


Keeping Oneself Unspotted from The World



Drugs



Lying



pornography




Alcohol



Tattoos



Gambling



Sex



Gossip

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Sin is Fun

After gaining military victory the ancient Persians would take the noblest slave and make him king for three days. During his short reign he would wear the royal robes, do as he pleased, and be lavished with all the pleasures and foods he desired. His term in office would come to a violent end when he was sacrificed to the gods.

While the fun feasting for the flesh continued for three days some bystanders would be envious of the pleasure the temporary king was enjoying. However, in the end they would not have change places with him for all the pleasures of the world. So it is with sin. It looks like so much fun. Yet, the pleasure of sin is so short-lived.

Some would-be disciples will explain why they have not been baptized into the church of Christ: "I want to be a member of the church some day, but right now I want to have fun." First, it is a vain belief that one can live a life of self-centered hedonism and right before death repent and be saved. Furthermore, who says being a Christian is not fun. TV mogul Ted Turner is believed to have said, "Christianity is for losers." True, Christians do lose out on the "*passing pleasures of sin*" (Heb. 11:26). They also lose out on the eternal consequences of sin. Who are the bigger losers? Is it Christians or is it sinners?

The Sweet Side of Sin

Sin is pleasurable and therefore attractive. It is fun and exciting. Many television commercials and shows will exploit this reality by showing the fun side of sinful activities. Imagine how ineffective they would be if they showed the end results of the "fun"? Since the day Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit as desirable to make her wise, good for food and pleasant to the eyes, men and women have been falling for the old "bait and switch" ploy of the Tempter. Satan has been making sin look good. If sin tasted like castor oil who would want it. If sin was not fun few would be tempted to do it.

Pleasure is the bait of temptation. James wrote, "*but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death*" (Js. 1:14,15). The pleasures of sin are the worms on the hook that the devil uses to lure us back into sin. If he can just get us to focus on the fun we might just forget about the hook. Sex outside marriage is fun. There is pleasure to be found in gossiping. Drinking and some drugs can create a sense of euphoria that can become very addictive. The Devil knows how to lure us with the sweet side of sin.

However, the pleasure of sin is passing. Just as the beautiful colors and pleasant weather of autumn are for but a season and then give way to the bitter cold of winter, so sin's fun is only for a short time. While the devil masks the true nature of sin, he exaggerates the joy it will bring. Sinners fall for Satan's sales spiel which promises great immediate returns on our short investment while minimizing the long term cost, eternal risks, and impoverishing lifestyle. Loving the pleasures of sin will bring the fool to poverty. "*He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich*" (Prov. 12:17). Worst of all sin's pleasures leave us without God in a world that is passing away. "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:15-17).

Consider Some Fun Sins

Although this author has never personally tried alcohol, it is a well known fact that most men and women, boys and girls find drinking even in small amounts to be fun. *“Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”* (Prov. 20:1). Perhaps, instead of calling it “Budweiser” Solomon would have called it “Bud Dumber.” Wine is being personified as sitting back and laughing at those who fall victim to its folly. No one starts drinking with the hope of driving their car down the road and hitting another car and killing all its occupants. However, alcohol related auto accidents occur all the time. When a teenager drinks his first beer, he never envisions himself penniless, alone, dying of cirrhosis of the liver and for another drink. Perhaps no better description of the consequences of drinking can be found than Proverbs 23:29-35: *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’”*

What can be said of alcohol can be said of other drugs and smoking. Drugs offer pleasure and fun. These too are addictive and the enjoyment derived from them is short-lived. The appeal of the drug culture is very tempting to those who wish to escape the hassle and boredom of everyday life. Those who smoke seem to have it together and are more mature. With the pleasure of the drugs comes the enjoyment of belonging to a group and sharing in a common activity everyone enjoys. At the end of this road of pleasure is the dead end with no u-turns. The brain cells have been fried. All the money is long gone. The body is wasting away. Breathing which once came so freely has to be labored for night and day. Sure, drugs are fun but only for a season.

Believe it or not sex is related to the two fun sins of drinking and drugs. Once under the influence of drugs and alcohol men and women of all ages are far more likely to cast aside their inhibitions and give their bodies to a stranger. However, sexual sins are tempting enough without these. David was quite sober when he looked upon the bathing beauty, Bathsheba, lusted for her, called for her, had sex with her, and made a child with her. The attempted coverup and then murder of her husband, Uriah came later. David had to face the consequences of his one time affair for the rest of his life. The child born to him and Bathsheba died. His son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar. Absalom killed Amnon and finally rebelled against David which led to David burying another son. How many times David must have wished he had turned away to pray when he saw Bathsheba bath. How many times Bathsheba must have wished she had been more modest with her body. Yet, the passing pleasures of sexual sins cannot be easily undone, such as, loss of self-esteem, love, pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, divorce, etc.

On the other hand, we consider poor foolish Joseph. He was sold into Egyptian slavery and became head steward of Potiphar’s entire house. But when given an opportunity to have a little fun with the master’s wife while the boss was away guess what that “loser” Joseph said to Potiphar’s wife, *“There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Gen. 39:12). Many millions would like to have had Joseph’s strength and wisdom on the day they gave in to the pleasures of sin.

One more fun sin to consider: materialism. We all need things to own and use, but materialism is where those things begin to own and use us. Judas no doubt delighted, at least for a moment, in the reward given him for betraying Jesus. Thirty pieces of silver seemed like a lot of money for the moment. His *“love of money”* had pierced him through with sorrow (1 Tim. 6:10), and he *“went and hanged himself”* (Matt. 27:5). Money can buy a lot of things, it cannot buy happiness or eternal salvation.

The Pleasures of Sin are Over-Priced

\$ Cost: Loss of God

Jesus made it clear that man could not serve God and mammon, that is, materialism (Matt. 6:24).

Paul warned, *"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"* (2 Tim. 3:2-4). Looking back on a life blessed with a good father, who could bring themselves to trade their relationship with him for a beer, cigarette, juicy piece of gossip, little white lie, attention received by showing a little cleavage or by sporting an extra short skirt. Yet, every day the very children of God sell Him for a moment of sinful pleasure.

\$ Cost: Loss of Life

Before there was sin, God warned Adam and Eve that it would bring death (Gen. 3). *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). Paul spoke of widows, he encouraged them toward proper conduct by saying: *"But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives"* (1 Tim. 5:6). Young people feel they have their whole life ahead of them to do as they please, but Solomon left them with this piece of wisdom: *"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'"* (Eccl. 12:1).

\$ Cost: Loss of Harvest

For years and years we have been told that "Young people must sow their wild oats." Nonetheless, the law of sowing and reaping applies to the wild oats of youth just the same. *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"* (Gal. 6:7,8). Bad habits that form in your youth can plague you all your life. Just as the sexual promiscuity of a young lady can leave her barren and childless for life, so can the pleasures of sin lead to spiritual barrenness. *"And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity"* (Luke 8:14).

\$ Cost: Loss of Soul

Jesus was approached one day by a man who asked Him to settle a money matter. The Lord warned him about covetousness with a parable about a rich farmer who had a bumper crop and made plans for a long pleasurable life of ease. *"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'"* (Luke 12:19,20), All the money and all the fun in the world is not worth the price of one soul.

How To Overcome Sin's Pleasures?

✂ **By Choosing**

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:23-26). Moses chose not to enjoy the pleasures of sin. You see, it is by choice that men and women sin. No one is forced to sin. When sin seems alluring and inviting you can still muster up the courage to say "NO."

Daniel, another great man of faith, stood alone in the pagan court of the Babylonian Empire. This young Hebrew refused to defile himself with the unclean food offered on the King's table. He would rather risk the wrath of royalty than reject the religious rules of God.

To chose is to take a position for oneself and to determine your direction in life. God has given each soul the right of free-will to chose his own destiny. Jesus has not only told us about the two paths that we can chose He has told us which one we should pick and has given us a good reason why its is the best choice. *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matt. 7:13,14). Every time one is tempted with the pleasures of sin, he stands in the crossroads and must make a decision.

✂ **By Considering**

Moses esteemed the riches of Christ greater, that is, he considered the value of accepting one path over the other. True, Moses would never had a statue or Sphinx bearing his image or a pyramid for a tomb. Moses has something far more enduring: a monumental faith. Although forgotten in Egypt, he will forever be remembered in Heaven and by those who will be inspired by his wise choice and consideration to overcome sin's pleasures.

One of Aesop's Fables tells of a friendship between a town mouse and a country mouse. The town mouse visiting the country befriends a country mouse and tells him of all the free food that exists in the town. He invites him home to share in the feast. But was soon as they arrive at the cupboard someone enters the kitchen for some food. The mice in great fear scramble out of sight. Next, they approach the food on the table only to be interrupted as before. Not so easily discouraged they go for the crumbs on the floor and are almost crushed by the man of the house coming in for a piece of cheese. The country mouse starts to leave explaining to his friend, "Thanks, the food looks great and very tempting but I would rather forage in the fields for grain and bugs than constantly try to dodge the dangers of your 'free' feast."

So it is with the promised fun of sin. They look great but are way to dangerous to be enjoyed.

Questions:

1. How was the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden appealing to Eve?
2. Place in proper order from James 1:14,15 from first to fourth in order.
____ enticed
____ death
____ drawn away by own desires
____ sin
3. True False The love of pleasures leads to poverty.
4. True False The world and its lusts are passing away.
5. What are some of the end results or consequences of a night of drinking?
6. What are some of the unhappy results of drug abuse?
7. What were the terrible results of David's one night stand with Bathsheba?

8. What did Joseph say to Potiphar's wife when tempted by her to have some "fun"?

9. What problems and pain did Judas' greed for money bring to his life?

Matching the High Cost of Sin

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------|----|---------------|
| 10. ____ | Loss of God | a. | Romans 6:3 |
| 11. ____ | Loss of Life | b. | Gal. 6:7-8 |
| 12. ____ | Loss of Harvest | c. | Luke 12:19,20 |
| 13. ____ | Loss of Soul | d. | Matt. 6:24 |
14. How did Moses and Daniel defeat the allure of sinful pleasures?

15. What did Moses' choice cause him to give up?

Application and Discussion:

1. Sin can have its pleasures, but these are passing. Explain how being a Christian is "fun" can bring long-lasting joy.

2. How would you go about convincing someone that the fun or pleasure they associate with sin is not worth it?

Homework: Consider the sins you find pleasurable and remind yourself of the choice you have and the cost that comes with making the wrong choice.

Taking Drugs

Does the Bible speak out directly against drug abuse? Many believe that it does not because they feel that drug abuse is a 20th century phenomenon. Yet the ancient world was filled with drug cultures. Sorcery is one of those terms which has been deemed an ancient relic of the past. The only time we consider the possibility of those involving themselves with it in contemporary times is in connection with some strange cult. However, the essential elements of this sin are teeming in today's world. The following definitions will help you comprehend the gist and extent of this work of the flesh, sorcery.

Many fail to see that the Bible condemns drug abuse because the King James Bible is written in sixteenth century terminology. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul enumerates a concise list of works of the flesh. Contained in that list is the Greek word, *pharmakeia*. It is translated "witchcraft" or "sorcery". From the Greek word *pharmakeia* one can clearly see that such words as "pharmacy", "pharmacist", "pharmaceuticals" and "pharmaceutic" are derived from it. In the beginning, *pharmakeia* was a medical term; it had to do with the proper use of drugs. "It literally means the act of administering drugs" (ISBE). The learned William Barclay says that *pharmakeia* began "to denote the misuses of drugs, that is, the use of drugs to poison and not to cure. So we read about the law regarding poisoning in Plato and Demosthenes accuses a bad man of poisoning and all kinds of villainy. This is the beginning of the bad use of the word" (Flesh and Spirit, p. 36).

"Since the preparation and administration of drugs was under the supervision of sorcerers, the word 'pharmakos' came to be connected with the art of sorcery and magic". (A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures of the N.T., vol. 4, p. 313). "This was the age when men thought they could control the world and manipulate the gods. This was the age of Magic, and drugs played a major part in that age" (R. A. Morey, DRUG ABUSE, p. 33).

So the fact of the matter is, when the Bible mentions sorcery, it also refers to drug abuse, which was an integral part of ancient sorcery. And when the Bible mentioned sorcery, it condemns it. Therefore, the Bible condemns drug abuse.

Remember what Paul wrote about it in Gal. 5:19ff. *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: ...idolatry, **sorcery**,...and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Reasons for Drug Abuse

We might ask ourselves "If drug abuse is so dangerous and harmful why do people do drugs?" There are several answers one could give to this question.

While the rest of the world uses alcohol or sexual immorality, some people try to escape the realities of life by suppressing the sensations of tension by using drugs. Their thinking goes like this: "Do you want to get out of the rat-race of the 'nine to five' group? Do you want to have a free trip to a land where there are not atomic bombs or taxes, but all is lovely and beautiful? Then join the hip generation, and enter into a psychedelic rest."

We need a keen alert mind in order to tackle the problems of this life. Nothing is solved by running from reality. We need not escape reality, but go to Jesus for He said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Mt. 11:28).

We live in a drug oriented society. The slogan is "Better living through the miracle of chemistry". The average medicine cabinet in America contains 34 drugs. Americans believe that medicine can solve

every problem. But we need to be looking to the Great Physician and not to drug pushers to solve our problems.

Some see drugs as a religious experience. They believe they can get closer to God through drugs. The way to God is through faith and not drugs. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, a drug-induced experience cannot be a true religious experience, because drug abuse is contrary and incompatible to faith.

Many young people take up the practice of drugs due to peer pressure. Young people need social acceptance, but they think that this can be achieved by conformity. As Christians we are told not to be conformed to this world. We need to dare to be different. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Rom. 12:2).

Youths need friendship, but *"friendship with the world is enmity with God"* (Js. 4:4). Remember, popularity with God is far more important than popularity with one's peers. We need to be more careful of the type of friends we allow to influence our lives. *"Do not be deceived. Evil associations corrupt good morals"* (1 Cor. 15:33).

You see there are many reasons why people use drugs. However, there are many other more important reasons why they shouldn't.

The only real salvation from the pressure to do drugs and the slavery to drugs is found in Christ. No where in the Gospels do we find Jesus saying that He came to make people happy, wealthy, and wise. Those may be side effects of salvation, but they do not constitute the purpose of Christ's coming. He came to save sinners who were conscious of their sin and their need of salvation. Without our teaching from the Bible against drug abuse the drug users will have no conscious awareness of sin, guilt, and hell. They have no concept of the need of salvation through the person and work of Christ. Jesus said, *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill...for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners"* (Mt. 9:10,11).

The Dangers of Drug Abuse

x Drug Abuse Harms Our God Given Body

Scripture teaches that the human body is a gift of God and deserves the utmost respect not destruction through drug abuse. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, reveals the holiness of its creation. Man was created in God's image (Gen. 2:7).

The common belief of modern man is much like that of the Corinthians two thousand years ago. They argued, *"foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods"* (1 Cor. 6:13a). In the context the body was made for sex and sex is therefore for the body. Paul counter-argued, *"now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body"* (1 Corinthians 6:13b). God did not give us bodies to use any way we want. The Christian must remember: he has been bought with a price. The price is the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ. Paul went on with his argument, *"or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). Christians should present their *"bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"* (Romans 12:1). The fact is drug abuse is really the abuse of oneself.

x Drug Abuse Kills the Flesh

In 1971 John Lennon himself told Rolling Stones Magazine that the Beatles were engaged in pushing drugs via their music. Ringer Star sang, "I get high with a little help from my friends." Marijuana is praised in such songs as: Mary Jane, Lady Jane, Rainy Day Woman, Along Came Mary, Acapulco God, Norwegian Wood, etc. County music is just as bad in the promotion of drinking, smoking and chewing. Willie Nelson sang: "I gotta get drunk, I cant stay sober."

PARADE MAGAZINE, in December 1980, ran an article listing the tragic deaths of some of music world's greatest "stars".

- Brian Jones, Rolling Stones guitarist, was found at the bottom of his swimming pool in East Grinstead, England, dead under the influence of drugs and drink.
- Janis Joplin, was 27 years old when she died in 1970 of a heroin overdose alone in a dingy West Coast motel.
- Jimi Hendrix, guitarist-singer, died in 1970 at age 27 after an overdose of sleeping pills.
- Jim Morrison, singer, leader of The Doors, died in 1971 at age 27 of apparent heart attack, but was a heavy drinker.
- Alan C. Wilson, a member of the Canned Heat rock group, died in a sleeping bag behind the home of a friend in California's Topanga Canyon, apparently from an overdose of sleeping pills.
- Elvis Presley, singer, died in 1977 at age 42, ostensibly of a heart attack, but was addicted to a wide variety of drugs.
- Keith Moon, drummer for the Who died in 1978 at age 32 from an overdose of drugs.
- Sid Vicious, guitarist, died in 1979 at age 21 from an overdose of heroin.
- Malcolm Owen, singer with the Ruts, died at 24 in 1980 of a heroin overdose.
- John Belushi in 1982 age 33 died from speed-balling, mixing cocaine & heroin.

X Drug Abuse Will Cost Some Their Souls

The Bible places a severe consequence on those that abuse drugs. *“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Rev. 21:8). *“But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie”* (Rev. 22:15).

X Drug Abuse Violates the Law

Christians are commanded by God to obey the Laws of man. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1). The laws of the land have criminalized the use of certain drugs without a prescription.

X Drug Abuse Enslaves Users in Addiction

Many drugs are addictive. Despite the arguments made but advocates of legalization, marijuana can be addictive. Marijuana has long been known as a threshold drug. After one uses it for a while, it begins to take more and more marijuana to achieve the same high. Stronger drugs are required to produce the desired high, such as, speed, cocaine, and crack. Christians are to be slaves to God and righteousness not slaves to sin and lusts of the flesh. *“For by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved”* (2 Peter 2:18). The best way to prevent addiction is never to begin using marijuana

X Drug Abuse Stunts Spiritual Growth

Since illegal drugs hinder mental development and processes, it often results in the users inability to learn. Those who have problems retaining memories or facts cannot learn effectively. Spiritual development requires one to remember God’s will and commandments. Being faithful to obey and resist temptations requires sober-mindedness. These drugs produce an apathetic outlook on life. To grow in Christ one must care about their soul’s condition and eternal destination. Christians *“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). Spiritual growth is hard work. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Marijuana is one such encumbrance to the Christian race. Therefore, *“let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Hebrews 12:1).

X Drug Abuse Does Not Result in Finding Joy and Peace

As is often the case with getting high on drugs, they produce a gratifying experience which is short-lived. After it is over the user is left with a feeling of emptiness. Some use drugs to escape the pain and problems of life. However, when they come down off their high, their problems are still there. Others find no joy in drugs due to their addiction. Instead their life is consumed by constantly chasing after the next drug induced experience.

A genuine relationship with God is the only lasting and real source of joy and peace this life has to offer. *"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:17). The fruit of the Spirit includes *"love, joy, peace"* (Galatians 5:22). We are to *"be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).

X Drug Abuse Destroys Sober-Mindedness

Most illegal drugs intoxicate thus hindering self-control while at the same time lowering inhibitions. Drugs impair judgement. If a person is high, they are more likely to sin.

Christians are to be sober-minded. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age"* Titus 2:11-12). *"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night...therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Thessalonians 5:2,6). *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:13). *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). *"Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded"* (Titus 2:6).

12 Steps to Raising a Drug Addict

(borrowed)

1. Believe from infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him, this will make him think vulgarity is cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases, that will blow off the top of your head later.
3. Never give him any spiritual training, wait until he is 21 and then let him decide for himself.
4. Avoid use of the word wrong. He may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him, and he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves laying around, such as, books, shoes, clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
6. Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.
8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own way. Why should he have things as though as you had them.
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink, and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers, and policemen. They all are prejudiced against your child.
11. When he gets into real trouble apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."
12. Prepare for a life of grief, you will be apt to have it.

