

A Day in the Life of a Christian



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Teen Class - Spring Quarter 2024

by Daniel R. Vess

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: Disciples' Daily Duties	5
<i>Sunday, April 7, 2024</i>	
Lesson 2: Some Days are Gray	11
<i>Sunday, April 14, 2024</i>	
Lesson 3: Something to Wear: Modest	18
<i>Sunday, April 21, 2024</i>	
Lesson 4: Somewhere to Be: Work	25
<i>Sunday, April 28, 2024</i>	
Lesson 5: Something to Listen to: Gossip & Music	30
<i>Sunday, May 5, 2024</i>	
Lesson 6: Something to Say: Conversations	35
<i>Sunday, May 12, 2024</i>	
Lesson 7: Something to Do: Habits	40
<i>Sunday, May 19, 2024</i>	
Lesson 8: Something to Watch: TV	44
<i>Sunday, May 26, 2024</i>	
Lesson 9: Something to Read: Bible	49
<i>Sunday, June 2, 2024</i>	
Lesson 10: Somethnig to Share: the Gospel	55
<i>Sunday, June 9, 2024</i>	
Lesson 11: Someone to Love: Marriage	62
<i>Sunday, June 16, 2024</i>	
Lesson 12: Something to Buy: Toys, Tools or Treasures	68
<i>Sunday, June 23, 2024</i>	
Lesson 13: Some Things to Avoid: Anger, Anxiety, Procrastination	74
<i>Sunday, June 30, 2024</i>	

Disciples' Daily Duties

If you are an average adult of average height and weight there are several things your body must accomplish every twenty-four hours:

- Your heart beats 103,689 times
- Your blood travels 168,000,000 miles
- You breathe 23,040 times
- You inhale 438 cubic feet of air.
- You eat 3.25 pounds of food
- You drink 2.9 quarts of liquids
- You speak 4,800 words, including some unnecessary ones
- You move 750 muscles
- You exercise 7,000,000 brain cells.

No wonder men and women feel tired just existing day to day. However, you cannot take a day off. If you didn't do these things every day you would die.

Disciples Daily Duties:

Just as one must daily do these things physically, there are some things we must do daily for our souls or we will die spiritually. Being a disciple of Jesus demands doing daily duties. Someone has well said, "the problem with the Christian life is that it is so daily." There are many things we take time to do daily: shave, brush teeth, put on deodorant, read newspaper etc. What are those things which a Christians must perform every day?

► **Daily Performance of Vows**

When couples have problems with their marriage. Preachers and counselors have been known to advise them to repeat their vows to each other daily for a week or two. Well, I told my wife that we might give this a try and she said it would be kind of hard since we wrote our own and gave them from memory. I said I could remember mine from way back in grade school: A,E,I,O,U. She said that those are not the vows she had in mind but she really like the last three vowels: I.O.U.

In a marriage relationship there are daily duties to perform. The Christian's relationship with God requires them to perform their duties to God. F. Lagard Smith wrote a book entitled: *Baptism: the believer's marriage ceremony*. As a Christian you gave your promise to God when you were baptized. The Psalmist wrote, "so I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows" (Ps. 61:8). "The Christian life is like an airplane -- when you stop you drop."

► **Daily Praise**

For their 10th wedding anniversary, Danielle LeFeuvre of Toulouse, France brought her husband a throne, a crown, and a sceptre. "All of this talk about women's liberation and domination got him down," she explained. "He's a new man now that he knows the children and I consider him a king and master in his own home."

Praising God is to tell Him and the world He Is KING. Some reproach God daily. "Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily" (Ps. 74:22). In contrast some praise God every day. "And He shall live; and the gold of Sheba will be given to Him; prayer also will be made for Him continually, and daily He shall be praised" (Ps. 72:15). "Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:164). This praise will turn into eternal

praise of God. *"I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever"* (Ps. 145:1,2). If you cannot stand praising God daily here you will not enjoy Heaven.

▶ **Daily Prayer**

Psalmist prayed daily for help in affliction, *"My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You"* (Ps. 88:9). Daniel Prayer Three Times a Day (Dan. 6:13). Prayer for daily bread requires daily prayers (Matt. 6:11). Paul's daily concerns for the churches caused him to pray daily for them (2 Cor. 11:28). Since we have daily benefits for God daily prayers of thanksgiving are needed. *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah"* (Ps. 68:19). As a believer said to an atheist, "God is not Dead, I spoke with Him this morning".

▶ **Daily Evangelism**

The disciples suffered persecution for preaching Christ, but instead of giving up *"daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (Ac. 5:42). Daily evangelism equals daily growth. *"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily"* (Ac. 16:5). Consider Paul's daily debates on the Truth. *"Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there"* (Ac. 17:17). *"But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus"* (Ac. 19:9). Bailey Smith said, "we on the inside of the Church need to endure some inconvenience in order that those on the outside can hear the gospel."

▶ **Daily Exhortation**

The Hebrew writer urged *"but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Heb. 3:13). The first Christians started off with daily encouragement. *"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:46,47). So, call, write or visit one Christian each day. In college my friend Jorge told me of his summer working with the brethren in Mexico City. They did not take naps in the afternoon instead they gathered each day for Bible Study.

▶ **Daily Self-Denial**

Jesus demanded of His disciples, *"if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23). Dying to self every day is essential if one is to live for Christ. Paul spoke of his daily death. *"And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily"* (1 Cor. 15:30,31).

All these daily duties are performed in preparation for one very special day - The Day of the Lord.

All our days are focused on one day in the future. When Jesus comes again. Chinese proverb: "To be for one day entirely at leisure is to be for one day an immortal". One day we will be immortal and rest from all our labors (Rev. 14:13). The way you live daily will determine where you live in eternity.

How A Christian Should Start the Day

A Morning Poem:

I woke early one morning,
The earth lay cool and still,
When suddenly a tiny bird,
Perched on my window sill,
He sang a song so lovely,
So carefree and so gay,

That slowly all my troubles,
 Began to slip away,
He sang of far off places,
 Of laughter and of fun.
I stirred beneath the covers,
 Crept slowly out of bed,
Then gently shut the window,
 And crushed his little head,
I'm not a morning person.

– Unknown

If you are like me, the poetry above may represent you as well. I am not much of a morning person. If you ask me, if the good Lord wanted us to enjoy sunrises they would have come at nine o'clock in the morning. However, having a good morning is the only real way to start the day.

✓ **Raise Early**

In contrast, the Bible is filled with evidence that successful men of God arose early in the morning. Abraham rose early to worship the Lord. *“So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him”* (Gen. 22:3). Jacob rose early to worship the Lord (Gen. 28:18). Moses rose early to serve the Lord: *“And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh”* (Ex. 8:20). And Joshua rose early to worship the Lord. David rose early to worship the Lord (Ps. 5:3). Job rose early to worship the Lord (Job 1:5). And Isaiah rose early. Daniel rose early. The apostles rose early. The women who came to the empty tomb of Jesus arose early (Mark 16:1,2). Even Jesus rose early to worship the Lord and spend time in prayer and study. *“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed”* (Mark 1:35).

Don't misconstrue the point being made here. Getting up early does not make you righteous. We can find other examples of the righteous staying up late and even sleeping in all day at God's command. The wicked can rise just as early to do their deeds. The selfish can rise early to do whatever they please. Many Christians are guilty of giving God only what is left over after a hard day's work.

Most people who have jobs that require them to be there at a certain time do not give a second thought about arising early to start the day. Getting up is just the first part of their every day morning routine. If it wasn't, they would be taking their shower and getting dressed while still in bed. A cup of coffee, and rush to shower and get ready for work. Then the kids have to be awakened, dressed, and fed. Once all is gathered, the children are loaded up, taken to school or day care, and then there's the rush to daily employment. Life has become a routine.

✓ **Awake**

Christians need to rise early, so they can have a spiritual routine. In fact, our soul's salvation may just depend upon a daily spiritual routine. *“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed”* (Rom. 13:11). Christ is the morning light that will shine on us: *“Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light’”* (Eph. 5:14). So, the first part of your daily morning routine is to AWAKE! Just because you are awake physically does not mean you are awake spiritually.

✓ **Smile**

There is no better way to start your day than with a smile. *“Sometimes I wake up grumpy; most of the time I just let her sleep in.”* The fact is, when I awake in the morning, I often repeat this Psalm 118:24 in my mind, *“This is the day which the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”* No matter how bad it was yesterday, today is a new day. *“Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning”* (Ps. 30:5). So wake up with a smile and a positive, happy attitude.

✓ **Get Clean**

Remember how your spiritual life began. Your filthy sins of yesterday were washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16). Start off the day with a clean slate. Remember your shortcomings of the day before, and turn from them. Confess your sins to God, and pray for cleansing. *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

✓ **Get Dressed**

All of us get dressed for the day. What we are determines how we dress. For example, fireman, policeman, carpenter, lawyer, preacher, plumber, etc. all will dress according to the profession. Christians are Soldiers and must put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17). A good soldier does not arrive late at the battlefield in his pajamas in bare feet waving a toothbrush around and throwing an alarm clock. The enemy is not going to be beaten back by such an attack. Although, they might laugh themselves to death. How successful can a Soldier of Christ be if he crawls out of bed half-naked and unarmed? Here is what you do before your feet hit the floor: mentally dress your soul for battle by putting on the Belt of Truth, then the Breastplate of Righteousness; next the feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; after this the Shield of Faith; next the Helmet of Salvation; and finally the Sword of the Spirit.

✓ **Eat**

Remember what they say, “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” Our morning devotions are just as vital. Jesus Himself had a habit of morning devotions with the Father. *“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed”* (Mark. 1:35). Toward the end of His life, *“early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him”* (Luke 21:38). We need a strong spiritual appetite (Mt. 5:6). A longing for God’s Word like a baby will cry out for his milk when he is hungry (1 Peter 2:2).

Take Daily Dose of Prescription

We have prescriptions for everything. Taking our daily doses of medicine is part of most American’s daily morning ritual. Some medicine is hard to take. Christians are told to take a daily dose of dying. *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”* (Luke 9:23). Paul wrote, *“I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily”* (1 Corinthians 15:31), and *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20). The only way you can possibly live for Christ everyday is to die to self daily. So, put self in the electric chair of self-denial and throw the switch first thing, every morning.

✓ **Go to Work**

Most people get up to go to work. God commanded His servants to get up and obey Him first thing in the morning. Abraham was to take Isaac and sacrifice him first thing in the morning. He was also told to be circumcised and to circumcise Ishmael and his servants first thing in the morning. The Battle of Jericho was to take place in the morning. David killed Goliath in the morning (1 Sam. 17:20). The Apostles *“entered the temple early in the morning and taught”* (Acts 5:21). Why get a good start at work in the morning? Jesus said, *“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4). Furthermore, we need to give our work everything we’ve got. *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going”* (Eccl. 9:10).

✓ **Talk to the Boss**

Before getting to work, many meet with the boss to talk about their work for the day. As Christians, we communicate with our Master through prayer. This must be done daily, because Christ commanded us to pray for our daily needs. *“Give us this day our daily bread”* (Matt. 6:11). Paul told us to *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Th. 5:17). According to the Psalms, it appears the Jews had morning prayers. *“My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up”* (Ps. 5:3). *“Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice”* (Ps. 55:17). *“But to You I have cried out, O Lord, And in the morning my prayer comes before You”* (Ps. 88:13).

A minister asked a little boy whether he prayed every day. "No, not every day," said the boy.

"There are some days I don't WANT anything!" Mature Christians understand that prayer is not just for what we want from God, but for help and an understanding of what He wants from us.

An artist was found creating a great mosaic with tens of thousands of pieces. He was asked how he ever hoped to finish such a monumental task. His reply, "One piece at a time." The billions of the world are to be reached one soul at a time. You will make the journey to Heaven one day at a time. Isn't it time to start a morning spiritual routine?

Questions:

1. True False It is too much to expect a Christian to perform daily spiritual task in their busy day to day schedule.
2. What promises or commitments did we make to God when we were baptized?
3. Why should we praise God daily?
4. Why should a Christian pray to God everyday?
5. How can a Christian share their faith daily?
6. Who should we exhort daily?
7. What is a Christian exhorted to take up daily in order to follow Christ?
8. List men in the Bible who arose early. What did they do?
9. What does it mean to be spiritually awake?
10. Why start the day with a smile?
11. How does a Christian get "cleaned up"?

12. What does the Christian put on each day?

13. List servants of God who did great deeds for Him in the morning.

Application & Discussion:

1. Explain why a Christian should not expect to be productive and effective in His Christian walk with God, if he does not start the day with prayer.

2. List some ways Christians can cultivate a spiritual appetite.

Homework: Begin this week to establish your own daily spiritual routine in the morning

Some Days are Gray

Do gospel sermons seem like tired, old reruns? Does your mind and your mouth switch to automatic pilot during hymns? Do you get a lot more excited about your favorite sports team than you are about being a disciple of Jesus? Do you find yourself criticizing the sermon and the song leader rather than searching for what you can learn from the services? Do those smiling, happy Christians get on your nerves? Are you just plain tired of the sometimes empty routine of Bible study, devotions, prayers, and ministry? If so, then you may be suffering from a common spiritual malady which we will call "Spiritual Burnout".

Many spiritual giants of the Bible have suffered spiritual burnout, such as, Moses, Jeremiah, and even Elijah. In I Kings 19:4 we learn of Elijah's burnout. *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers'"* Why was he so depressed? Had he committed some crime? No. He had simply declared the truth. He had done what was right - and what he got in return was death threats from the Queen of Israel. It hurt him deeply. Analogous to Elijah, nearly all of us experience times when our spiritual appetites diminish or when God seems distant and we are suffering from spiritual burnout.

Common Spiritual Extinguishers

Why do we suffer from burnout? There are several reasons for this. We will only be able to explore a couple of them in this tract.

→ **Running on Fumes**

The great prophet's desert depression was preceded by the Mt. Carmel triumph. Elijah had been on the mountain three days earlier, engaged in a remarkable confrontation with the pagan priests of Baal. This was the age of Ahab and Jezebel in which God judged the land with a "no rain" edict for three years. Elijah had challenged the priests to a duel of sorts, and he had scored a spectacular victory by the end of the day. An altar had been erected on the mountaintop. Two bulls were prepared for sacrifice: one for the Baal flock and one for Elijah.

It was suggested by Elijah that which ever god answered by sending fire to consume the sacrifice would be the victor. The Baal priest were to go first and take their best shot. Elijah cried out,

Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken." 25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it." 26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made. 27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. (I Kings 18:24-29).

What an absurd scene of sincere, grown men dancing, screaming, and cutting themselves in order to

gain the attention of their god. Yet their zeal was all in vain.

Next it was Elijah's turn. He repaired the long ignored altar of the Lord, set up the wood and the prepared animal, dug a ditch around it, and drenched the entire altar with water. Then he prayed.

"LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. 37 "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (vv. 36-39).

One man against a spiritually depraved nation, a powerful king and queen. God answered the prayer with force!

The next thing Elijah knew he was running for his very life. He had received death threats from Queen Jezebel who was upset at the humiliating defeat of her god at Mt. Carmel. Elijah was afraid, *"and when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there"* (v 3). He could have said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but your threats will never hurt my passion. Instead, he asked God that he might die, *"but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'"* (v. 4).

Was this the same man who performed valiantly on Mt. Carmel? He ran to Jezreel fuel short. He was had expended tremendous spiritual, mental physical, and emotional exertion. He was running on fumes. Elijah was depressed, ready to give up, to lie down and die. What he did, however was to lie down and sleep. More than anything else, Elijah needed some sleep and some good food, and it was provided. God knew just now to deal with the drained prophet.

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." 8 So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God (vv. 5-8).

Perhaps, our spiritual burnout is caused by over work or over commitment. Unfortunately we sometimes act and think as if we came from the planet Krypton - Super-Christians. We try to be spiritual men of steel. Yet remember, Elijah was a man of like passions as we. He needed God to send an angel to fix him breakfast twice and to tuck him in. Additionally, like a car, we only come equipped with gas tanks that will only hold so much. We cannot run on fumes forever. Soon you get no where as your car coughs, sputters and leaves you stranded and depressed by the side of the road. Remember, even Christ and his disciples needed re-"creation" in a deserted place. It would be nice if this were the only cause of burnout, but too few Christians work so hard that they are running on fumes.

→ **Unrealistic Expectations**

Having defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, Elijah may have thought his victory had demonstrated once and for all that the pagan idols were nothing. We also desire to make a difference for Christ in the lives of those around us. Yet when that vision fails to mesh with reality we too burnout. Years are passing, yet we see nothing happening. Burnout takes place when we feel that we are batting our heads against the wall day after day, year after year. When our dreams fail to materialize. However, we should keep them in proper perspective. No dream is going to unfold as smoothly as we have imagined. Remember, God has promised us success if we don't burnout. *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"* (Gal. 6:9).

→ **Unconfessed Sin**

Although Elijah's discouragement was not caused by his sinning, sin does remain the number one reason for spiritual burnout. Half-buried sin will do great harm. David knew this. In Ps. 139:23,24, he wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

David's desire was the difference between him and Saul. Both sinned and both confessed. Yet the similarity ends there. Saul confessed his sin hoping to retain a position of prominence. David lamented his sin because it was an offense to God. He saw sin for what it really was.

Ask yourself: Am I engaged in practices that dull my spiritual sensitivity? Am I harboring some unrepented sin in my life? Am I stubbornly hanging on to a vice instead of giving it up? If so, you will undoubtedly become depressed spiritually and/or you will harden in your sin.

→ **Repetitious Ritualism**

George MacDonald wrote, "Nothing is so deadening to the divine as a habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things." This is why Jesus was so hard on the Pharisees. Their religion was steeped in repetitious ritualism. For example, they had created an elaborate system of rules to keep them from breaking the Sabbath day laws. If their house caught fire on the Sabbath they could not put it out. Firefighting was considered work. Nor could they remove their belongings. That too would be considered a violation of the Sabbath. However, according to Pharisaic traditions one could wear several layers of clothing out of their burning home without sinning. Furthermore, if a Jew ate an egg laid on the Sabbath you would be a sinner. These Pharisees taught that the hen worked to lay the egg. The consumer of the egg therefore would be guilty via proxy. Undoubtedly tilling the ground was work. Spitting on the ground was thus considered work, because it would move the soil. When they condemned the disciples of Jesus for not keeping their tradition of washing one's hands before you eat, Jesus rebuked them saying, "*Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'*" (Mt. 15:7-9).

Do you attend church? You should. But perhaps, you need to rethink why you do. Is it merely a ritualistic habit or to worship God? Do you pray? You should, but not as a mere formality of your religion. Check to see if you've lost sight of the true goal of these activities. Disciplines that should breathe the very life of God into our lives can stiffen in rigor mortis if we lose sight of Christ Himself. We must meet with a Person, not a habit.

Reigniting After Burnout

How can I overcome spiritual burnout? There are many things which can help, let's consider a few.

✧ **Fire-Up Through Fellowship**

Israel encountered the hostile Amalekites who would not permit them to pass through the land on their way to Mt. Sinai. However, Moses had a plan (See Ex. 17:9-11). Joshua would go with the army of Israel into the valley to face Amalek. Moses went with his aides, Aaron and Hur, to the mountaintop to hold the rod, symbolizing God's power and authority. It was an interesting day of ups and downs as one army and then the other prevailed in battle. The Scriptures tell us that whenever Moses held his hands with the rod upward, the armies of Israel began to advance against Amalek. But when he dropped his arms, the battle turned against the Israelites. Finding a stone for Moses to sit on, Aaron and Hur stood on each side and held up his arms "*so that his hands were steady until the going down of the sun*" (v. 12). Israel easily won the battle.

