

Important Decisions
for the
Christian!

12 Lessons

Prepared by:
PAUL E. CANTRELL

2009

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PAUL E. CANTRELL
84 Northview Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

pecantrell@juno.com

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"Important Decisions for the Christian"

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Lesson One

"How Do I Live an Abundant Life?"

We daily face the decisions of living! (Job 14:1). We constantly struggle with the challenges that living brings into our lives! (Gen. 3:17-18). If we make wrong decisions, we will suffer the consequences. (Gal. 6:7-8). It is important, therefore, that we learn how to make the best decisions that we can! (Joshua 24:14-15).

Man is living longer now; but, is he living an abundant life longer? What are some basic ingredients of an abundant life? Accumulating years of living and accumulating a great amount of knowledge and possessions may not be a guarantee of an abundant life. (Eccl. 1:18; Luke 12:15). To what or to whom can we turn so that we may learn how to live an abundant life?

Jesus said that He could give man abundant life!

He claims to be the giver of (the means of) an abundant life! If He is unable to help us live this kind of life, He was very foolish to promise something that He could not give! Look at the claims that Jesus makes:

John 10:10 _____

John 14:6 _____

Gal. 2:20 _____

Phil. 1:21 _____

Eph. 2:1, 5 _____

1. What is the life that Jesus is talking about? _____

2. How can a person be "dead" while he is still living? _____

3. Why did Jesus call life an "abundant life?" _____

4. Why is Christ the only One who can give us an abundant life? _____

An abundant life is one that is built around and in Christ! A person outside of Christ is said to be "dead!" Can a "non-Christian" live an abundant life outside of Christ? Who or what can give him an abundant life? What can give him the guidance and help that he needs to live an abundant life?

Abundant Living requires a Positive Outlook about Living

Can you imagine a "gloomy" person living an abundant life? In truth; what does he have to offer to others about living an abundant life? This type of person seems to be "fed up" with life and what it has to offer—that is the reason why he is "gloomy" or "negative" about life!

1. Why would a Christian have a "gloomy" outlook on life? _____

2. How does Christ give us a "positive" outlook on life?

a) Phil. 4:13 _____

b) Rom. 8:31 _____

c) Psa. 23:4 _____

d) John 14:1 _____

3. Should there be such a thing as a "gloomy" Christian? (Phil. 2:14) _____

4. How does having a positive outlook on life give us an abundant life? _____

Abundant Living is determined by how we view others

Have you ever heard this sentiment: *"The only trouble with life is that we have to live with people!"* We don't really have much choice about the matter—we basically "have to" live with others—in the midst of others! How we view others can make a great big difference upon the "quality" of our life. How can we have the right view of others that will help us to have an abundant life upon this earth? **I don't think the above quote is the right answer!** Jesus was God in the flesh—He lived among us (Jn. 1:1, 14). He recognized the struggle it can be to live with people. What did He have to offer that would help us have the right view of others? We want to look at three things (among many) that should help us.

A. **Be careful of how you judge others!**

Matt. 7:1-2 _____

Rom. 2:1 _____

Prov. 19:11 _____

B. **It is too easy to find fault!**

Rom. 2:10 _____

Rom. 3:23 _____

1 John 1:8, 10 _____

2 Cor. 5:21 _____

Prov. 10:12 _____

C. We need a proper view of ourselves before God and our fellow-man!

Jas. 4:6 _____

Prov. 11:2 _____

Prov. 16:18 _____

1. Why is it wrong to Judge others? _____

2. How can you make proper decisions without making judgments? _____

3. Why do we tend to find fault rather than see the good in people? _____

4. Why is it hard for some people to be humble? _____

5. How does our view of others help us to live an abundant life? _____

6. How does God help us to have a better view of our own lives? (1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10; 1 Jn. 3:1)

7. Why can't the proud, haughty, and arrogant live an abundant life? _____

8. How does Jesus help us to have a better view of people? _____

**An abundant life requires
Repentance, Confession, and Forgiveness**

It should not be hard for all of us to see that we are weak and sinful people and in need of forgiveness from both God and man! Relationships with both God and man can only be kept by Repentance, Confession, and Forgiveness! Since we live among people, we need to learn how to keep these relationships strong—and especially with God! If we expect to live an abundant life, we must practice all three of these great concepts.