Questions:

1. What term in the works of the flesh found in Gal. 5:19-21 include drug abuse?
2. What English words do we derive from the Greek *pharmakeia*?
3. Some use drugs as an escape for the burdens of life. What does Jesus want us to do instead?

4. True False There is a drug to solve every problem for modern man.
5. Explain why drugs cannot bring about a true religious experience with the true God.
6. How can youths combat the peer pressure to do drugs?
7. Why cannot Christians use their bodies any way their want? How should Christians use their bodies?
8. Using the internet search for more recent examples of famous musicians who lost their lives as a result of drug abuse (legal or illegal)?
9. What will be the eternal outcome the sorcerers and those who practice sorcery?
10. What is addiction to drugs wrong?
12. How does drug abuse stunt spiritual growth?
13. Instead of using drugs how does one find joy and peace in this life?
14. What is sober-mindedness? How does drug abuse interfere with this virtue?

Application and Discussion:

15. Form an argument to show the Bible condemns drug abuse.
16. What are some things parents can do to keep their children from engaging in drug abuse?

Homework: Examine the roll drugs (legal or illegal) play in your life. Do you rely too much on chemicals and not enough on your relationship with God?

Drinking Alcohol

Today, alcoholism is not as much of a problem as it was in the earlier years of this nation. During the early nineteenth century heavy use of alcoholic beverages became widespread throughout the nation. In 1829 the Secretary of War estimated that 75 percent of the country's laborers drink four ounces or more of spirits a day (Alcohol: Use and Abuse in America, p. 23). According to the famous Methodist revivalist, James Finley, "A house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could there be a log rolling, a husking, quilting, a wedding, or a funeral without the aid of alcohol" (Text, pp. 410-11). George Washington said, "drink is the source of all evil and ruin of half of the working men of the country." Years later President William McKinley claimed, "the liquor business is the most degrading and ruinous of all human pursuits."

Where Did All the Drunks Go?

Whatever happened to the sin of drunkenness? Paul warned in Galatians chapter five those who commit "*envy, murders, **drunkenness**, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*" The truth is, the Bible has not changed and neither has the will of God concerning this sin. What has happened? Secular arguments have explained away one of the most common and dangerous sins to ever afflict mankind. Let's take a look at a couple of these justifications.

■ **"As Long As One Drinks In Moderation, It's Okay"**

Some see the solution to alcohol abuse and the problems associated with drinking linked to one's ability to learn to drink responsibly or in moderation. Others believe the moderate habit of drinking a harmful and addictive drug to be something which cannot be learned. Earl L. Douglas wrote, "the moderate use of a habit forming drug is something that cannot be taught." The attempt at moderate drinking has led many down the path to alcoholism. Not a single drunk on Skid Row meant to be there when he took his first drink. Every person who has become an alcoholic did so unintentionally by taking his first drink. Dr. A. D. Ivey has said, "When a person starts to drink occasionally, he or she takes a 1 in 9 chance of becoming a heavy or addicted drinker or alcoholic. There is no way of telling in advance which drinker will become an alcoholic."

Many Christians who advocate moderation of drinking in a social situation, clearly admit that they do not know the limits or at one point one becomes drunk. The answer varies from person to person. What the Bible is very clear to them about is that it becomes a sin when one is drunk. Exactly what determines drunkenness is also not obvious. Dr. Ralph Overman of the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies said, "when you have drunk one drink, you are one drink drunk!" Moderate drinkers are trying to justify light drunkenness or being slightly intoxicated. They are trying to get as close to sin as they possibly can, enjoying it's pleasures while not being held accountable. The truth is: one is as drunk as he drinks and that begins with the first drink.

Let's suppose for a moment that one could figure out how to drink in moderation. They still would need to consider the influence they are having on others. This would especially apply to those who are weak and cannot drink in moderation. Is that responsible drinking?

Some even compare over-drinking with over-eating, but have you ever heard of a man having a third piece of cake and then get in his car and getting in an accident and killing an innocent family. One must eat to live. One can live a healthy life without ever drinking a drop of alcohol. One must eat and that eating and drinking of food (alcohol is not a food) must be done in moderation or else it is the sin of gluttony. Drinking alcohol is a sin (1 Peter 4:3). What other sins can one condone, if they are done in

moderation: adultery, murder, fornication, sorcery (drug abuse)?

The responsible drinker often has the self-confidence concerning his ability to drink in moderation that he thinks: "Drunkenness and becoming an alcoholic. That will never happen to me." Paul warns, "therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

X "In Our Culture Drinking Has Become Socially Acceptable"

A Dr. Morris Chafetz wrote, "alcohol is here to stay and people must learn to develop a healthy attitude toward it." He believes this can be accomplished by giving elementary school children small glasses of a little sherry in water. Lying, stealing, cursing, murder, fornication, and drugs are here to stay, so should we help society develop a healthy attitude toward these. Right and wrong is not determined by culture. It was acceptable in Nazi Germany to abuse and kill Jews, but that did not make it right. It was still murder. If drinking is the sin of drunkenness, at what point does it become socially acceptable? At what point does it stop being a sin? Is it right when it comes legal? Again a great many things in history and even in countries of today are legal, but this does not prove they are approved by God.

X "Alcoholism is a Disease"

The sin of drunkenness, which is found and condemned throughout the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, has disappeared. In its place is a sickness or disease causing individuals to drink irresponsibly - alcoholism. So, how can any descent human condemn person another just because he is suffering from a disease?

Where is the proof of this disease? It is a physical malady which leads to many diseases of the body. Have they found a alcoholic gene in the DNA of humans? Have they developed a test to show which drinkers will become alcoholics and those who will be able to drink it moderately? Have they found a virus or a mutation or a bacteria or a certain brain chemistry that is the cause? God is all knowing. He would have known of these. Why didn't He just treat it like a sickness instead of a sin? Cancer is a disease, but if you cause it by smoking then you are guilty of bringing it upon yourself. Alcoholism is also a self-inflicted disease.

Many today are rejecting the idea that alcoholism is a disease. In the article, "Alcoholism - A Disease of Speculation" by the Baldwin Research Institute, the following observations are made:

History and science have shown us that the existence of the disease of alcoholism is pure speculation. Just saying alcoholism is a disease, doesn't make it true. Nevertheless, medical professionals and American culture enthusiastically embraced the disease concept and quickly applied it to every possible behavior from alcohol abuse to compulsive lecturing and nail biting. The disease concept was a panacea for many failing medical institutions and pharmaceutical companies, adding billions of dollars to the industry and leading to a prompt evolution of pop-psychology. Research has shown that alcoholism is a choice, not a disease, and stripping alcohol abusers of their choice, by applying the disease concept, is a threat to the health of the individual. The disease concept oozes into every crevice of our society perpetuating harmful misinformation that hurts the very people it was intended to help. Remarkably, the assumptions of a few were accepted as fact by the medical profession, devoid of any scientific study or supporting evidence. And soon after, the disease concept was accepted by the general public. see <http://www.baldwinresearch.com/alcoholism.cfm>

Alcoholism can be easily be avoided by everyone. That is, if everyone chooses never to drink alcohol. Solomon in his great wisdom, warned, "*do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper*" (Proverbs 23:32,33). Do you hear what he said? Do not even look at it! Solomon is not say it is okay to drink alcohol so long as you are blindfolded.

The Bible places drunkenness on a list of sins (e.i., works of the flesh, Galatians 5:19f) not a list of diseases. No matter what name we give it, drunkenness is still a sin. Paul reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Sin against the body is sin against God. Alcoholism is a euphemism for drunkenness. With words they reduce the sense of personal moral responsibility for the choice to drink.

We have ignored sin and found either a medical, emotional, or social phenomenon to blame for our problems. Dr. Donald R. Young, staff member of the Menninger Foundation, said, "It is a mistake to

describe alcoholism as a disease, because it makes the alcoholic feel he is not morally responsible for his behavior. It is important, some assume, to remove some of the social stigma from alcoholism by calling it a disease". If alcoholism is a disease, why are millions of dollars spent annually in advertising to persuade people to run the risk of contracting such a devastating malady?

The Physical Dangers of Drinking Alcohol

One of the high cost of alcohol is that it hurts every part of the human body. As an example of the ravages of brain damage, the bodies of "skid row" drunks show such extensive destruction of brain cells that their brains are worthless for use in teaching basic brain structure to medical students. Just about the time one starts to feel the effects of the alcohol it is a sign that brain cells have already been destroyed. Brain cells are not replaced. What you are born with is what you have. Let's face it some of us can't afford to sacrifice any by drinking. We need all the brain cells we've got.

Drinking contributes to heart disease making the "heart beat faster, causing a marked fatigue of the heart. It causes an enlargement of the heart called a "beer heart".

It is the liver that detoxifies alcohol from the blood. After many years of alcohol consumption the organ becomes uneven, hard and lumpy, and shrinks in size. This slows the flow of blood and causes dilation of the veins. Thus, alcohol is the leading cause of cirrhosis or loss of liver function.

Alcohol disrupts the filtering apparatus of the kidneys which helps clean out the blood.

Alcohol affects the blood and makes your body less resistant to disease. A new report has appeared to the effect that even moderate amounts of alcohol damages the bone marrow, which in turn affects the production of red blood cells.

It irritates the digestive tract from the mouth on down. Digestion, instead of being a pleasant process, becomes a serious problem. In short, alcohol damages every gland and organ of the body.

One of the reasons the Bible condemns drinking is because of its harm to the body. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, God didn't give us bodies to be destroyed by drinking or any other substance or habit. *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, which you have from God, that you are not your own. You have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body."*

Consider what the Bible says on the effects of drinking: *"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things. and you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast"* (Proverbs 23:29-34). Additionally, the Bible warns in Proverbs 23:35 of the addiction, *"They struck me, but I did not become ill; They beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink"* We conclude that drinking in moderation is not the solution to alcoholism. It is the main cause of it.

The Bible Condemns All Levels of Drinking

Peter wrote, *"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries"* (1 Peter 4:3). Three drinking practices are here condemned as *"desire of the Gentiles"* and those that do such are living *"in the lust of men"*. In contrast, Christians are those who have ceased from sin, and live *"to the will of God"* (vv. 1,2).

These three words are in descent or digression in strength. "Drunkenness" is from the Greek word *oinophlugia*. The word for drunkenness in Galatians 5:21 is *methe* which refers to habitual intoxication, deep drinking, drunken bouts. *Oinophlygia* indicates habitual intoxication, but it is more. It marks a step in advance of *methe*. The one who practices *oinophlugia* staggers; stumbles, or even sleeps in his stupor. If he swings his fist he is the one likely to get hurt. If he drives he is more dangerous to himself than to others; he is likely to drive right up a tree.

The second level is seen in the Greek word for "carousals" which is *komos*. *Komos* illustrates a live

wire. He is intoxicated, but not as much as the one signified by *oinophlugia* so that he misses all the "fun". He's flying "high". *Komos* combines intoxication with merrymaking. With *komos* there is shouting, singing, and generally stirring wanton desires with merry companions with drinking or as a result of it. "Wine, woman, and song" is the modern way of saying *komos*.

The final level is drinking parties which is translated from *potos*. *Potos* is in contrast to drunken parties which would be illustrative of *komos*. The New English Bible says "tippling". That is, drinking continuously in small amounts. Vine tells us that it is literally a drinking without reference to amount (p. 162). I had a fellow brother look this word up in Vine's and argue "Look, it doesn't say how much one is drinking." "That is precisely my point. Drinking in any amount is thus being condemned", was my reply. Trench in his scholarly work SYNONYMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT wrote, "Not of necessity excessive, but it gives opportunity for excess" (p. 211). *Potos* would condemn all other types of drinking, especially social drinking, such as, cocktail parties, wine tasting, "having a few drinks with the boys", etc. Brother Guthrie Dean (from whom most this material in this section of the lesson was adapted) says the Bible condemns "drunken, half-drunken, and drinking" all in one verse.

Questions:

1. True False Drunkenness is more of a widespread problem in this nation than and any other time in history.
2. What are the problems associated with trying to learn to drink in moderation?
3. Some say drinking is okay because it is socially acceptable. List some sins which are socially acceptable today. Does that change God's Word on these sins?
4. True False An alcoholic gene has been found in human DNA.
5. True False If alcoholism is a disease, it is a self-inflicted disease.
6. What is the best way in ensure that one never becomes an alcoholic?
7. What does the Bible call alcoholism? What lists does the Bible place it?

Matching: Physical Dangers of Drinking Alcohol

8. ____ Brain a. Headaches, delusions, impaired judgment, decline in IQ
9. ____ Heart b. Reduced ability to filter the blood
10. ____ Liver c. gastritis, peptic ulcer
11. ____ Kidneys d. Lessened ability to produce red blood cells
12. ____ Bone Marrow e. Jaundice, hepatitis, irreversible cirrhosis
13. ____ Stomach f. Weakening of muscles, high blood pressure
14. Prov. 23:29 Who has woe? Who has _____? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has _____ without cause? Who has redness of _____? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not _____ on the wine when it is red, When it _____ in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a _____, And stings like a _____. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your _____ will utter perverse things.
15. Define *oinophlugia*:
- 16: Define *komos*:
17. Define *potos*:

Application & Discussion:

18. Based on the definitions in questions 15 through 17, what levels of drinking does the Bible condemn?
19. What are other arguments people use to justify drinking alcohol?

Homework: Find someone this week to encourage to either stop drinking alcohol or never to start.

Committing Fornication

In the fifth and sixth chapters of Paul's letter to the Galatians, he uses the words "spirit" and "flesh" ten times each. Christians are thus informed that there is a war going on in the world and in their personal lives. We must take care lest the worldly ways change the direction of our spiritual walk. It is not easy. In contrast, Satan would have you to believe that these two can be comparable. Yet, Paul clearly delineates between the two by giving us a list of both the works of the flesh in contrast to the fruits of the Spirit.

In Paul's list of works of the flesh is the term "fornication." The modern definition of fornication is more limited than its use in scripture. "voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons or two persons not married to each other" (Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, p. 558). The Biblical definition was used in a more general way and includes adultery and every kind of sexual immorality. Vine informs us it "is used of illicit sexual intercourse (i.e., communication or contact, DRV)..." (Vine, p. 455). Whereas adultery as a specific form of fornication implies that at least one of the parties is married. Jesus includes as adultery those who have divorced and remarried unscripturally in Mt. 19:9, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery." Fornication includes many other types of sexual immorality, such as, homosexuality (Rom. 1:26,27; I Cor. 6:9-11; I Tim. 1:10); unmarried couples, adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, rape, auto-sexuality, pornography, even some forms of dancing, and prostitution of any form.

Sexual immorality is rampant in our society. Just turn on the television, browse the internet, look up at the billboards that dot the highways with half-naked models selling every product on the market and you will see more pornography in a day than many of our great-grandparents viewed in a lifetime. Access to pornography has never been so easy with the advent of the internet. Movie stars like David Duchovny have checked themselves into rehabilitation centers for sex addiction. Many more celebrities are coming out of the closet boasting of their alternate lifestyles. As one preacher put it "we live in a culture that sweats sensuality from its pores" (quoted in *Secret Sex Wars: A Battle Cry for Purity*). Sex on the first date is now a natural expectation. Casual sex is called "friends with benefits." Children are using the phone to text explicit sexual messages and videos to other youth. This new sexual immorality is called "sexting."

As bad as it is today, the ancient world was also overrun with sexual immorality. During this the first century there was no strong body of opinion against immorality. To the Greco-Roman world immorality in sexual matters was not immorality; it was established custom and practice. Barclay wrote: "...chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity introduced into the pagan world." Perhaps, this is why the apostle Paul chose this work of the flesh at the top of the list. According to the Greek, Demosthenes, "We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day-to-day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes" (William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, p. 24). In Rome, Seneca says that Roman women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married. Seneca also remarked that innocence was not rare in Rome, it was non-existent.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 Paul begins to point to the need for more spiritual growth in some specific areas. "*We urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more*" (1:1b). Paul gives them ten good reasons why they should live a holy life and abstain from sexual sin.

#1 Sexual Sins are Not Part of the Christian Walk

Paul has already mentioned to the Thessalonians about the conduct of a Christians: "*just as you received from us how you ought to walk*" (4:1c). Walking was the most common means of transportation in the ancient world. Here the term refers not to how they travel on foot, but the manner of life they are

living in the world. *“Enoch walked with God”* (Gen. 5:24). This is in reference to his spiritual relationship with God.

The walk of a Christian is to be very different from all others. They do not walk the popular broad way to visit prostitutes, hook up with lovers, view pornography, expose their bodies to the opposite sex. Sex is a God-given desire to be fulfilled in marriage. Too many wish to take shortcuts to fulfill their lusts. Christians do not walk or conduct themselves like this fornicating world.

#2 Sexual Sins Do Not Please God

The saints are to live life *“to please God”* (4:1c). Sexual sins are about pleasing oneself. *“If it feels good, do it”* is the motto of many. Christians cannot go through life pleasing only themselves (Rom. 15:1).

God created man and He created man's desires. One of these desires is sex. To please the Creator means to operate and function as He was designed. Marriage is the designated relationship in which sexual desires are to be fulfilled.

God is the Father of all His children. Children ought to live in such a way to please the father. Our Father is perfect. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God was perfect. He lived a perfect life by perfect obedience to the will of the Father. *“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him”* (John 89:29). Although none of His children are perfect God still loves us and desires the best for us.

To love the Father involves a desire to please Him. Pleasing Him requires His children to know and follow His will. Joseph understood sexual immorality would not be pleasing to God. *“And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused and said to his master's wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’”* (Gen 39:7-9).

#3 Sexual Sins Are Contrary to the Command to Be Holy

Paul goes on to explain what is the will of God. *“You know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification”* (4:2,3a). God's will is our *“sanctification”* which comes from the same Greek word (*hagios*) which is the root for *“holy,” “holiness,”* and *“saint.”* Separation from the world of sin and devotion to God are two components of sanctification. The commandments found in God's will are what lead to a life of sanctification or holiness. Sex is from God and is holy. It is not dirty or inherently immoral. It is set apart for marriage between one man and one woman for one life time with one exception which allows for divorce: sexual immorality. This is what God the Father knows is best for His Children. The 1994 University of Chicago study: *Sex in America: The Definitive Survey*, found that monogamous conservative Christians reported the most physical satisfaction from sex. First, the saints long to please God by doing His will by obeying the commandments which leads to their sanctification or holiness. In this context the sanctification is sexual purity.

#4 Sexual Sins Are to be Avoided

To maintain a life of sexual purity Christians *“should abstain from sexual immorality”* (4:3b). The term *“abstain”* means *“to keep away,” “to hold oneself aloof”* or *“to be distant.”* Faithful Christians do not fool around with sexual desires, they are to *“flee from sexual immorality”* (1 Cor. 6:18).

Christians live in a world filled with sexual temptation on every turn of the page, every turn of the channel, and found on every other web page. So how can a Christian avoid it? A saint can try to maintain his sanctification by not frequenting places of temptation; by say *“no”* to fornication, extramarital sex, homosexual sex, and pornography; by not flirting with others; by not fantasizing in the mind; by turning away the head from immodesty, by turning off the channel; by turning over to another page, by keeping yourself modestly dressed before the opposite sex, and by running from it. Paul wrote, *“but fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints”* (Eph. 5:3). The question is asked in the Proverbs: *“Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?”* (Pr. 6:27). No! The closer you get to sexual sin, greater is the danger in being burned by it. David a man after God's own heart gave into sexual desires and was burned. Are you a stronger man or woman? So do

not look at television shows or movies or internet sites that promote sensuality. Avoid listening to music that will fill your mind with impure thoughts. Turn your eyes away from looking at women or men who dress in tantalizing ways.

#5 Sexual Sins Defile the Body

The end result of avoiding sexual immorality is *“that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor”* (4:4). This applies to all Christians: *“each of you.”* No one is exempt from this command, no matter what gender you are, how old you are, how young you are, your job, your hobbies, your sports, etc. The phrase *“know how to”* suggests that learning is involved. When it comes to sexual desires every saint can learn how to control the lust of the flesh.