When Moses' batteries were low and he was tired out, his special friends were just the energizers he needed to keep him going. We all need special friends to help us win the battles in our lives. Someone to hold up our hands. Even Elijah was later given Elisha. Moses was surrounded by friends, and together they accomplished what not one of them could have done alone.

Don't try to be a spiritual Lone Ranger. Our movies, television, and books focus on just such

heroes, overcoming tragedy without support from anyone, standing tall, solitary.

But real life works differently. We need each other. The Hebrew Christians were told to continue to attend for encouragement, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

One Sunday afternoon the preacher went to visit a gentlemen who had been absent from worship services for quite sometime. As he stepped into the erring brother's home he didn't say a word. They simply sat quietly by the fireplace watching the flowing embers. Then the preacher took the poker and pulled a hot glowing ember out of the fire onto the hearth. As that ember grew colder and darker the other embers were becoming hotter and brighter. At last, when the lone ember on the hearth was cold the preacher leaned over, picked it up with his bare hands. Upon being thrown back into the fire, the ember was soon growing hotter and brighter. The brother then turned to the preacher and said, "You need not say a single word sir. I get the message. I'll be at the services of the church tonight."

Why is it so important to go to church even when we are not in the mood? We draw strength from being with others. Each one present imparts energy to each other, and just like the Energizer Bunny and can keep on going and going and going...

Rekindle the Passion of the Past

Recall the excitement you experienced when you first committed yourself to that good news. The Hebrew writers reminded the early Christians of "the former days."

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward (Heb. 10:32-35).

Those were "the good old days," when they had first become Christians. Yet their early enthusiasm was waning. Some of his readers were not attending church services anymore. They had "*drooping hands*" and "*weak knees*" (Heb. 12:12). Christianity had turned out to be not a constant experience of excitement, but a long, difficult struggle. The Bible is a very realistic book. It does not ignore the fact that enthusiasm wanes and frustration sets in, even in the best of causes.

To keep the original passion alive and burning bright is not that difficult. It is all in the way you approach each day. Jesus said, "*therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*" (Mt. 6:34). Once there was a married couple who played the recording of their wedding service each year on their anniversary, this helped keep their love burning bright. Remember, this day is the first day of the rest of your life. If we take up our cross daily, we are renewed day by day. Or as the Psalmist wrote, "*this is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it*" (Psalm 118:24).

✧ **Burn Rubber**

When Elijah was suffering from burnout God just didn't let him retire altogether. He sent Him to anoint a new king over Israel, a new king over Syria, and appoint his successor.

Then the LORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 "Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 "It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 18 "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (I Kgs. 19:15-18).

Nothing helps keep one out of trouble like staying busy. Although a Christian is not to merely do good works, he is to be "*zealous for good works*" (Tit. 2:14). He is not to simply love his brethren, he is

to love them "fervently". *"not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"* (Rom. 12:11).

The Greek word for zeal is "zelos" meaning "to burn with zeal, to be heated, to boil..." (Thayer). Enthusiasm is unmistakable evidence that you are in love with your work. One large company told its employees that they can leave their brains at home and be forgiven, but if they leave their enthusiasm at home they are fired. Christ was in love with his work. He said, *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work"* (John 9:4). Nehemiah and the Jews finished the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. Why? Because they had a mind to work. We are to abound in our work for the Lord, *"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"* (I Cor. 15:58). Burn rubber in God's work and watch your spiritual passion reignite.

Conclusion

There is a positive side to Spiritual Burnout. It is a warning signal to the Christian to awake and rekindle their passion for their first love. Like a hot air balloon when the flame burns out we begin to drift down toward destruction. When the flame burns hot and bright we soar higher toward heaven and closer to God.

Every Christian and every congregation needs to work hard to revive its spiritual spark. "The story was told about the church house that was on fire and the preacher, the elders and a few members came to put out the fire. A man across the street also came to help. After the fire was out, one of the elders thanked the man and said, "I don't believe I've seen you before." The man replied, "No you haven't". "But why, you only live across the street". "Because this church has never been on fire before". Remember, spiritual zeal is contagious. There is nothing more impressive or attractive than a church full of Christians on fire for the Lord.

Tips For Reviving Your Spiritual Spark

- 1) Telephone and talk to a friend about it.
- 2) Read a biography of a faithful preacher.
- 3) Take a walk alone in a park or field and pray aloud to God.
- 4) Study a book of the Bible until you "own" it.
- 5) Set back and listen to a recording of Scriptures.
- 6) Go through and pick out our 10 favorite songs and study the words then jot down why they are your favorite.
- 7) Find someone with their own problems and lift their spirits.
- 8) Do a Bible study of a character you admire.
- 9) Keep a spiritual diary.
- 10) Memorize a chapter of the Bible.
- 11) Take notes during the sermon.
- 12) Figure the difference it would make to God's work if you gave God a pre-tax offering rather than a post-tax offering.
- 13) Do a word study throughout the Bible: Love, hope, etc.
- 14) Pray daily for someone you have problems liking.
- 15) Attend a gospel meeting in a small church far away.
- 16) Write lyrics to go with the music of a hymn. Sing it.
- 17) Memorize a piece of uplifting poetry.
- 18) Check out a religious book from the library.
- 19) Fast from a specific time. Pray during the time you would usually eat.
- 20) Share the gospel with someone.
- 21) After each chapter you read in the N.T., write a sentence summary of the chapter and a personal sentence on what that chapter said to you.
- 22) Draw a cross. Then list all your sins that come back to haunt you as dark memories and then in red ink write "Nailed to the Cross" then throw it away.

- 23) Write out a prayer to God.
- 24) Teach a class.
- 25) Do one act of kindness each day that you never expect to be thanked for.
- 26) Pray through the front pages of your newspaper and News.
- 27) Each day for a week write down how you'd day would have been different if you were not a Christian.
- 28) Know each book of the Bible well enough to state in one sentence what the book is about, and recite one key verse that captures for you what the book is saying.
- 29) Attend Bible Study Sunday morning and Wednesday.
- 30) 10,000 ideas won't work unless you are willing to commit the time. Do it! Today.

Questions:

1. What is "spiritual burnout"?
2. How great was Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal?
3. Why did Elijah run away to the desert?
4. What did he as God to do for him?
5. How did God response?
6. Was Elijah sinful in all this?
7. What is the leading cause of spiritual burnout?
8. What is repetitious ritualism and how does it lead to spiritual burnout?
9. In order for the Israelites to defeat the Amalekites what did Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and Hur have to do?

10. How can a Christian keep the passion He has for Christ when first baptized alive?

11. What three assignments did God give Elijah?

12. How were the Jews of Nehemiah's day able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in a mere fifty-two days?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some of you unrealistic expectations as a Christian? How can you overcome the discouragement this brings?

2. If spiritual zeal is contagious, who helps you reignite your spiritual passion and who can you exhort?

Homework: Take the tips for reviving your spiritual spark on pages fifteen and sixteen and use them this week.

Something to Wear: Modest Clothing

Bare Season

Believe it or not, it is bare season again. This is the time of the year when you will see, bare legs, bare mid-drifts, bare backs, etc. You do not even have to go hunting for bare skins, immodest apparel is beside every tree, laying on every beach, on the job, walking down the aisle of every grocery store and even mowing your neighbor's front yard.

A study on this topic can be very personal. After all, we are talking about the way people dress. However Christians need to search of God's Will on the matter of how saints should dress. This is not an attempt to promote one man's opinion on modern day fashion.

Instead of asking, what's wrong with showing a little skin in short shorts or bathing suits, we should ask "Is it pleasing to God?" Instead of asking "what is wrong with what I am wearing"? ask "what is right with what I am wearing"? We are to prove all things and hold on to what is right (1 Thess. 5:21). Instead people just wear what they like and hope it is right.

One preacher asked another, "Why do Indian women wear saris that leave most of their stomachs bare?" The other preacher replied, "The reason is because the top of the sari only comes down to the top of the rib cage and the bottom only comes up to the waist. So there is a gap in between that is left bare." Well, that is one reason. The real reason is due to the fact that they have a different standard of modest apparel.

Before we take a look at the Biblical standard of modesty, let us look at some false standards used to determine what is modest or immodest. How one feels in their own heart is not a good standard. We "*walk by faith not by sight*" (2 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, faith (not feeling or one's conscience) is the guide. That faith comes from God's Word (Romans 10:17). Others feel that what is considered modest or immodest is based on what is accepted by society. In this case, society may be either too loose or too strict in its concepts of modest apparel. Whether clothing is fashionable or in style is not the appropriate standard. Society thinks it is fashionable and stylish to smoke, dance, curse, even go in the nude, etc. What is fashionable and thus "modest" changes from year to year and culture to culture. At one time it was the height of fashion for french women to "bare" one of their breast while covering the other. Just compare the 1890's, 1920's, 40's, 60's, 80's, 90's to see how fashions change back and forth. In 1922, many were arrested for going topless at Atlantic City Beach. You might think it strange that even back then people were going topless at a public beach, but what is really unusual is that all those arrested for violating the city ordinance against topless bathing - were men. Would you want to use civil law as the standard for modesty? After all, in middle eastern countries it is immodest for women to show their face in public. Another standard for modest dress is related to the amount of material used in the clothing or just covering the essential portions of the body. However, yards of material may go into an evening dress, yet many are immodest. The weather is not a reliable standard. It was not any hotter or colder a century ago and they did not even have electric fans, air conditioners and central heat and air, but they wore modest clothing. The standard is the same weather you live in Florida or Alaska; Maine or California. You may say, "Oh, it is so hot!", so you take off your clothes. Well, Hell is so hot you had better leave them on. Finally, the standard is not based on whether anyone notices or lusts. Whether anyone pays attention or not certainly does not prove it right. God notices it, so that proves it wrong.

God designed the human body and the desires of the flesh. God created the body. He has the right to tell us how to dress it. He should be the one who designs the dress code for modesty. His standard is found in His Word. It contains absolute truth. It is not relative or fluctuating with fleeting fashions. It is never out of date. Just consider the nude Greek athletes and nude patrons in the Romans baths, and Roman women bathing with slaves in the first century. Nudity was an issue in the first

century.

God has been concerned with modesty all the way back in the beginning. Before sin, Adam and Eve as husband and wife were naked and not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). After sin, even Adam and Eve (the only adults on earth) had to wear clothing. They made fig leaves for themselves. The first couple were the first fashion designers. Fig leaves were the universal style for all mankind. God was not pleased with Adam and Eve's apron of fig leaves. Even Adam realized that they were still naked in wearing them. God made them a garment animal skins that was modest. Developing the first dress code, God made them modest clothing.

Today as in New Testament times modesty is commanded. *"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, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works"* (1 Tim. 2:9,10).

The word "adorn" means "to put in order, to arrange properly." A Christian is not adorn themselves with immodest clothing which is not proper, but with modest apparel. "Apparel" is the Greek word "katastole". A stole was a loose outer garment. The prefix "Kata" means "down". Women professing godliness to wear garments that hang down, but their apparel had to be modest. Among the ancient women some were known to slit the sides of their dress to expose a part of the thigh (phaino-marides, i.e., showers of the thigh as they were called). The Greek word "kosmios" is translated "modest" means: "Respectable, honorable" (Arndt and Gingrich, 446); "Well-arranged, seemly, modest..." (Thayer, 356) and "Orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest (akin to 'kosmos, in its primary sense as harmonious arrangement, adornment...), is used in 1 Tim. 2:9 of the apparel with which Christian women are to adorn themselves; in 3:2 ..., one of the qualifications essential for a bishop or overseer" (Vine, 79). Thus, men are to be modest was well (1 Tim. 3:2). The next term describing their attire is "shamefastness" or "propriety" from the Greek word "aidos" meaning: "1. Modesty of women" (Arndt and Gingrich, 21); "A sense of shame, modesty...reverence...would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act," (Thayer); "a sense of shame, modesty which is...rooted in the character" (Vine). Davies Bible English tells us that "shamefastness is that modesty which is 'fast' or rooted in the character". The "bedfast" person is firmly fixed in his bed. The "shamefast" person is firmly fixed in a sense of shame or modesty. He is fast to blush. Yet, some are embarrassed over nothing. The ability to blush is a vanishing virtue with many (Jer. 6:15; Ezra 9:6). When just one curse word was used in the movie, *Gone With the Wind* people gasped. - the nation blushed. Today, the nation does not even blush over the nudity that abounds in movies. Finally, to help us understand the type of clothing a godly woman would wear the Bible uses "sobriety" from the Greek "sophrosune". This word means: "Soundness of mind, self-control, sobriety" (Thayer, 613); "It is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires; which would hinder the temptation to these from arising.." (Trench, Synonyms of the N.T., 72); and "good judgment, moderation, self-control...esp. As a feminine virtue, decency chastity" (Arndt and Gingrich, 810). In other words, a Christian will dress in a way as not to stimulate the passions of the body in one's self or in those that behold him or her. A Christian with sound judgment will not dress immodestly. A person with a sense of shame or modesty will not have to stand there doubting whether a one piece bathing suit or swimming trunks are modest on the crowded public beach. The Christian will use sound discretion in picking out their clothes.

The following questions represent the three views on modesty:

- 1) Where do I draw the line?
- 2) Which dress code should I follow?
- 3) Would this be clothing a Christian professing to be godly should wear?

The last question is the one which fits the standard found in 1 Timothy 2. If you dress according to these guidelines you will not have to worry whether you clothing matches what you profess to be: a Christian. However, if you dress in such a way that causes the world to wonder or even be shocked that you are a Christian, than perhaps it is time for a new wardrobe.

There is a famous commercial of the '70's that was revived in the 90's which asked: "Who wears

short shorts?” Not the woman of 1 Timothy 2 who professes godliness.

Ten Immodesty Magnets

The Bible approaches the idea of immodesty in dress from two different points of view. Women are to dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9,10). Men are not to lust after women whether they are modestly dresses or not (Matt. 5:27-28). Keep in mind the Scriptures do not imply that men can dress any way they so desire in front of women because modesty is not an issue for males. Men need to respect women by dressing in a godly manner.

Some women, even those who proclaim to worship God (1 Tim. 2:10b), seem to dress anyway they please without regard for the impact it may have on those men who see her. They may even know that they are tempting men to look, lust, and sin in their hearts. However, they feel they have the liberty to dress according to whatever is the fashion and if a man is tempted and sins that is entirely his problem. Her attitude is like that of the woman in Proverbs: *“this is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong’”* (Prov. 30:20). Although every man must take responsibly for where he trains his eyes and what he allows to dwell in his mind, women are responsible not be to a stumbling block by dressing immodestly.

Some women understand the way God created men to be attracted to women. They will either dress in a chaste manner or they will dress in a manner to be chased. Some love to dress provocatively because they love to be seen by men and lusted after. Other women love God and the souls of men. These ladies will dress in a way to encourage men to see them as beautiful women of virtue instead of advertising themselves as sex objects.

Immodesty has been excused by some women because they dress with pure motives. They may dress in immodest clothing (or the lack there of) because they want to exercise or be cool on a hot day or just “catch some rays.” If she exposes herself she just might catch some rays: “Ray Jones, Ray Smith, Ray Roberts, etc.” What all women need to understand is: purity of a woman’s motive does not nullify the impact of immodesty on the man’s heart.

An elderly preacher’s sermon on youtube gave ten immodesty magnets which attract the attention of men. 1) Wearing shirts or dresses with long slits which expose the upper leg. 2) Tight and form fitting clothing which accentuate their derriere. 3) Tight and form fitting clothing which emphasizes their breast. 4) Clothing which reveals cleavage even that which is not revealing while standing upright but immodest when they bend over. 5) Sleeveless clothing which have large arm holes leaving skin and underwear exposed when their arms are raised. 6) Pants or skirts which hang below the hips. 7) Any type of see-through clothing. 8) Short, shorts and mini skirts. 9) Tight or form fitting clothing which accentuate the crotch. 10) Clothing which presents a bare midriff or bare back. This list was adapted by one given by Al Martin. His candor and wisdom should help ladies with morality control issues in regard to how they dress.

How To Bear With the Bare?

One Sunday morning in the spring several visitors came to church. Nothing out of the ordinary was noticed until one of the older men brought to my attention a young woman sitting in a front pews directly in the middle of the building. He said, “from here it looks like she isn’t wearing any clothes.” Although the front of her dress was modest by comparison, the dress had no coverage from the shoulders down past the middle of her back. The brother asked me what we should do. Worship services were about to start in a couple of minutes. She was a visitor who came with her two small children. Instead of embarrassing her I reached over to the wall and turned on the air conditioner even though it was already a perfect seventy-two degrees in the building. Right before services began we noticed that she had borrowed a shawl from one of the other ladies and wrapped her bare back to shield herself from the cold air.

Wherever you go these days, the store, the park, a wedding, a funeral, even worship services, people are dressing immodestly. How are New Testament Christians suppose to deal with the sin of public exposure of skin? Surely, turning down the temperature will not always work in motivating others

to cover up.

☛ **Reject the World's Immodest Fashions**

During the reign of Xerxes, King of the Persian empire, a great feast was held for seven days. When the men were well drunk, the king had a great idea. He called for his queen, Vashti, to come before the drunken mob of men *"in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold"* (Est. 1:11b). Although the passage does not mention how much skin was or would have been exposed, *"Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs"* (Est. 1:12a). Most ladies of any century would have understood the implications of displaying oneself in this manner before a group of men who have been partying for several days. Vashti not only refused the wishes of her husband but the most powerful man in the world. She was deposed as queen. Later, it appears that Xerxes regretted his decision.

The fashions of modern society have often tried to dictate what is fashionable for women to wear and where they are to wear it. Years ago Christian women wore the mini skirt because it was in fashion. It was acceptable and fashionable before the world to wear them. Paul warned the Romans, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:2). Instead of proving that it is okay to wear immodest clothing because it is fashionable, choose to wear what is acceptable according to the will of God.

☛ **Do Not Lust**

A immodestly clad woman passed by an elderly couple sitting on a park bench. The man gave the woman a long hard look as she passed by. His wife poked him in the ribs with her elbow and said, "What are you doing, you're a married man of some thirty-five years." His response, "now Honey, just because I am on a diet does not mean I cannot look at the menu."

The above story illustrates the attitudes of men and women today. They believe it is okay to look and lust, so long as you do not act on those thoughts. So long as a man does not go all the way and commits adultery, a little looking is okay. To this Jesus would say, *"whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And 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"* (Matt. 5:28b-30). Ouuuch! Surely Jesus does not mean men and women are to literally pluck out an eye or cut off a hand. After all, if one can lust with his right eye, he can also do so with the left. Whatever he does with his right hand, he can learn to do with his left hand. Jesus wants those who wish to be righteous to do whatever it takes to be free of adultery in the heart. Therefore, a man does not lust after any woman but his wife. He does not look at undressed women. If that means "cutting off" some activities, such as going to certain places or watching certain events, then so be it. Better to miss out on those things - instead of lusting and losing one's soul.

