, Parishoners have reported that they were constantly reminded of just about every failure they ever made, morally or otherwise. This is not the way God's Spirit deals with us. By reminding us of every possible error, the enemy hopes to convince us that we really do not have a genuine relationship with God. He is hoping to get us to relate to him instead.

Evil Forces Will Deceive

In Revelation chapter 12, John wrote:

**And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.
Revelation 12:9**

For the unprepared, deception is a devastating experience. It is, none the less, a favorite means the enemy uses to captivate unsuspecting people of God. This is exactly what happened to our first parents and every generation of human beings from that time onward has lived with the consequences of that devastation.

Evil Forces Hinder God's Work In The World

Paul wrote, "Because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us." I Thessalonians 2:18. The word translated "hindered" means to destroy; it is to thwart or impede. The enemy hinders the work of God's people making it difficult for them to serve and accomplish God's will for their service.

The Devil And His Forces Tempt People

In Matthew chapter four, the apostle wrote these words, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Matthew 4:1 We should not be surprised if the devil and his evil forces do the same thing to us. They will appeal to our every desire to cause us to give in to their control of our lives.

We Are Tempted At Our Place Of Weakness

Every human being has a point of weakness. Satan and his evil coworkers will tempt us at that very point until we make it very clear that we will not give in to that temptation. It does not mean that he will leave us alone. It only means that the strong emphasis on that particular weakness will stop.

The demon possessing a person will sometimes take control to a certain degree and at times totally dominate the possessed person's personality, body and voice. In such instances, the evil spirit is using the person. The scenarios just mentioned will help one identify such instances.

How Do Demons Enter A Person ?

There are a host of scriptural references that indicate that an evil spirit can take possession of a person's life. There is nowhere in Scripture, however, that identifies precisely the process by which an evil spirit takes possession of a person's life. It cannot be uniquely by personal invitation because we know that a little boy was demon-possessed and it is difficult to believe that this was by invitation.

If you study every Biblical instance where demon possession is mentioned, you will not find a single instance where a person who is a born-again Christian is demon possessed. They can and will be oppressed, but they cannot be possessed.

There is no single cause which enables an evil spirit to possess a person. In all probability there are a host of complex conditions responsible for such possession. It may well be traced to one's voluntary yielding to temptation and sin. The result of this is a weakening of the human will which causes the individual to become more susceptible to the control of the demonic forces. This is more common than one might think.

People have an affect upon their heirs.

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them, for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, Exodus 20:4, 5

It is not so much that God says the next four generations will suffer for the father's sins. It is that siblings tend to imitate the actions and values of their parents and it becomes a punishment in that sense. Every form of idolatry is a form of entre that allows the evil spirits to gain a hold upon one's life that can lead to total possession by those forces. In such cases, the person would become aware that there are powers taking hold over you that are otherwise unexplained. There is just a sense that something is not right, but you do not

know what it is. If this is observed, attempts to deal with the issue tend not to work and it leaves the person with both discouragement and depression. This is the open door that the enemy seeks.

In the bitterness of severe anger, some people would ask a witch doctor to place a curse upon a person they consider their enemy. The individual might not be aware of this, but would soon begin to realize that something was not right. The good news is that it does not work on believers. A very good Christian friend of mine often witnesses to witch doctors. One day a witch doctor confided in him, "you know, I have no power over you at all." That is true!!!

In our time, the occult is being highlighted and presented in a positive light. The occult is the exclusive property of the devil and his evil forces. Any openness, on our part, to any portion of the occult leaves us vulnerable to their presence and power. Indeed, every form of evil which the Scriptures denounce will become an avenue through which evil forces will attempt to enter and control our lives. This is one of the reasons that any form of disobedience is such a terrible thing and must be avoided at all cost.

How Are Demons Driven Out ?

This issue is so important that we must consider how they are **not** driven out as well as how they **are** driven out. That is what we will attempt to present.

The Way They Are Not Driven Out

In the book of Acts, evil spirits/demons were driven out of the people whom they possessed. Observing this fact, there were some who made the mistaken conclusion that they could drive out the demons in their own power.

But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. Acts 19:13 – 14

They used the formula, "by Jesus whom Paul preaches, " but they clearly had no personal knowledge or personal relationship with Jesus, the one in whose name they commanded the demons to leave. This was certainly a serious mistake on their part.

And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Acts 19:15 – 17

Though there are those who will try such a mistaken effort, it is clearly one of the ways that we are not to attempt to get rid of a demon who possesses a person.

In the Ephesian epistle, Paul was working against the whole realm of satanic forces. He cautioned his readers:

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

There is no doubt that we are in the midst of combat. In this verse, however, Paul has made it very clear that this is not a physical combat with which we are quite familiar and versatile. This is not a physical form of combat that we are equipped to win. It is a prescription for disaster and we should never attempt to get rid of a demon in terms of conventional power.