The term *“vessel”* is subject to various interpretations. The wife is called by Peter *“the weaker vessel.”* Yet, in this context it is perhaps more fitting to view *“vessel”* in reference to the body. Our bodies are vessels of our soul and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19,20). When one commits sexual sin he sins against this own body. Clearly other sins also affect the body, such as gluttony or drunkenness, but no other sin has the same effect on the memory, personality or soul of a person as does sexual sin.

#6 Sexual Sins Are Ungodly Lust

The way to live a life of sexual purity is: *“not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God”* (4:5). Sexual promiscuity in the first century was just as bad if not worse than in the twenty-first century. While we live in a society that is in the throes of trying to throw off sexual restraints, they lived in a society that knew no such restraints. The Gentiles simply accepted immorality as a way of life. Women of the Roman Empire counted their years by the number of their husband. Juvenal tells of one woman who had eight husbands in five years. Homosexuality was common and accepted. Incest was overlooked. Slaves were kept and used for sex. Some Pagan temples employed prostitutes for the pleasure of “worshippers.” Demosthenes said *“we have to prostitutes for pleasure, we have concubines so that we can have regular sex, and lastly we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately and for looking after our household affairs.”*

In the eyes of the world sex is seen as a bodily function. Just as food was for the body, they thought sex was for the body and the body was for sex. *“Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body”* (1 Cor. 6:13). Just as the human appetite for food, drink, rest, etc. naturally need to be satisfied by all, so sexual desires are to be met. However there is still a need for self-control over our God-given appetites. Eating and drinking too much is the sin of gluttony. Sleeping too much is the sin of slothfulness. And sex outside of marriage is sinful.

The problem of sexual immorality is an ignorance of God and His will. They do know the ways of the world, but do they know the will of God. Today failure to preach God’s will and a lack of a spiritual relationship with God has led many to be involved in many unholy sexual relationships. Holy marriage and its vows are no longer sacred and jealously guarded. Anything now goes between “consenting adults.” Unbridled expression of all desires has become the norm.

#7 Sexual Sins Hurt Others

Not only does sexual immorality have a negative impact on our relationship with God but also our relationship with our brother: *“that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter”* (4:6a). The term *“defraud”* means to *“take advantage of.”* It is an act of taking advantage of another individual either directly or indirectly. It refers to fellow members of the body of Christ, both male and female. We have no right to that which belongs to another man. When one takes another’s wife and daughter to engage in any form of sexual immorality he robs others of their sexual purity. It is like stealing their property and destroying their rights. It also defrauds some fellow Christian who eventually will take this woman as his own wife.

How often is heard the excuse: *“I am not hurting anyone”* when a man or woman engages in sexual immorality. There is no such thing as a *“victim-less”* sexual sin. Sexual sins hurt a vast multitude of people both socially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. AIDS, babies born out of wedlock, abortion, STDs, damnation of one’s soul are just a few of the ways others are taken advantage of one’s sexual promiscuity.

Even premarital sex has lasting consequences for future relationships. Sex with a multitude of various partners is one way to prepare for future divorce before one ever gets married. Historians tell us that during the 520 years of the Roman Republic, there had not been a single divorce. In the first century the Roman philosopher Seneca said, “women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married.”

#8 Sexual Sins Are Judged by God

The wrath of God upon sexually immoral persons is a strong motivation to avoid it. *“Because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified”* (4:6b). The Bible is filled with warnings against sexual promiscuity. Sodom and Gomorrah went up in smoke because of sexual sin. King David lost a son because of his sexual sin. The Hebrew writer warned, *“marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). Paul told the Romans, *“for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”* (Rom. 1:18). In this verse Paul is most likely warning of God’s final vengeance upon them on Judgment Day.

#9 Sexual Sins are Unclean, Not Part of Your Holiness

“For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness” (4:7). “Uncleanness” is a sexually impure life. Pagan religion called its worshipers to commit fornication. God calls Christians to a separate life from the uncleanness of the world. They are not to conform to the ways of the world but to the holy character of God. Christians do not wallow around in the filthy beds of sexual impurity, but save their bodies for the holy marriage bed (Heb. 13:4).

#10 Sexual Sins Are a Rejection of God’s Will and His Gifts

“Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (4:8). Still another reason for compliance with sexual purity is that they are God-given. These are the God-given rules which men are rejecting. The Holy Spirit has revealed that sex is for married people only. Anyone rejecting this is not just rejecting Paul, but God and the Holy Spirit. Remember one of the fruits of the spirit is self-control.

If Paul’s ten points were relevant in the first century these ten pointers can help people today to avoid the temptation of fornication. Both men and women are to remain pure until marriage. So as not to defile the divinely created holy institution of marriage. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). Fornication is not even to be a part of the Christian community. *“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints”* (Eph. 5:3). When one becomes a Christian, the old sinful habit of sexual immorality must be killed. *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5). Abstinence is necessary for the saint to stay clean. *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality”* (1 Thess. 4:3). Timothy was encouraged by Paul to run away from this youthful vice and instead chase after various virtues. *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Tim 2:22). According to the Bible and God virginity is now and has been from creation a virtue not a vice.

Questions:

Short Answer

1. Demonstrate how prolific sexual immorality is throughout our society by listing some examples. Compare that with the problems of fornication in the first century.

2. How had they learned to walk as Christians?

3. How can the saints please the Father in regard to sexual morality?

Matching

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|----|--|
| 4. _____ | Sanctification | a. | to keep away from |
| 5. _____ | Gentiles | b. | robbing or taking advantage of others |
| 6. _____ | Abstain | c. | separation from the world of sin and devotion to God |
| 7. _____ | Vessel | d. | God |
| 8. _____ | Defraud | e. | do not know God |
| 9. _____ | Avenger | f. | body |

True/False

10. T F Sexual immorality is far more common today than it was in Paul's day.
11. T F The reason for sexual immorality among the Gentiles was their ignorance of God.
12. T F Sexual immorality only hurts the people directly involved.
13. T F Paul had not previously warned the Thessalonians about God's wrath upon the sexually immoral.

Multiple Choice

14. The Christian who commits sexual immorality rejects not only men like Paul but
- a. God and the Roman community
 - b. God and His Church
 - c. God and the Holy Spirit
 - d. The saints and their own bodies

Application and Discussion:

15. What things can Christians do to protect themselves and their children from this world which is filled with sexual temptations?
16. Can a man or woman take fire (sexual temptation) to his bosom and not get burned? Explain.

Homework: Be alert this week to all the messages in media (via TV, internet, billboards, conversation) which promote fornication.

Viewing Pornography

One Sunday I viewed pornography on the way to church. As I was driving down the highway there as a thirty foot woman high in the sky on a billboard wearing nothing. However, her hands and arms were strategically placed so the pornography was not too overt for today's public ads. What the ad was for I do not know. My jealous wife (I so describe her out of respect) suggested I keep my eyes on the road. The point is we live in a sex-saturated society. Mass media lures the attention of customers with glamorous women and sex appeal. Many of the commercials on television, ads in magazines, as well as pop-ups on the internet shamelessly displaying half-naked or naked men and women. Movies and programs are filled with what used to be termed "soft porn." The fashion industry continues to crank out immodest apparel. Kent Hughes observed, "there is probably no area in which Christians fail more than in what they allow to enter their minds through the media" (*The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, 109). The pornography industry is perhaps the biggest venture in the world. It rakes in billions of dollars a year. This is nothing compared to the influence it has upon the souls of men and women.

Why is our world overflowing with sexual images? The old philosophy of hedonism is alive and doing very well. Its mantra is "if it feels good, do it." Women are no longer viewed as ladies to be loved as mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, etc. They are being objectified as fodder for the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. A real woman was never created to be paper thin, wear creased folds across her body, and sport a staple in her belly button.

What can be done about the problem of porn? In this passage, Jesus deals with the real issue. He attacked the problem right where it resides: in the heart of man. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell"* (Matthew 5:27-30)

Pharisaical View of Adultery

An older couple were taking a stroll through the park when two scantily clad young ladies jogged past. The wife noticed her husband's lusty looks and rebuked him. "Shame on you, you are an old married man" she complained. He responded, "just because I am on a diet does not mean I cannot look over the menu." This attitude represents the view the Pharisees had about adultery. They believed the act itself constitute the sin or adultery. Therefore, they could look and lust all they desired without guilt. Perhaps, they had overlooked the tenth commandment which condemned coveting their neighbor's wife.

Committing adultery has always been a serious sin. In the Law of Moses it was punishable by death. Both parties were to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:10; Dt. 22:22-27). A female slave guilty of adultery would be whipped but not stoned. The man who committed it with her was to bring a trespass offering (Lev. 19:20-22). When the wife was not caught in the act her husband took her to the priest (Num. 5:11-31). The adulterous woman brought to Jesus by the Jews was told by Jesus to *"go and sin no more"* (Jn. 8:11). In the New Testament adulterers will not inherit the Kingdom of God. *"God will judge"* them (Heb. 13:4). According to Jesus adultery was to be the only exception for one to get a divorce (Matt. 5:31,32).

There are three kinds of adultery spoken of in the Bible; physical adultery, mental adultery, and spiritual adultery (Js. 4:4). All three are very serious sins. Though they may have different consequences in the end will cost each sinner their soul. The Pharisees did not see how serious a sin adultery in the heart

was, because once again they were too preoccupied with external acts (Matt. 23:25,26). In contrast, God looks upon the heart as the source of a man's righteousness and wickedness (1 Sam. 16:7).

Adultery Begins in the Heart

Jesus begins to expose the self-righteous nature of the Pharisees' view on adultery and marriage by looking at the source and origin of the sin. Like all sins, hatred, jealousy, envy, anger, etc., adultery begins in the heart before it is manifested in the flesh. As the hatred of the heart is murder, so is the unbridled lust of the heart considered adultery. Mere external obedience by lusting and not "going all the way" is in fact the disobedience of fornication in the mind. The heart is the spring from which all the thoughts, words, and deeds of man flow. Like it or not lusting after a woman who is not your wife is mental adultery.

There as known a group of Pharisees who were known as "knot heads." They did not want to see anything that might cause them to even be tempted to lust, so they walked around town looking at their feet and bumping into things. The truth is one can lust without even looking. So all they gained for themselves was a headache.

Jesus is not condemning mere momentarily observation. He does not say that if a man notes that a woman is beautiful that he is an adulterer. There is a difference between lust and mere attraction, admiration, and affection. After all, it was the Creator who made the woman to be appealing to man. And man appealing to woman. Furthermore, a man may be surprised by see a half-naked woman at the gas station, on a billboard, in the store, then turn away and tell his heart "no" to any tempting thoughts.

Jesus knew that in a flash, seeing promotes temptation, giving into the lust of the eyes turned to mental adultery. This too will lead to physical adultery. For example, David saw the bathing Bathsheba. He lusted for her. Called her to his palace. They committed adultery. The end result was murder and death and decades of misery (2 Sam. 11,12). David was considered a man after God's own heart, yet he failed to guard his heart the look of lust was the beginning of his trouble. Consider this, if a godly man like David could so quickly fall for temptation to lust how careful should all Christian men be in this regard.

Just seeing is not lusting. But Jesus was pointing to men who will cast his eyes upon a woman to "look...to lust for her." The Greek indicates a deliberate intention of looking in order to lust.

Just being tempted is not to sin by lusting. There is a distinction between the temptation to harbor thoughts of sexual lust in the heart and choosing to give into the temptation. David saw and was tempted. He could have turned his eyes away and fled from fornication.

The Cure for Lust

✓ **Not Self-Mutilation**

When the William Tyndale's New Testament translation in English came out, some were very concerned that men might read Matthew 5:29-30 and blind or maim themselves by plucking out their eyes and cutting off their hands. Jesus is obviously using a figure of speech. The literal plucking out of an eye or cutting off of a hand might hinder a man from committing adultery in the actual physical sense. However, any man who can lust with his right eye can learn to lust with his left eye. Additionally, a blind man can lust without sight in either eye. Self-mutilation is completely powerless to remove the sin which emanates from the heart.

The statement in these two verses are hyperbolic. Jesus is using an exaggeration to warn them away from the sin of sexual lusting at all cost. After all, a cancerous limb will be readily sacrificed to save the whole body.

✓ **Mortification of Sin**

Mortification or putting to death the deeds of the flesh was commanded by Paul, "therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them" (Col. 3:5-7). "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"

(Rom. 8:13). This is part of the demands of true discipleship where one *“takes up his cross daily”* (Luke 9:23). The lustful “eye” and “hand” must be removed to save the soul.

✓ **Radical Removal of Enticements**

Anything that causes a man to be trapped or to stumble or lead him into sin must be removed. Paul wrote of his struggles, *“but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Cor. 9:27). Figuratively, Paul is beating himself up and giving himself a black eye to help control his fleshly desires.

Making sacrifices of the things you love may save you from sin. The Rich Young Ruler was told by Jesus to give all his riches to the poor to have eternal life (Matt. 19). A lizard when caught in an attack will sacrifice its tail and a lobster will give up its claw. Like a runner Christians should, *“lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Heb. 12:1). When you get to heaven nothing in this life you have sacrificed will compare with the glories up there. If you go to Hell, nothing you saved and hung on to will be worth the eternal regret and misery. Anything that morally or spiritually snares us, should be eliminated quickly and totally. This separation is to be absolute and final, not gradual. Do not be like the little boy who wanted a short tail on his dog, so he cut it off an inch at a time. When asked why he said, *“this way it will not hurt as much as cutting it off all at once.”*

✓ **Watch What You Look At**

Job wisely determined to guard his eyes from sins. *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?”* (Job 31:1). The Psalmist declared, *“I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me”* (Ps. 101:3). Watching movies, TV shows, and even commercials with naked or most nude men and women has to be cut off. Magazines, like Playboy, Playgirl, Penthouse, are out. The internet must be used carefully.

✓ **Mind What You Think**

In Barrie’s Peter Pan, the children are unable to fly like Peter Pan. They asked him how he was able to fly. He explained, *“You just think lovely, wonderful thoughts and they lift you up in the air.”* The only way to defeat evil thoughts is to begin to think of something else. He heart is the source of the problem of lusting. *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man”* (Mark 7:21-23). Therefore, we must *“keep our heart with all diligence”* (Prov. 4:23). Just because you cannot remove yourself from the influence of all temptresses and pornography, does not mean you have to give a place in you heart to them. Someone once said, *“you cannot keep the birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.”* Try replacing the tempting thoughts of lust with good thoughts. *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things”* (Phil. 4:8).

✓ **Be Careful Where You Go**

Paul commanded us to *“abhor that which is evil”* (Rom. 12:9). *“Abhor”* means to “shrink with shuddering from, to regard with horror” all evil. Therefore, movies showing nudity are out. Beaches populated with half-naked bodies are out. Gentlemen’s clubs are out. Hooters is out. Let your feet take you to a place without temptation, so your hands and your eyes will not cause you to sin. *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts”* (Rom. 13:14).

✓ **Marriage**

Some think that fornicating and lusting are an inevitable part of life. The Greeks had this notion. They viewed sex as merely a biological act that was necessary like eating and drinking. Paul summed up their view when he wrote, *“food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food”* (1 Cor. 6:13a). Yet, God did not create the body to be used for fornication, but as a spiritual temple for the Holy Spirit. A temple he redeemed with His blood (6:15,19).

There is a choice between remaining celibate and being promiscuous. God has designed marriage

for the fulfillment of sexual desires. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). God created sex and gives it as a blessing to be enjoyed within the bounds of marriage. Paul told the Corinthians, *“it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband”* (1 Cor. 7:1,2). The only one a married man needs to look at or to be seen by or be with sexually is his wife. Monogamy is not monotony, but a privilege and a blessing. *“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love”* (Prov. 5:18).

✓ **Run**

When confronted with temptation Joseph ran out of the temptress' house. Christians need to *“flee from sexual immorality”* (1 Cor. 6:18) and *“flee the evil desires of youth”* (2 Tim. 2:22). So look the other way. And run away if you must.

Mental adultery is a very serious matter. Those who succumb to it are in great danger: *“your whole body to go into hell.”* Radical spiritual surgery on the heart is necessary to remove the enticements to sin. So, you have choice. It is either amputation or conflagration in the fires of Hell. Just remember, even if it did cost you an eye or hand in the end all that you have lost for the cause of Christ will be restored in the resurrection in heaven. The only difference is it will be incorruptible.

Questions:

1. Do we live in a sex-saturated society? Explain.
2. According to the Bible how serious is adultery?
3. What are the three kinds of adultery spoken of in the Bible?
4. T F A Christian man whose heart is "after God's own heart" can observe bathing beauties and never be tempted.
5. Is just seeing an immodest women the same as lusting? Explain.
6. Is being tempted to lust the same as mental adultery? Explain.
7. When is a woman part of the sin of mental adultery, that is, a man looks upon her and lusts?

8. Can women commit adultery in the heart? Explain.
9. List the things necessary to counter the temptation to lust with the eyes.
10. What is mortification of sin? How is it accomplished?
11. List some things a man might remove, avoid watching and stop attending to help avoid the temptation to lust.
12. How can one protect themselves from evil thoughts?
13. How can marriage help this situation?

Application and Discussion:

1. How extreme or radical should someone be with regard to avoiding sexual lust? Give some examples of great sacrifices which could be made.
2. What can women do to help avoid become a stumbling block to men? Should she be willing to make some sacrifices? Explain.

Homework: Think of about those places, activities or things in your life that either tempt you to lust or cause you to be a temptress to another and cut them off or pluck them out of your life.

Tattooing

Tattoos are now a cultural phenomenon. Popular in part due to the number of high profile athletes and movie stars who sport these colorful skin drawings. In recent years, reality television has promoted tattoos with shows like *Miami Ink*, *LA Ink*, *New York Ink*, etc. Shows like these are often featured on The Learning Channel. These underscore the profession of tattoo artists executing their trade. No doubt many of these are men and women quite talented in rendering images and designs on a person's flesh. Tom Leppard was the most tattooed man in the world until Lucky Diamond Rich claimed the title by having 100% of his skin covered in tattoos. In 2006 the Guinness World Record officially recognized his claim to fame. As of December 2013 statistics show that there are some 21,000 tattoo parlors in the United States with 45 million Americans having at least one tattoo. The average large tattoo cost \$150.00 an hour. It is believed that 1.65 billion dollars were spent in 2013 on tattoos.

The art of tattooing is as ancient as man. According to *Archaeology Magazine* the most tattooed ancient man is Otzi the Iceman found frozen in the Italian Alps dating back to 3500-2100 B.C. He had more than fifty tattoos. In more recent history the term "tattoo" comes from the Polynesian word *tatau*. European sailors to the Polynesian islands brought the term and the concept of tattooing back to their home countries.

Whether or not it is moral to tattoo the skin has been a topic of debate for many centuries among the generations since its introduction to Western culture. It has definitely been an issue of concern among those practicing various forms or denominations of Christianity.

An Old Testament Prohibition

Over the years many have appealed to the Old Testament for proof that God is anti-tattoo. The Law of Moses states, "*You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord*" (Leviticus 19:28). The Hebrew word for tattoo is *qa aqa*. It literally means "to cut." According to an article written by Micael Lueck ("Does Yeshua have a Yattoo?"), "the Hebrew word 'qa'aqa' is from the root meaning 'to insert or to stick in.' So a 'mark that is inserted' or a marking made under the skin. According to Jewish oral tradition, the phrase refers to inserting pigment under the skin" (messianic fellowship.50 webs.com/yeshuatattoo.html).