☛ **Do Not Tempt Others**

Just as men must be careful about what they see, women must be careful about what they wear. Paul wrote, *"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, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works"* (1 Tim. 2:9,10). Some women will argue that even if they dressed like old Mother Hubbard some men would still lust. If so, that is the man's problem not hers. However, many women dress like old Mother Hubbard's cupboard - BARE! In that case the women are not dressing in a way that professes godliness or is producing good works. If it is wrong for a man to lust after a woman, it is equally sinful for a woman to show her nakedness either purposely or carelessly to the opposite sex. Consider King David walking on his roof top one evening as was the custom in those days for people to spend the evenings out on the flat roof of their homes or palaces. However, *"from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold"* (1 Sam. 11:2b). David should have turned away from this sight. Instead he lusted after her, sent for her and had sex with this

married woman. Bathsheba was not innocent in this matter even if the purpose was for bathing. No woman has any business showing off her body to another man.

Today, some women professing to be godly will strip down on the beach and go sun bathing. Even if there are no men around to see them, there are the male life guards. It is argued, "but they see so many different women that they cannot lust. They see half-naked bodies the way a mechanic views a radiator." If you believe that, I have some ocean front property on Mars I would like to sell you. To get there it includes a free ticket on the Millennium Falcon." If David, a man after God's own heart with four wives, did not avoid lusting then a twenty-one year-old male life guard does not stand a chance.

☛ **Marriage Is the Solution to God-Given Desires**

God created men and women to be attracted to one another. Men desire to see beautiful women and women desire to be seen as beautiful. This attraction is normal. However, when a woman exposes herself to a man with nakedness it creates a sexual desire which is sinful outside the realm of marriage. Like David and Bathsheba, many men and women have fallen into the sin of sexual immorality because of immodesty. Paul informed the Corinthians that God has a solution to this sin. *"Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: 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. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 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. 7:1-4). Solomon also encouraged men to continue to love the wives of their youth. *"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. 5:18,19).

☛ **Our Bodies Were Not Meant for Immodesty**

A brother in Christ once approached a mother of a teenage girl about the dress the daughter was wearing to church. The young lady in question wore dresses which were too low cut and revealed too much cleavage. The mother promptly defended her daughter, "Honey, if she's got it, she might as well flaunt it."

Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are not to be slaves to the lust of the flesh. They and their bodies belong to the Lord. *"Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "The two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 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 Cor. 6:16-20).

Wearing immodest clothing does not glorify God but oneself. Furthermore, Paul wants us to flee or abstain from fornication. This cannot be accomplished by running around half-naked or running after those who are. *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God"* (1 Th. 4:3-5).

☛ **Do Not Become Desensitized to Nakedness**

A worldly solution to the problem of nakedness is to become desensitized to nakedness to the point that if you saw someone nude in public it would not bother you. Some people see this not only as a viable response to nakedness but also a virtue or sign of superior spiritual maturity. Whether or not it is possible to become desensitized to the sin of exposing too much skin is not the real issue. The real question is whether this is pleasing to God. When Adam and Eve were still naked though wearing aprons of fig leaves God made for them tunics from animal skins to cover their nakedness. Moreover, He commanded the priests to wear clothing to ensure that they covered up their nakedness while serving before Him in the tabernacle. God cannot be tempted to lust (Js. 1:13-15) but He is sensitive to man's need to cover up his nakedness. Besides God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example for all generations who would live ungodly *"and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his*

righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)" (2 Peter 2:7). Did righteous Lot just need to grow up and become desensitized to the evil around him? If he had, he would have been destroyed with the rest of his ungodly neighbors.

☛ **Nakedness is Shameful so Blush**

Men and women have become so desensitized to nudity that they are no longer able to blush. This is not a sign of spiritual maturity. Jeremiah lamented, *"were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush"* (Jer. 6:15). The day you stop blushing over the sinful behavior of others is the day you have become more conformed to the world than transformed to the will of God (Rom. 12:1).

☛ **Make a Covenant**

Not a great deal can be done to make sure that you are completely shielded from the immodesty of the world. If you chose to watch a wholesome show on TV, a Victoria Secrets' commercial comes on displaying that Victoria has no secrets or sobriety. If you drive to church to worship God, you pass by one or two billboard with a giant display of nudity. If you go to the store to buy modest clothes, you shop the isles trying to avoid those who are immodestly dressed. You cannot always control your environment. However, you can make a promise as men not to look and/or lust after any woman but your wife. Job said, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"* (Job 31:1). And women can make a commitment never to expose themselves to any man but their husband.

Questions:

1. List the various false standards of modesty used today and explain why they are not reliable.
2. Why does God have the right to created a dress code?
3. At what point did Adam and Even notice they were naked? What did they do? Did God consider what they were wearing modest?

Matching:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 4. _____ "adorn" | a. "A sense of shame, modesty...reverence...would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act," |
| 5. _____ "apparel" | b. "orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest |
| 6. _____ "modest" | c. "It is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires; which would hinder the temptation to these from arising.." |
| 7. _____ "shamefastness" | d. "to put in order, to arrange properly."- |
| 8. _____ "sobriety" | e. garments that hang down |
9. What is wrong with the following attitude: "I have the right to dress any way I please. It is my body and if a man is tempted and sins that is entirely his problem?"

10. Does a "good" motive for the way a person dresses excuse the need for modesty?
11. Was Vashti right in refusing the King's request? Explain.
12. What advice does Matthew 5:28b-30 give concerning viewing immodesty?
13. What was Bathsheba's role in the spiritual downfall of King David?
14. How is marriage a solution to the God-Given desires of men to appreciate feminine beauty and a woman's desire to be seen as attractive?
15. What is wrong with becoming desensitized to immodesty to the point that nudity does not cause one to blush?

Application & Discussion:

1. What role should husbands have in helping their wives to dress modestly and fathers assisting their daughters?
2. Use the "ten immodesty magnets" found in page twenty and use it to remove any inappropriate clothing from your wardrobe.

Homework: Make a covenant with your eyes not to pick out immodest clothing to wear and not to look upon those who are immodest.

Somewhere to Be: Work

A popular restaurant is called TGIF which stands for “thank God it’s Friday.” Many Americans hate their jobs or dislike working. They live only for the weekend. Work is not punishment from God in and of itself. God made the first couple and gave them a job to tend the Garden. Christians are to work. Just how does Christ expect them to conduct themselves on the job?

Slavery in the Roman Empire

According to Roman law one could sell themselves into slavery if they were in financial difficulties. Later, they could save up their money and buy themselves back. As the Romans began to conquer the world they used their prisoners of war as slaves. Soon there were sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire. Most the labor done in the Empire was by slaves. Romans revered idleness and delegated work to slaves. Many of the Christians of the first century were slaves.

All this did not mean the New Testament approves of slavery dealing in slavery by kidnaping men (men stealers) and selling them is atrocious and severely condemned in the New Testament (1 Tim. 1:10). The Gospel was not just the good news to slaves. Yet, indirectly it was bad news for slavery. Although the Gospel’s intended design was to save men from their sins, it did have as its by-product the cessation of the practice of slavery. By 314 A.D. Christianity had spread and influenced the Roman world to the extent that Emperor Constantine abolished slavery.

Paul warns these Christian slaves of the results of dishonoring their masters: God’s name and doctrine would be blasphemed. *“Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed”* (1 Tim. 6:1). The master would verbally rail against the Christians God and discredit the teachings of the Lord’s church. Christianity did not demand the abolition of slavery. This would have hindered the progress of the Gospel and making it the Good News for social reform instead of being able to offer spiritual freedom to all. The New Testament slowly destroyed the slavery system by turning slave and master alike into slaves of Christ. Slaves were known to share the Gospel with their masters.

How Laborers Were to Treat Believing Masters

“And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefitted are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things” (1 Tim. 6:2). If a Christian slave had a brother or sister in Christ as their master their situation may not be all that different. Some might despise them instead of serving them faithfully. The Christian may regard their master as an equal and would not take orders or work as hard. They may have expected favoritism. Paul gives three reasons why they need to continue to honor their believing masters. First, they are brethren or family members. Just as most masters made their slaves part of the family so now they are both part of God’s family. God is the master of both and demands that the employees continue to work hard for the employer. Second, their masters are beloved, that is, God loves them too just as much as He loves those who are slaves. Finally, both the master and the slave who are Christians have received the same benefits or spiritual blessings in Christ.

Now let us take a look at some additional commands from the apostle Peter to household servants of the first century. Peter says that servants must be... *“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God”* (1 Peter 2:18-20).

✓ **Be Submissive**

Today, everybody is into rights. Strikes, protests, walk outs, law suits are all common experiences because people are clamoring for “my rights.” Submission is a dirty word and a demeaning concept. Yet, somebody has to lead, somebody has to follow, somebody must be in charge, and somebody needs to submit.

The term for “submit” means to yield. It means literally “to stand under.” Like the concept of LaMaze in childbirth, you don’t fight the pain you submit to it and work with it. Submission is more than just on outward obedience to the boss. It also involves an inward attitude. In a cartoon I remember seeing, Dennis the Menace is sitting in his rocking chair facing the corner, where his mother has put him to punish him. He is saying over his shoulder to his mother, "I'm sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside!"

In the first century a slave did as little as he could. If he could, he would pilfer or steal from the masters (Tit. 2:9,10). Not only is this condemned but God wants servants to work heartily (Col. 3:23) and with singleness of heart (Eph. 6:5), that is, sincerity or honesty.

✓ **Be Submissive to Good Masters**

Submission is a lot easier for you if you have a good master. A gentle master was “equitable, fair, mild” (Thayer 238). Not all slaves were unhappy. Many would have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and success. There were some believing masters (1 Tim. 6:2). Masters are to forbear threatening their slaves (Col. 4:1). Christian employees must never take advantage of Christian employers.

✓ **Be Submissive to Mean Masters**

Just because you have a lousy master or boss does not give you as a Christian have the right to be disobedient. The Greek word used here for “harsh” is *skolios*. You’ve heard of scoliosis of the spine or curvature. That’s the word, it means bent, crooked, curved, metaphorically perverse. A boss may be crooked, but the Christian worker must be straightforward in his labors for this employer.

✓ **Be Fearful**

Fear could apply in many ways. Servants work in fear of offending their masters, of being punished by their masters or the authorities, but mostly the fear of offending God and bringing reproach on the name of Christ.

✓ **Be Patient in Punishment**

A master has a right to punish or buffet his servant. According to Vine the word “buffet” means “to strike with clenched hands, to buffet with the fist.” Some believe it meant to give a box on the ear. Today, employers have ways to punish workers for poor performance on the job.

The question asked in verse twenty is a rhetorical one. Of course, a worker who deserves to be punished should take it patiently. He deserves it and should take it “like a man.” However, if one is innocent of doing wrong or is suffering punishment due to his relationship with Christ he is not only to take it with patience, but he finds favor with Christ for doing so. So if you are always late to work, doing a half-hearted job, stealing or having a bad attitude and uncooperative disposition, God wants you to take your punishment with a calm attitude. Yet, if you are suffering punishment for Christ’s sake and taking it patiently, you are bringing honor to the name of Christ.

Why Submit to the Boss?

Peter has addressed the need for Christians to be submissive servants who are submissive both to good masters and harsh masters, to be fearful and suffer patiently. Now we will explore the reasons why.

◆ **It Is Commendable Before God**

Submissive servants must suffer patiently “because this gains the favor of God.” In the NKJV, the word “commendable” is used twice in verses 19,20. The NASV translates it as “finds favor.” It makes God grateful.

How can we be sure to have this commendable conduct? Celebrate that you are counted worthy to suffer. Combat the temptation to retaliate. It was because David refused to take vengeance on King Saul that we remember his story to this day. It was because Joseph was so willing to forgive his brothers

that we admire him to this day. Reply to mistreatment by doing more good.

◆ **Because of Conscience Toward God**

The Greek word for “*conscience*” is composed of “sun”, meaning “together or with”, and “oida”, “to know”, and thus it means “joint knowledge.”

One can bear up under mistreatment for several different reasons. Fear of further or greater abuse can move one to bear it calmly. A sense of hopeless despair can cause one not to fight back. However, the Christian must be patient in suffering because of His knowledge of God. He is a son of God and must behave in a way pleasing to Him.

◆ **Because You Were Called to Suffer**

The term “*called*” means “to invite one” (Thayer 321). The Gospel is an invitation to suffering with Christ for the cause of righteousness. Those who wish to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Many of those in the New Testament who have been known suffered bodily affliction (Phil. 2:27; 2 Tim. 4:20; 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Tim. 5:23). This does not sit well in relation to the Health/Wealth Gospel which teaches that God wants all Christians to have good health and wealth.

Workaholics

Just what is a workaholic. Much like the alcoholic, the workaholic is driven to drowning himself in his work to the point of consuming all aspects of his life, just as another may drown himself in a bottle of booze. Workaholicism is reaching critical proportions in this country.

There are several reasons why so many become so absorbed in their work. Sometimes the individual's self-esteem is so low that they have nothing by which to identify their self-importance than the work they do. If he is a High School football coach who has such an identity crisis, he will focus on nothing else but his team. The more successful he becomes the more he is driven. Some of these men will end up winning many football games, but lose their wife, children, friends, and soul. They may be unconsciously trying to prove their worth. Others equate achievement with success. They fail to realize that life consist more than an abundance of business achievements. Still others have such a strong work ethic that they legalistically view hard work as a plan of salvation in itself. The harder they work the more pleasing they think they will be to God. Many preachers will fall prey to the idea that they are justified in long hours because of the importance of their work. Finally, there are those who are so materialistic that they are working hard to have all those things their greedy heart desires. Work for them is but a form of idol worshipping. Their credo is: *HE WHO DIES WITH THE MOST TOYS WINS*. Wins what? The Rich Fool thought he won it big time with his bumper crop, only to lose his soul (Lk. 15:12-21).

The Need for Leisure Time

It is interesting to note that Jesus was by no means lazy or a workaholic. According to Mark 6:3 His physical occupation was that of a carpenter. It was very hard work by ancient standards. Naturally, they did not have the power tools of their modern day counterpart. During His earthly ministry there were times when He labored long hours teaching, preaching, and healing. Nonetheless, there are several times when we are told, He deliberately took a break. The Gospel of Mark tells us of one such occasion. *"Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things"* (Mk. 6:30-34). Christ's priorities were perfect. He recognized the value of His work, but even He noticed the human need for recreation or shall we say "Re-Creation".

The fact is the Creator deliberately stopped working after six days of creation for a day of rest (Gen. 2:1-3). Not that the All Powerful One ever gets tired, bored, or lazy. Yet, His creation would need periods of rest. Man, His highest creation was designed to rest. As a matter of fact in order to be

effective we must have periods of rest.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy". This old saying holds much truth for modern man. The man who is so absorbed in his own work will see little need in focusing on the other important realms of his life. Being a social creature, forms of recreation are essential to establishing and maintaining relationships with our spouses, children, grandchildren, brethren, neighbors, and even co-workers. Additionally, the health of our mind and body are greatly enhanced by periods of leisure. By leisure I do not mean mere inactivity, but doing things that relax and rejuvenate us, giving us a break from the normal work routine.

Work can often interfere with our spiritual life. When Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha it was a joyous occasion. However, Martha was upset and told Jesus to reprimand Mary for not busying herself with the preparations for the guest. Jesus responded, "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary had chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:41,42). Nor should you allow the much needed leisure time be taken away from you. Yet, many fail to equate a time of rest and relaxation with setting down at the feet of Jesus and learning from His Word. Antithesis to this notion is not only observed here by Mary, but by many modern Christians. While I worshipped with a small congregation in Florida, there was a construction supervisor who made it a point to attend every Wednesday night. When the time came for Bible Study he would tell his assistants to carry on, for he would return from church in about two hours. Once a co-worker inquired, "you mean you have to go to church on Wednesday nights". This brother replied, "no, I get to go to church on Wednesday nights". In relating this to me he added, "I work long and hard, and I need the rest and relaxation mid-week Bible Studies bring. I can't understand how others think of it was a burden to come."

Work is vital and essential for the New Testament Christian. However, we must "stop and smell the roses" God has created for our noses. In our work-worshiping world, that is no simple assignment. You see, work and leisure are not foes, but indispensable companions of a Christian's life. Believe it or not, there is more to life than the job. When you arrive at Judgment your leisure time will be just as positively effect our eternal destiny as did your years of hard labor.

A Christian on the job has more at stake than his rights or a paycheck. The salvation of your soul, your co-workers' souls and even the soul of your boss is on the line. Let them see Christ living in you even when you have to suffer wrong.

Questions:

1. What were some positive aspects of slavery in the first century?
2. In general how are slaves to treat their masters?
3. Why didn't Christianity attack outright the institution of slavery in the first century?
4. Give three reasons why the slaves should not despise their master who are Christians?

5. What is a "workaholic"?
6. Why do some become "workaholics"?
7. Does God understand the need for man to have times of rest from labor? Explain.
8. Why did Jesus rebuke Martha? What was the good thing that Mary chose?

Application & Discussion:

1. Read the other scriptures which discuss the employee/employer relationship and list what the Bible teaches is required of both.
2. How does working hard interfere with one's spiritual life?

Homework: This week work hard at putting God first even in your work.

Something to Listen to: Gossip & Music

As a Christian works with other and simply goes about his day, he will have and hear conversations all around him. Some will involve gossip, dirty jokes and words, and cursing. How does God expect a Christian to deal with these?

Remedies for Rumormongering

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 solution for idle talk. There are several things we can 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 inserted an item in the local paper, as follows: "In the first place I never attempted to influence my wife in her views of her choice of a meeting. In the second place my wife did not attend the meeting in question. In the third place I did not attend the meeting. In the fourth place neither my wife nor myself had any inclination to go to the meeting. Finally, I do not now have and never have had a wife."

One can avoid the embarrassment of spreading such preposterous tales by heeding the words 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? Do not adopt a "shoot off my mouth now, and ask questions later" approach.

Gossip is a magnifying glass. With it a little info, truth grows into a big lie. "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.

The fact is, gossip is a like the sin of murder. The murder snuffs out the life of his victim. Gossip butchers the very facts of truth.

⇒ **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 any 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 your 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. It is easier to build yourself up by tearing someone else down. Personality clashes, pride, and personal desires all make for prime motivators.

"A honey bee finds sweetness because he is a bee! A vulture finds the rotten because he is a vulture!" When I gossip I become like a buzzard - I had rather feast on the putrefied carrion of scandal than the unadulterated nectar of truth.

Self-examination is critical to overcoming one's impetus to gossip. Ask yourself: Why am I telling this? Why do I want to tell it? Will it do any good? Is it necessary that I tell this? Will it profit me or him about whom I'm speaking? If you are tempted to gossip, work on purifying your heart for evil speech proceeds from the heart (Mt. 15:18-20). The lips serve as a door to one's heart. Through that door the heart lets one see what is within.

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).

So live that you won't be afraid to sell the family parrot to the town gossip. Remember, the very best defense against gossip is to Think - Think - Think - before speaking.

Music

Often while gassing up the car at the local station I will hear the loud music blasting from someone's car. They obviously feel that their particular taste in music needs to be heard by everyone else. More often than not the songs will speak of sex, drugs, hatred for God and authority, use foul language, etc. In addition to this many are subjected to this type of music at work and while perusing the radio stations in their car or flipping through the channels on their television. What is a faithful saint expected to do?