Acts 2:38; 3:19; Luke 13:3 _____

Luke 17:3-4 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

Matt. 6:12, 14-15 _____

Col. 3:13 _____

1. Why is repentance so important to an abundant life? _____

2. Why is confession so important to an abundant life? _____

3. Why is forgiveness so important to an abundant life? _____

4. Why must forgiveness be a matter of mercy rather than justice? (Psa. 51:1; Jas. 2:13) _____

Concluding Thoughts

An abundant life must be desired—it is a matter of **CHOICE!** Jesus offers it to all, but we must make the choice to have that kind of life. If this kind of life were offered without cost to us, we would all jump at it! But since it has a "price-tag" on it, this is where the reluctance comes. We must be willing to pay the cost. Jesus died to make it possible! We have to die to self to make it possible in our lives (Gal. 2:20).

Lesson Two

"How Do I Discern Between Things?"

What makes some things wrong, bad, evil, and sinful; and other things right, good, righteous, and godly? Our lesson is on making decisions about things to determine whether something is right or wrong. To decide is to distinguish between, tell the difference between, to discriminate or differentiate, to detect or recognize the difference between things that are good or bad. The following passages use the word "discern."

Prov. 7:7 _____

1 Kings 3:9, 11 _____

Eccl. 8:5 _____

Mal. 3:18 _____

Matt. 16:3 _____

1 Cor. 11:29 _____

Heb. 5:14 _____

Heb. 4:12 _____

1 Cor. 12:10 _____

God has blessed humans with the ability to discern between good and evil, right from wrong, and truth from error. The reason why I need to be able to discern these things is because there are good or bad consequences of the choices I make. My ability to discern things helps me to make the right choices in life. While the Word of God spells out many things that are right or wrong (Gal. 5:19-23); it cannot possibly name everything. So, we must learn how to discern between things so that we can make the right choice.

How do I discern between things?

The Christian is constantly faced with decisions to make. He should want to make the best decision that he can. What will help me to make proper distinction between things so that I can make the right choices in life? The following things will help!

1. Listen to your conscience. The Apostle Paul said that he lived up to his conscience in all that he did (Acts 24:16; 23:1). Yet, he did not make all the right decisions for his life at all times. His persecution of Christians and giving consent to their death shows that the conscience is not an infallible guide. The reason is shown in the following passages:

1 Cor. 8:7, 12 _____

Rom. 2:15 _____

1 Tim. 1:5, 19 _____

1 Tim. 3:9 _____

1 Tim. 4:2 _____

1 Pet. 3:1 _____

2. Listen to what the Bible says! There are at least three ways that the Bible can help us to make the right choices:

- a) **Statements of those things that are right or wrong!** Listing of sins and virtues can help greatly such as: **Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 4:25-32; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:5-7, etc.**
- b) **Principles by which we can determine the rightness or wrongness of an action.** Decisions may need to be made according to principle, such as: **Matt. 18:3-5; Rom. 14:1, 19-21, 23, etc.**
- c) **Examples to illustrate!** The Bible is full of examples to help us understand what is good or bad, right or wrong, evil or righteous. **Lk. 12:16-21; Lk. 10:38-42; Jn. 8:3-11, etc.**

3. Time or Experience can help us to discern correctly! We will not make all of our decisions 100% correct! But, when we fail to discern correctly the first time; the second time, we should know better. Older age and wisdom go together; but, older age is not a guarantee of wisdom.

Job 32:9 _____

Prov. 2:10-13 _____

Prov. 1:22 _____

Heb. 5:12-14 _____

Some of the "Hebrew Christians" mentioned in Heb. 5:12-14 had been Christians for possibly 30 years, but had not grown in their ability to discern between the good or the bad. Jesus continually condemned the Scribes and Pharisees (religious leaders) for their inability to discern things.

Matt. 23:23 _____

Matt. 23:24 _____

Matt. 23:25 _____

We need to be constantly watchful!

1 Cor. 16:13 _____

Prov. 22:3 _____

Concluding Thoughts

It is expected of the Christian to grow in his ability to discern between the good and the evil—to throw out the evil and retain the good. Many of the problems that humans face is because of our poor discernment that leads to poor choices in life. And then on top of that, we also fail to learn by time and experience! But probably one of the chief problems could be to have the courage to make the right decision or do the right thing. Fear is an enemy of Discernment. We may be able to discern correctly, but be fearful of the consequences if I make the right choices. King Saul was condemned because he allowed fear to cause him to make a poor choice at a critical time (2 Sam. 15:24).

Lesson Three

"How to Deal with Immature Actions"

There is no doubt but that God expects His people to grow up and mature in Christ. Such is not only desired, but commanded!