Just why did God make this prohibition against tattooing the skin by the Israelites? To find the answer requires a careful examination of the context. Verse two of Leviticus nineteen gives the basic reason for the commands which follow. God says, "*You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*" Since God is completely pure and separated from all wickedness and that which is common, so the Israelites must be holy. They are to honor parents, keep the Sabbaths, and reject idolatry (19:3). Leftovers of the peace offering are to be burned the third day. To eat of them would be an abomination (19:5-8). When reaping the harvest, portions were to be left to the poor. When new fruit trees were planted, none of the fruit was to be eaten for the first three years (19:9-10). They were not to sow two different seeds in the same field (19:19a). The Hebrews were not to wear a piece of clothing with two kinds of cloth (19:19b). Eating meat with the blood was forbidden (19:26) just as it is in the New Testament (Acts 15). Special instructions were given in regard to hair and beard grooming (19:27). Prostitution is prohibited in verse twenty-nine. In the next verse encouragement is given again to keep the Sabbaths. Some will argue this passage is not a blanket condemnation of tattooing the flesh, but only where it is connected with pagan or idolatrous worship. Yet the same will argue against the sins of prostitution, Sabbath breaking, adultery, mistreating strangers, from this context, etc. Why condemn these when they are not associated with paganism and idolatry and not tattooing?

God was not merely telling the Hebrews to stay far from the religious practices of the surrounding

peoples. Israel was to be holy to the Lord (Leviticus 20:7) and maintain their separation from heathen practices (Exodus 33:16, Leviticus 20:24). Some of the laws are given to demonstrate to the Israelites the need to be separate, as in the no two seeds in a field and no two fabrics in the same garment. Christians today must be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:13) and “abhor what is evil; cling to that which is good” (Romans 12:9).

Another common objection to the passage in Leviticus is that the Old Law was nailed to the cross (Co. 2:14). Christians do not have to obey the prohibition against tattoos for the same reason they do not offer animal sacrifices anymore. As part of the Old Law the command not to tattoo is no longer in force today. Thus, some jump to the unnecessary conclusion that tattoos are okay day. The Mosaic system was abrogated by the death of Christ (Ephesians 2:14ff; Colossians 2:14ff). However, the Old Testament was written for “*our learning*” (Romans 15:1-4). After condemning the unholy conduct of the Israelites Paul told the Corinthians, “now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11).

Consider the popular mantra “What Would Jesus Do?” Would Jesus have a tattoo? No. Jesus kept the Law of Moses perfectly (Matthew 5:17), which banned the Jews from getting tattoos.

Arguments For Having Tattoos

The burden of proof for Christians tattooing their skin is not on those who oppose to prove to them it is wrong. Those who advocate the practice must prove it is the holy thing to do with their body. In an attempt to find support for tattoos many have appealed to various scriptures. Some have pointed out that God Himself put a mark on Cain. “*And the Lord said to him, ‘Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him*” (Genesis 4:15). The false assumption is that anything God does, Christians are free to do. Remember, when the priests Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire on the altar of incense, God killed them with fire (Lev. 10:1-3). Does this mean Christians can destroy false worshipers today with fire?

Others will go so far as to claim that God has a tattoo. God said, “*Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me*” (Is. 49:15-16). God does not have physical hands. He uses this symbolism to make the point that He does not forget His people.

Akin to this argument is the claim that Christ has a tattoo. John describes his vision of Jesus in Revelation, “*And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS*” (Rev. 19:16). This book is filled with figurative language not to be taken literally.

While holding a sermon series on tattooing, the Gold Creek Community Church had a live demonstration during services of someone getting a tattoo. The preacher, Larry Ehoff., explained “we think of it as amoral. It's neither immoral nor moral, it's just the choice of a person” (Nick Perry, The Seattle Times, Published: Saturday, November 28, 2009). Are tattoos merely an amoral act and matter of personal opinion like clothing choice, makeup, plastic surgery, hair cutting and coloring, weight loss, body-building, and ear piercing. Even if it is a matter of opinion, Paul told the church in Rome, “*it is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak*” (Rom. 14:21). “*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another*” (Rom. 14:19).

Perhaps the most common argument for tattoos is: “The Bible does not say ‘Thou shalt not have a tattoo.’” The Bible does not say: “Thou shalt not strap a stick of dynamite to thy neighbor's cat and blow it up.” Neither is there a direct prohibition against abortion, drugs, euthanasia, etc. in the New Testament.

Yet the Bible does condemn all forms of murder, and commands sobriety. Instead of looking for a “Thou Shalt Not,” Christians must “*abstain from every form of evil*” (I Thessalonians 5:22). As Christians we need to have discernment concerning what is acceptable. “*Those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*” (Heb. 5:14b).

Tattoos Violate Biblical Principles

It is true that the Bible does not contain the negative command: "Thou Shalt NOT get a Tattoo." However, tattooing does violate many clear Biblical principles.

- **Principle of Influence**

"Historically, the origin of the tattoo is associated with paganism, demonism, Baal worship, shamanism, mysticism, heathenism, cannibalism and many other pagan beliefs. The tattoo has NEVER been connected with Bible believing Christians," wrote Lynette Schaefer on the Web site Rapture Ready. According to research 29% of those who have tattoos say they make them feel rebellious and 31% feel more sexy (www.statisticbrain.com). Tattoos have been often associated with Bikers, Convicts, Gangs - Bad Boy image. The message is one of intimidation or sex appeal. The 50th anniversary of Barbie comes with a tattoo gun for applying temporary tattoos for children. After the manufacturer received complaints on the message this was sending to young girls, it was pulled off the market. Even the names of Tattoo parlors sport negative messages, such as, "Sinful Inflictions;" "Red Devil Tattoo;" "Voodoo Tattoo;" "Tainted Flesh;" "Mark of Cain;" and "Sin on Skin." Any practice that is vulgar, gaudy, or a distraction to one's Christian influence should be avoided. Jesus told His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Peter commanded Christians to have "*your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Pet. 2:12).

- **Principle of Communication**

Tattoos are skin billboards. What message is a particular tattoo telling other people? Some tattoos certainly would be inappropriate for Christians. Depictions of devils, gang symbols, naked women, dirty words, would not communicate the right kind of message. Many of these images glamorize the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). Our message to the world both verbal and pictorial must be "*sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you*" (Titus 2:8).

- **Principle of Motive**

Motives are important. One may do the right thing with the wrong motivation or one may do the wrong thing with the right motivation or do the wrong thing with the wrong motive. All three are condemned. Some believe that tattoos can improve their ability share the Gospel with others. They may even quote Paul, "*to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you*" (1 Cor. 9:22,23). The phrase "all things" does not include those things with are immoral or not expedient. Yet many of those of this world who are lost in sin already have "religious" tattoos. How would becoming more worldly save the world? We are to be in this world but not of this world (Jn. 17: 14f). The saints cannot become like the world to spread the Word. The power of salvation is in the Gospel not in the ink (Rom. 1:16). Does one desire to rebel against parents? Such is a sinful motive (Ephesians 6:1). Does one desire to show one's sexual promiscuity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)? Does one desire to use their body art to support anarchy or rebellion (Jude 1:8-10)?

- **Principle of Modesty**

What sexual message does a tattoo communicate? Most tattoos are made to be seen. Sexually suggestive placement of tattoos are prominent. The so-called "Tramp Stamp" is placed on the tailbone to draw men's eyes to a women's behind.

Christian women are commanded to "*women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works*" (1 Tim. 2:9,10). Modesty prohibits dressing or adding anything to the body that is provocative, sensual, revealing, and exploitative. Too much or too little to draw attention or excite the sexual passions in the opposite sex is wrong. The word "*shamefastedness*" means "a sense of shame or modesty." The term "sobriety" implies the ability to exercise good judgment. When

contemplating a tattoo ask yourself, “does it say I’m a Christian. Please carefully consider whether ‘body art’ is appropriate for one who ‘professes godliness?’” Young women should not use their bodies as a means to cause others to think or speak negatively about the Faith. *“Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully”* (1 Tim. 5:14).

Men and women are exposing parts of their body to a tattoo artist that only spouses should see. “Its art and they are artists.” It is art and immodest and these artists are still men with souls. Some believe these tattoo artist see so much immodesty it is like a body shop repainting a car. Some women are prone to thing that tempting men to sin is merely their problem and the woman has no culpability. Yet God will hold them responsible for being stumbling blocks.

- **Principle of Stewardship of the Body**

In defense of inking up one’s skin it is claimed, “It is my body I will do with it what as I want.” Paul wrote, *“do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Is getting a tattoo something that desecrates the temple of God, our bodies, or something that glorifies God? How is getting a tattoo on our fleshly temple any different from spray painting graffiti on the wall of a temple? God owns the rights to our bodies, not us! Christians are just stewards of their bodies.

Good stewardship of the body involves keeping it healthy. The Red Cross requires declarations of tattoos and body piercings of all blood donors. If so, donors must wait a year. Much of the concern is over blood born diseases, such as, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B, Tetanus, Tuberculosis, and HIV. Tattoos open the skin to nearly a thousand different air bourne viruses and bacteria. In addition to a variety of resulting skin disorders and inflections are allergic reactions. Tattoos and peircings are known to interfere with MRIs.

The late actor and comedian Richard Jeni once remarked, “I always look for a woman who has a tattoo. I see a woman with a tattoo, and I'm thinking, okay, here's a gal who's capable of making a decision she'll regret in the future.” This alludes to the regret factor which can accompany tattoos. The American Academy of Dermatology predicts that half of those who get tattooed will regret their decision at some point. What is cool at age twenty is lame and immature at fifty. Having a tattoo of the name of a girl-friend or boy-friend is a common cause of regret. Temporary tattoos only addresses the issue of health and permanency.

One day when a permanent mate is found and married, there will be someone to share one’s regrets. Before getting a tattoo ask yourself, “What will my future spouse think of this?” Should they not have a say what they will have to see the rest of their married life? *“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does”* (1 Cor. 7:4).

- **Principle Stewardship of Money**

Just as Christians must maintain good stewardship of their bodies, the same is true of the stewardship of money. We are stewards of what God has given us. An over-priced luxury car might be poor stewardship. Spending \$75 to \$150 an hour for tattoos is poor use of our God-given blessings. Tattoo removal is even more serious at up to \$10,000 per tattoo.

- **Principle of Discipleship**

Tattoos are viewed as a decorative means of self expression and personal decoration. Fulfilling every self-centered desire is not a right disciples have in Christ. Just has Christ lived a life of self-denial in services to God so must His disciples. Jesus explained true discipleship: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”* (Luke 9:23). The Christian is not to call attention to self for the sole reason of promoting self. He is to live in such a way to give glory to God. *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

- **Principle of Separation and Distinction from the World**

To be holy like God requires the saints to remain separate and different from the world. *“Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you”*

(2 Corinthians 6:17). *“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”* (James 4:4). *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”* (1 John 2:15-17).

Before you get a tattoo ask yourself...

- What is your motivation for getting the tattoo?
- Will your tattoo honor or glorify God?
- What message will it send?
- Have you considered the health implications?
- Will you still want your tattoo years from now?
- What about tattoos on children?
- Where do you want your tattoo?
- What will my parents say?
- What will my future spouse say?
- Where on the body to you plan to have it?
- Will it cause others to lust and sin by drawing attention to the body?
- May it cause the tattoo artist to lust and sin?
- How will this affect your relationship with others?

The only marks a Christian needs to bear on his flesh is are the scars of persecution for the cause of Christ received at the hands God’s enemies. Paul wrote, *“from now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”* (Galatians 6:17).

Questions:

1. Leviticus 19:28 - You shall not make any _____ in your flesh for the dead, nor _____ any marks on you: I am the Lord.
2. Why did God prohibit tattooing under the Old Testament Law?
3. Should the Old Testament have any influence on Christians today with regard to tattooing? Explain.
4. "What Would Jesus Do?" Tattoo No Tattoo

Matching: Arguments For Having Tattoos

5. _____ God Put a Mark on Cain a. Romans 14:19,21- 19Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 21 It is good neither

to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

6. ____ God has a tattoo
7. ____ Christ Has a Tattoo
8. ____ Matter of Opinion
9. ____ The Bible Does Not to
- b. Genesis 4:15 - And the Lord said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.
- c. Heb. 5:14b - those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
- d. Is. 49:15-16 - 15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. 16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.
- e. I Thess. 5:22 - "Abstain from every form of evil"
- f. Rev. 19:16 - And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Matching: Tattoos Violate Biblical Principles

10. ____ Principle of Influence
11. ____ Principle of Communication
12. ____ Principle of Motive
13. ____ Principle of Modesty
- a. James 4:4 - Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- b. 1 Tim. 2:9,10 - in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.
- c. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
- d. Luke 9:23 - Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.
- e. Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and

glorify your Father in heaven.

- f. 1 Jn. 2:15-17 -15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
- 14. _____ Stewardship of the Body
 - g. Titus 2:8 - sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.
 - h. 1 Peter 2:12 - having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.
- 15. _____ Principle of Separation/Distinction
 - i. 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 - 22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Application and Discussion:

- 16. Your fifteen year old daughter comes to you wanting a butterfly tattoo on her tailbone. She would also like her first name and her boyfriend's first name on either side of the butterfly. Her friend has school has a father who is a professional, experienced tattoo artist who is willing to do it at a reduced price. She still needs an advance on her announce. How would you handle this?
- 17. What about temporary tattoos on young children?

Homework: Think about the principles noted in this lesson and how you might be violating them by some other choices you are making in your life.

Stealing

It has been a few years since thieves broke into the church building and stole thousands of dollars worth of equipment. They did not get everything, but they tried. It was apparent that they parked their vehicle at the back door where they loaded up their stolen goods. We even found a large box in which they piled up cleaning supplies and drug the heavy load to the back door. For some reason they left the box. On top of this pile of loot were six rolls of toilet paper. Who steals toilet paper? Well at least they were thoughtful thieves. They left four rolls on the shelf in the storage room, so that members would be able to worship in comfort.

Remember the time when church buildings were left unlocked. Thieves had enough sense not to steal from a building filled with books which say, *"Thou shalt not steal"* (Ex. 20:15; Matt. 16:18; Rom. 13:9).

When growing up we never locked our house. When my family was getting ready to take me to college in Florida my dad was looking everywhere for the key to lock the front door. I asked him where he had it last. He informed me that they gave him the key when they moved into the house when I was three months old and he had not seen it since. Today if it is not lock up, tied down, lit up, monitored by a security company, surrounded by guard dogs, it quickly becomes a worry for someone else to hang onto.

There is the ancient Greek story about the philosopher Diogenes who spent his life walking around with a lantern, looking in vain for an honest man. The prophet Nahum wrote, *"Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs"* (Nahum 3:1). The problem exists in our times. Stealing and dishonesty is pandemic. Workers think nothing of taking supplies home from the office to use for personal reasons. Many do not even view their deeds to be dishonest or stealing. Theft does not merely involve picking up something that does not belong to you. Sick leave is stolen by employees who lie about their health in order to be paid while they convalesce on the golf course or while shopping at the mall. Added to this would be the hours of work lost from employees who rob their employers by being tardy, leaving early, taking extended lunch and coffee breaks or just goofing off (Lev. 19:13; Mal. 3:5; Js. 5:4). Seventy percent of college grads steal from the government when they default on their college loans. Bank robbers and thieves who break into homes and steal are not the only ones violating God's commandments.

Why Do People Steal?

A truck load of excuses are given by thieves and their sympathizers as to why people steal. Remember never to confuse an excuse given with the real reason.

The thief will say, "Everyone does it." Their parents, co-workers, employer, neighbor, etc. do it so why not do the same. How many people have to murder before everyone else gets a free pass for murder? The fact is, everyone who steals is a sinner.

Many other excuses for stealing are given. "They should protect their stuff better if they do not want to lose it. If I did not take it someone else would have come along and helped themselves." Is the greater sin a victim's failure to use better security measures? Face it, there are no fool proof systems that will keep the hard working and industrious thief from eventually getting what he wants. This excuse is just another attempt to blame the victim for the crime. Some try to blame their ungodly choices on the economy or how unfair life has been to them. "If I had been given what I deserve I would not have to steal. I did not get an education like the rest of society." Yet the same man who steals a car will steal a company if you give him an education. The world does not owe anyone a fair life. Life is not fair. But that is no excuse to be unfair to others by stealing from them. It only gives them a chance to declare that life is not fair when they are stolen from and steal from someone else. Perhaps one of the most common excuses is: "They have so much these rich people will not miss it" or "it is only a small amount." Jesus warned, *"He who is faithful in*

what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” (Lk. 16:10). If you say that it is acceptable to steal from someone who has much more than you do or because you think that they have enough already, that would mean that most people in the world have the right to steal from you. Still, others steal to have fun, just to be mean, or because they are just too lazy to get a job.

No matter what excuse given for the crime of stealing, the real reason is a heart problem. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man” (Matt 15:19-20).

How to Respond to Theft

How should a Christian respond to all the stealing going on in the world around them? First, make sure that you are not a thief. *“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters” (1 Peter 4:15).* If you have been guilty of stealing then repent and make restitution. Some believe that repentance alone is all that needs to make things right with God. Under the Law of Moses restoring the stolen or lost item was required and then some (Ex 22:1-8). When Jesus visited Zaccheus He blessed him with salvation because His host said, *“Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” (Luke 19:8).*

What steps can be taken to encourage others not to become thieves? Remind yourself and others that since all forms of dishonesty begin in the heart; they must reject the temptation to covet (Lk. 12:15; Rom. 1:29). All of us need things and money in order to function in this world. The means by which to obtain honest gain is through work. Paul commanded, *“let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good” (Eph. 4:28).* Paul, himself, often used his training as a tentmaker to work with his hands to provide for his needs as he ministered spiritually among the brethren and the lost (Acts 20:35). While making money for oneself remember the needs of others. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of one who helped someone in need. In the last part of Ephesians 4:28 Paul explains another reason why we labor with our hands *“... that he may have something to give him who has need.”* Of course, even if you do work hard and are blessed with enough to help others and to have goods laid up for a rainy day, thieves can always break in and take them away. Jesus wisely suggested a solution, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21).* Finally, if you find yourself a victim of thieves, you should pray for them. Jesus said, *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mt. 5:44).*

No matter what a thief takes from us there are many things he cannot steal that are so valuable that no amount of money could be given to replace them even if they could be stolen. Your treasures in heaven are the only theft proof possessions you have. Your salvation in Christ can be lost but not to a robber. It would be far better to suffer the loss of things in this world that can be replaced, than to hate and retaliate against a thief. By doing so you could end up losing that which is more valuable than all the world, your soul (Matt. 16:26).

A Very Costly Piece of Real Estate

A warning familiar to most is: “Buyer beware!” However, when studying the story of King Ahab’s covetousness for Naboth’s vineyard a better warning would be: “Seller beware!”

Before looking into the story, a glance at the preceding events will give a clue as to why Ahab was not the best person to be involved with in a real estate deal. In 1 Kings 11 he had killed all the preachers in the country except for a hundred and fifty of them. Later, came the prophet Elijah’s tremendous victory over the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). Queen Jezebel vowed to even the score by killing Elijah. He ran off into the wilderness and longed for death. God had other plans for this dispirited prophet. At Mt.

Horeb God revealed himself in a *“still small voice”* (1 Ki. 19:12). He ordered his prophet to anoint three men to task for the carrying out of God’s Will. Elijah anointed Hazael king over Syria; Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha as his successor as God’s prophet.

Although Ahab’s capital was at Samaria, he had a palace in Jezreel twenty miles to the north. Next to the palace was a beautiful vineyard that caught his lustful eye. He found the owner, Naboth, and offered to buy it from him. Now, when a king like Ahab says he wants our vineyard to plant himself a veggie garden, it is not a request but a demand. Naboth, however, was a man of faith and courage. He reject Ahab’s offer and confessed before this Baal serving king his faith in God. Perhaps, Naboth rejected the offer because the land was the property which had been allotted to his family (Lev. 24:23). No matter how profitable the business deal, Naboth was going to respect his God and his family and keep the land. Many greedy Christians are not of this hue. They are more apt to make decisions to make money and ignore God’s will.