Not all modern music is immoral. It is different than what your grand-parents and parents grew up with but just being different does not make the difference. "The difference between music of yesteryear and that of today is the leap one makes from swimsuits in *Spirits Illustrated* to the centerfolds of *Hustler*" (USA Today, Oct 11, 1985).

Music is a powerful means of communication. It can soothe and invigorate. "Music is made of a stuff which is in and of itself the most powerful stimulant known among the perceptual processes...Music operates on our emotional faculty with greater intensiveness and rapidity than the product of any other art." (Dr. Sohone, *the Psychology of Music*, p. 39). In 1969 Jimi Hendrix admitted, "You can hypnotize people with music and when you get them at their weakest point, you can preach into the subconscious what we want to say." Thus some music can strengthen the soul or defile it with evil.

b **Promotes Humanistic Ethics**

The harmfulness of modern music is not found in the style but in the ungodliness which it promotes. Even Debbie Boone's *You Light Up My Life* says, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right." Singer Perry Farrell argues, "You don't have a society until the society is completely shameless" and that "drugs can be beneficial and they are necessary" ("*Jane's Addiction*", *Groundswell* (Hawaii), July/August

1991, p. 50).

Promotes Drug Abuse

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."

Promotes Fornication

Alan Freed, a Cleveland disc jockey, was looking for a name to fit the new style of music that was overwhelming the music industry in 1954. He soon found one, started using it, and it stuck. Freed merely borrowed the slang term "rock and roll" from the ghetto. "Rock and roll" was another way of describing premarital sex.

It is a most fitting term because a great deal of Rock and Roll Music is nothing more than electronic pornography. Is this statement uncalled for? Let me give you several examples of Rock music to demonstrate this point. In the 60's the Beatles had a song out that said, "Why don't we do it in the road". The Rolling Stones song "Let's Spend the Night Together" promotes free sex. More recently, Olivia Newton-John set pornography to music with her hit "Physical". One verse in her song says, "I'm sure you understand my point of view. We know each other mentally. You gotta know that you're bringin' out the animal in me. Let's get physical, physical; I wanna hear your body talk."

Perhaps, Rock star Prince is one of the greatest offenders. On his album "Purple Rain", which won a Grammy award and has sold millions copies, includes "Darling Nikki". It describes Prince's sexual encounter with a girl he met in a hotel lobby. In his song "Sister" from the "Dirty Mind" album, he sings "Incest is everything it's said to be". There are many other examples that could be given, but most are too pornographic for this lesson.

Still further proof of Porn Rock is the comments from the musicians themselves. The Rolling Stones manager, Richard Oldham, said, "Pop music is sex and you have to hit them (teenagers) in the face with it." Frank Zappa wrote an article on the role of rock in the sexual revolution. His conclusions were that rock music is sex. Former Playboy Bunny, Debbie Harry (she is the lead singer of the group Blondie) says, "I've always thought that the main ingredients in rock are sex, a really good stage show and really sassy music. Sex and sass..."

Country music promotes sexual immorality with songs like: *To All the Girls I've Loved Before*, *Now I Lay Me Down to Cheat*, and *Tell Me a Lie* which is about a woman committing adultery with a married man.

Promotes Rebellion

Paul Canor of *Jefferson Airplane* admitted that the new rock music is intended to "broaden the generation gap, alienate parents from their children, and prepare young people for revolution." Compare this to Bob Dylan's song:

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land.
And don't criticize
What you can't understand.
You sone and your daughters
Are beyond your command;
Your old road is rapidly agin'
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times are a-chagnin'

Jon of *Bon Jovi* observed, "I wanted to rebel against anything and everything, and it happened that I was able to do it by playing rock and roll in a band" (Metal Edge, Aug, 1987, p. 12).

b **Promotes Violence and Hate**

From the album *Stress: The Extinction Agenda*: "Now it's a flood of blood in circumference to her face/And an abundance of brains all over the street/Shame how we had to meet." Rap and Hip Hop music abound with violence toward women in particular, threats against police and others in authority, and expressions of hate toward various groups.

b **Promotes Anti-Christian Views**

The group K.I.S.S. stated these initials stand for "Kings in Satan's Service." In concert they asked the audience to follow them into Satan's Service. Remember John Lennon's *Imagine*:

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...

However, some people defend the music they listen to by saying, "Oh, I don't listen to the words, I just like the rhythm and the tune." Yet we are influenced by it through suggestive messages that sneak into our subconscious thought. Proverbs tells us, "*watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*" (4:23). In other words, whatever we allow to shape our heart will determine the kind of life we will lead. One of the things we should watch is what we listen to. Listening to Porn Rock can lead to a promiscuous life. So parents, be aware of what is shaping your child's mind.

One cannot "*flee fornication*" (1 Cor. 6:18) while listening to the sexual messages found in modern music. Christians need to remember why God has called them into His kingdom. "*For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness*" (1 Th. 4:7). The saint is not a vessel for fornication but to be temple for the Holy Spirit. "*Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!...but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 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 Cor. 6:13,15,18-20).

Christians are not to have fellowship with the fruits of darkness (Eph. 5:11). One cannot listen to this music without being influenced. It is up to the child of God to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good and abhor what is evil (1 Th. 5:22). By doing so, one can remain unspotted from the evil consequences of modern music (Js. 1:27). If not the effects of evil music can dull our senses till we are past feeling (Eph. 4:18,19). The question to ask yourself is: Do you want music and it's lyrics in your head which promotes fornication and adultery, rebellion against all types of authority, drugs, and humanistic philosophy?

Questions:

1. How much time does God give you each day? How much time does He give the busy CEO of a Fortune 500 company?
2. What does it mean to "*walk circumspectly*"?
3. Why are we to walk circumspectly?

4. What does one redeem?
5. Who or what should we consider before making plans for the future?
6. Why was the rich farmer in Jesus' parable a fool?
7. What does Psalm 90 teach us about time?
8. What are two appointments all men must face?
9. What does Bible study have to do with redeeming the time?
10. How much time do you spend in worship services and private devotion and study each week?
11. Who else needs your time in life?
12. Why is saving souls a wise use of time?

Application & Discussion:

1. How can you find more time for prayer in your busy day to day life?
2. How does the saving of your soul relate to how well you redeem the time?

Homework: Make a time budget this week.

Something to Say: Conversations

It is said that for every word in Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, 125 people died in World War II. Solomon was right: *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue"* (Pr. 18:21). And *"whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles"* (Proverbs 21:23). As a doctor has the patient stick out their tongue because it can reveal their state of health, so the way we use our tongues reveals the health of our heart and soul. How a Christian uses his tongue throughout the day in conversations is very important in his relationships with others and God.

Things to Cut From the Conversation

✂ Flattering Comments

The English word "flatter" comes from a French word that means "to stroke or caress with the flat of the hand." It is used as a tool to obtain something from someone else by appealing to their sense of pride. What makes the flattering tongue so dangerous is that the motive of the speaker is self-centered and deceitful *"He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue"* (28:33). To put it simply, flattery is a form of lying.

All of us love to hear something good about ourselves coming from the mouth of someone else. However, out of the mouth of a flatterer, compliments bring ruin and do not help build us up. A true friend will give criticism as well as compliments.

✂ Fault-Finding Criticism

After Job had lost everything, his friends came to help him make sense of it all. However, all they could do is search for the faults in Job (Job 32:10-18). With friends like that who needs enemies. The truth was Job was innocent. His so-called friends did not even want to allow that as a possibility.

Finding fault is easy. Fixing problems can be very difficult. Dealing with fault finders is even more difficult. The following story demonstrates how one man dealt with a fault-finding tongue.

Consider the poem "When to find Fault", which is about the man who struggles with a fault-finding tongue.

Don't find fault with the man who limps
Or stumbles along life's road,
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears,
Or struggled beneath his load.
There may be tacks in the shoes that hurt,
though hidden away from our view.
The burden he bears, if placed on your back
Might cause you to stumble, too.
Don't be too hard on the man who errs,
or pelt him with wood or stone,
Unless you are sure-yea, double sure,
that you have no fault of your own.

Criticism hurts. Soften the negative with positive facial expressions, tone of voices and body language. Avoid using phrases, such as, "You always" or "You never". Seldom are these ever true.

✂ Fracturing Communication

"The Lord hates . . . one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16,19). Why is this type of tongue listed among seven things which God hates and considers an abomination. First, arguments

and striving tear down relationship between men. Some even argue out of habit. The tongue has the power to separate marriages, children from their parents, nations from nation, friends from friends, etc. In contrast, the tongue can be used to heal instead of hurt. *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (Prov. 15:1).

✂ **Fibbing Chitchat**

Nothing is more destructive and hurtful to others than lying. *"The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. ...Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight"* (Prov. 12:19;22). This type of tongue can be found on false teachers, salesman, "lovers", etc.

The problem with those little white lies is that they tend to grow into big black ones. Consider the poem "The Life of a Lie":

First, somebody told it, then the room couldn't hold it,
So the busy tongues rolled it. Till they got it outside.
Then the crowd came across it, And never one lost it,
but tossed it and tossed it, till it grew long and wide.

This lie brought forth others, Dark sisters and brothers, And fathers and mothers-A terrible crew.
And while headlong they hurried the people they flurried, And troubled and worried, As lies always
do.

And so evil-bodied, this monster lay goaded, Till at last it exploded in smoke and in shame.
Then from mud and from mire the pieces flew higher, And hit the sad victim and killed a good name.

"What We Have Here is a Failure to Communicate"

A woman once came to a judge for a divorce. The judge asked: "Do you have any grounds for divorce?" The woman replied, "Grounds? We just have 2 acres." The judge says, "Lady, that's not what I'm talking about. What I mean is, do you have a grudge?" The woman thinks for a minute and then replies "Garage? No, we park our car in front of the house." By now, the judge is getting a little frustrated! He sort of snaps at her, "Ma'm, does your husband beat you up?" She replies, "No. I wake up way before he does ever morning." The Judge practically yells at her, "Lady, why do you want a divorce?" The woman looks at the Judge and replies, "Judge, me and my husband just don't seem to be able to communicate!"

Ann Landers wrote, "The most important single ingredient in a marriage is the ability to communicate...most marital problems stem from the inability of two people to talk to each other." This is also true in all other relationships.

Three little old ladies were traveling on a train in England. One said, "is This Wimberly?" Another responded, "No, this is Thursday." The third lady said, "I am too; let's get a drink". These three demonstrate both the need to be an effectual speaker and well as an efficient listener.

The world is filled with talkers, but what effective communication requires is a listener who hears more than just words. "Researchers say that good listening is accompanied by a slight rise in temperature, a faster heartbeat, and a quicker circulation of blood...listening is not a passive activity!" Jesus had a problem with those who had ears, but did not get his message because they would not listen. *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear"* (Matthew 13:9, 14-16). "Research indicates that we listen at about 25% efficiency, and that much misunderstanding is attributable to poor listening."

Every good communicator must be an active listener. This can be done by maintaining good eye contact and avoid the glassy eyed look which is a dead give away that you are think about how to respond or react instead of opening your mind. It is helpful to learn to read between the lines. Listen to what they are really trying to communicate. Put your ears on first, your mouth second. *"So then, my*

beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Repeat what you think you heard before you give your answer. "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:13).

Effective Communication

◆ **Be Loving**

Whenever with whomever a Christian has a conversation they must be *"speaking the truth in love"* (Eph. 4:15). Although the great love chapter (I Corinthians 13) does not give us a definition of love it does tell us how love will act: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:4-8).

◆ **Tell the Truth**

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another." (Eph. 4:25).

◆ **Maintain Control of Emotions**

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). This verse is a permissive imperative. The emotion of anger is commanded of Christians just as we are commanded to be kind. Anger is a God given emotion. Yet letting your anger get out of control does not meet with God's approval. When anger slips out of one's control it is sinful. It is okay to be angry, but when we attack the person rather than the problem anger becomes danger.

Several things can be done to assist you in controlling anger in an argument. Lower your voices one octave rather than raising them two. Ask God to help you control our emotions by saying: "let's pray about this". As the verse above says do not let the emotion linger too long. If anger goes on too long it will grow too strong. And Anger is just one letter away from Danger.

◆ **Timing is Important**

A proper time exists for disagreeing and there is an improper time for disagreeing. Together a couple needs to set the time. Kindly postpone it by saying: "This isn't the right place to discuss it. Let's deal with it a little later."

However, it must be noted that procrastination will only allow problems to grow and the relationship to deteriorate. *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:26,27). The quicker the discussion begins the sooner it will be over.

◆ **Use Words to Build Up**

"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). *"Corrupt"* literally means "rotten, putrid". Such tactless speech will not help keep the fight right. On the other hand, "...tactfulness is an approach to another human being which involves being sincere and open in communication while at the same time showing respect for the other person's feelings and taking care not to hurt him unnecessarily". Tact is displayed when one takes care to watch what they say, how they say it, their tone of voice, their body language and facial expressions.

The term "edification" means to build-up. When we speak our words are to be chosen well in order to build one another up. Just as a man builds a house of cards. His careful choices and moves determine how high the paper edifice will rise.

◆ **Stop the Fighting**

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). These only build a wall of resentment.

◆ **Included Kind, Understanding, and Forgiving Words**

Words have a great power for hurting, or healing. *"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"* (Proverbs 12:18). You can use your words to start a fight or stop a fight, it's your choice. *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1). Watch your tone of voice, body language, and timing your response. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."

Communication over a disagreement may involve one's willingness to forgive and forget. Forgetting is very important because in the next fight you don't want to rehash all the previous ones. Its like the story of two little boys who each had little kittens. They loved them dearly. They even loved them to death. So as instructed they went out back behind the shed to bury them. However, they left their cat's tails sticking up out of the ground so that when ever they wanted to pet their cat they could go out behind the shed pull up the dead cat's tail and pet the rotten thing.

Questions:

1. What is flattering?
2. What were Job's friends guilty of?
3. What does God hate? Why does God hate it?
4. How does God view lying lips?
5. How important is listening to good communication? Why?
6. What are some habits you can have to make you a better listener?
7. Christians are to speak the truth _____.
8. Why should Christians tell the truth to each other?
9. How does one control their tongue?
10. What does "edification" mean? How does it help with proper communication?
11. What things are Christians to put away (Eph. 4:21)? Give an example of each.

12. What is the standard for kindness and forgiveness?

Application & Discussion:

1. How can one “*speak the truth in love*” while explaining to a homosexual that their sinful condition and to repent?

2. How can we properly respond to criticism in a conversation?

Homework: Work on being a better listener this week.

Something to Do: Habits

Everyone has everyday habits. 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."

Unbreakable?

X **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).

X **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.

X **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.

X **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.

X **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.

X **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).

X **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".

X Make it a Daily Discipline

Habits are dependent on repetition for survival. Success reinforces success, failure reinforces failure. I 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).

X Pray for God's Help

Paul commanded the Philippians, *"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.

X 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.

Common Bad Habits to Cut Out

✂ Taking Drugs

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.

A survey of 17,500 California seventh, ninth and eleventh graders regarding their use of liquor and drugs found that 70% had been high on either alcohol or drugs by age 16. Most popular choices: 45% had used marijuana and 65% had been drunk.

✂ Drinking Alcohol

Most Americans have at least tried an alcoholic drink. Now there are tens of millions of alcoholics in America. It is the number one addiction. "Alcohol is a habit-forming drug, one that may lead to addiction. Unlike narcotics, however, alcohol in moderate amount is socially acceptable in our culture and herein lies some of its danger" (Marvin A. Block, AD, Alcoholism, It's Facts and Phases, p. 259). In addition to being addictive it is dangerous physically, mentally, socially, personally, and spiritually.

✂ Smoking Tobacco

This habit also includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, snuff, etc. Studies show that the cancer rate for smokers is far higher than non-smokers. Second hand smoke has been proved to be a health hazard. Smokers would do good to remember the golden rule (Mt. 7:12). Hard to let your light shine if you are blowing smoke. By what one is addicted to is whatever overpowers him (2 Pet. 2:19b).

✂ Porn: The Non-Chemical

There is an addiction which has nothing to do with drugs, smoking, alcohol, eating, or any chemical substance. The addiction has nothing to do with what goes into an individual's mouth or veins, but what goes into their minds through their ears and eyes. It is pornography.

To defeat this habit make a covenant with your eyes. Job did, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze..."* (31:1). The eyes are the door of the mind. David said, *"I will set no*

worthless thing before my eyes" (Ps. 101:3). What you allow to pass through will effect the way you think. Remember, our actions are the result of our thoughts, and our thoughts are the result of what we have put into our minds. We cannot think something unless we have a basis for it in our minds.

We need to take care not to be addicted to anything. In addiction, neither we or Christ is in control. We have allowed something else to enslave us and be a master over us. The apostle Paul wrote that he would not permit this to happen to him. *"But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified"* (1 Cor. 9:27). We need to be servants of Christ, not enslaved to pornography.

Questions:

1. What is a habit?
2. Why is daily self-examination so important to making and breaking habits?

Matching:

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|----|--------------|
| 3. ____ | Form a plan of action | a. | 1 Cor. 9:27 |
| 4. ____ | Seize immediate opportunities | b. | Phil. 4:6,19 |
| 5. ____ | Have a strong desire to change | c. | Gal. 6:2 |
| 6. ____ | Stick to your commitment | d. | Rom. 13:14 |
| 7. ____ | Daily discipline | e. | Acts 22:16 |
| 8. ____ | Pray for God's Help | f. | Josh. 24:15 |
| 9. ____ | Desire and Accept help | g. | Act 19:18-20 |
10. True False Drinking alcohol is dangerous physically, mentally, socially, personally and spiritually.
 11. What does the golden rule have to do with smoking?
 12. What covenant did Job make with his eyes?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why are good habits so hard to make and bad habits so hard to break?
2. List some of bad habits and the good habits needed to replace them.

Homework: Work on dropping bad habits and picking up good habits this week.

Something to Watch: TV

Television, whether viewed on a computer, TV set, or phone, is still America's number one pastime. "The average American over the age of 2 spends more than 34 hours a week watching live television, says a new Nielsen report — plus another three to six hours watching taped programs" (David Hinckley, *New York Daily News*, Wednesday, September 19, 2012). Families cannot spend this much time with the television and not be influenced.

The Stranger

A few months before I was born, my dad met a stranger who was new to our small Tennessee town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer, and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in our family. In my young mind each member had a special niche. My brother, Bill, five years my senior, was my example. Fran, my younger sister, gave me an opportunity to play "big brother" and to develop the art of teasing. My parents were complementary instructors - Mom taught me to love the word of God and Dad taught me to obey it.

But the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries, and comedies were daily conversations. He could hold our whole family spellbound for hours.

If I wanted to know about politics, history, or science, he knew it all. He knew about the past, understood the present, and seemingly could predict the future. The pictures he could draw were so lifelike that I would often laugh or cry as I watched.

He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bill and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see the movies and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars. My brother and I were deeply impressed by John Wayne in particular.

The stranger was an incessant talker. Dad didn't seem to mind, but sometimes Mom would quietly get up-while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of faraway places - go to her room, read her Bible, and pray. I wonder now if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave.

You see, my dad ruled our household with certain moral conviction. But this stranger never felt obligation to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house - not from us, from our friends, or from adults. Our longtime visitor, however, used occasional four-letter words that burned my ears and made Dad squirm. To my knowledge, the stranger was never confronted. My dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home- not even for cooking. But the stranger felt like we needed exposure, and enlightened us to other ways of life. He offered us beer and other alcoholic beverages often.