The Way Demons Are Driven Out

In Revelation chapter 12, John tells of the battle between Michael and Satan. In that passage, John wrote,

And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Revelation 12:10, 11

In this passage, John wrote about the victory over Satan. John indicated that there were three things that contributed to this victory: 1. Because of the blood of the Lamb. 2. Because of the word of their testimony. 3. Because they did not love their life even to death. The blood of the Lamb is the powerful weapon God has given us against Satan.

My son rented an apartment. Over one of the doors there was a satanic symbol carved deep into the plaster of the wall. He tried to remove the symbol by scraping it with sandpaper. When he did this the light fixture and fan began to shake violently. It continued as long as he scraped on that symbol. We prayed for God's protection over that apartment and started to sing and scrape. We sang every hymn about the blood of Christ and about His victory over Satan that we could think of. That light fixture never shook as long as we sang about the blood of Jesus. That night, the entire, huge satanic symbol was scraped from the plaster and replaced with new plaster. The blood of Jesus is the gift God has given His people with which to defeat and destroy the works of the devil.

The apostle Paul was preaching in Thyatira and a slave girl who had a spirit of divination kept following him and announcing that he was a servant of the Most High God. This proved to be very annoying to the apostle. Luke reported:

And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour. Acts 16:18

In this account, Luke has indicated the appropriate way for us, as followers of Christ, to deliver a person from demon possession. The idea "in the name of..." might be better expressed if we said, "in the AUTHORITY of Jesus." We pray "in the name of Jesus" because He gave us the authority as members of God's family to petition for our needs. We have no personal power to cast out demons. Jesus repeatedly demonstrated the fact that He has that power and has granted us the authority to cast them out in His powerful name. This is the only

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way we will be successful in freeing those who are bound down by the forces of evil.

What does one do when it appears that someone is demon-possessed? There are some appropriate steps a person can take when this appears to be the case:

1. Discover if the person is a Christian or not.
2. Talk with the person about the victory that is ours in the blood of Christ.
3. Talk with them about Christ's victory over the devil and his forces.
4. If these conversations cause a reaction by the person, you are probably dealing with a possessed individual.
5. Humbly, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ command the demon to come out of the person.
6. Give thanks to God for His great power which is ours in Jesus Christ.

About Angels

We tend to focus on the threat of the demonic world and forget about the angelic world – God's great gift to our world, life and ministry.

The angels, though they are created and time-bound beings, are holy as God is holy. No thought, word or action of angels can be less than holy.

These holy angels are intimately related to the holy God who created them. They are God's servants to whom God has entrusted a dual task: 1. They are to serve God. 2. They are to accomplish God's will serving each one of us. Though they are not omnipotent or omniscient in themselves, the omnipotence and omniscience of God works through them to accomplish the divine will.

Wherever you encounter angels in Scripture, they always stand for what is righteous and holy; they never stand with the forces that oppose the work and people of God.

Angels always confront evil. When Jesus finished His temptation, the angels ministered to Him. It was the angel who released Peter and John from prison when religious leaders wrongfully imprisoned them. Baalim's donkey was kept from continuing on course to oppose the will and purposes of God when an angel stood in the way so that he could not continue on his intended mission to do harm to God's people.

There is not one appearance of angels in Scripture that pictures them doing harm to the righteous. Rather, angels are always defending and helping God's people. The angels, who are lower than Jesus, our Lord, have no power of their own. They constantly do the impossible as God applies His limitless power through their actions and ministries. Again, the angels are not omniscient, but constantly do what God in His limitless wisdom chooses for them to do.

Think of it! There is never a moment, day or night, when the angels of God fail to watch over your life. They come to our defense today just as they released Peter from prison so that he could go to the temple and continue his witness there.

There is never a moment or an experience when the angels are not ministering to us as we seek to accomplish God's will in our lives.

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How does this happen? Do we have to pray and ask the angels to defend us? Never! Peter did not pray to angels or ask God to send his angels. Rather the angels came; woke Peter up and released him from prison to serve the Lord as he had before placed in prison.

We do not have to ask. We need to rejoice and give God great thanks for the ministry that He has given to angels to watch over us and to do in our lives and ministry what we could never do for ourselves. This being the case, it is important that we not only know that the angels minister to and through us; we must have great expectation that God will have them work in our ministry. We must do our planning with the fact in mind that the angels will help us to do what others may think is impossible. Nothing is impossible when God's angels watch over and work through and for us. There is no evil force that can stand against the power of God demonstrated and administered through the angels of God.