Ahab was very disappointed at this rejection. He showed his childlike immaturity and began to pout like a spoiled child. While he was throwing himself a lie pity party his wife, Jezebel, comes along and inquires about his temperament. He whines to his wife about not being able to get his way with Naboth. Instead of encouraging her husband to grow up, she castigated him for his weakness and leaps into action to get him what he wants at any cost. Theirs was truly a dysfunctional relationship.

Jezebel had a plan. Her husband might of had some respect for the laws of God, but she worshipped Baal and had less restraints and scruples standing in her way (21:4-14). First, letters were sent in Ahab’s name to the rulers of Jezreel. They were to proclaim a fast and set Naboth in the chief seat among them. This was to make Naboth appear to be the source of the problem that led to the community fasting. Next, two false witnesses would be brought in to falsely charge Naboth with blasphemy. Blasphemy was a capital offense (Ex 22:8) punishable by being stoned to death (Lev. 24:10-16). Not only was he killed but his heirs were killed as well leaving his estate free for Ahab.

Now that the vineyard was available (21:15), Ahab was able to take possession at last (21:16). However, God sent his prophet Elijah to pronounce judgment against the greedy, thieving king (21:17-19). Not only was the king guilty of illegally ceasing this property, but he was compliant in his murder. Elijah appears just as the king is celebrating his triumph over Naboth. Ahab and Elijah were not strangers to one another. Ahab knew this prophet was a source of trouble to him and often would blame Elijah for his troubles. It is always easier to blame the messenger than it is to accept the message. The warning has a profound effect upon the king (21:27). His repentance seems to be sincere, in fact, God does delay part of the announced punishment (21:28-29). His house would not fall in his days, but in the days of his son. Later Ahab was mortally wounded in battle. As his blood flowed from his chariot the dogs licked it up. Later, Jezebel is pushed out of an upper window and falls to her death. All this, because they envied another man’s land.

Concerning the value of the Old Testament for New Testament Christians, Paul wrote, *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:3-4). What invaluable moral applications can be gleaned from this tragic event which can help God’s saints today?

● **No One Is Above the Law**

Lord Acton once observe that “absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Men, like Ahab, who are in positions of authority should not use their power to corrupt justice but to uphold it. Fathers and mothers, elders and preachers, teachers and bosses, lawyers and judges, etc. should all realize that they are not above the law, especially the law of God. Just as God punished King David for the abuses of his power in the sins related to the coveting of another man’s wife so all men will not above the law of God.

● **Don’t Sell Yourself into Sin**

The Word of God includes a number of instances of persons who sustained their faith and character and who affirmed righteous integrity in the face of staunch trials to do otherwise. Ahab *“sold [himself] to do evil in the eyes of the Lord”* (1 Ki. 21:20). Many a man has sold his soul at a bargain basement prices. They have sold themselves out of greed to become slaves to sin and Satan. Any price paid to gain a

moment of gratification is a price that is above the cost of the whole world. *“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matt. 16:26). Thank God for Jesus, who paid the price of our redemption to buy us back from sin and Satan.

● **Coveting Costs Too Much**

Ahab demonstrates that even the rich may be covetous. His crime did not pay! Nor did his coveting pay off. Adam and Eve had everything they could possibly want, except for one thing, they could not eat from one tree. *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”* (Gen. 2:16,17). Their covetousness cost them life and the garden of Eden. Esau sold his birthright for a mere morsel of food. Such is the problem with an appetite out of control. First, it ate Adam and Eve out of house and home and next it devoured Esau’s birthright. There is a story told about Abraham Lincoln walking down the street with his two boys, both of who were bawling over something. A friend happened along and asked Lincoln, “Abe, what’s wrong with your boys?” “What’s wrong with the boys?” he replied, “The same thing that is wrong with the world. I have three chestnuts and they both want two.” God warned the Israelites of the problem of covetousness in the Ten Commandments. *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s”* (Ex. 20:17). What ever gained through covetousness will in the end always be lost. Just ask Ahab and Jezebel, Adam and Eve, Esau and a myriad of others.

● **Ethics to Suit the Situation, Ends in Death**

Jezebel was not hampered by the moral principles that seemed to hold Ahab back. This made him appear weak in her eyes. She had no problem corrupting the town officials or bribing some wicked men to perjure themselves. Sending an innocent man and his sons to death did not cause her to lose any sleep. The Phoenician princess worshiped a Baal whose name was Melkart. The Ugaritic Texts state that Baal is a god who covets the houses of his fellow gods. He also coveted mythological animals and fields. He was a perfect role model for the covetous hearts of Jezebel and her husband. Her idolatry promoted covetousness. No wonder Paul wrote, *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth.... covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col 3:5). Using the ethical standards of Baal, she could...

- Trump up false accusations against Naboth, 10
- Secure false witnesses, 10,13
- Have Naboth murdered, 13
- Take by force another families property, 16

However, in Israel the Law of Moses included the Ten Commandments which proclaimed that there should be...

- No false witnessing
- No murder
- No stealing

The real test of any ethical system is the objective effect in the lives of these who abide by it.

Moses had warned the Israelites of the necessity to follow his commandments. *“But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out”* (Numbers 32:23). Ahab’s sin found him and robbed him of the vineyard of Naboth, his kingdom, and his life. *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Prov 16:25).

Questions:

1. Why did churches in the past leave the building unlocked? Why did they have so little problems with thieves back then?

2. What are some other ways workers, citizens, and students steal?
3. Answer in your own words this defense for stealing: "everyone does it."
4. Answer in your own words this defense for stealing: . "They should protect their stuff better if they do not want to lose it. If I did not take it someone else would have come along and helped themselves."
5. Answer in your own words this defense for stealing: "I need it more than they do."
6. What is the real reason people steal from others?
7. What is the first step a Christian should take to deal with all the stealing in the world today?
8. What should a Christian do to make sure he does not steal from others?
10. How did Ahab react when Naboth rejected his offer to buy a vineyard from him?
11. How did Jezebel go about in obtaining the vineyard for her husband, King Ahab? Did she in effect steal the vineyard? Explain.

12. Was Jezebel and Ahab exempt from being guilty of stealing because they were king and queen?
13. What does stealing have to do with the sin of covetousness?
14. List the Ten Commandments Ahab and Jezebel broke in stealing the Naboth's vineyard.

Application and Discussion:

15. List some valuable things you have which no thief can steal or take from you.
16. How do we as Christians rob God?

Homework: This week think of ways you can both discourage yourself and others from stealing.

Gambling

Definition of Gambling

Gambling in its various forms is very common in the United States:

- 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lifetimes (National Council on Problem Gambling).
- About 1% are pathological gamblers (clearly addicted). Problem gamblers account for another 2 to 3% (National Council on Problem Gambling).
- Legal gambling is available in 48 states; Hawaii and Utah are the only exceptions. (National Council on Problem Gambling).
- In Texas, (in 1996 gambling interests) hired 74 (lobbyist), more than two for every state Senator and one for every two members of the Texas House of Representatives (WGBH educational foundation),
- Twenty-three million dollars a day is spent gambling in Las Vegas.

Statistics show that a majority of Americans approve of gambling in one form or another. Many of those in various denominations not only agree with gambling, they also practice it. Even some New Testament Christians see no harm in spending a dollar or two on a lottery ticket.

If gambling is so popular with so many, why teach against this widely accepted practice? Gambling is a moral issue and always has been. When sinful activities turn socially respectable many Christians get involved in them. The argument that everyone is gambling tends to dull the consciences of many. Some are unaware that gambling is a sin. In contrast there are those who condemn those things which are associated with gambling, such as, playing pool, cards, and even bowling, etc. when these activities do not even involve gambling.

What Constitutes Gambling?

The Macmillian Dictionary defines gambling as “an activity in which you risk money in the hope of winning more money if you are lucky or if you guess something correctly.” Two elements are involved in gambling. First, gambling involves an uncertain event. It could be a horse race, dog race, football game, roll of the dice, bowling, card game, pool, election, shooting ducks at the fair, etc. Second, it involves the stake or wager placed on the uncertain event. It could be money, clothing, time, labor, property, etc. These two work together to produce a winner(s) and losers. It is essential to true gambling that some lose while some win. In a game of chance there must be losers in order for there to be winners. Gambling is not just taking a chance or risk. It is a wager placed on a chance. The outcome of a ball game is a chance. While the wager placed on that chance is a gamble.

Often what constitutes gambling has been confused by calling life, farming, investing money in the stock market, etc. gambling. Some will argue that everyone gambles every day of their life. Every time they get on a plane or cross the street they are gambling with their lives. Living life does not fit the definition of gambling. For example, if you successfully cross the street no one stands to gain something of value if you get run over. Crossing the street may involve risks as do all things in life, but a mere risk is not gambling. Gambling would require an event with an uncertain outcome and someone placing a wager on the outcome of that event. If you have men and women placing wagers on whether you can successfully navigate a street crossing you have bigger problems than those who are gambling on your success or failure. Furthermore, no one has become a compulsive street-crosser by merely taking the risk of crossing

the street. However, many do become compulsive gamblers by risking a wager on uncertain events.

Life is not a gamble. Life is a choice. *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live"* (Deut. 30:19). Life is not a succession of chances, but of choices. Life does come with built in risk. In contrast, gambling is creating a risk.

Others argue that farming is a form a gambling. It was decreed by God that man work the ground to produce his food (Gen. 3:19). Whereas gambling demands that someone lose in order that others might win, The farm is not seeking to gain anything from another. He is a producer of goods, not a parasite on the labors of others. The farmer does not need a loser to gain produce. He may suffer loss of a crop but not at the expense of others. The law of harvest is that a man reaps as he has sown. The more he sows the more likely he is to reap.

Some claim that investing in the stock market is the same a gambling, such as buying a lottery ticket. Although there is a risk and money at stake the stock market does not require losers in order for others to be winners. Work must be done to produce a profit. The investor's money is put to work by the company. When it is successful everyone wins: the workers, the employers, the investor, and the community all benefit. In order for an economy to work there must be buyers and sellers. When you buy stock you have bought something of value. When you buy a lottery ticket you have not purchased part of a company or goods. A lottery ticket is not an investment. For example, several people invest a thousand dollars each in a company that is to manufacture a product. Facilities are purchased, workers are employed, a product is sold, etc. a profit is realized from the investment. Gambling does cannot accomplish any of this.

A raffle ticket is not a life insurance policy. A lottery ticket will not suffice for auto insurance in the event of an accident. When you buy insurance you are buying financial protection for something of value. Buying insurance does not create an unnecessary risk, the risk is already built into everyday life.

The winning of prizes are not an example of gambling. Nothing has been wagered on the part of the winner. It does not require someone losing in order for there to be a winner. You go to the mall and fill out a form for a chance to win a five thousand dollar shopping spree at a particular store. The store has set aside this money as part of its advertising. It is not taking money for others. When you win you do not take from others who did not want to give it to you. You did not wager anything in order to win. The winnings are not from gambling, they represent a gift.

Gambling differs from all of these things in that it involves the creation of unnecessary risks which may endanger financial security of the persons involved. None of these produce bunch of losers just to create a winner.

Gambling Violates Legitimate Economy

When people risk a stake on a game of chance they are hoping to procure funds through improper means. Gambling violates three forms of legitimate economy or means of gain. All Three of these are approved of in the Bible.

■ **The Law of Labor**

Paul told the Christians at Ephesus *"let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need"* (Eph. 4:28). He also warned the Thessalonians, *"if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread"* (2 Thess. 3:10b-12).

From the very beginning of time man was created to be a laborer. God gave man the duty to work in the garden. This was even before sin enter the world and made labor much more taxing. Gamblers want to gain off of another's work without doing any work or investing anything of real value.

■ **Law of Exchange**

The Law of Exchange simply involves at least two parties agreeing to exchange items of equal

value. Jesus demonstrates this in his parable of the hidden treasure. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it"* (Matt. 13:44-46). Sometimes it is money which has been exchanged for something of value. Others trade one product for another. Gambling does not involve exchanging something of equal value. A lottery ticket is not equal to another lottery ticket. One ticket of them results in the gaining of money and the other does not.

■ **Law of Love**

In the Law of Love goods or money is obtained not by exchanging time and energy for them and they are not gained by means of mutual agreement. Instead, the products and funds are given because the love one person has for the other. The early church in Jerusalem had many needy saints among them. To deal with this need wealthier Christians practiced the law of love. *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (Acts 4:32-37). Money and help was given without an expectation of anything in return. Charities operate on this manner. Any type of gift that is not earned or where there has not been a wager is of this type. Parents may leave an inheritance for their children (Num. 27:1-11).

■ **Gambling is Lawless Gain**

Gambling does not obtain funds or products by any of these illegitimate meanings mentioned above. Gambling does not involve gain by reason of labor; it does not involve exchange of equal values; and it does not involve a gift with no desire of a return. Gambling does not add anything to the economy. The gambler does not labor for what he gains. He does not offer anything of equal value in exchange for what he hopes to receive. Gamblers are not motivated to give out of love for the other person. Losers do have not give up what they have lost out of love for the winner. No faithful servant of God in the Old or New Testament gained by way of gambling with God's approval.

Reasons Why It is Sinful To Gamble

Why have so many who call themselves Christians oppose gambling as a sin? Is there any Biblical basis for modern Christians condemning gambling?

\$ Gambling is Covetousness

An inordinate desire to gain without giving something of equal value. It seeks to get at the expense of others. Gambling fits the definition for covetousness. All men and women, Christians and non-believers have a desire for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, health, money, etc. They can work to receive these needs through legitimate means or they can merely lust after that which does not belong to them. Their desires grow beyond legitimate needs.

Paul therefore, refers to covetousness as idolatry. *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry"* (Col. 3:5). Covetousness is not the mere desire for things, it is the worship of things that causes one to be covetous. The tenth commandment says, *"Thou shalt not covet"* and the eighth commandment, *"Thou shalt not steal"*. The first commandment says, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* (Ex. 20:3). Though other ancient people had gambling devices Israel had none. Because it would have violated THREE of the TEN commandments. Jeremiah describes the people of his day as being given to covetousness, *"Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely"* (Jer. 6:13).

Gambling is the love of money. Again Paul warned, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of*

evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10). Loving things more than God is covetousness or idolatry.

\$ Gambling Is Stealing

Notice that the gambler is taking something: 1) which the other person does not desire to surrender; 2) which the gambler has not earned and therefore does not rightfully belong to him and 3) the means by which he takes it is called "tricks". He is interested in "fleecing" those that are inexperienced. This sounds like stealing not a mutually beneficial or agreeable transaction.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, *"let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need"* (Eph. 4:28). Gambling is stealing by consent. For example, "murder is wrong, but at times, men and nations have "legalized" duels; hence, murder by common consent. William Edward Beiederwolf does an excellent job explaining the parallel between gambling and stealing:

"...gambling bears the same relation to robbery that dueling does to murder. One man will meet another in a dark alley and take his life at the end of a pistol, and you call it murder; two men will meet each other in an alley and agree to shoot each other until one or both fall dead, and you call it dueling. But the only difference is that in the first case there is one murderer, and in the second case there are two. One man will meet another in a dark alley and take his money at the end of a pistol and you call it robbery; two men will meet each other round a table and agree to take each other's money with dice and cards, and you call that gambling. But the only difference is that in the first case there is only one robber and in the second case there are two."

No matter how a person is robbed or how they are murdered, God is still opposed to it was dishonest profit and bloodshed. God said to children of Israel, *"Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst"* (Ezek. 22:13). Is money or property acquired by gambling honest gain? For gambling to be appealing for those who promote it they must trap the "suckers," that is, to take advantage by any means possible of the other person. The Wall Street Journal reported that gambling in the lottery is "technically a swindle." ("Gambling and the Government," Jan. 4, 1974). In all of our trades or transactions with our fellow man, we should see to it that our gain in material things does not come only at his loss.

\$ Gambling Violates the Work Ethic

In the beginning God created man and placed him in the garden to work. *"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it"* (Gen. 2:15). After sin entered the world, men were to earn their bread by work, by the sweat of their brow. *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return"* (Gen. 3:19). Those who refuse to work are condemned, *"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"* (2 Th. 3:10). Gambling destroys the incentive to work. Advertising for the Illinois state lottery used slogans such as: "Money does grow on Trees," and "lottery: Your Ticket to Easy Street." A sign for the lottery on Washington Ave., in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago, read, "Your ticket off Washington Ave. to Easy Street." Gambling makes man unfit for this duty in life.

Gambling lives like a parasite on the earnings of constructive labor. The gamblers winnings do not represent remuneration for the exchange of goods and services. The gambler profits solely at the expense of another's labor.

Gambling is born out of idleness. A gambler is by nature a lazy person. He needs and wants food and clothing, but he is too lazy to work for it. One's income is to come as a result of his own industry, "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (1 Th. 4:11,12). We are to give a day's work for a day's pay. The irony in all this is that while some government agencies spend time and money to promote the work ethic, another part of the government deludes citizens with the dream of being an "instant millionaire".

Whereas, happiness comes through work, most discontent is the result of those who waste their money on gambling. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes extol the virtue of toil, of riches gained by honest labor.

\$ Gambling Violates the Principle of Stewardship

Man is to be a good steward of his possessions. Jesus taught a parable to this effect. *"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 'Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has'"* (Luke 12:42-44). In a real sense no one on earth really owns anything. Instead, man is in temporary possession of those things provided by the Lord. Ultimately everything belongs to God (Ps. 50:8-10). Yet, the Lord considers what is given us is under our control or stewardship and thus we bear responsibility for it (Acts 5:4). All men are encouraged to give thanks to God for all that he has since God is the giver of all good things (Js. 1:17). The money men enjoy is also a gift from God. Would you want someone to take your gift and wager it? How would you like it someone you had given \$1,000 to turn around and gamble with it and most likely lose part of it, if not all of it?

Questions:

1. How widespread is legal gambling in America? How widespread is illegal gambling in America?
2. Why teach against gambling?
3. What two elements are necessary to constitute gambling?
4. Explain why farming or crossing the street are not forms of gambling?
5. Is the stock market gambling? Explain.
6. True False A lottery ticket is the same as buying a life insurance policy.
7. Is just signing up for a prize car the same a buying a raffle ticket for a chance to win a car? Explain.
8. What is the Law of Labor?
9. What is the Law of Exchange?
10. What is the Law of Love?

11. Why does not gambling fit in either the Law of Labor, Exchange, or Love?
12. How is gambling the sin of covetousness?
13. Why is gambling a form of stealing?
14. How does the Bible violate the Biblical work ethic?
15. How is it that gambling an example of poor stewardship?

Application and Discussion:

16. Form an argument against buying lottery tickets.
17. List some of the negative effects gambling has on society.

Homework: Examine this week the stewardship of your money.

Lying Lips

Definition of Lying

The Bible categorically denounces lying as a sin. The Law of Moses commands, *“you shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another”* (Lev. 19:11). Solomon wrote, *“lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal truthfully are His delight”* (Prov. 12:22).

The sin of lying has been a very common activity among men throughout the ages. It is a sin against God (Acts 5:4). However, God had never lied to man. In fact, it is impossible for God to lie. Even if every man on earth or every man who has ever lived is a liar, God does not lie. *“Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4).

The Bible is filled with examples of the sin of lying and its consequences. The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. Genesis tells of the beginning of man, sin, lying, and Abraham's seed. Abraham himself deceived Pharaoh about his relationship with Sarah. He felt compelled to do so in order to avoid being killed because of her beauty. His son, Isaac, lied to Abemilech concerning his wife Rebekah. Their son, Jacob, fell victim to the lies of Laban who had promised his daughter Rachel, if Jacob worked for seven years. Laban resorted to a wedding night switch that resulted in Jacob marrying Rachel's older sister Leah. Years later, Jacob's son, Joseph, was a slave in the house of Potiphar. When he rejected the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife, the scorned woman lied about Joseph to Potiphar. As a result Joseph was cast into prison (Gen. 39:1f). After the Israelites left their life of slavery in Egypt, they came to camp at Mount Sinai where Moses went up the mountain to receive the ten commandments. When he returned, he found the Israelites breaking most of these commandments in their worship of the golden calf fashioned by Aaron. When questioned about this calf by Moses, Aaron said the people gave him the gold, *“and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out”* (Ex. 32:24). In 2 Kings 5:20-27 Gehazi lied to Elisha about taking gifts from Naaman whom Elisha, by the hand of God, had cured from his leprosy. The result of Gehazi's lie was that he became a leper. Peter would deny Jesus three times (Matt. 26:72). After the establishment of the church Peter confronted a Christian couple, Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), for their lie against God. They both in turn dropped dead at the apostle's feet after being given a chance to tell the truth.