He made cigarettes look tasty, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished. He talked freely (probably much too freely) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I know now that my early concepts of the man-woman relationships were influenced by the stranger. As I look back, I believe it was the grace of God that the stranger did not influence us more. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents. Yet, he was seldom rebuked and never asked to leave. More than thirty years have passed since the stranger moved in with the young family on Morningside Drive. He is not nearly so intriguing to my Dad as he was in those early years. But if I were to walk into my parents' den today, you would still see him sitting over in a corner, waiting for someone to listen to him and watch him draw his pictures. His name? We always just called him TV.

-- Keith Currie

Television is a powerful vehicle for influencing the mind. You name the problem and there is a commercial that can solve it in less than a minute. Dr. James P. Comer, Associate Dean of Yale

University Medical School wrote, "All authority figures have less influence today than in the past - ministers, teachers, policemen and parents. People are exposed to TV much more than they are to church, school or family. Television is a model and people use it as a model for their behavior...And often TV is a bad model. It doesn't promote desirable social behavior. Its only purpose is to get your attention and entertain..." Fred Friendly, a professor of broadcasting journalism at Columbia University and former President of CBS News said, "Broadcasting is going to determine what kind of people we are." Years ago Bing Crosby warned, "Writers and producers are working nudity, permissiveness, irresponsibility, profanity, scenes of semi-explicit sex, provocative dialogue, smutty innuendoes and situations into their shows...I fear they are depicting life as it is going to be if they are not diverted."

Television Promotes Immorality

The media is slanted in favor of the ungodly opposition to Christianity. There is a homosexual bias in television. Those who disagree with the gay agenda are considered tolerance judgmental homophobes. Television has been known to promote the woman's right to have an abortion over the unborn baby's right to life. Dr. Richard Norman counsels newscasters and correspondent as follows: "In describing or referring to pro- or anti- abortion groups, the use of loaded terms should be avoided wherever possible. Many listeners might legitimately object to calling a pregnant woman a mother, calling a fetus or an embryo a child; and referring to an anti-abortion group as a 'pro-life' group or as 'right-to-life' advocates..." (Joseph Sobran, "Are Babies Taboo?" Word, Tulsa July 3, 1920, p. 12A). Yet, we have all referred to pregnant women as being "with child" or "expectant mothers." The reason is that killing a fetus is not as objectionable as killing a child. Remember Television can be Hellivison. It portrays a view of life more in keeping with a visions of who's who in Hell (Rev. 21:8).

Television is a Thief of Time

TV robs a congregation of all the man hours of service and attendance Christians could give. Compare the average of the thirty some hours a week of watching to the amount of time each member spends serving the Lord. Do the same fo each member of the church and the results are staggering.

Four and five year olds in a Michigan State University study, when offered a hypothetical choice of whether to give up TV or their father, voted one out of three to give up Dad. (DAD'S ONLY, Nov. 1983.)

Parents use TV as if it is the world's greatest baby sitter. Parents who substitute television for training can expect that their children will grow more rebellious and less disciplined. TV is a greater educator in the life of the child because the average child under 5 watches 23.5 hours a week.

By the time a child graduates from high school he has vicariously participated in at least 18,000 killings. That is not a very suitable baby-sitter is it? Is it healthy to send your children off to bed with:

Sing a song for TV for the little ones.
Four and Twenty jailbirds. Packing Tommy guns.
When the song is over the blood is ankle deep
Now isn't that a pretty song to send them on to sleep?

Perhaps the greatest problem TV watching posses in the home is that it robs us of valuable family time. It takes time-lots of time every day-for families to become all God wants them to be. Back in the days before television most people lived on the farm, father and son worked together all day in the field. A boy learned about farming, but more importantly, he learned about life. While they worked together, he learned about values, faith, and commitment from his dad.

But we live in a hectic world which makes that very difficult. When does the modern family find time to spend together like that? The first step is setting up some priorities. Of primary importance is making the time for spiritual training like the parents of Israel were commanded in Dt. 6:6-9 when God told them, "*you shall teach my words diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall*

write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."

The question for you to consider now is who is going to raise your children? Are you going to make the time or are you going to let the television set do it for you? *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). How can a parent bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord when they are glued to the TV set thirty-four hours a week. The Detroit Free Press offered one hundred and twenty families five hundred dollars to turn their television sets off for a whole month. Ninety-three families refused the offer. Do not let the television programs program your children.

Finally, all this time spent in front of the set robs marriages. A sign in an LA shop read, "We interrupt this marriage to bring you the football season." One of the best decisions Beverley and I made in our early years of marriage was not to have a TV. For the first five years together we did not have a television set. It gave me time to do the extra work in preparing myself for the ministry and for her to finish college and prepare for motherhood. Most of all, it allowed time for communication.

Would You Bring Prostitutes Home as Entertainers for Family Night?

It is Friday night and a family of Christians is making preparations for their entertainment. They go out for pizza. Next they stop off at a local neighborhood establishment and pay for the night's entertainment. Back home the adults and children alike watch a woman bare it all in the corner of their living room while they stuff their mouths with popcorn. Surely, no Christian would hire a stripper to come home with them for family recreation! However, many are doing just that when they rent a video at a neighborhood store or Redbox or on-line service or cable which is displaying the exact same situation.

There is a deceit type of pornography that is creeping its way into the homes of the average American. It is being smuggled in by way of cable or the internet (R and NC-17 rated movies), art, adult entertainment magazines, videos, music, and even over the cell phone. Then there is the immodest dancing and singing on MTV where they combine pornographic lyrics with comparable video scenes. Today just about anyone can hours and hours worth of pornographic R-rated movies to view in their homes. Still worse than that, regular television shows like "Dancing with the Stars" and certain Public Television programs provide free porn. The biggest offender of them all is the internet with universally accessible porn.

But what is so wrong about seeing movies and music videos that have a couple of scenes of explicit sex or nude and semi-nude men or women? After all, this is just entertainment and recreation? There are several good reasons why this is spiritually unhealthy.

1) It will lower one's level of discretion. We are effected by what we see and hear. Paul warned in 1 Cor. 15:33, *"Do not be deceived. Evil companions corrupt good morals."* If you are entertained by prostitutes you will eventually be corrupted by them. Moreover, what we allow our minds to dwell on will determine what kind of person we will be. *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he"* (Prov. 23:7).

Naturally, we hear the argument: "Well, everybody is doing it." First, that's not true there are

The 23rd Channel

The TV set is my shepherd.

My spiritual growth shall want.

It maketh me to sit down and do nothing for His name's sake, because it requireth all my spare time.

It keepeth me from doing my duty as a Christian, because it presenteth so many good shows that I must see.

It restoreth my knowledge of the things of the world, and keepeth me from the study of God's Word. It leadeth me in the paths of failing to attend the evening worship services, and doing nothing in the Kingdom of God.

Yea, though I live to be a hundred, I shall keep on viewing my T.V. as long as it will work, for it is my closet companion. Its sound and its picture, they comfort me. It presenteth entertainment before me, and keepeth me from doing important things with my family. It fills my head with ideas which differ from those set forth in the word of God.

Surely, no good thing will come of my life, because my TV offereth me no good time to do the will of God; thus I will dwell in the place of the Devil and his angels forever.

– author unknown

many who will not watch such shows. Furthermore, we need to heed the warning God gave the Israelites, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil..." (Ex. 23:2).

2) This type of entertainment invites prostitutes into our living room. Now I'm sure that there are very few Christians who would invite prostitutes into their homes to entertain them, but this is what many are doing by way of their TVs and computers. A prostitute is someone who engages in promiscuous sexual activity for pay. Actors who commit indecent acts are paid prostitutes. When we pay for cable or even just watch a "free" entertainment showing nudity and fornication we are supporting prostitutes and pornography.

3) This type of recreation destroys our shamefastness. Years ago when just one curse word was uttered in the movie "Gone with the Wind" America blushed. Today, many Christians don't even blush at the coarse language and vile scenes viewed day after day. After viewing so many scenes of sexual promiscuity our moral senses become dull. Then our conscience comes seared to the extent that we feel no sense of shame when sex scenes via the TV screen are seen. The ability to blush at this point is gone even as one watches a couple act out fornication.

We must remain sensitive to sin. Passive indifference is a danger point in our efforts to remain pure. It is not a sign of maturity when a man or woman comes to the point where they no longer feel vexed over perverse entertainment. It is when we begin to feel comfortable with others' sinfulness that we are dangerously close to being complacent with our own sin. As the poet Alexander Pope wrote in his *Essay on Man*:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

4) It will encumber our capability to let the light of the Gospel shine in our community (Mt. 5:14-16). How will your non-Christian family and friends react to your choice of entertainment? Can you really influence them for good if they have set down in your living room and watched prostitutes perform on our TV set for your entertainment? How can you convert the cashiers at the video store when they know you rent tapes with immoral scenes in it? David Frost once said that by means of the television we invite people who we wouldn't have as guests into our living rooms to entertain us. Remove such forms of entertainment from our homes "that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

5) It will make a voyeur out of you. Voyeurism is "the practice of obtaining sexual gratification by looking at sexual objects or acts, esp. secretly" (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, p. 1602). Men and women alike have been known to become addicted to the promiscuous scenes on the TV screen, "art", or lyrics to modern songs. Instead, may we be like Job, who said "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" (31:1).

Heed the warning! Beware fellow Christians, especially parents, of video vice in your homes! Check out your entertainment before you go or before you bring it home to the family. Since the day we started internet service in 1997 we have bookmarked a very helpful website: screenit.com. This site is very helpful to parents and adults in choosing movies or DVDs that are not fill with porn and vulgar language. Remember, it is not a sin to walk out of the theater in the middle of a movie. There is nothing shameful about turning off the TV when a pornographic commercial pops on the screen. And it is not immoral to return a DVD that is inappropriate.

Is it not a little dishonest for a Christians to argue, "I did not have time to study my Bible lesson because I did not have time" when in fact they spent many hours each day watching TV. Think how you would feel if the Lord came while you were watching TV from your easy chair. So Do not watch a show if you could not do so with Jesus watching it with you. Only view those shows which you could with a clear conscience in light of the Scriptures. Watching only those programs you would want to die watching.

Questions:

1. On average how many hours of TV do you watch per week?
2. True False Watching TV is a harmless pastime that does not influence that thinking or the behavior of those who watch it.
3. What forms of immorality do many shows and movies promote?
4. How does television watching rob congregations and families?
5. What are fathers commanded to do for their children?
6. How is watching shows with sexual content like bringing a prostitute or stripper into the home to entertain the family?
7. "Evil companions _____ corrupt good morals."
8. How would you deal with the argument: "Well, everyone is watching these shows"?
9. What is shamefastness and how do some shows destroy this virtue?
10. How can the shows we watch hurt our influence for good?
11. What is a voyeur? How can watching these shows turn a person into one?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some things you can do with your congregation or family instead of watching shows?
2. How can you check out of the contents of shows before your watch them? If you find out that the show you are watching has inappropriate scenes to watch or bad language what should you do?

Homework: Try turning off the TV and doing more with your family and God's family this week.

Something to Read: The Bible

How well do you know the Bible? Biblical illiteracy is a spiritual bane to many Christians, congregations, Bible Classes, etc. It has a profound effect on all aspects of life. Due to ignorance Christians lack the ability to defeat temptation and remain faithful unto death. Therefore, they will lose the eternal reward. Children lack the basic Bible stories to help them make the right decisions and live a life not knowing where to go for answers and often turn to false religions for the answers. When working with the lost in the past Christians could at least expect their prospective converts to have some knowledge of the Bible. Today, many are completely ignorant of the most basic Bible stories and facts.

Complete the test to the right to see how well you know the Bible. Some of the answers that are way off the mark come from actual young adult responses.

1. Who was Israel's first judge?
 - a. Samuel
 - b. Shamgar
 - c. Othneil
 - d. Judge Judy
2. In Genesis, what happened to the serpent after God cursed it?
 - a. The woman, Eve, crushed its head.
 - b. It had a hissy fit.
 - c. Was made to crawl on its belly.
3. The child with the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz was the son of whom?
 - a. Jeremiah
 - b. A parent with a sick sense of humor.
 - c. Ezekiel
 - d. Isaiah
4. What is the Golden Rule?
 - a. Share and share alike
 - b. Do unto other before they do unto you
 - c. Do to others what you would have them do to you
 - d. Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you
5. The prophet Daniel was thrown into a den of what?
 - a. Women selling tupperware
 - b. Cub scouts
 - c. Bears
 - d. Lions
6. The prophet Joel had a vision of a plague of what?
 - a. Jehovah's Witnesses at the door
 - b. Frogs
 - c. Lice
 - d. Locusts
7. What was Gideon famous for?
 - a. Judge of Israel defeating enemy with 300 soldiers armed with trumpets & torches.
 - b. General who helped Deborah
 - c. Putting Bibles in hotel rooms.
8. What is the first king mentioned in the Bible?
 - a. Melchizedek
 - b. Nimrod
 - c. David
 - d. King James
- 9.. According to Revelation, what place is never dark?
 - a. Heaven
 - b. Hades
 - c. Hell
 - d. Motel 6 because they leave the lights on
10. What was Samson's final dramatic act recorded in the Bible?
 - a. He invented Samsonite luggage.
 - b. He showed up at Wrestlemania with a mohawk
 - c. He spiked his hair with gel and opened a salon with Delilah
 - d. He destroyed Philistine temple.

A certain preacher knew a family of Christians who had a real nice family Bible which they displayed on their coffee table. This fine Bible was always covered in plastic to keep the dust off. During one visit, he noticed the Bible missing from its usual place. When he questioned them concerning the Bible's whereabouts (thinking they might be reading out of it for a change) they told of its disastrous end. "No. You see the family dog was left in the house one day by mistake while the family was away for the day. The little dog evidently wishing to find something to do got a hold of the family Bible. He tore the Bible to shreds. We came home and found pieces of the Bible from the front door to the back, upstairs and down, from the bathroom to the living room, on the furniture and under it. It was totally destroyed." To this story the preacher replied, "It seems to me your little dog got more good out of the family Bible than you did".

As in most things you only get out of Bible study what you put into it. God is more impressed with a well used and worn out Bible than He is a well kept, but unused Bible. The apostle Paul gives us the following piece of advice concerning the proper use of our Bibles. "*Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). If you want the approval of God you must do is study and use His Word properly.

What Do You Find in Our Bible?

An old man in New Jersey discovered a large sum of money in an old family Bible. It seems his aunt died when he was a young man, and one clause in her will read, "To my beloved nephew I bequeath my family Bible and all it contains, with the residue of my estate after funeral expenses and just debts are paid." The estate amounted to only a few hundred dollars, which he soon spent. He neglected his Bible and lived as a comparatively poor man for 35 years. While packing his trunk to move to his sons' house, where he expected to spend the rest of his days, he discovered money hidden in the Bible by his aunt. He was several thousand dollars richer.

There are treasures worth far more than money in your Bible (Is. 55:1-3). Did you know that the Bible continues to be the world's best selling book? In countries where the sale of Bibles is banned, it is the most sought after book. Yet, in America, where Bibles are readily available and where most everyone can read, the Bible may be the most abused and neglected book of all.

▶ **Power to Transform Lives**

The Bible is an inexhaustible treasure trove. The Bible is the textbook of life, not merely a book of texts. Other books are given for our information, but the Bible was given for our transformation. "*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple*" (Ps. 19:7).

▶ **Insight to the Mind of God**

By reading the Bible one gets acquainted with the greatest Author, God. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3:16). We cannot come to Him without being taught His word (Jn. 6:44,45). Knowing God comes about by means of revelation (Mt. 11:27).

▶ **Salvation from Sin**

Paul wrote, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek*" (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel is the "Good News" of salvation from sin. It has the power to make one wise unto salvation. Paul said of Timothy, "*and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 3:15). The Word will save your soul. "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (Js. 1:21). The Bible is not only the world's best seller; it is man's best buy. No one is saved by buying a bible he does not read. No one is saved by reading a Bible he does not obey. God will take vengeance on them that "*know not God, and obey not the Gospel*" (2 Th. 1:7-9).

▶ **Nourishment for Spiritual Growth**

Ever hold a bottle in front of a baby and watch it start to cry and kick its legs and flap the arms

with desire. Christians are to be *“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”* (2 Peter 2:2). When we neglect feeding our souls we neglect our most precious possession. God’s Word is able to build us up (Acts 20:32). It will work in us causing us to be fruitful and active (2 Tim. 2:15). By it one’s faith will grow (Rom. 10:17). It is as sweet as honey to those who have an appetite for God and righteousness (Ps. 119:103). The Bible can help nourish our children (Eph. 6:4).

▶ **Truth to Guide**

A frustrated little boy complained loudly that he could not find his tennis shoes anywhere. Later, it was learned that he had not bothered to look in his closet where his shoes were kept. When someone is searching for the answer to a Bible question, where should he look? To check on whether Paul was preaching the truth the Bereans searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11,12). It can safeguard against fatal error (Mk.12:24). By it a Christians can *“test the spirits, whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1). By putting on the armor of God a Christian soldiers has the greatest of weapons - the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). David said, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!”* (Ps. 119:11). Furthermore the Bible will aid us in resisting temptations (Mt. 4:1-11) and give wisdom in solving many of life’s problems.

▶ **Life Saving Facts to Share**

Again Paul instructed Timothy, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2). Christians cannot make clear to unsaved people what is not clear to ourselves. The blind cannot lead the blind. It must be studied so the soul winner can be ready to give an answer when asked (1 Pet. 3:15). Fellow-saints need to know it in order to *“comfort others”* (1 Th. 4:18).

▶ **Road Map to Heaven**

The Bible is the "Road Map" that leads through this life and on into an eternity. By it the child of God can learn how to prepare for the future. Once more David wrote, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Ps. 119:105).

How to Find Time To Study the Bible?

A certain preacher knew a family of Christians who had a real nice family Bible which they displayed on their coffee table. This fine Bible was always covered in plastic to keep the dust off. During one visit, he noticed the Bible missing from its usual place. When he questioned them concerning the Bible’s whereabouts (thinking they might be reading out of it for a change) they told of its disastrous end. "No. You see the family dog was left in the house one day by mistake while the family was away for the day. The little dog evidently wishing to find something to do got a hold of the family Bible. He tore the Bible to shreds. We came home and found pieces of the Bible from the front door to the back, upstairs and down, from the bathroom to the living room, on the furniture and under it. It was totally destroyed." To this story he replied, "It seems to me your little dog got more good out of the family Bible than you did".

As in most things you only get out of Bible study what you put into it. God is more impressed with a well used and worn out Bible than He is a well kept, but unused Bible. The apostle Paul gives us the following piece of advice concerning the proper use of our Bibles. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth”* 2 Tim. 2:15. If you want the approval of God concerning your Bible all you must do is use it and use it properly. Just how did the Noble Bereans find time to search the scriptures every day (Ac. 17:11)?

☺ **Redeem the Time**

Paul commanded the Ephesian brethren *“see then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is”* (Eph. 5:17). “Redeem” means- to buy up for one’s use or benefit. Margin in the American Standard version is “buying up the opportunity.” Redeeming the time means that we buy up and seize the opportunities that are presented us. Time is not something you find. Time is something you have already to be used prudently.