Despite all these examples from the Bible which warn mankind of the dangers of telling a lie, lying remains to be just as popular as ever. Years ago the German leader, Otto von Bismarck, observed: *“People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war, or before an election.”* Lying is still popular in politics. The liberal Al Franken has a book out titled: *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*. On the right of the political spectrum, is Ann Coulter's book, *Slander: Liberal Lies About the American Right*. How can you tell if a politician is lying? One comic responded, *“just check to see if his lips are moving - if so - he's lying.”* According to polls reported by USA Today, Americans lie - and are lied to-much more than we realize. Citing statistics from the book *The Day America Told the Truth*, the newspaper reported that 91% of Americans lie routinely.

- 36% of those tell dark, important lies
- 86% lie regularly to parents
- 75% lie to friends
- 73% lie to siblings
- 69% lie to spouses
- 81% lie about feelings
- 43% lie about income
- 40% lie about sex

When New York and New Jersey's Port Authority ran a help-wanted ad for electricians, they asked for those who had expertise using a Songtog connector. They received a 170 resumes from applicants claiming to have such experience, even though there is not such thing as Songtog connectors. It may be common to lie on a resume to obtain a job, but some use lying as a means to accomplish their jobs. Lawyers will use lies to help their clients. Used car salesmen unload cars on customers with lies.

Parents raise their children telling them lies. It is a lie to reassure them Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny is real. Parents have been caught by their children telling lies in an effort to keep a birthday party a surprise or lying about a gift. Children will overhear the parents telling their boss they are out sick when in truth they just wanted to take the day off.

In the New Doublespeak: Why No One Knows What Anyone's Saying Anymore, author William Lutz defines innovative doublespeak terms: "strategic misrepresentation," "reality augmentation," and "terminological inexactitude." Alexander Haig once quipped: "That's not a lie, it's a terminological inexactitude." Added to these fancy ways to evade admitting to lying are the common euphemisms employed by society every day, such as, fibbing, a little white lie, a tall tale, and slip of the tongue.

Just what constitutes a lie? Today's dictionaries attempt to capture the anatomy of a lie in the following definitions:

- A lie is the utterance by speech or act of that which is false, with intent to mislead or delude (The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, 776 ed. Merrill F. Unger "Lie").
- ...a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive... (Random House College Dictionary).
- 1) to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive; 2) to create a false or misleading impression (Merriam-Webster).

Defining a lie is not as simple as merely classifying something as not true. The Bible makes use of fables which are not true to teach truths. Furthermore, lying is not merely a deception. God created in the animal kingdom deceptive camouflage and other means which promote survival in various species. And yet God does not lie.

Sometimes it is easier and more productive to first determine what something is not before identifying what it is. The use of figures of speech are not lies. Someone might say, "I am so hungry I could eat a horse." This is a hyperbole which is defined as "an exaggeration or extravagant statement used as a figure of speech; for example I could sleep a year. Or This book weighs a ton." (American Heritage Dict. Of th Eng. Language, p. 647). In a true hyperbole there is simply an intensification of language that is obvious. Jesus made a referred to a ruler in His day as "Herod that fox." Added to this is the Bible's use of the fables of Jotham in the book of Judges and the sarcasm of Micaiah. Jesus was condemned by His enemies because He claimed He would destroy the temple and built it again in three days. This was not a lie (Matthew 26:60,61; 27:40). But He was referring to His body, meaning that He would rise from the dead three days after they killed Him (John 2:19-21).

Inexact or ignorant statements are not necessarily lies. If I say I weigh 260 pounds when in fact I weigh 258.214952 pounds, did I lie? If someone asks me the ages of my grown children, if I tell what I believe is the truth, but it turns out to be a mistake, I have not lied. Never speaking falsehood will necessarily be impossible at some level or speaking everything with exact accuracy is not possible for those who are not omniscient.

God told Gideon to deceive the Midianite army by dividing his 300 men into three groups carrying a trumpet, a torch, and a pitcher. Was this deception a lie? If so God is its author. Yet God cannot lie. If people are deceived unintentionally by our actions we have not lied. Sometimes they may be deceived by our intentional actions. When you leave the lights on in your home to deter a thief it is a deception. But are you lying? However, false statements made with a deliberate intent at deception would be a "bold-faced lie."

Varieties of Lying

Man was made in the image of God. He has a soul. He also has creative powers which God did

not give animals. What dolphin has ever designed a submarine? Sinful man has used his creative ability to invent I multitude of ways to lie.

? **Deceit**

Deceivers attempt to cause others to accept as true that which is false. This is condemned in the New Testament. *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking”* (1 Pet.2:1). *“He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit”* (1 Pet. 3:10). Ananias and Sapphira attempt to deceive the early church in their attempt to cause them to believe they had given all the proceeds from the sale of the land when in fact they only gave a portion (Acts 5:1-11). They did not sin in keeping part of the money, but rather by leading others to believe they had given everything.

? **False Witnessing**

The ninth commandment is: *“you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”* (Ex. 20:16). It would be destructive for any civilized society to have justice circumvented by false testimony. Alan Dershowitz, professor of Harvard Law School, wrote, “on the basis of my academic and professional experience, I believe that no felony is committed more frequently in this country than crimes of perjury and false statements” (Joe M. Sprinkle, “a Call to Honesty,” Decision (October 2000). False witnesses were used in the trial of Jesus that led to His crucifixion.

? **False Promises**

Some people make promises they have no intention of keeping or know they cannot keep. Laban’s lies to Jacob are such false promises (Genesis 29:18,25). When Moses was sent by God to tell Pharaoh to let His people go, he was about to find out how hard-hearted and deceptive the king of Egypt could be. *“So Pharaoh said, ‘I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.’ Then Moses said, ‘Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord”* (Ex. 8:28-29). The Pharisees were known to make vows and create loopholes to avoid keeping them. Jesus demanded they let their “yes” be yes and their “no” be no (Matthew 5:33-37).

? **False Teaching**

Paul warned of false teachers. *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron”* (1 Timothy 4:1,2). *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works”* (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Today, there are some 2000 different denominations. These have their creeds, confessions, and articles of faith filled with various doctrines which contradiction each other and the teachings of the Bible. No matter how much the adherents of these beliefs hold them to be true they are false teachings of men. Many false prophecies have been passed off as genuine. When they do not come to pass it is clear proof of falsehood (Deut. 18:20-22). Another group of false teachers are the faith healers who claim to be able to perform miracles.

? **Flattering Tongue**

When a co-worker comes in with her new haircut the nice thing to do is to recognize it in some positive way. “Oh, I love what you did with your hair.” The truth may be it looks terrible. Yet to make an favorable impression upon someone you work with day after day. This is a form of flattering. The Psalmist notes that some try this with God. *“Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; for their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant”* (Psalms 78:37,38). Jude speaks negatively of those who *“mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage”* (Jude 1:16).

? **Slander**

Paul predicts in the last days men will be slanderers (2 Tim. 3:1-3). Slander is when one verbally

misrepresents the facts in defaming another's reputation. This is closely associated with gossip. Many who gossip will slander another person because they would rather accept as fact second and third hand information which they have not gone to the trouble to verify.

? **Cheating**

According to Psychology Today, a survey of 2,153 juniors and seniors from colleges across the nation found that 70% of men and women confessed to cheating during the high school. Nearly half of all college students surveyed cheated (Dec. 1992). Another survey found that seventy-five percent of high school students have engaged in serious cheating. Plagiarizing papers for credit has been a growing concern in high school and for colleges. How would you like to cross a bridge designed by an engineer who did not study but merely cheated his way to a degree?

? **Hypocrisy**

A hypocrite is a deceiver because he pretends to be something he knows he is not. He tries to give other people the impression he is more righteous than he really is. Christians are to lay aside "hypocrisy" (1 Pet. 2:1). False teachers are accused of "*speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*" (1 Tim. 4:2). Honest men do not play the hypocrite or act righteous when they are not.

? **Silence**

Robert Louis Stevenson, "the cruelest lies are often told in silence." The silent lie is seen clearly in the failure of a car owner to disclose to a potential buyer the knowledge of an inaccurate odometer and repairs from being in several wrecks. Although it is not a lie not to tell everyone everything you know, it is a lie to fail to disclose facts they you need to share. "*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17). After Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, they tore up his coat of many colors and dipped it in goats blood. They showed it to Jacob who was deceived into believing that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. Throughout the decades they remained silent concerning the truth of what really happened to their little brother (Gen. 37:31-35).

? **Half Truths**

True/False statements on a test can be tricky. If part of the statement is true, but the other part is false than the whole statement is false. Elias Lyman Magoon states, "half a fact is a whole falsehood." Even the mention of a fact while being silent about the other facts pertinent to the issue can represent a half-truth or lie. The captain entered in the log of the ship the record for the day: "Mate drunk today." When the mate was keeping the log he made this entry: "Captain sober today." Even Christians use half-truths to lie. When asked about their absence from worship they will say "I had a headache." While the rest of the truth as they went to a ball game with the same headache.

? **Little "White" Lies**

Some believe the size and color of a lie makes it less sinful. Those who tell little white lies will soon become color blind and fail to comprehend the gravity of truth. The Bible condemns all liars to hell (Rev. 21:8). This includes lies of every size and hue. Little white lies have the potential of growing into huge, monstrous black lies. The further these little white lies travel and the longer they are allowed to go unchecked by the truth the more dirt they accumulate and the bigger they grow. Ananias and Sapphira's little white cost them their lives.

? **Self-Deception**

The New Testament warns of "*let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise*" (1 Cor. 3:18). "*For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself*" (Gal. 6:3). "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ...If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless*" (James 1:22,26). Telling a lie to another may deceive them. But to deceive oneself with a lie is to be guilty of victimizing oneself.

In John's first epistle he warns of the danger of Christians who have deceived themselves:

- 1 John 1:6 - *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not*

practice the truth.

- 1 John 1:8,10 - *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*
- 1 John 2:4 - *He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*
- 1 John 4:20 - *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*

Do not be deceived this list of various forms of lying is by no means complete.

Consequences of Lying

A father calls his son in San Diego and tells him that he is getting a divorce from his wife of forty years. The son cannot believe it. But the father tells him he is through talking about it and asked the son to call his sister in Nashville and tell her about it. The son calls his sister and the both agree to go home for Thanksgiving to talk some sense into their father. Back in Dallas when the father hung up the phone, he turned to his wife and said, "I have some great news. Both kids are coming home for thanksgiving and they are paying for their own plane ticket this time."

Is there any lasting benefits to lying? Is honesty always the best policy? This father and mother obtained just what they wanted because of a lie.

- **Little White Lies Grow Bigger and Blacker**

You tell one little white lie and then another and another to cover for each subsequent lie. Martin Luther is believed to have said, "a lie is like a snowball. The longer it is rolled on the ground the larger it becomes." Ananias and Sapphira's lie about the price of the land they sold necessitated another. Gehazi's lie to Naaman required another lie to cover for the first lie when he was confronted by Elisha. Furthermore, the more one lies the easier it becomes, until it is a habit.

- **Leads to Compulsive Lying**

Those who lie can become so accustomed to twisting the truth they become compulsive liars or even what is known as a pathological liar. A pathological liar is "an individual who habitually tells lies so exaggerated or bizarre that they are suggestive of mental disorder" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Perhaps, the Psalmist spoke of these when he wrote, "*Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah You love all devouring words, You deceitful tongue*" (Psalms 52:2-4).

- **Living in Fear of Being Exposed**

Lies keep on lying because they do not want their previous lies to be exposed by the light of truth. Lies live a life of fear. C.S. Lewis, "a little lie is like a little pregnancy - it doesn't take long before everyone knows." "*A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape*" (Prov. 19:5). Four teens came to school late. When questioned by the principal as to the reason for their tardiness they claimed they had to fix a flat tire on the car. The principal gave them a sheet of paper and pen and had them write down in private which tire. Their lie was quickly discovered.

- **Lord Hates Lying**

According to Proverbs 6:16-19 there are six things the Lord hates and seven are an abomination. These include "*a lying tongue.*" "*Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal truthfully are His delight*" (Prov. 12:2). Sin separates man from God. Lying lips produce this alienation from God. God has warned, "Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity" (Is. 59:3b).

- **Lake of Fire is the Liar's Destiny**

The Bible began with the first liar, Satan, which resulted in mankind being cast out of Paradise. The Bible ends with a warning the liars will be cast into a life of fire. "*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Rev. 21:8). "*But there shall by no means enter it*

anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 21:27). "But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Rev. 22:15).

Beware of the lie of the harmless lie. *"The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment" (Proverbs 12:19).*

Questions:

1. Does God ever lie? Explain.
2. List some men and women in the Bible who lied.
3. What euphemisms do people use to down-play the seriousness of lying?
4. True False All fables, hyperboles, metaphrs, sarcasms, made up stories like Jesus' parables are all forms of lying.

Matching: Varieties of Lying

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------------|----|--|
| 5. ____ | Deceit | a. | "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). |
| 6. ____ | False Witnessing | b. | Jude speaks negatively of those who "mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage" (Jude 1:16). |
| 7. ____ | False Promises | c. | "let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). |
| 8. ____ | False Teaching | d. | pretends to be something he knows he is not |
| 9. ____ | Flattering Tongue | e. | Laban promised to give Rachel to Jacob but gave Leah instead. |
| 10. ____ | Slander | f. | "I had a headache so I missed worship services" [but I also wanted to stay home and watch the football game]. |
| 11. ____ | Cheating | g. | Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 |
| 12. ____ | Hypocrisy | h. | "you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). |
| 13. ____ | Silence | i. | Plagiarizing papers for credit |

14. _____ Half Truths j. "ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).
15. _____ Self-Deception k. is when one verbally misrepresents the facts in defaming another's reputation.
16. Why do lies grow bigger and bigger?
17. Is lying habit forming? Explain.
18. What will become of all liars?

Application and Discussion:

19. What are some ways in which well-meaning parents may be teaching their children to lie?
20. Give an example where it would be right or excusable in the eyes of God to lie.

Homework: Examine your conversation and life this week try to catch yourself in a lie.

Gossiping Tongue

Five preachers were gathered for a study. One said that since confession is good for the soul and they should all confess their faults one to another. "I've got the bad habit of taking a nap in my office every afternoon." Second, "I have a terrible temper". Third, "I smoke when no one else is around." Forth, "I have a weakness for dirty R-rated movies". Then the fifth one said, "I've got the terrible habit of gossiping, and I can hardly wait to get out of here!"

Rumortism's Side-Effects

Gossip has been a problem through out the ages. A lot of regular "church-goers" have the problem (Js. 1:26). The spiritual malady of "rumortism" has afflicted many.

There are many destructive sins in the world. The book of Proverbs outlines several characteristics which make it one of the most injurious character flaws a Christian may manifest.

◆ **Gossip Makes One a Fool**

"Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Pr. 10:18).

The word for "fool" comes from "nabal" which describes one who has no respect for God. The Psalmist indicated that such a fool says there is no God (14:1). A gossip is "a person who knows a great deal about very little and who goes along knowing more and more about less and less, until finally he or she knows practically everything about nothing." Remember, if someone will listen to you gossip, he will likely gossip about you to anyone who will listen.

◆ **Reveals Secrets**

"A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" (Pr. 11:13).

Through gossip we both tell and learn things that do not need to be known. Like an "armorbearer" or a "standard-bearer" a talebearer has a tale to carry. To give him information is like putting it on the six o'clock newscast. With this passage as a measuring rod, which are you? A talebearer? or a faithful person? A faithful soul does not become a 50,000 watt broadcasting station announcing the failures of others. Instead, he respects the confidence that another has placed in him. He has the capacity which seems all too rare - the ability to keep a secret. One day a small boy overheard a visitor tell his mother something very personal. After her guest left the mother realized her young son heard. She asked him if the lady had left her purse there would it be alright to use it any way they wanted to or even give it to someone else. He promptly responded "No!" She continued: "Well, Mrs. Brown left something more precious than her purse here today. She left a story that would make many people unhappy. That story is not ours to give away. It is still hers, even though she left it here. So we shall not give it to anyone. Do you understand?"

◆ **Gossip Causes Strife**

"An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Pr. 16:27,28).

Few things are divisive in a church than gossip. Paul specifically noted that wives of church leaders should not be "slanderers", that is, prone to gossip (I Tim. 3:11). Vine's defines it as, "Finding fault with the demeanor and conduct of others and spreading their innuendos and criticisms in the church". Interestingly, "slanderer" is from "diablos" which is where we get the English word for "devil". Gossipers do the devils' work for he is the "accuser of the brethren."

Years ago, a young man spread a criticism about an elderly preacher. It split the church and created a scandal. Later he repented and went to the preacher. He was told to take a pillow and the young

man to the top of the church building and told him to tear it open in the wind. Feathers blew everywhere. Then the preacher said, "Now go gather the feathers; all of them." "Its impossible". "I know. I just wanted you to realize how impossible it is to retrieve a criticism once it is made."

◆ **Gossip Separates Friends**

Gossip can easily bring to an end a long time relationship. Friendships and family ties have been butchered in the slaughter house of gossip. Even whole nations have been brought low by slander. Rumors have started wars. Paul Harvey tells a story of how the Boxer Rebellion was initiated by the careless, scandalous journalism of a man in Denver.

◆ **Gossip Ensnares One's Soul**

"A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body" (Pr. 18:6-8) and *"Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles"* (Pr. 21:23).

Perhaps the gossipier needs to be reminded that *"whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"* (Gal. 6:7). People lose confidence in one who continually gossips. One is hung by his lose tongue and his lose lips trip him. The man who gives his ears as a trash receptacle will soon be filled with the rancid results of those rumors. Those tasty tales will become acute indigestion to the soul.

◆ **Gossip Wounds**

"The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body" (Pr. 18:8).

Most of us would be appalled to learn of one of our brothers or sisters being robbed and battered. Yet, mindlessly these same church members, will render wounds to that same fellow-Christian that are far more injurious and take longer to mend. Paul refers to those Christians who would bite and devour one another, like a form of intangible cannibalism.

David, Saul's son-in-law, fleeing for his life from Saul, came to Nob to Abimelech, the priest. Abimelech feared at meeting David and asked why he was alone. David told a plausible untruth about being hurriedly sent on a secret mission by Saul. When David asked for food and weapons, having only hallowed bread and Goliath's sword, Abimelech gave them to him, thinking he was doing Saul a favor. Doeg, Saul's chief herdsman, observing the incident, reported the matter to Saul - minus some facts but plus an apparent supposition. Thinking Abimelech had joined David, Saul was enraged and demanded the death of the priests. 85 priests plus men, women, children, sucklings and animals died by the sword in Nob that day. Thus, innocent men, women and children have been killed by an idle tongue (I Sam. 21:1-9; 22:9-19).

◆ **Gossip Has Great Power to Do Harm**

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Pr. 18:21)

Although the tongue is one of the body's smallest members it has a great influence over the body. James compares the effect of the tongue to "fire" and "poison" 3:2-8. Beasts of the field can be tamed, and afterwards can be trusted. The tongue of a man cannot be easily domesticated. Your tongue can do more damage than setting your neighbor's house on fire or putting poison in his food. He is a verbal arsonist. Like most arsonist he is too cowardly to strike his match out in the open. Gossipers give no heed to the "firemen" who work with experience to right the wrong and save the souls involved. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire. If the fire gets big enough, then it creates its own wind to further spread its devastation. It is harder to put out a forest fire than it is to start one. It is easier to tame a lion than it is to tame a tongue. Recanning a rumor is like recanning air.

Character assassination may be bloodless, but it is vicious. Reputations which took years to build through faithfulness in teaching and practice in life can be maimed by the tongue. Once robbed by gossip of one's reputation, a man may spend the rest of his life reeling for its effect.

In conclusion, consider the follow poem "The Gossip's End" by Richard Armour.

When gossips die, as mortals must,
And leave their earthly home,

Their punishment will be, I trust,
Eternally to roam
Down flaming paths and darkened pits
And empty halls of hell,
With heads crammed full of juicy bits
And not a soul to tell.

Rumortism Remedies

One of the worst sounds I ever heard was somebody repeating, word for word, something I never should have said in the first place. If we are honest with ourselves we will admit that at sometime or another we have lent our lips to the hideous habit of gossip. Furthermore, each of us, at one time or another, has been the object of another's gossip. Does the Lord have a remedy for repulsive rumormongering? The Psalmist was having difficulty in guarding his words, thus he prayed, "*Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips*" (Ps. 141:3). All of us need the same prayer pouring from our lips. Each of us needs to be a part of the resolution for idle talk. What can we do?

▶ **Make Sure the Tale Is True**

In a certain town a report went the rounds that a local pastor had gone to a place where his wife was attending a meeting against his will. He reportedly dragged her from the place and forced her to go home. Upon learning of this rumor the minister wrote in the local paper, as follows: "First, I never attempted to influence my wife in her views of her choice of a meeting. Second, my wife did not attend the meeting in question. Furthermore, I did not attend the meeting. Fourth, neither my wife or myself had any inclination to go to the meeting. Finally, I do not now have and never had a wife."

One can avoid the embarrassment of spreading such preposterous tales by heeding the word of Paul: "*Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another*" (Eph. 4:25).

Before you speak, answer the following questions: Do I know this to be fact? Would I be willing to put it in writing and sign my name to it? Considered the effect this publicity will have on many innocent parties? Have I considered every possible angle? Don't adopt a "Shoot off my mouth now, and ask questions later" approach.

"Gossip is like a blotter - it absorbs a lot of dirt, and gets it all backwards." One lie that just refuses to die is that the president of Proctor & Gamble appeared on the Phil Donahue show proclaiming that he was a satanist and that the company's moon and stars trademark is a satanic/occult symbol. According to some information sent to me by Proctor & Gamble the trademark has been used since 1850. It started as simple markings on the crates of Star Candles, an early P&G product, and evolved to a formal design showing a man-in-the-moon, a popular figure of the 1800's; and thirteen stars representing the original colonies. As someone put it: One thing that is most difficult to understand is how rumors without a leg to stand on can get around so fast. Remember, it is easy to build an iron-clad case in the absence of cross examination, so get the facts.

▶ **Make Sure You Are Not Guilty Too**

Jesus warned, "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?*" (Mt. 7:3) Is there a beam in my own eye? While I magnify my brother's shortcomings do I at the same time fall short of God's Will in the same or similar realm? A faultfinder is rarely a faultmender, even when it comes to his own faults. Remember, it is easy to dig up some dirt on someone if you are trying to make a hole to cover up you own faults.

▶ **Use the Golden Rule**

"*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*" (Mt. 7:12). This one rule of life would go a long way in curbing gossip. Ask yourself before you broadcast your tale about another: Is it Kind? Would I want him to thus talk about me? What if I were in his shoes?

▶ **Check Your Motives**

There seems to be a perverseness in many of us that delights in finding fault with others. Gossip is often the prime indication of improper motives. It is easy to gossip if our motives are wrong. It is easy to find something wrong with a person, if we are determined to do so. It is easy to talk of the failures of the congregation, if we don't want to pull our share of the load. It is easy to see only the good in our loved ones, and only the bad in those you hate (dislike). It is easier to build yourself up by tearing someone else down. Personality clashes, pride, and personal desires all make for prime motivators.

Our only valid incentive to speak about another's negative disposition should only be to save from sin. *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1).

▶ **Stay Busy**

Some gossip is caused by idleness: people having nothing better to do than to talk about others. This is why Paul wanted to see the younger widows married (I Tim. 5:11-14).

With the invention of the cell phone, texting, blogging, etc., it is become a lot easier for idle women (or men) to wander from house to house and speak things which they ought not to speak. Paul gives the secret of preventing gossip: overcome it with a busy life and mind proper things. Be busy, but do not be busybodies. To put it another way, keep your body busy, and you won't become a busybody.

▶ **Use the Power of Love to Control the Tongue**

Gossip according to Earl Wilson is "when you hear something you like about someone you don't". Gossip grows out of and is a symptom of hate. *"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends"* (Prov. 17:9) The love of our brother will either vanquish talebearing or talebearing will soon defeat brotherly love. You do not criticize the sins of the persons you love any more than you advertise your own shortcomings. In fact, if you love someone, you will delay making judgments about his guilt. Love them enough to straighten their problem out instead of spreading it around (Mt. 5:23,24; 19:15-18). When I have a complaint against a brother, I must go to him, not a third party. Yet, the chatterbox Christians are talking with everybody else but the one with whom they should be talking - the brother or sister with whom they have a problem.

▶ **Don't Associate with Gossipers**

It takes two people to gossip: one to talk and another to listen. *"An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue"* (Pr. 17:4). The listening ear must share in the blame of the gossiping tongue. When you listen you increase the gossipers sense of importance. You give him an audience. *"He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips"* (Pr. 20:19). Our response will either encourage him or discourage him. You can't stop a gossip from gossiping, but you can stop the tale from being told anew. Perhaps it will dawn on him some day that if you will not listen to his gossip about someone else, you will not listen to someone else's gossip about him.

▶ **Show Them Your Displeasure**

If the tongue is a member set on fire by Hell then how does one extinguish it. The wisdom of Solomon suggests: *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body"* (Prov. 26:20-22). If you give him no ear, he will give you no lip.

Ask the scandalmonger to submit to these: Do you know this to be a fact? Would I be willing to put it in writing and sign my name to it? May I quote you? Will those to whom I tell it be made better by this knowledge? Can you identify sources by name and support evidence with facts? Openly admit, "I don't appreciate hearing that. It might drive a wedge between you and the guilty, but you will pour cold water on the fire of contention.

▶ **Use Your Tongue Wisely**

Fire prevention is much easier than extinguishing a raging inferno. Paul said, *"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers"* (Eph. 4:29). The word "corrupt" means "rotten" or "putrid". Remember the old saying, "If you

can't say something good, then don't say anything at all." The gossip thinks: "I won't say anything unless it is good. And wow is this one good."

There are times when it is good to report another's wrong-doing. Idle chatter ensues when we talk bad with bad intent. There is a tremendous difference between reporting one who commits a crime or immorality and peddling malicious tales. The criminal should be exposed and found out. There are times in the church when one needs to share with the proper people a concern about another. Paul heard bad news about Corinth from Chloe's people (I Cor. 1:11). There is a song which we sing in church: "I love to tell the story". It may sound like the gossipers anthem, but rather what ought to occupy a Christians conversation.

If you heard of bit of gossip and repeated it to two other persons within 15 minutes, and they each repeated it to two others in 15 minutes, and so on and so on, without duplication, it would take about nine hours for everyone in the world to be informed? Instead of 15 minutes of gossip allow yourself a full week to tell just two people about Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Using the same formula, we find that the whole world would have a week's teaching - individually - in about nine months. Truly, *"a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver"* (Pr. 25:11).

A missile with a thousand mile range staggers the imagination, but the tongue can carry a message of life or deadly poison around the world. All that is needed is a telephone number or postal address. Early saints went every where preaching the gospel (Ac. 8:4); talebearers go everywhere spreading the gossip.

Someone has suggested that the Lord gave us two ears, but one tongue; and that He arranged them in such a way as to denote which was to be used more often. He places the ears on the outside of our head where they can catch the sound, but He put the tongue inside and placed it behind both the lips and the teeth. Regardless of these handicaps the tongue often is found doing a lot more work than the ears.

Questions:

Matching: Gossip's Side-Effects

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|----|---|
| 1. _____ | Gossip Makes One a Fool | a. | "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (Pr. 21:23). |
| 2. _____ | Reveals Secrets | b. | "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" (Pr. 11:13). |
| 3. _____ | Gossip Causes Strife | c. | "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Pr. 10:18). |
| 4. _____ | Gossip Ensnares One's Soul | d. | "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Pr. 18:21) |
| 5. _____ | Gossip Wounds | e. | "The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body" (Pr. 18:8). |
| 6. _____ | Gossip Separates Friends. | f. | "An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Pr. 16:27,28). |
| 7. _____ | Gossip Has Great Power to Do Harm | | |

8. True False As long as something is true, it cannot be considered gossip.
9. What are something you should do before repeating something you have been told about someone else?
10. How does gossiping violate the golden rule (Matthew 7:12)?
11. What role does one motive have in whether his speech is gossip or not?
12. How does staying busy keep on from gossiping?
13. How does love help avoid gossiping?
14. Why does the Bible discourage us from associating with gossipers?
15. What are some proper things to say when one hears what might be gossip?

Application and Discussion:

16. Someone informs you they feel the preacher is having an affair. They saw him in the checkout line at a store with a young lady purchasing flowers. After the purchase was made he opened the car door and handed her the flowers and then they drove off together. How would you handle this information?
17. When is it right to tell someone about the sinful words or inappropriate actions of someone else?

Homework: Go to a person of whom you have heard a negative tale about them and give them a chance to explain themselves.

Doing Nothing

In a Bible class, the teacher asked her young students, “What are sins of omission?” One student offered this explanation, “They are the sins we should have committed but didn’t.” Unlike sins of commission, such as, adultery, murder, stealing, and idolatry, sins of omission are the sins of doing nothing. Sin is not just doing bad. Many today feel they are good simply because of an absence of bad in their lives. They are sinless in their eyes because, “I didn’t do anything wrong.” They assume they are good, simply because they have done no evil. They forget that goodness is a positive quality; not merely the absence of doing evil. Sin is more than just a transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Sin is also a failure to do the law. *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

Sin can also be defined as a failure to do as you ought to do. For example, the one-talent man in Jesus’ parable did not do anything outwardly sinful. Yet, it is affirmed that he was *“wicked”* (Matt. 25:14ff). He could have defended himself by protesting, “Wait just a minute there. I will have you know that I am not an embezzler, I did not squander the money through riotous living like the prodigal son, in no way was I dishonest, never have I been a drunkard, murderer, fornicator or thief of any kind. I was entrusted with a talent, and it is a talent I have returned.” He was still condemned a wicked man because he failed to do as he was commanded.

R.V.G. Tasker wrote, “It is probably true to say that we more often leave undone that things we ought to have done than do the things we ought not to have done.” How often have you admitted:

- “I ought to study my Bible more.”
- “I ought to attend church services more frequently.”
- “I ought to give more.”
- “I ought to visit the sick more.”
- “I ought to do personal work.”
- “I ought to pray more.”

Who is able to say that he does all the good that he knows he should do? None! To be sinlessly perfect you would have to avoid committing any acts of sinfulness, but you would also have to perform every act commanded of you. You see, no man is sinlessly perfect.

God did not create mankind just to avoid doing bad things. He did not make it possible for us to become Christians so we could just shun evil practices. We were created in Christ to do good works (Eph. 2:10). We live the Christian life in order to do those good deeds which please God (Col. 1:10). No one persecutes us just because we do not murder and steal. Christians suffer for doing good in the name of Christ (1 Peter 3:17). By suffering persecution for doing good, we confirm and promote Christianity before the world (1 Peter. 2:13-15). God has equipped all Christians for doing good (2 Tim. 3:16,17). He rewards us for doing good (Rom. 2:6-8). Doing good as we have been commanded brings us happiness (John 13:17).

James 4:17 is a verse within a context. Note, that the term *“therefore”* connects this statement to the preceding context. *“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil”* (James 4:13-16).

Therefore, James 4:17 expresses an axiomatic statement. If anyone omits to consider man’s

dependency upon God, he thus sins. Man's life is transient and fleeting. He must acknowledge the hand of God in the affairs of life.

This verse bears close comparison with other parts of the epistle. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (James 1:22). As children of God, we must always strive to be "doers of the word." If not, we sin. *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:17,26). Our faith in Christ is not demonstrated by just a refusal to do bad, but a commitment to take God at His word and respond to His commandments. Failure to do so is to sin.

Doing good is an axiom of the Old Testament as well. God condemned Israel for failing to do what was commanded. Their failure to act was rebellion (Dt. 1:26); non-belief (v. 32) caused God to be angry and punish them (vv. 34-37). The people admitted that their refusal to obey was sin (41). The scriptures insist that "all" of God's law is to be obeyed (Dt. 27:1; 12:32).

All of Jesus life *"He went around doing good"* (Acts 10:38). To be a Christian we must be Christ-like and go about doing good and not just avoid doing evil. In the great commission, He wants us to make disciples *"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:20). In fact, if "you know to do good" shows that with knowledge comes responsibility. And the greater the knowledge the greater the responsibility. *"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more"* (Lk. 12:47,48).

In fact, those who fail to do good to others will be judged as if they failed to do good for Christ. *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (Matt. 25:41-46).

How do we commit such a sin?

By Knowing What Is Good Without Doing

The term "good" in James 4:17 is from the Greek word *kalos* which describes what is qualitatively good, morally excellent, worthy of honor, and upright. The term "knows" is translated from the Greek root *oida* which means "to know perfectly well." As your mother would say when she caught you doing something you should know is wrong, "Danny, you know perfectly well that you were wrong to get into the cookies right before dinner."

A knowledge of what is right creates the obligation to discharge the duty involved in it. Moses failed to circumcise his son. God threatened his life for his omission. Many hear but seldom heed. They are practical atheists. Christians who believe there is a God, but behave as if there is no God. For example, atheists do not pray to God because they do not believe He exists. Christians do not pray to God who they believe does exist. What is the difference? Think about it: if you were on a plane that was going down, both you and the atheist would start praying. We know it is good to pray to God at all times and not just in bad times. Samuel said, *"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way"* (1 Sam. 12:23).

By Knowing of Needs Without Helping

In several passages, Christians are commanded to do good to others in need.

- Heb. 13:16 - *But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*
- Gal. 6:10 - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of*

the household of faith.

- 1 Jn. 3:18 - *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus told a story about a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. *"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side"* (Luke 10:31,32). Surely, the priest and the Levite sinned in their failure to render aid. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Lord says to the goats, *"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41). Why? Had they committed murder, adultery, robbery or some other such sin? Christ explained, *"for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me"* (Matt. 25:42,43). So it is for Christians who rail against abortion, but don't do anything to help moms in crisis pregnancies. They condemn those getting divorced, but do nothing to strengthen their marriages. They abhor the homosexual lifestyle, but do nothing to lead them out of sin.

□ **By Knowing Your Abilities Without Serving**

One day Jesus was hungry, *"And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. And when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it.... Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away'"* (Matt. 11:13,14,20,21). Now, the order of the Palestinian fig is first it puts forth fruit and then comes the leaves. This tree had leaves. Therefore, the assumption was that fruit was there also. On observing that the leaves were mere pretense, Jesus pronounced the curse upon it. The lesson is clear. We must not make a mere pretense of being a Christian. We must bear fruit that shows we are Christians.

Jesus taught a similar lesson in the Parable of the barren fig tree, *"He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down'"* (Luke 13:6-9). This barren tree required space, moisture, fertilizer, time and labor just like all the other trees, but it bore no fruit. What about those who could serve but don't? They could and should be elders or deacons, song leaders and teachers, but they just take up space in the pew without anything more to do.

□ **By Knowing the Truth Without Telling**

It has been said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." In Nazi Germany, nothing could have explained it better. Good men and women were silent and did nothing while millions were slaughtered. Many knew the truth but were too afraid to speak up.

The prophet Jonah was called by God to preach to Nineveh. Instead, he attempted to flee to Tarshish, which was directly in the opposite direction. God found a way to turn him around. Jonah preached the truth and there was a great repentance.

God cautioned Ezekiel not to fail to warn the wicked, *"When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul"* (Ezek. 3:18,19).

How would you feel about a neighbor that would not wake you up to the fact that your house is on fire? What would you think about a doctor who knew you had cancer but failed to warn you about the danger? How should God respond to those who fail to warn man of the dangers of sin and the fires of hell?

□ **By Knowing the Truth Without Obeying**

God was sorry He made Saul king, because Saul omitted what was commanded: *"I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.' And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night"* (1 Sam. 15:11).

Everyone who ultimately misses Heaven does so because of a sin of omission. *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (Jn. 3:18). The sin of not believing (Mark. 16:16).

Conclusion

Sam Jones was a preacher who held revival services, which he called "quittin" meetings. His preaching was directed primarily to Christians, and he urged them to give up the sinful practices in their lives. Sam's messages were very effective, and many people promised to quit swearing, drinking, smoking, lying, gossiping, or anything else that was offensive to the Lord. On one occasion, Jones asked a woman, "Just what is it that you're quittin"? She replied, "I'm guilty of not doing something -- and I'm going to quit doing that too!" Even though she had no bad habits to give up, she wasn't actively living to please God. (Our Daily Bread, September 6, 1992).

If you have been doing nothing, it is time to quit it.

Questions:

1. Can someone sin by doing nothing? Explain.
2. List some things Christians failed to do and thus sin against the commandments of God.
3. Why is doing good deeds so important in the Christian life?
4. What was the result of the Israelites failure to do as God commanded in Deuteronomy chapter one?
5. "Faith without works is _____."
6. True False The greater the knowledge the greater the responsibility.
7. What are some of the failures resulting in condemnation in Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:41-46?
8. How did Samuel sin against the Lord?

9. Did the Priest and Levite sin by not helping the man in need in the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Explain.
10. Why did Jesus condemn the fig tree (Matt. 11:13ff)? How does that relate to Christians today?
11. What was to happen to the barren fig tree in the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)?
12. How did Jonah react to his charge to preach to Nineveh?
13. What will become of those whose duty it is to warn others of their sin and yet they will not warn them?
14. Why was God sorry He had made Saul king?

Application and Discussion:

15. List some things you have not been doing.
16. List some things you can do to help you get starts with those neglected duties listed above.

Homework: Stop procrastinating.

Just One Little Sin

People typically understate the danger and damage of sin. They will say such things as, "it was just a little white lie" of "but we're in love and plan to get married" or "that huge department store chain will never miss this" or "they have insurance." Others today are defending their evil actions by arguing, "God is too merciful," and "just one little sin is not going to send you to hell."

It is quite easy to recognize that sins in abundance are destructive. The abundant sinfulness of the antediluvian world led to God's decision to destroy mankind (Genesis 6:5-7). The "*exceeding wickedness*" of the people of Sodom brought about the destruction of the city (Genesis 3:13; 18:20). The many backslidings and iniquities of the Israelites testified against. This resulted in Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 14:7).

But what harm is there in just one little sin?

Just one little sin, what harm can it do:

But give it free rein and soon there are two,

And then sinful deeds and habits ensue;

So guard well your acts, or they'll enslave you

– DJD

One Sin Sinners

● **Adam and Eve**

The transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden was not to be overlooked by God as "just one little sin." The first act of disobedience by man in the Bible occurred in Genesis 3. God had forewarned Adam that on the day he would eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die (Gen. 2:17). Satan was the first to minimize the danger of sin. When tempting Eve, he assured her that she would not die as God had said. In fact, Satan not only accused God of lying but suggested Eve would benefit greatly from eating the forbidden fruit. This one "little" sin cost the first couple the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-23).

● **Lot's Wife**

Jesus warned, "*Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it*" (Luke 17:32,33). Lot and his family were led away from the city of Sodom before it was to be destroyed and warned not to look back. Lot's wife looked back one time and was and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26).

● **Man Gathering Sticks on Sabbath**

One of the ten commandments was to remember the Sabbath Day. Israelites were to regard it as holy unto the Lord by not working. A man violated it by gathering up sticks. As punishment for this one time sin he was put to death by stoning with the sentence given by God Himself with all the congregation as executioners (Numbers 15).