The Bible can be read in much less time than you might think. “How much time does it take to

read from Genesis to Revelation? If you would read the Bible at a standard pulpit speed (slow enough to be heard and understood), the reading time would be seventy-one hours. If you would break that down into minutes and divide it into 365 days, you could read the entire Bible, cover to cover, in only twelve minutes a day. Is this really too much time to spend reading about God?" (The Almanac of the Christian World, Tyndale House Publishers).

A daily bible reading schedule may help. After all, the Muslims have divided up the Qur'an into thirty sections for reading the whole book each month. Believe it or not, the whole New Testament can be read in about twelve hours.

book	min.	books	min.	books	min.	books	min.
Matthew	90	2 Corinthians	30	2 Timothy	10	1 John	10
Mark	50	Galatians	15	Titus	4	2 John	2
Luke	95	Ephesians	15	Philemon	2	3 John	2
John	70	Philippians	10	Hebrews	20	Jude	3
Acts	92	1 Thess.	10	James	10	Revelation	50
Romans	30	2 Thess.	5	1 Peter	10		
1 Corinthians	20	1 Timothy	15	2 Peter	10	TOTAL	12 Hours

If a Christians can read a newspaper or Facebook one hour a day for a week and skip an hour of television watching an hour each day, they could read the New Testament each week. It may help to wake up a ten minutes earlier or read it right before bed.

☺ **Teach a Bible Class**

Nothing can motivate a Christian to study like the need to teach others. If one has the ability to teach they can begin with the children's classes. These do not involve intense lessons, but simple ones. If they do not feel they are able to teach, they can team up for a few months with a seasoned teacher and learn how. The church is to develop new teachers and put them to work (2 Tim. 2:2).

☺ **Conduct a Family Devotion**

There are many books available to aid in having a weekly Bible study with the family. Or even a daily Bible reading. To help get started you can invite the preacher or another experienced couple to join you.

☺ **Share the Gospel**

As a fisher of men a Christian must be prepared to catch lost souls from the sea of sin. To get started find someone to work through a Bible Correspondence course or watch the Jule Miller series. The best way to learn is to go with an experienced and skilled personal worker. Think you cannot find someone to begin with. Just invite a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon elders into your home when they come knocking.

☺ **Study While You Eat**

Jesus told the Tempter, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"* (Matt. 4:4). Man will not live long without physical nourishment and his soul will not grow without the Word. Begin by cultivating a spiritual appetite. *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:6). So every time you feed you belly pick up the Bible for a few minutes and feed you soul.

☺ **Listen While You Travel**

With the expense of a family meal one can purchase the whole Bible on CD to listen to in the car while they travel to work each day. Better yet they can listen to it by over a cell phone or other device by downloading a digital audio copy of the Bible for free from the internet.

☺ **Watch a Bible Program While You Sit**

DVDs of Bible books can be found in various translations. Many Bible study lessons can be found online from trustworthy sources.

☉ **Keep a Bible Handy**

Like most things when the Bible is out of sight, it is out of mind. Carry a Bible in your purse or brief case. Keep a Bible in your car's glove compartment. Have a Bible on laptop or I-phone or computer pad. Never go on a trip without a Bible. Have one ready to read when you are waiting in the Dentist office or for your tires to be rotated. Read it when someone has you on hold.

☉ **Take a Day of Vacation or a day off to just read the Bible**

You have had a good Bible Study experience when 1) you have interacted on a personal level with the message of the text; 2) you have learned something new; 3) you have been comforted, encouraged, exhorted, admonished or rebuked; and 4) you have something you must share with someone else.

Questions:

1. How well did you do on the test at the beginning of this lesson?
2. What are the positive results of studying according to 2 Timothy 2:15?
3. True False The Bible was given for information and for our transformation.
4. What four things is the Word of God profitable for according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17?
5. Can one be saved from sin apart from the Gospel message? Explain.
6. To what is the Christian desire for the Word of God compared?
7. Why did the Bereans search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11)?
8. What are the chance of one making it to Heaven without using the Bible as their guide?
9. How long does it take to read the New Testament?
10. List some things one could do in improve and increase their Bible study.

11. How do you know when you have had a good Bible Study experience?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some good Bible Study aids one can use to assist them in understanding the Bible better?
2. Did you study this lesson? Why or why not?

Homework: Try reading the Bible a half-hour each day of this coming week.

Something to Share: The Gospel

Why Should You Become a Fisher of Men?

To becoming a fisher of men is to be a soul winner for Jesus. A favorite hymn, we have often sung, says: "I want to be a soul winner for Jesus every day." But why? The song goes on to give several good reasons: First, "I want to aid the lost sinner to leave his erring way, and be from bondage free." Second, "And bring the lost to Christ, that they His grace may know." Another reason would be, "I want to hear Him say, servant, 'You've gathered many sheaves, receive a starry crown.'" In the refrain the final reason is: "He's done so much for me."

Yet there are some other good reasons to be soul winner. Jesus has commanded us to share the Gospel. The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark. 16:15 is clearly given to the apostles. The apostles are all dead and gone, but this does not mean all responsibility to save the lost is out of the hands of man. Preaching the Gospel is the responsibility of every Christian. Part of the apostles' commission was to teach the disciples. The apostles were to teach all disciples to observe all things which Christ had commanded them (Matthew 28:19). Second, Jesus left us His example to follow. At the age of twelve Christ was teaching in the Temple, saying: "*know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" (Lk. 2:49). What is the Father's business or work? (Jn. 4:34). The Father's business Christ was to do involved saving the world (Jn. 12:4); calling sinners to repentance (Mt. 9:13); seeking the lost (Lk. 19:10); and making fishers of men (Mk. 1:17). Jesus was always willing and ready to teach multitudes as well as individuals. We are to be as our mater (Mt. 10:25). Next, there is the example of the early Christians. After Stephen's death "*there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ...Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word*" (8:1,4). In addition to these reasons our salvation depends on our efforts to help save the souls of others. (Ezek. 3:18,19; 2 Tim. 2:3f; 1Cor. 9:16). Furthermore, being a soul winner brings great joy Those who received the Gospel in the New Testament went on to rejoice (Acts 8:39; 16:33,34). Jesus made the application for us, "*just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:10). Fishing for the soul's of men is a wise thing to do. "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise*" (Prov. 11:30). It is wise because one soul is of great value. Jesus said, "*for what profit is it to a man 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). If a church has fifty members it should have fifty soul winners. "Every Christian this side of heaven ought to be concerned with every sinner this side of hell."

One the best ways to learn how to fish is to watch others fish with great success. In the Gospel one learns of two fishermen who can teach us a lot about how to share the Gospel. Andrew and Jesus are but too great fishermen who can help us. Their stories give us insight into just how the great fishers of men were able to make big catches in the first century.

6 Solemn Facts:

- #1 Not all will be saved (Matthew 7:21).
- #2 The majority will be lost (Matthew 7:13-14).
- #3 Many will perish who expect to be saved (Matthew 7:22-23).
- #4 There is no means of salvation for those who die lost (Matthew 7:21-23).
- #5 Christ, the only savior (Acts 4:12) saved only those who do His will (Matthew 7:21,24-27).
- #6 Today may be someone's last opportunity - even yours (2 Cor. 6:2).

The Andrew Approach to Fishing for Men

Many passages could be employed to demonstrate the various means and methods utilized by the early Christians. However, we can learn a great deal about leading people to Christ by taking a look at John 1:35-42. This context will manifest the approach used by a simple ordinary fisherman. Andrew may be considered a lesser known apostle and a minor Biblical figure, but his encouraging example in evangelism is as equally important as others, such as, Peter and Paul.

Just what does the Andrew Approach involve?

A. Be Converted

John the Baptist was with two of his disciples when he pointed out Jesus, “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” (John 1:36). Prior to this he proclaimed that Jesus “*takes always the sins of the world*” (1:29). John also spoke of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove and testified that this Lamb of God was the Son of God. He sparked the interest of Andrew and the other disciples. They followed Jesus and ended up staying with Him all night. Their faith was not founded just upon John’s preaching, but they questioned Jesus throughout the night to learn that He was the Messiah (1:41).

One of the first and most important steps in beginning to bring others to Christ is to genuinely believe in Christ. Before one can convert others, he must first be converted himself. The blind cannot lead the blind to Jesus. Andrew had heard John preach a baptism of repentance. Surely, Andrew as John’s disciple had repented and been baptized by John. He was completely convinced that Jesus as the Messiah. It was only then that Andrew became evangelistic. Remember, before Jesus can mean anything to your friends, he must mean everything to you.

A young man came to me one day very upset. He was new to our congregation. His wife was not a Christian and was pregnant. Furthermore, she was not interested in studying or worshiping. He was very concerned about the spiritual well-being of his family. What could he do? His first mistake was his haphazard attendance. So, I told him, “you need to show her how much Christ means to you and then He will start meaning something to her. To do this you need to be faithful in attendance. Come whether she will or not. Arrange a ride for her when you cannot come.” This is what he did. A few months later she obeyed the Gospel.

B. Set Your Priorities

Andrew “*first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (Which is translated, the Christ)*” (1:41). The word “first” suggests Andrew’s priority. The first thing on his “to do list” was not to spend ten more years investigating and learning more about Christ before feeling qualified to introduce Him to others. Although he had not yet been called by Jesus to become a fisher of men, Andrew had already went fishing for his brother.

C. Be Personal

So, much of what we refer to as “personal” evangelism is so impersonal. We use radio, TV, flyers, cards, letters, email, websites, etc. However, Andrew personally knew his contact and gave him a very personal invitation. Others in the New Testament did the same: Philip found a friend, the Samaritan woman found her neighbors, Cornelius invited his relatives and friends, etc.

D. Bring them to Jesus

Another problem with our modern methods is seeking to win people by merely bringing them to a church building or win them with a man’s sparkling personality or a carnal form of recreation or promoting peer groups. The real objective is to bring them to Christ. This is the most effective means of conversion in all the world. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus not John the Baptist, not a building, not a group meeting, not a “fellowship” meal, but to Christ, Himself. Ever since we see Andrew’s name pop up on the printed pages of the New Testament, he is bringing someone to Jesus. He brought Peter, his brother. He brought the boy with the basket of food and Greeks seeking Jesus.

E. See the Opportunities

Andrew seems to have had the unusual ability to see great opportunities in the smallest and simplest things. At the feeding of the 5,000 Andrew saw the boy with the five loaves and two small fish. The result of this perception of such a small thing provided for the feeding of many and great glory to

Christ (John 6:4-9). Could you imagine the other disciples' response to Andrew. "That's right Andrew what is the boy's sack lunch among so many. Why did you even point out the boy's lunch?" Peter may have thought, "Oh, brother, you are embarrassing me!" However, with the small lunch from a small boy with Andrew's simple observation, Jesus performed a great miracle. How many millions of souls starving for the truth have been fed because of men with faith and vision like Andrew.

To many of the Jews of Andrew's day, the Messiah was to be the Savior of the Jews, not the Gentiles. Yet, one day Greeks came to Philip saying, "*sir, we wish to see Jesus*" (John 1:20-22). Philip did not know what to do about this odd request, so he brought it to Andrew's attention. Andrew saw this as an opportunity, so he and Philip brought them to Jesus. The Pharisees would never have thought to bring them to Jesus. Goodpasture said, "not only was Andrew the first home evangelist and the first foreign evangelist."

Today, we are blessed with far more opportunities and abilities than those of Andrew's day. We have television, telephones, cell phones, radio, the printed page, e-mail, internet, cars, planes, trains, buses and subways. Sadly, we seem to do less with more.

Once a congregation I had just started working with asked me what evangelistic programs would I implement to save souls in the community. They also asked how much money, manpower, and special tools would be required to start it. To their surprise I told them that I had no special program, no money would be required, no help needed for me to get things started and we already had the tools necessary. Next, they inquired as to how successful could I hope to be with this approach. I informed them that over the past six years an average of six souls from the community were saved per year. They insisted, "You're not going to have such lunch in his area. We have tried everything: radio, newspapers, door to door, etc. After all, where are you going to find your contacts." Well, they were right that next year we did not see six souls come to Christ, we witnessed seven being born again. Where did these contacts to teach come from? The first three were sitting in the pews of the congregation. They had been attending for months. No one had made the effort to bring them to Jesus. Sometimes the best opportunities are sitting in the pew next to you.

F. Do a Lot With a Little

As Americans we have always been taught to believe that BIGGER is better. Is this really true in relation to evangelism in the twenty-first century. In his book *Why Churches Grow*, Flavil Yeakley presents a statistical survey that shows that those churches with the "bigger is better" mind set have on an average, reached a "zero growth" condition (losing more members by death and apostasy than they are gaining by conversion). The Mormons learned that they had a 0.1% rate of "conversion" by knocking on 1,000 doors but that the percentage went up to 50% when members invited neighbors into their homes for a study. Perhaps, nothing is more effective than one person sitting down with another person and just a Bible between them.

Andrew knew how to do a lot with a little. With just one evening spent with Christ, He brought Peter. With his knowledge of a boy in the crowd with a lunch He fed 5,000. With the knowledge of Greeks seeking Jesus he introduced them to Christ.

Remember, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ, Peter became a leader among the apostles. He preached the first Gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He was given the keys of the kingdom by Christ (Matt. 16:16f). The first Gentile converts were taught by Peter (Acts 10). Additionally, Peter wrote two epistles found in our Bibles. Without Andrew the name of Simon Peter might not have been written across the pages of history of the Lord's Church.

Does a congregation have to have a large membership, a million dollar budget, a massive amount of man power, highly educated workers, thousands of programs, to save souls? NO! You could take the Andrew approach and do a lot with a little.

One man like Andrew could do a lot to bring souls to Christ. Our job is to plant the seed. God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Sometimes the seed we sow produces thirty-fold, sometimes sixty-fold or perhaps even a hundred-fold. Never underestimate the power of the seed, the Word of God. Never underestimate the power of a single common man sowing the seed. In 1903 there were seventeen communist countries in the world. By 1980 one third of the world was communist. We have all puzzled over the mathematical problem about giving a someone a penny and doubling the amount each day for

a month. Checked it out. You will be amazed how fast a little penny can grow. Just how fast would the Lord's Kingdom grow if someone like Andrew would lead one soul to Christ each year? And each new converts would in turn lead someone to Christ. How long would it take to teach every soul in the world?

It has been observed that the average church member has heard 4,000 sermons, 8,000 congregational prayers, 20,000 public songs, and saved 0 sinners! This does not have to be the case with you. You can be like Andrew and get started today bringing souls to Jesus. Don't wait for fancy methods or programs. There is a story to the effect that a certain society in South Africa once wrote to David Livingston. "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you. Livingston replied: "if you have men who will come ONLY if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is NO road at all." The church of today needs good men who will bring others to Christ even if there is no money, large building or fancy personal work program.

Other than these three short stories in the Gospel of John, we know very little about Andrew. The last thing told of Andrew is by tradition. He died in Edessa at the hands of Egeas the governor. This account says that he died on a cross put in the ground like an "X" for preaching against idolatry in the city. The "X" shaped cross is now called "Andrew's Cross." We all have the cross to bear, it is much like his. It requires us to seize the opportunities and bring people to Jesus.

Jesus: The Master Fisher of Men

Jesus was a carpenter by trade. He did have a lot of time and experience on the Sea of Galilee with several fishermen. On two different occasions Jesus help his fishing disciples catch a large quantity of fish. First, in Luke 5:1-11 the disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus had Peter cast out into the deep. The result of this was such a large catch Peter had to call for another boat to assist. After His resurrection Peter and several other disciples went back to fishing. Again they spent the night in the boat and caught nothing. Jesus called and told them to "*cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.*" So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish" (John 21:6). On another occasion Jesus told Peter to go fishing. When he caught a fish, he was to open its mouth and he would find coins to pay both His and Peter's temple tax. Now that is some fish story. No wonder the disciples began to listen to Jesus when He talked to them about fishing, especially fishing for men.

◆ Compassion for the Lost

A fisherman does not have to like fish or even eat fish to be good at his job. He certainly does not have to have compassion on the fish. However, he may throw the small ones back, so they can grow up to be caught another day. One of the most amazing aspects of Jesus ability to influence others is His love and compassion for people. You can talk to just about anything to anyone, if they know you really care about them. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking what he needed to do to obtain eternal life. "*Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me'*" (Mark 10:21). Throughout His ministry Jesus had a love for the lost with strong feelings of compassion.

- "*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with **compassion** for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd*" (Matt. 9:36).
- "*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with **compassion** for them, and healed their sick*" (Matt. 14:14).
- "*Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have **compassion** on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way'*" (Matt. 15:32).
- "*So Jesus had **compassion** and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him*" (Matt. 20:34).

- *“And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had **compassion** on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’” (Luke 7:12,13).*

Not only did He have compassion, He did something. Do not just see the needs of the lost and love them. Do something! Share with them the Good News.

◆ **Seize the Moment**

Jesus was very busy healing and addressing the crowds. However, He was never so busy that he could not stop and bait a hook for fishing opportunities. In John 4:1-42 Jesus and His apostles were passing through Samaria. While the apostles went into town to find something to eat. Jews normally did not have anything to do with Samaritans, but Jesus had compassion on all men and even women. When seeking the lost no such barriers can keep one from hooking onto the opportunity to fish for men. When a Samaritan woman came out to fetch water from Jacob’s Well, Jesus seized upon this opportunity to arouse her spiritual interest. First, he found some common ground: the need for water. He asked her for a drink. He had no means to get water for Himself but she did. Quickly He turned the conversation from the physical need for water to the promise of “living” water He could give to her.

Jesus was the expert when it came to choosing the right bait for the right moment to lure others into a conversation about their soul’s deepest needs. Not only did He use a little boy’s lunch of five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand, but He turned it into an opportunity the next day to teach the masses He was the bread of life come down from heaven (John 6). Whether it be a question, a lily in the field, a sower in the field, a barren fig tree, Jesus could turn the conversation to the spiritual topics people needed to hear.

When the disciples came back to see Jesus talking to the woman they questioned Him. She went off to the city to tell them about Jesus. He asked the disciples, *“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”* (John 4:35). The people were coming out to meet Him. They only needed to open their eyes to the opportunities that were right in front of them and not wait four months. A short time later, Philip would come to Samaria and baptize many of them (Acts 8:12).

◆ **One on One Personal Contact**

Much of what we call personal evangelism is not very personal. Most would rather just pass out flyers or preach on a radio without facing the lost person to person. Once I had asked an older Christian man to teach a new converts class in his home. He said he would only if I could guarantee three to four students. Otherwise it was not worthy his time.

Jesus took time for the single soul in need of His guidance to truth. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night to ask him how to enter the kingdom, He took the time to teach him (John 3:1f). When the rich young ruler came asking Him the same question, He told him what to do (Matt. 19:16-22). He spoke one on one with the Samaritan woman at the well and she went to the city to tell the people who she found. That one woman brought out to Jesus the whole city of Sychar. Jesus knew that souls are not just saved in large audiences gathering to hear the Gospel. Most are saved one soul at a time.

Many, many other lessons can be learned by observing the Master Fisher of Men. Study the Gospel accounts showing how Jesus interacted with people. You will be amazed by His examples on how to share the Good News with others.

Questions:

1. Why is it so important for a fisher of men to be truly converted, before he begins to convert others?

2. How much time did Andrew need to spend with Jesus in order to know He was the Messiah?
How much time did he need with the Messiah, before he could start bringing people to Him?