● **Nadab and Abihu**

The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were fired by God for failure to do their jobs as priest. They used "strange" fire to burn incense in the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:1-3). God sent fire from heaven to devour them. The sons of Aaron had the right incense, the proper desire, they were the right men, in the right place, at the right time, with the right utensils, but there was one thing wrong: the strange fire which the Lord commanded them not. Their father held his peace, because he understood the seriousness of one sin.

- **Achan**

Achan greed acknowledges the fact that one sin in the camp can cause victory to be withheld, till sin is properly punished (Joshua 7). He took things from Jericho which God had forbade. The Israelites were defeated at Ai as a result. Later the people were reminded, *“did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity”* (Josh. 22:20).

- **Uzzah**

For years the Ark of the Covenant had been a capture trophy from Israel and held by the Philistines. David desired to bring the ark of God into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-2). The ark was placed upon a cart pulled by oxen (2 Sam. 6:3). *“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled”* (2 Sam. 6:6). It appears that Uzzah was only trying to help. His actions were genuine and well-intended. Touching the ark, however, was a violation of God’s will. Only certain Levites were to transport the ark using poles (Num. 4:15). Uzzah only touched the ark once, but the result was immediate death.

- **David & Bathsheba**

As far as we know David committed adultery only once with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:4). However, the sin led to the death of her husband. As punishment their was the death of the baby. It did not stop there, but the horrifying consequences of the one-night stand would lead to the death of three more of David’s sons. David was not about to argue with Nathan that it was just one little sin. Nathan rebuked David, *“why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon”* (2 Sam. 12:9).

- **Ananias and Sapphira**

Even in the New Testament one can clearly see the danger and damage of one little sin. A Christian couple by the name of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Lied to Peter about the amount of money they were putting into the church treasury. Peter gave each one an opportunity to repent. First, Ananias continued to hold to the lie and as a result he died. Next, his wife did the same. Great fear came upon the church over the consequence of one little lie.

- **Simon**

When Philip brought the Gospel to the Samaria many were saved. A sorcerer by the name of Simon was baptized. However, his desire to purchase the duty of an apostle’s of laying on of hands to depart gifts from the Holy Spirit, he was severely rebuked by Peter. Peter did not pass this request from Simon off as a little sin. *“But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity”* (Acts 8:20-23).

So the next time you are tempted to think one little sin is not that big a deal, remember what these Bible examples teach about the danger and damage that one sin can bring. Just one little bite cost Adam and Eve paradise. Just a little bit strange fire caused Nadab and Abihu to be fired by God. Just one little touch of the ark killed Uzzah. A one-night stand with Bathsheba result in the deaths of four of David’s sons. Just one lie ended in the deaths Ananias and Sapphira. Do not let one little sin keep you from eternity in Heaven. Repent today of that sin.

Just How BIG is One little Sin?

- ◆ **One Sin Makes One a Sinner**

The Law of Moses states, *“If a man strikes someone with an iron object so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death”* (Num 35:16) A single act of murder makes a person a murderer. Again, *“if a man commits adultery with another man’s wife - with the wife of his neighbor - both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death”* (Lev 20:10). How many times? Just once is enough

to be guilty of adultery. Likewise, "just one little sin" makes one a sinner. *"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all"* (James. 2:10). A criminal does not need to break all the laws in order to find himself in jail, one violation can lead to punishment.

◆ **One Sin Cannot Be Nullified by Good Deeds**

Let us say a man murders one person, but later saves the lives of 2000 on a ship. Does the man's saving of many absolve him of the one murder? One is not saved from sin based upon whether his good deeds outnumber his bad deeds. One is saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10).

◆ **One Sin Brings Judgment**

Paul wrote, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). And Jesus said, *"but I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matt. 12:36,37). Not only will a man be judged for every sinful deed and every evil word, but even for every little ungodly thought. Again Jesus said, *"but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:22).

◆ **One Little Sin is Serious**

One little sin is serious because every single sin brings death or separation from God. *"Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"* (James 1:15). Some will argue, "God will not damn a soul to hell for just one little drink." He kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden for just one little bite. Sin, big or small, few or many, still offends God who is Holy. The actions of one man can lead to the downfall of many. *"For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord"* (2 Chr. 28:19).

Once a sailor was cleaning the ship compass. The tip of the blade broke off and fell into the case. He thought it was just a small piece and would not make a difference. That piece of metal influenced the compass which was used to set the course of the ship and caused it crash into the rocks at the cost of many lives. Sin can shipwreck the faith of many.

◆ **One Little Sin is to Be Avoided**

John wrote his epistle to the saints, *"that you may not sin"* (1 Jn. 2:1). "The aorist, or point, tense in 'that ye may not sin' shows that each act of sin is to be avoided" (W. E. Vine, *The Epistles of John*, p. 20). Sin is serious enough it must be avoided. We are to *"abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good"* (Rom. 12:9). It is our duty to *"test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22).

Proper Response to Little Sins

▶ **Reject the Easy Way Out**

Perhaps some are motivated to commit just one little sin and minimize its consequences, because they are looking for a easy way out of a situation. Suppose they are at a party. Instead of just saying "no" to drugs or alcohol, it is easier to give into peer pressure. Instead of getting up and going to church, it is easy to pass off one's laziness by telling yourself that God will not miss you at worship services or Bible Study.

If anyone had a good excuse to take the easy way out of a tough situation, it would have been Daniel's three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. King Nebuchadnezzar had built a large image of gold and commanded all to bow down in worship when the music began. Daniel's friends refused. The king gave these three a second chance to avoid being burned alive. They would not yield to the pressure, "but answered and said to the king, *"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up"* (Dan. 3:16-18). Would you commit one little sin of idolatry to avoid a "burning fiery furnace?"

▶ **Remember, the Real Issue is Relationship**

The real question is not whether we will go to hell for just “a one night stand,” but whether we love our spouse and our God who created marriage. The real question is not whether we will go to hell for just one little white lie, but whether we love the truth. The real question is not whether we will go to hell for just one little sin, but whether we love God. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:3).

▶ **Repent and Be Reconciled**

Brother, you are guilty of “just one little sin”: you are a sinner; you stand condemned for that sin before God and you need to confess and repent of that sin. If sin stains your soul, apply the remedy instead of looking for an excuse. To have forgiveness for that “one little sin” through the blood of Christ, we must confess our sins and comply with the conditions of pardon. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8,9).

So, will God condemn a sinner for just that one little sin he commits? What if he commits this sin just moments before he dies and is not given a chance to repent? *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). Do you really think God wants a person to lose their soul? He wants to give every sinner a chance to repent.

▶ **Redemption For All**

Jesus came down from Heaven to save sinners. He had to live a sinless life. If He committed just one sin He could not have die for our sins. He could only have died because of His sin. When Jesus was tempted by Satan He did not rationalize and give into sin by saying: “Well, it is just one little stone turned into a piece of bread” or “what is one little jump of the Temple” or “just one time I can bow to Satan and have all the kingdoms of the world.” Jesus did not believe in one little sin. If he had committed just one little sin, you and I would still be in our sins and so would everyone else to this very day.

Conclusion

There is no such thing as: “one little sin.” There is not such thing as: “one little sacrifice for sin.” There is no such thing as: “one little soul lost in sin.”

Questions:

1. How do people defend one little sin?
2. What was Adam and Eve's one little sin? What were the consequences?
3. What was Lot's wife's one little sin? What was the result? How did it set up her daughters for sin?
4. What happened to the man who was simply gathering up sticks on the Sabbath? Why?

5. What was Nadab and Abihu's one little sin? What did God do about it? Why?
6. What were the consequences of Achan's sin?
7. What was Uzzah's motive for touching the ark? Whose sin set up this disaster?
8. What were the consequences of David's one-night stand with Bathesheba?
9. What did Ananias and Sapphira's little white lie result in?
10. What was Simon told to do about his sin and why?
11. How many sins does it take to make one a sinner?
12. How many good deeds or motives does it take to erase one sin?
13. What will be brought before God in Judgment?
14. What is the end result of all sin?
15. How can one avoid these "one little" sins?

16. How did Daniel's three friends reject the easy way out of the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar?

17. What should one do with their "one little" sin?

Application and Discussion:

18. In what ways are all sins equal?

19. What are some of the most common "little" sins in your life?

Homework: Find those "little" sins in your life and repent.

Breaking Sinful Habits

A woman had four husbands. She divorced all of them because they turned out to be drunks and womanizers. How did she end up with four such men? She met them at a bar on ladies' night.

A drunk wants to get off the bottle. Yet he continues to visit with his same drinking buddies at the local bar. He is perplexed by his inability to stay sober.

A young man has problems with temptations of a sexual nature. He watches R-rated movies with nudity. Then he looks at magazines with immodest pictures. He ogles girls jogging down the sidewalk and also goes to the beach where he is around half-naked women. He spends time alone in his girlfriend's apartment. This young man wants to change and stop fornicating, but he cannot figure out how to flee fornication.

A family cannot seem to get up and attend morning worship, even though they know they should. Yet, they spend Saturday nights staying out late at Six Flags, the movies, watching TV, going to a ball game and generally staying up too late.

A couple has problems with saving money. They want to save, give and spend it wisely, but they find themselves constantly in debt. Several credit cards are maxed out. If they see something they want, they buy it. They will not save up for anything. They think they have to have the newest and best of everything. If their neighbors, friends or co-workers have it, they have to have it too.

A good sister sincerely wants to study the Bible more. "I sure wish I knew the Bible like old brother so and so." When it comes to Bible classes at church, she never prepares. When it comes to the preaching of the sermon, she never follows along in her Bible or even listens to the lesson. She reads novels and the newspaper. She watches TV and stays on-line until the late hours of the night. For some strange reason she just cannot increase her Bible knowledge.

A preacher has a strong desire to become a soul winner. He believes that he can help lead many of his friends and co-workers to the Lord. He has yet to even set up a Bible study. This preacher talks with people about sports, politics and his work, but he never finds time to bring up the subject of Christ.

From the reader's perspective there are no real surprising outcomes in the above examples. The biggest problem with making a change in life is to start changing the little things that will make a difference. No one should expect to get different results by doing that same things the same way they always have. So life is like Mark Twain who said, "To cease smoking is the easiest thing I ever did. I ought to know because I've done it a 1000 times."

The Bible is filled with similar examples of those who had difficulty making changes. The children of Israel for centuries had a problem with idolatry. From the golden calf through the period of the Judges with the two calves of Jereboam and the Baal worship of Ahab and Jezebel they struggled with graven images. Their struggle with sin did not end until God sent the ten tribes into Assyrian captivity in 722 BC and the Judah into Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. When the remnant returned to the promised land they never had a problem with idol worship again.

While being led through the wilderness by Moses the Israelites had a problem with murmuring. They complained and grumbled until that entire generation died in the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Samson, one of the judges of Israel, constantly had a problem with sin. The divinely mandated Nazarite vow demanded he not cut his hair. Samson was a He-man with some trouble. He was strong enough to defeat hundreds of Philistine soldiers, but he was unable to withstand his lust for a Philistine woman.

To help Israel come to repentance God sent a multitude of prophets. One by one they killed them.

Stephen told them, *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it"* (Acts 7:51-53). Even with this stern rebuke they were unable to change. Instead, they took Stephen out and stoned him to death.

Habits can either be good or bad. It seems that good habits are hard to make and easy to break. While bad habits are easy to fall into and most difficult to break. Someone has well said, "Good habits are like good porcelain and as easily broken. Bad habits are as indestructible as coarse crockery." Therefore, we need help in breaking the bad and establishing the good. The following points are part of the series of things a Christian can do to assist him in making good habits and breaking bad habits.

Before investigating these procedures we would do well in consider the definition of "habit". The word "habit" comes from a Latin verb that means "to have." Which indicates that habits - have us. So, it may be more appropriate to say that "a bad habit has me" instead of saying "I have a bad habit." Webster defines "habit" as "Custom or practice; especially an aptitude or inclination for some action, acquired by repetition and showing itself in facility of performance or in decreased power of resistance; as, the opium habit."

✂ **Recognize the Danger of Bad Habits**

Samuel Johnson wrote, "The chains of a habit are generally too small to be felt, until they are too strong to be broken." Bad habits demand little time or training and are produced in such a refined way that they become matters of everyday life with ease. Worse, they can cost us the race for eternal life weighing us down and entangling us so we cannot finish the race. *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"* (Heb. 12:1).

✂ **Recognize the Blessings of Good Habits**

A practical joker, one day saw a man who had spent years in the army, going home from the store. He was an aged man who had been for some years out of the army. When the joker suddenly called out, "Attention!" the former soldier stopped, and as his arms snapped to his sides the bundles he was carrying fell to the ground. His military training had been so thorough it had become a second nature to him.

Habits will make or break us! Learning to begin good habits is the key to solving spiritual lethargy. Bible study, prayer, visiting our brethren and talking to others about Jesus as good habits can take their place. As Paul told the Ephesian church, *"that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"* (Eph. 4:22-24). Changing your life from the world to Christ means changing your habits, breaking the old ones making new ones.

✂ **Resolve to Change Today**

Joshua didn't have the children of Israel make changes next week or next year, he said, *"and if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Josh. 24:14). When the Gospel was present to the lost in the book of Acts they were not told to wait a month or a week or even a day to be baptized. The Pentecostians, the Ethiopian, Cornelius and his household, Lydia and her household, the Jailor and his household, etc. all obeyed the Gospel immediately. To change one's life demands immediate action.

✂ **Form a Plan of Action**

Put your habits to the test. Find out which ones need to go and which ones you need to hang on to. *"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* (I Th. 5:21,22). Make it easy to start the new, and difficult to return to the old way of life. *"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no*

provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14). Good habits must be planned.

✂ **Self-examination**

What you habitually do becomes the new you. If you drink you are a drunkard. If you are promiscuous then you are a fornicator. Our habits need checking on a regular basis. Daily spiritual exams will help us break these habits before they can take root in our lives. *"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-- unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5).* This will also help us strengthen and initiate good habits.

Remember, removing bad habits is like pulling weeds in the garden. If you pull them up when they are young it is easy. Wait until the weeds have well rooted themselves in the soil and you will have a much harder task. Furthermore, when you finally do pull them out it will cause a great deal of damage to the rest of plants in the garden. In contrast, good plants take more time and have more easily threatened by the weeds. Daily examination and week (bad habit) pull is essential.

✂ **Seize Immediate Opportunities**

Successful people resolve to act upon a good idea at the first possible moment. Ananias told Paul to seize the opportunity to be saved. *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).*

Others fool themselves into the believing that the good intentions are enough. They say, "Yes but..." Remember, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

It is never too late to change habits. The old saying: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" does not apply to Christians. Why do you not attend on Wednesday night? Is it not because you simply have not cultivated the habit? Yet, how can we develop the habit of faithful attendance? By doing it, that's how! Not just acknowledging that we need to do it, or by deciding that we are going to, but by doing it.

✂ **Develop a Strong Desire to Change**

Socrates told a young man, whose head he had held under water, that when he wanted knowledge as badly as he wanted air when his head was under the water he would become a learned man. If you want to break or make a habit bad enough you will find a way. We can only change with resolve and strong action. A girl in Bowling Green, Kentucky who threw away her entire ungodly wardrobe after finding the Lord illustrates this point. We choose our own fashion, pattern of thought, mode of speech, etc. Man's legacy is his freedom of choice. Joshua encouraged the Israelites to recognize the great power of choice to initiate change. *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15).*

✂ **Go Through a Mental Metamorphosis**

A boy once noticed a moth struggling to emerge from its cocoon. He felt the need to show mercy and help it. So he took a pair of scissors and carefully cut open the cocoon so the moth could come out with ease. However, the moth seem swollen and lethargic. It could not fly and within twenty-four hours it was dead. The moth needs to struggle through the small opening in the cocoon. By doing so the fluids were squeezed out of its wings allowing it to fly.

To change a carnal man into a spiritual man requires struggle. Paul wrote, *"that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).* This is not accomplished by being like every one else, but by being *"transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).* This transformation is the metamorphosis of the Christian. He has a new manager in his heart, he has a new family, he has a new citizenship in a new kingdom, he has a new King, he has new riches laid up in heaven, he has a new name, etc.

✂ **Stick to Your Commitment**

The idea that many have is "I'll do it little by little," is fine and necessary in setting goals, but not in breaking habits. Reminds me of the boy who wanted his puppy to grow up with a short tail. He said he was

going to do it himself. His father said to would hurt the pup. "No it will not. I am only going to cut it off an inch at a time." Cutting off your bad habits a little bit at a time will not work:

Drop the "H" and you still have "a bit".
Drop the "A" and you still have "bit".
Drop the "B" and you will have "it".
Drop the "I" and you still have "t",
and that stands for the "thing" itself

The best way to break a habit is to drop it. Renown psychologist William James suggests, "Make engagements incompatible with the old way, take a public pledge, if the case allows; in short, envelop your resolution with every aid you know." The first days are arduous then it gets easier. "It takes a lot of effort to get the water flowing through the pump, but very little effort to keep it flowing out steadily."

The new converts of Ephesus knew the value of destroying their habits and all that was associated with them by destroying them altogether. *"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"* (Acts 19:18-20). In contrast Mark Twain said, "To quit tobacco habit is the easiest thing in the world to do, I ought to know, for I've done so a thousand times".

✂ **Stop Procrastinating!**

A congregation had a problems with several members who were always ten to fifteen minutes late for services. The elders came up with a plan to solve the tardiness. All they needed to do was to start services fifteen minutes later. They soon found out that the problem could not be resolved. The tardy members were still ten to fifteen minutes late to services. You see procrastination is not about having more time, but having the right attitude about the use of time.

Procrastinators keep planning to make plans to change, yet never mature beyond the planning stage. God is more concerned with what we are doing with the present and not the thousand fancy fairy tales we have planned for tomorrow. Planning is important, but mere planning never got the job done. *"So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom"* (Psalm 90:12).

✂ **Make it a Daily Discipline**

Habits are dependent on repetition for survival. Success reinforces success, failure reinforces failure. 1 Corinthians 9:27 talks of this exercise: *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified"*.

Just as the west Texas cowboy had to "break" the horses by showing them who was really the boss, even so we must "break" our bad habits by showing them that we are greater than are they. If we don't master them they will master us. *"...for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage"* (2 Peter 2:19).

✂ **Pray for God's Help**

Paul commanded the Philippian, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ... I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:6,13). Christians have found by experience that the power of Christ is stronger than any earthly habit. Only with the help and power of God can we break the bad habits and form good habits. Many refuse to obey the Gospel or return to the Lord because they want to break their bad habits first. However, if one could do so without Christ than who needs Christ. No habit is too strong for Christ to break or too difficult for Him to cultivate in our hearts.

✂ **Desire and Accept Help**

Some habits require extra special assistance, such as, smoking or drinking or speeding. Part of Christian maturity is learning when to ask for help and accept the help offered. We need one another in order to accomplish our responsibilities. *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

Remember your habits determine who you are and more importantly where you will spend eternity. Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a life. Sow a life, reap a destiny.

Questions:

1. What bad habit plagues the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings?
2. What bad habit let Samson into sinful situations and the violation of his vows?
3. True False Bad habits are easy to break and good habits are easy to create.
4. What is a "habit"?
5. What are the dangers of bad habits?
6. What are the blessings of good habits?
7. When is the best time to start breaking bad habits and forming good ones?
8. What role does self-examination play in break and making habits?
9. List some Bible character who seized the opportunities to change.
10. What is mental metamorphosis?
11. What is the best way to defeat procrastination?

12. Besides God who in your life could help you with your changing of bad habits to good?

Application and Discussion:

13. Make a prayer list of your habits to break and make. Pray about them daily.

14. Make of list of your bad habits you need to break and beside the good habits which need to take their place in your life.

15. What are some things you can do to help you sit to your commitment to change your habits?

Homework: This week replace a bad habit with a good habit.