3. How can we make our evangelistic efforts more personal?

4. Is it possible to bring someone to church without bring them to Christ? Explain.

5. How important is seeing the opportunities in order to seek the lost?

6. How necessary is it to have a large congregation, big building, lots of money, etc. to saving the lost?

7. How long would it take to teach every soul in the world (8 billion) using the following model where each soul each year just reached one soul

Year 1: 1 = 2
Year 2: 2 = 4
Year 3: 4 = 8
Year 4:

8. Would it be fair to say that Jesus himself was quite a successful fisherman?

9. Can one be a successful fisher of men without compassion for the lost? Explain.
10. What often keeps us from seizing the opportunities to share the Gospel?
11. What is the value of one on one personal time with lost souls?
12. What other fishing for men tactics can we learn from Jesus: the Master?

Application & Discussion:

1. List some things that have been lost and the joy of finding them. Compare that to the joy of sharing the Gospel with the lost.
2. List several reasons why it is wise to save souls.

Homework: Find someone to share the Gospel with this week.

Someone to Love: Marriage

Which couple was married the longest in the Bible? Answer: Adam and Eve were married the longest provided that Adam outlived Eve. *"So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died"* (Gen. 6:5). Just think of the advice this couple could have given having been married 930 years? Of course, adultery, remarriage and in-law trouble could not have been areas where they had a lot of personal experience.

The years have taught me a thing or two about marriage. Here are a few things I have learned:

- ▶ Date a friend, marry your best friend and remain closer than a friend till the end.
- ▶ One good thing about being married the day before July 4th: I have been able to promise her fireworks for 33 years straight.
- ▶ It is noble chivalry to be the guardian of the purse in the shopping cart while the wife tries on a new dress. After all, the wife knows you not going to go too far with her purse, thus making you available to comment on which dress is the best. And keep in mind my Queen has knighted me Sir Pursealot.
- ▶ During our wedding the preacher dropped his three by five cards on the floor. Grandpa and the maid of honor were audibly crying. The window unit air conditioner was making a racket. The point is, you don't have to have a great wedding to have a great marriage.
- ▶ We wrote and memorized our vows (its not that hard I still remember my vowels: a,e,i,o,u. She reminds me often of my last three: IOU. More importantly and much harder is the need to remember your vows every day.
- ▶ Avoid waking up grumpy. After all everyone deserves some time to sleep in.
- ▶ The best thing about marrying a Christian (and not a child of Satan) is you will not have a devil of a father-in-law.
- ▶ It's okay to let your wife hold the remote once and a while. The withdraw symptoms will not kill you.
- ▶ If love is blind, 20/20 vision is revived in marriage.
- ▶ If the wife offers up burnt offerings for supper, eat up and be thankful she still treats you like a god.
- ▶ The best way to start a marriage and a honeymoon is to lock your keys in the car as soon as you arrive at the hotel.

Marriage as God Designed It

Our perception of marriage has changed over the years. During the 1920's adultery could be punishable by imprisonment in the state of California. Now, states are struggling with the idea of marriage between homosexuals.

From the beginning God has set forth the guidelines for the marital relationship. He made ONE man and made ONE woman for that man. They two become ONE flesh in marriage (Gen. 2:24). They are joined for ONE life-time not to be separated, save ONE exception and that is adultery (Mt. 19:6-9). Divorce is something that God hates. When we see divorce, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, adultery, through the eyes of God and not via the glamorizing of Hollywood, we too will hate all these perversions.

♥ Marriage is for Life

With divorce so popular and easy to obtain young couples need all the encouragement they can get to remain married. Although the laws of men will grant divorce for just any reason Jesus gave only one reason for divorce. *"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"* (Matt.

19:9). The only other acceptable way for a marriage to come to an end is death. Paul wrote, *“For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband”* (Rom. 7:2). This is why marriage is “till death do us part.”

Far too many Christians are abandoning the clear Biblical standards on the longevity of marriage. Some even have gone so far as to teach that divorce is acceptable for any reason so long as the two do not remarry. In fact, Paul taught just the opposite. *“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife”* (1 Cor. 7:10,11). Note Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:3-9. Jesus said, *“whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,] and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery”* (Matt. 19:9). He made it very clear that no man could divorce his wife for just any reason. Furthermore, *“God hates divorce”* (Mal. 2:16), because no matter what the reason someone has sinned and His institution of marriage is disparaged.

To every marriage heartache and headaches will come. Divorce is not the answer. Divorce should never be threatened or suggested in a fight. Better yet, a husband and wife shouldn’t even entertain the thought. Don’t be naive, the world is a hostile environment for marriage, but every marriage is worth fighting for. *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD”* (Prov. 18:22).

♥ **Be United as One**

Many wedding ceremonies use the unity candle. It is often used to represent two families creating a new family as the bride and groom marry. Two candles are lit at some point in the service. From these two candles the middle candle is lit and the couple blow out their individual candles to symbolize the extinguishing of their two single lives.

Marriage is a three fold relationship composed of a husband as the head and wife as the help meet and God who ordained marriage from the beginning. He should have the last word in any argument or decision. *“He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matt. 19:4b-6).

At the end of the very first wedding when God brought Eve to Adam they had no mother or father. However, God summed up the uniting of these two as one when He said, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”* (Gen. 2:24). This statement is repeated twice more in the Bible: once in the Gospel of Matthew and again in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians. Beside the physical aspect, the implications of these verses are various. First, a man and wife are no longer part of a mother/father family. So a spouse should not run home to mom and dad every time something does not go their way. They are now life-long companions and best of friends all the rest of their lives. They should no longer think “me”, “mine”, “I”, “my”, etc. but “we” and “us.” They have learned how to share their life together. A little girl once asked her mother why there was a bride’s cake and a groom’s cake. Her mother said she did not know. The little girl offered an explanation of her own. She said, “Its because they haven’t learned how to share yet.” Perhaps, there is a lot more truth than humor in her remark. Couples need to learn how to share. One final implication needs to be made. The great thing about two being one: it is easier to count on each other (Gen. 2:24). God never intended for marriage to be just a 50-50 proposition. Whoever said that doesn’t know the half of it. God intended marriage to be a 100-100 submission where the man gives 100% to being a husband and a woman gives 100% to being a wife.

♥ **Love Each Other**

The problem with today’s standard of marital love is endurance. True love lasts through difficult times. One of the quickest ways for a marriage to get into trouble comes in the form of financial problems.

Relationships are more important than riches. People are more significant than possessions. It

does not take a lot of money to love your honey. Jesus said, *“for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses”* (Lk. 12:15). If your wife totals the car two weeks after your final payment, just remember it’s your wife you love, not the car. *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”* (Eph. 5:25). However, I do still miss the car. Husbands should be willing to give up their lives for their wives as Christ did for the Church. So, he should at least be willing to give up some time, money, and personal desires. The best way to be and feel loved is to be the first to show our feelings of love.

When William Bennett heard a couple state in their contemporary wedding vows “...so long as we both shall love” he sent them a set of paper plates as a wedding gift. Most couples view “love” in marriage as a warm, fuzzy emotional feeling. This type of love will come and go as emotions do. Biblical love must be taught. Older Christian women are commanded to teach the younger women *“that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children”* (Tit. 2:4). Can a woman learn to love her husband? Rebekah was brought five hundred miles from her home to marry a 40-year old man whom she had never even seen.

♥ **Wives are to Submit To Their Husbands**

Oh, that dirty word that subjugates and demotes wife to such an inferior status. However, the Bible does not come across demeaning and hateful when it teaches wives to submit to their husbands. *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”* (Eph. 5:22-24). *“For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror”* (1 Pet. 3:5,6).

The term “submit” is from a military term that involved a soldier to put himself under a leader and take orders. Submission is not necessarily forced upon someone. A wife voluntarily gives to her husband an attitude of cooperation. This enables both husband and wife to function together in a productive relationship. When a problem comes up and a decision has to be made the democratic system of one vote for and one vote against will resort in a stalemate every time. Someone as to give in or nothing will ever get done. God has come up with a solution to these stalemates. The wife is to be willing to submit to the husband. Even nature illustrates this with mountain goats who meet on a narrow ledge on a steep cliff. They can start fighting and butting their heads and fall to their deaths. Instead, one goat will willingly lay down and allow the other to walk over him safely to the other side. This is a win-win solution for both goats.

What about those rare times when a good man will make an ungodly choice? After all, *“we must obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). If obedience to her husband necessitates disobedience to God, then the wise wife should remember that her obedience is limited to that which is “fitting in the Lord” (Col. 3:18). Abigail and Vashti are perhaps two wonderful examples of women who are immortalized via the scriptures for all women to emulate through out the ages. They stood against the godless demands of this husbands.

♥ **Husbands are to Honor and Understand Their Wives**

Husbands are able to understand their wives. How do I know? Because they are commanded to understand them. *“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered”* (1 Pet. 3:7).

He is to give, that is, portion out to her. Paul says he must nourish and cherish her (Eph. 5:29). This does not mean to give into the wife. As head of the family he will have to make decisions which affect the wife. These must be made with knowledge of the wife and done so while respecting the wife’s feelings, thinking, and desires. To give her honor is to render to her a just amount of self-esteem. Chivalry may be dead, but every husband must be a “knight in shining armor” who treats his wife like a princess.” By the way, the name Sarah means “princess”

To honor or esteem the wife requires husbands to accurately assess their value. To value their

work at home and for the home. To esteem her opinion. To demonstrate her importance.

Her emotions are different than her husbands. Things that may seem minor and insignificant to a man may be a crisis to a woman bringing her tears. She is weaker like a fine piece of china but still far more valuable than the coarse piece of crockery used to make pickles. She must be treated with care. One wife complained, "My husband simply takes me for granted. To him I'm another piece of furniture around the house. I'm only important to him for what I do for him, not for what I am."

So find a good wife and honor her. *"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies"* (Prov. 31:10).

♥ **Help Each Other Go To Heaven**

When God blesses us with children it is not only a life-long duty but a blessing that comes with eternal obligations. Godly parents will pray that God will help them raise their children in such a way that one day their children will go back to God. The choice of a godly spouse is essential to success. Now that you are married your spouse has the primary ability and opportunity to help you return to God. Wives can help win the souls of their husbands for the Lord. *"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear"* (1 Peter 3:1,2). Couples need to realize the role they play *"as being heirs together in the grace of life"* (1 Peter 3:7).

The Bible has focused on plenty of wives who discouraged the spiritual life of their husbands instead of encouraging them to be faithful unto the Lord. Eve tempted Adam with her disobedience to God in the Garden. Job's wife spoke as one of the foolish women when she instructed him to *"curse God and die"* (Job 2:9). Solomon's many wives lead him away from God to serving idols (1 Kings 11:1f). The idolatrous Jezebel "stirred up" King Ahab to do evil. In the New Testament Sapphira conspired with her husband Ananias to lie to God (Acts 5:1-11).

God created wives to be a help suited for their husbands (Gen. 2:18). They are commanded to seek instruction from their husbands (1 Cor. 14:35). Christian couples are to pray together (1 Pet. 3:7). They should work together like Priscilla and Aquila to save souls (Acts 18:22ff). This is the only way to make marriage become a foretaste of heaven. For marriage to be a taste of heaven couples should pray to heaven and read the words from heaven on a regular basis.

How To Have a Fair Fight

Fights or strong disagreements within marriage are inevitable, normal, even necessary part of every marriage. Disagreements need not be viewed as an obstacle, but an opportunity for understanding and growth. It could be the very thing needed to keep the lines of communication up and running. A couple that acts like a turtle retreating into its shell every time a disagreement comes along will not grow closer, but only apart as their difference go unresolved. A man told his buddy about a terrible fight he had with his wife. The friend asked, "How did it end." "Well, she came crawling to me on her knees", the husband replied. His friend then inquired, "What did she have to say". "She said, 'Come on out from underneath that bed, you coward!'"

Neither should a couple allow their disputes to go unchecked resulting in painful consequences for them and even the rest of society. The Los Angeles police department reported that during one considerable period, 80 percent of the morning rush-hour accidents were caused by people who had earlier been involved in arguments with their mates before leaving home. An even sadder story took place in Rotterdam, New York. A bride and her new husband had argued on their way from the cocktail lounge where the reception was held. In the heat of the argument, the groom left the car and she jumped behind the wheel and ran him down with the car. Thus, the real import of our study is to learn how to quarrel and not afflict unnecessary misery upon each other.

Why do couples get into ugly fights? First, is poor communication. They never learned to talk about a problem area without yelling and get all worked up. Instead of talking about the difference, some become indifferent. Others stunt communication by way of their dirty looks, sarcastic remarks, dominating the conversation, and intimidating their spouse with either verbal or physical threats. When working through a disagreement remember to fight the problem and not each other.

The key is to limit the amount of contentiousness in the marriage. Although the book of Proverbs describes for us the virtuous woman in chapter thirty-one it also depicts her counterpart throughout. *"A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping"* (Prov. 19:13). *"It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman"* (Prov. 21:9). *"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman"* (Prov. 21:19).

Second, may be a case of pre-marital blindness. Most couples do not fight until after they are married. Before they say "I do" everything is voluntary, afterward it is compulsory. For example, the girl loves the opera and the guy hates it. She sighs, "Oh, I'd love to go see 'Carmen'." He lies, "Oh, I'd love to go too!" She went to football games before marriage with him. After marriage they don't want to go. Before marriage she is dolled up, sweet, and submissive. Afterwards, she retires to take up the hobby of nagging. Before marriage he promises to work hard, take care of her, and spend time with her. Afterwards, he works hard, spends his own money, and she rarely sees him because he is hanging out with his buddies.

Finally, couples fight due to their self-centeredness. With some it is the "my way, or the highway" approach to a disagreement. Consideration of the other's desires are not given any regard. A sign in a wallpaper and paint store said, "Husbands choosing colors must have note from wives." Still others cannot stay away from an argument. Winning an argument is a means by which to boost their ego. Like a little boy heading for a mud puddle, they would like to splash right through any disagreement instead of learning to go around.

A marital conflict should end before the governor has to declare martial law. *"Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife"* (Prov. 17:1). Remember, the goal of a family fight is not to decide a winner and a loser. It is to bring the disagreement under control so that both spouses are benefitted and not hurt by the experience. Although I must admit, my wife lets me have the last two words in any argument: "Yes Mam!"

Questions:

1. How has the American perception of marriage changed over the years?
2. What are the only two ways for a marriage to end according to the Bible?
3. Explain why marriage is a three-fold relationship.
4. What is wrong with the view that marriage is 50-50?
5. What is the standard for a husband in loving his wife?
6. Can married couples learn to love each other? Explain.
7. What is submission?

8. Give some Biblical examples of submissive wives.
9. Why are husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way?
10. Name some couples in the Bible who did not help each other spiritually.
11. Why do couples get into ugly fights?
12. List three things couples can do to limit nasty fights.

Application & Discussion:

1. How can wives learn to be submissive to their husbands?
2. What can couples do to assist each other in getting to Heaven?

Homework: Show appreciation and give encouragement a fine married couple this week.

Something to Buy: Tools or Treasures

In Florida in a mall parking lot I observed the following bumper sticker: "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." Most of us work out of the necessity of earning money to pay our bills on things we thought we needed and to buy more things we think we cannot live without.

Great Gain Through Godliness

Everybody it seems wants to be rich. Not everyone will be rich. Jesus said, "*for you have the poor with you always*" (Mark 14:7). In 1 Timothy 6:6-10 Paul gives a formula but which every Christian can be rich. However, Paul gives a formula for getting rich that defies not only their view of gain but our modern concept of how to become wealthy. His formula is: "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Tim. 6:6). Godliness is the means of great gain. Paul's simple formula:

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain

\$ Great Wealth is Found in Godliness

Godliness refers to being like God. Faithful teaching accords without godliness (6:3). The exercise of godliness is profitable for all things now and eternal (4:8). God knows how to deliver the godly from temptations (2 Pet. 2:9). Godliness will make us fruitful (2 Pet. 1:5). Godliness results from loving God never from loving money.

\$ Great Wealth is Found in Contentment

Contentment "is an inward self-sufficiency, as opposed to the lack or the desire of outward things" (Vincent 4.275). This contentment comes from being godly and has as its ultimate source God Himself. "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13). A wealthy man thinks has all he needs and has want of nothing. A content person has all they need and has want of nothing.

Many of millionaire never knew the contentment of a godly man. The first billionaire in the world, John D. Rockefeller said, "The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money." It is the rich who visit psychiatrists and/or commit suicide more often than the poor. Money can buy a lot of things in this world. Two things necessary to have a great wealth, godliness and contentment cannot be bought a any price. True happiness and riches are found within the rich relationship a believer has with God in his heart, not the amount of money he has in his bank account.

\$ Great Wealth is Not Found in Temporal Goods

Paul went on to say, "*for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*" (1 Tim. 6:7). This is one of the most well attested axioms in the Bible. Job said, "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*" (Job 1:21). Solomon wrote, "*As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand*" (Eccl. 5:15). "*Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him*" (Ps. 49:16-17). An old Spanish proverb reminds us that there are no pockets found on a burial shroud. You can amass

material goods on this earth, but you cannot take them with you. Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a u-haul?

In fact, spending one's life to make more and more money to buy mounds and mounds of material goods does not make a lot of sense. After all, all of it one day will either rust, decay be stolen or inherited by another (Matt. 6:19,20) or burned up (2 Pet. 3:10,12). No matter how much you have you can never buy back your lost soul (Mk. 8:36). Truly, *"one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"* (Luke 12:15).

\$ Great Wealth Can Be Found in Food and Covering

Jesus had food and covering. He never showed signs of discontent. The bare necessities of life are all that is needed for one to be rich in this life. *"And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content"* (1 Timothy 6:8). A rich miser cannot even enjoy his own food. In fact, some have been known to starve to death while sleeping on a mattress loaded with money. A wealthy man like John D. Rockefeller could not even eat a steak because his pursuit for riches had destroyed his stomach with ulcers. Those who cannot be content most likely will never learn to be content. They will desire more and more.

\$ Worldly Wealth is Destructive

Christopher Winans, in his book, Malcolm Forbes: The Man Who Had Everything, tells of a motorcycle tour that Forbes took through Egypt in 1984 with his Capitalist Tool motorcycle team. After viewing the staggering burial tomb of King Tut, Forbes seemed to be in a reflective mood. As they were returning to the hotel in a shuttle bus, Forbes turned to one of his associates and asked with all sincerity: "Do you think I'll be remembered after I die?" Forbes is remembered. He is remembered as the man who coined the phrase, "He who dies with the most toys wins." Although most would say they reject this philosophy of life, the way they spend their lives betrays them. Jesus warned that one's life does not consist in his possessions (Luke 12:15). He asked, *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). Many people think money is security, but 1 Timothy 6:9 warns that it can be just the opposite. *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."* A godly view of money would result in the worshipers of the dollar in which they trust to turn to trusting in God instead.

Those who make it their life's goal to be rich set themselves up for a fall. Like a baited trap Satan waits for those who lust for more and more go for the temptation. Those who want to be rich continue to fall and fall for one scheme after another. Enough is never enough. *"He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity"* (Eccl. 5:10). They will borrow many things they do not have to purchase things they do not need. In the end they drown. It is interesting that Paul uses a metaphor here of a man drowning in his attempt to be wealthy. It is said that when a great ocean liner sank to the depths of the sea a richman went back for his money belt weighed down with gold. His efforts to swim to a lifeboat were in vain as he slipped beneath the waves and drowned. Many never have any riches or gold, but they drown in the red ink of credit card debit.

The Bible is replete with examples of those trapped by their own greed. Achan brought destruction upon himself because he took contraband at the destruction of Jericho. Judas hung himself having betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Ananias and Sapphira both dropped dead at Peter's feet because of their dishonesty over money. The list goes on and on.

\$ Worldly Wealth Costs Too Much

Next, is a look at one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible. *"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 Timothy 6:10). Notice it is not money that is the root of all kinds of evil, but the love of money. It literally means "affection for silver." No matter how much you have no amount of money is worth losing your soul. Gold cannot replace God. Fortune cannot replace faith. The riches of the world cannot compare with the riches of Heaven. Though money itself is not evil, but a gift from God; money tempts us into thinking it is the giver of all good things instead of God. Some Christians think they can love both God and material goods. Jesus warned, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise*

the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24).

Riches do not equal happiness. Jay Gould is rumored to have been worth \$100 million at the time of his death. He died saying, “I’m the most miserable man in the world.” Money die disillusioned by what money seems to promise and what it actually gives in return. All that is spent or lost to get wealth, time, marriage, children, health, the soul is too great compared to what little is received in return.

Trust Not in Riches, Guard Your Trust

Paul continues in 1 Timothy chapter six with advice for those Christians who are rich with the goods of this world. *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:17-21)*

Earlier Paul addressed those Christians who had a desire to be rich. They were told that great wealth was found in godliness and contentment. As an old German proverb goes, “he is rich enough who is contented.” They were warned about the love of money. Now, Paul commands Christians who are already rich how to deal with the money they have. Ephesus was one of the richest cities in the Roman world. Some of the rich would have obeyed the Gospel. They were not told to go and sell all they had and give to the poor or the church. Their riches did not prove they were more blessed or beloved of God. Nor were they necessarily lovers of money just because they had money to spare.

Dealing with those who are rich and those who are poor is a relative distinction. After all, those who may be poor in this country would be considered rich by third world standards. Those who are wealthy in the first century would not be so well off by today’s standards. Note, the Paul does qualify those who are rich as those in the present world or age. However, those who are rich would be those men or women not only have enough money to take care of their necessities for living but have enough left over to use at their personal discretion.

The Rich Must Be Humble

Having more money than others gives one a sense of power over others. This leads to an exalted opinion of oneself. Those who have wealth tend to think themselves wise and too good to associate as equals. *“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” (Rom. 12:16).* Some rich brethren may have looked down on poor members (Js. 2:1-4).

The Rich Must Trust in God

Jesus told a parable about a rich farmer who trusted in his bumper crop. *“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, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:19-21).* Riches cannot save your soul. Furthermore, with regard to riches it is here today and gone tomorrow. One moment the farmer was alive to enjoy his riches the next he was dead and far removed from enjoying them. However, if he would have trusted in God who is living and eternal he would have had both God and riches. On our money we put “In God We Trust”. The way we live our lives it should read, “In Gold We Trust.” Money is uncertain. It does not provide us with the security we seek. God is certain. He will be alive tomorrow. The cannot be robbed or bankrupt. Three reasons are given not to trust in money: riches are uncertain; God is living and can never die; and God gives all for our enjoyment. *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (Js. 1:17).* *“Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God” (Eccl. 2:24).* Not only does God supply us with all He does so richly. He is not stingy. Just giving enough to say He has helped. God keeps pouring out the gifts till they overflow.

The Rich Must Do Good

Whatever is noble or excellent in character. Good cannot be defined by the rich. They need the wisdom of God to know how to spend their money for good. The Bible can supply us with every good

work (2 Tim. 3;16,17). He can help the widows and orphans (Js. 1:27). The wealthy can help the spreading of the Gospel. Funds for needy saints as well as their needy lost neighbor can be provided by the rich Christians. A Christians cannot be just a giver so good can be done. He must do something with his riches. Too often wealthy members literally pass the buck so they can skip out on the work.

The Rich Must Be Rich in Good Works

The rich work to make riches to put to work for good works. Earthly gain is only good for heavenly riches. The term rich means that they are abounding with good works. The give enough and more to do the job. The work enough to accomplish the good.

The Rich Must Be Ready to Give

In order to be ready to give requires preparation. Some wealthy people can never help because they have their money always tied up in other ventures. Not only does money need to be available they need to make their own lives available. Implied in the term to give is a level of generous of bountiful given. It would require an unselfish, liberal, cheerful and sacrificial giving.

The Rich Must Be Willing to Share

David noted the kind of giving by the Israelites for the building of Solomon's Temple. David prayer, *"with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You"* (1 Chr. 29:17). Share is the term *koinonia* translated in other places "fellowship". These rich Christian are assessable to the needy. They have made themselves and their money available. They have not been forced or coerced into giving. They are like Barnabas instead of Ananais and Saphirra (Acts 4:32-5:11).

The Rich Must Store Up Riches

No better commentary on this passage can be found that what the Lord said in His Sermon on the Mount. *"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). Storing up is what a rich man does with his funds or in this passage foundation. These funds are not found as a future foundation on earth but in Heaven. Rich people long to learn about a good investment. There is no better investment than in the futures of mankind. To be rich in this life and poor in the next result from very poor financial planning.

No Need for Gold Bricks in Heaven

A rich man knew he would die soon, but he hated to leave his hard-earned riches behind. So he had all his assets converted to gold bars, put them in a big bag on his bed, draped his body over the bag of gold, and breathed his last. Next we see him at the gate of Heaven. Peter says (very surprised), "Wow! You managed to get here with something from earth! Let's see what you brought." He opened the bag, looked inside, then looked quizzically at the man. "You brought...pavement?!"

If the streets of heaven are paved with gold, why do we go through life acting as if we can take our valuables with us.

Heaven is adequate enough without the feeble trappings of this life, such as, money and gold. Jesus promised to go and prepare a place for us. *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:1-3). Do you believe He can make all the adequate preparations? Does He need your money and gold? If not give Him your heart and soul.

Are your preparing to walk the streets of gold or you busy packing up pavement?

Questions:

1. What is Paul's simple formula for becoming rich?

2. Define contentment.
3. Where else in the Bible is the axiom of verse seven found?
4. Why is the amassing of material goods such an illogical use of time and energy?
5. True False Those who are rich fall into temptation and a snare.
6. What will drown those who desire to be rich?
7. List some people in the Bible who were destroyed by their desire for riches?
8. True False Money is the root of all kinds of evil.
9. Explain why money costs too much.
10. Give some examples of evil which has been produced by the love of money.
11. How do the rich demonstrate haughtiness?
12. To what extent does God supply us and why?
13. Why should the rich do good instead of just pay people to do it for them?
14. What does "ready to give" imply?
14. How can the rich store up riches?

Application & Discussion:

1. How can one tell when he is falling in love with money?
2. Contrast the trustworthiness of money with the faithfulness of God?
3. Should a Christian set as his goal in life to become a rich man?

Homework: Count your blessings and consider how rich you are this week.

Some Things to Avoid: Anger, Anxiety, Procrastination

Anger

Some Christians have never learned how to deal properly with the God-given emotion: anger. That could well be one of the causes of many divorces in Christian homes, conflict among brethren, inability to get along with one's neighbors. Since anger is considered sinful, we justify our wounded feelings by calling them hurts, mistreatment and frustrations. Aristotle wrote, "Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way - that is not easy."

* **God Has Anger**

There are over eighty occasions in the Old Testament that scripture says, "*God was angry*" (Ps. 7:11). God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day. God is recorded to have been angry with Moses, Aaron, Solomon, and Israel.

When Jesus was cleansing of the temple He was angry - hotly angry in fact his anger "ate him up." Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up*" (John 2:17). A group of greedy businessmen who were getting rich off their "religious merchandising." He was often angry at the unbelief of the Jews. Jesus was once recorded as instantly angry, as when he turned on the hardhearted priests in anger at their malice and unbelief. "*And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other*" (Mk. 3:5).

* **God Gave Man the Emotion: Anger**

Anger itself is not a sin. Paul said, "*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:26,27). Not only is it proper to be angry, it is necessary. God created man with the natural emotion to be angry. It is as abnormal for a man not to be angry as it would be for one not to have joy or feel grief. The problem is not with the emotion but with how an angry person responds or reacts. Emotions are neutral by nature. They can be helpful or harmful.

Anger in a baby is quite normal. It will repress its anger to get the attention of an adult to feed it or change the diaper. Anger is a strong motivator. Sorrow motivates you to face the reality of a situation. Fear motivates you to be cautious. Anger motivates you to deal with a problem. All need to learn to use this emotion in productive ways.

* **God Commands Man to Be Angry**

Once a man bragged about a Christian "who was never angry in his whole life." To which I responded, "well I hope he repented, because God commands all Christians to be angry. Paul commanded, "*Be angry*" (Eph. 5:26). This is just as much a God-given obligation as Paul's command in verse thirty-two: "*be kind to one another.*"

* **God Wants Us to Be Angry When His Law is Violated**

Is it not natural for citizens to be angry when violent criminals are allowed to get away with breaking the law of the land due to some technicality. Many saints of both the Old and New Testaments expressed anger at those who resisted God and His Law. Paul was provoked at the many idols in the city of Athens (Ac. 17:16). Jonathan was angry at Saul when he realized that he was trying to kill innocent David (1 Sam. 20:34). Moses was angry over the golden calf. When Moses saw Israel's wickedness his "anger became hot" and he broke the tablets God had given him. Three thousand who

did not repent were killed. This was not out of revenge or hatred but Moses said, "You have sinned a great sin" (Ex. 32:30).

Righteous indignation is always right. It is directed at the sinner only because of his sin. MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) and MAD (Mothers against Drugs) are two groups who represent this attitude. An angerless apathy at sins and sinners shows a lack of love for God and His law.

* **God Warns of the Danger in Anger**

Again Paul said, "*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:26,27). The word "anger", you will find that it is fittingly only one letter short of "danger". Cain was angry at God because He did not accept his sacrifice and it led him to so lose control that he killed his own brother. Jonah became angry when God did not destroy Nineveh. An angry man is vulnerable, and Satan is working overtime to exploit this. When your anger gets out of control, proper rational thought shuts down. Maybe that's where the phrase came from that says, "I'm so angry I can't see straight!" John Clark once related a story about a woman who told a preacher she had a bad temper, but that it was over in a minute. "So is a shotgun blast, but it blows everything to pieces," was his reply.

* **God Helps Us Control Anger**

In dealing with anger the world suggests one just get it out of one's system so they will feel better. That is, as long as it is direct in such a way no one gets hurt.

What advice does the Creator have for this emotion found in His creatures. First, Paul tells us to deal with anger in a timely manner: "*do not let the sun go down on your wrath*". Second, practice self-control: "*do not give place to the devil*." If we allow Satan a foothold because of our anger, we can be sure he will mold us to be like him.

Anxiety

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus deals with the problem of anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34). The term "worry" is used in this text? The Greek verb *merimnao* "signifies to be anxious about, to have a distracting care" (Vine 160). The term deals with the thoughts harbored in the heart. Our English word for "worry" is derived from a German term meaning to strangle or choke. Men become so preoccupied with getting more, they choke the Word of God out of their lives. They are strangled by all the overtime, accumulation of things, to the point they do not have care for their soul, the needs of their neighbor, and the contentment in life with the things they do have.

⊗ **Do Not Fret About Food**

First, Jesus said, "*do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*" (Matt. 6:25). God made the body of man and knows what it needs. Life does not consist of just the food man eats and the clothing one wears. Excessive thought and concern over daily bodily maintenance does not demonstrate faith in God to whom we are to pray for our daily bread.

God created the birds and man. "*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*" (Matt. 6:26). If He knows how to take care of them shall He not take care of the very creatures who were made in His image?

⊗ **Do Not Languish About Longevity or Length**

Jesus further argued, "which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matt. 6:27). The word *helikian* is used either of height (stature) or length of life (age)" (Robertson 59). Either one of these is a good illustration of the utter futility of worrying. The fact is, although worry can not add years to your life, trusting in God can always add life to your years. The truth about worry is that it is more harmful to life of the body than healthful. Any man can worry himself to death over anything. No man can worry himself into more life.

⊗ **Do Not Care About Clothing**

They say clothes make the man. Men and women put a lot of emphasis on what they have to wear. Wearing just the right clothing makes one popular and fashionable. Just as clothing fashion and

fame is here today and gone tomorrow so is the grass and flowers of the field. *“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”* (Matt. 6:28-30). The “grass” is of the every day variety. This is a most fitting comparison to the life of everyday man. “The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40:7,8). Clothing wears out, goes out of fashion, can be out grown. One day the body will cease to house life and there will be no need for clothing. Being a citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven will result in a new body and new clothes (Phil. 3:20,21; Rev. 3:5).

⊗ **Do Not Distress - Develop Faith**

Distressing over the three-fold triad of daily concerns is forbidden. 1) *“What shall we eat?”* 2) *“What shall we drink?”* 3) *“What shall we wear?”* (Matt. 6:31). An excessive preoccupation with these worldly provisions is not productive. Anxiety over these concerns are fear-thoughts, not fore-thoughts. They must be countered with thoughts of faith. Of the four times the phrase *“you of little faith”* is found in Matthew’s Gospel all have to do with their anxiety over the minor cares of life.

⊗ **Do Not Be Anxious - Rely on the Father**

Worldly men who live without a relationship with God as their Father concern themselves with human self-sufficiency. Not so with the children of God *“for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things”* (Matt. 6:32). God’s children also work but have a trust and dependence upon God to care for them. Instead of worry about anything, Christians should talk to their Father in Heaven about everything. *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”* (Phil. 4:6).

⊗ **Do Not Seek Provisions - Seek First Spiritual**

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). “The word ‘seek’ is a present imperative, a command to fulfill a continuing obligation” (Barton 125). It is used in contrast to Gentiles who seek only after the things of this life. In contrast to the lost, Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and practice Kingdom righteousness.

⊗ **Do Not Fear the Future - Live Today**

No one except those in a coma or mindless can escape contemplating what their future holds. Some just live for the moment and are content. Others fret and worry their present lives away. Still children of God trust in God who alone knows the future. *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”* (Matt. 6:34). Worry is only alive today, but is always focused on life that is yet to be in the future. What a waste of time in that most of what a man will become anxious over will never come to fruition in the future. Tomorrow is a promissary note, yesterday is spent, only today is cold hard cash.

Procrastination

Have you ever met Ben Putinoff? He’s the guy who came up the famous saying, “Don’t do today what you can put off till tomorrow.” It has always been his plan to join Procrastinators’ Club of America, yet he never would take the time to complete and send in the application. He is rather skilled at getting things done at the last possible moment. Ben can take an easy job and make it almost impossible to accomplish. If it wasn’t for him tomorrow would not be the busiest day of the week. But he keeps talking about “Someday” as if it were this special day of the week when he can accomplish all the things he ought to have done on all the other days of the week. Beware, he acts like he is your best friend, but Ben Putinoff can just as easily become your worst enemy.

Ben Putinoff has been around for a long time. Jesus described him in a couple of His parables. He speaks of a rich farmer who had a wonderful problem for a farmer: a bumper crop (Luke 12:16-21). His decision was to build bigger barns and enjoy the rest of his life with his new found wealth. He made a mistake. He failed to remember to *“take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not*

consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12:15). The consequences of his failure to take care of his spiritual needs: *"this night your soul will be required of you"* (Luke 12:20). It is a fool indeed who takes time to provide for the body and not for the soul.

Despite the fact that Ben Putinoff has been very popular with people around the world for a very long time, He has some rather vile characteristics. He is a well known thief and robber. He steals from you time which is what your life is made of. Hour by hour and day by day life is stolen. Jesus recognized that opportunities exist here and now and not in the hereafter. He said, *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work"* (John 9:4).

Ben Putinoff is also a liar. He promises us that which does not belong to him. He keeps saying, "You can always do it tomorrow." The fact is all time belongs not to man, but to God. He created it and it exists for everyone by His good grace. He could chose to allow death to cast one into eternity this very hour or He could chose to end time and mankind on this earth by sending His Son. Do not believe his lie, "There is always tomorrow." Is like promising to pay your debt off with someone else's money.

America is a most wasteful nation. Americans waste more money, food, and energy than most nations have. Thanks to Ben Putinoff's influence the citizens of this country and all others are wasting one of the most precious irreplaceable gifts God has given to man: time. At the end of his miracle of the feeding of the multitude, Jesus commanded His disciples to pick up what was left over *"that nothing be lost"* (Jn. 6:5-12). No one can create or purchase more time. Once it is gone is it lost forever. Therefore Paul commands us to redeem *"the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:16).

The Boy Scout's motto is "Always be prepared." Ben Putinoff would have never made it in the Boy Scouts. His motto is similar: "You can always get yourself prepared - later." When you wake up and smell smoke and see the flames leaping about your home, it is too late to purchase fire insurance. Once the cardiologist informs you that your heart is failing is too late to start watching your cholesterol intake and start an intense cardio-exercise program. When death comes knocking or the Lord appears in the end it is too late to save the soul. The Hebrew writer warned, *"how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"* (2:2). There is no greater waste than to spurn the opportunities God has allotted all men through the Gospel to save their souls. Perhaps, life's best motto in the exercise of time is to love as though Christ died yesterday, arose this morning, and is coming back tomorrow. Endeavor to live so that when you die, even the undertaker will be sorry.

As harmless and innocent as Ben Putinoff may appear, he is in fact a murderer. Many have lost their lives and/or their souls by putting off until it was too late for them to be saved. Archeologists found that most of those Romans who lost their lives at Pompeii did so because they lingered too long. Many of those who went down with the unsinkable ship, the Titanic, could have been saved if they had not procrastinated. When it comes to one's soul's salvation, today is late, tomorrow is too late. Paul wrote, *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). Jeremiah warned, *"The harvest is past, The summer is ended, And we are not saved!"* (Jer. 8:20).

Perhaps, Governor Felix best represents all the negative aspects of Ben Putinoff. Paul was his prisoner and would preach to Felix. *"Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you"* (Acts 24:25). Did Felix ever had a convenient season? Did he ever have this opportunity again? God didn't put obedience on a "convenient season" basis. The truth is Felix have plenty of opportunities to seek the message of salvation from Paul. *"Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound"* (Acts 24:26f).

Do not waste another moment living in sin. Heed the warning and redeem the time and save your soul. God sent the preacher Ananias to Paul to tell him, *"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).

Questions:

1. Does God get angry? Give some examples.

2. True False Anger is not a sin but a commandment.
3. When or at what should a Christian be angry?
4. How can a Christian avoid the danger in anger?
5. Why should Christians not be anxious or worry about food, clothing or length of days?
6. How is worry a sign of little faith?
7. What priorities should a Christian have? Why do good priorities help with worry?
8. Why should we not worry about tomorrow?
9. What was the consequence of the rich farmer's procrastination in Jesus' parable?
10. How can procrastination be deadly?
11. Why did Felix procrastinate hearing Paul?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some practical things you can do to avoid procrastination?
2. Make a list of things you tend to worry about and list passages beside them talking about God's care or promises.

Homework: Don't worry - be angry - be busy.