1 Pet. 2:1-2 _____

2 Pet. 1:5-10 _____

2 Pet. 3:18 _____

The means of this growth comes from a continual study of the Word of God and the things that we take on in our lives. Our faith will become rooted and established in Christ Jesus (Col. 2:6-7). While all of us need to grow up; yet, there are some childish characteristics that we should hold on to, such as:

- 1. A simple faith and trust.** It is natural for children to trust in adults. God wants us to have that same kind of faith and trust in Him (Prov. 3:5-6; Isa. 12:2).
- 2. A compassionate concern for others.** Children are easily touched by the sufferings of others and even animals. As Christians we should have this compassionate concern for the poor, lonely, helpless, and infirm (Rom. 12:15; Eph. 4:32).
- 3. A forgiving spirit.** Children can be fussing and arguing in one moment and the next be playing happily with the same people. God wants His children to have a forgiving spirit towards all (Heb. 10:17; Eph. 4:32). We cannot expect God's forgiveness if we are unwilling to forgive our fellow-man (Matt. 6:12)

What are some Immature Actions?

When we become a Christian, we are called upon to put off the old man and put on the new. This is not an option, but a command! (Eph. 4:22-24). The old man of sin is to be put to death, crucified, or no longer to exist (Rom. 6:1-2, 6, 19). We are to stop our rebelling and become obedient children of God. But let's look at some immaturities that we need to put out of our lives.

1. Lev. 19:16; 1 Tim. 5:13 _____

We can overcome the sin of tale-bearing by (1) Going to work, and (2) Stay out of the other fellow's business.

2. Gal. 5:26; Phil. 2:3-4 _____

It is characteristic of little children to want and strive to get the attention of adults. They want to

be noticed, loved, and cared for. Some Christians also have a problem of wanting attention—and often doing some drastic things to secure it. The solution is simple: "***Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.***" (1 Pet. 5:6). Grow up! Stop thinking that the world revolves around you.

3. Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10 _____

We have often heard the statement: "*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!*" However, little children have more problems with: "*All play and no work makes me happy!*" We do our children an injustice when we do not teach them to work. Many people do not grow out of this irresponsible state of childhood. They want to play and enjoy life and not have all of those responsibilities. Responsible people are those who have grown up—put away their childish ways (1 Cor. 13:11).

4. 1 Cor. 15:58; Phil. 2:12 _____

Children can be very undependable, inconsistent, and changeable. They are easily detracted and do not finish a job that they are given. It is the same with adults who have not grown up. It is not easy to stick with a difficult responsibility, but that is one of the tests of a mature person. God wants us to grow up, be dependable, be steadfast, and not easily moved away from what is the right thing to do. The fickle person will never meet the demands of God's way of living.

5. 1 Pet. 3:11; Rom. 12:18 _____

Self-centered children often wind up fussing and fighting over the smallest things. They will argue about most anything, such as: "*My daddy is the Stronger,*" or "*My daddy makes more money than your daddy,*" etc. They argue over who gets which toy, first in line, who hit who first, and many more things. But there are adults who act much the same way—they haven't grown up yet! God hates those who sow discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19). The mature person seeks to be at peace with all men (Rom. 14:19).

6. 1 Cor. 13:5 _____

Little children are often quite rude. They run into older adults, not being concerned about them being hurt. They break in line instead of waiting their turn. They mock and make fun of others not realizing the harm that they can do. But some adults have never grown out of this mentality. They often act very rude and unkind to their fellow-man. They get a perverted sense of satisfaction out of criticizing and chiding others. Their joy comes from inflicting wounds instead of binding them up. It is their desire to make people weep and not to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). With some adults, it is hard for them to love others because they are so much in love with themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

In 1 Cor. 16:13, God expects His children to grow up and behave like adults. Some times it is not easy to be mature or act mature, but God calls upon His people to put away childish actions and put on those actions that show that we have grown up. Mature people show strength and bravery.

1 Thess. 3:10 _____

Heb. 13:21 _____

1 Pet. 5:10 _____

Jas. 2:22 _____

1 Jn. 4:17 _____

1 Jn. 2:5 _____

Lesson Four

"How to Overcome Worry"

Worry is something we do inside of us and reap the consequences inward, as well as, outward! God tells us that we should not spend our time foolishly by worrying about things we can have no control over.

Matt. 6:25 _____

Phil. 4:6 _____

Worry has several synonyms that are used by translators of our Bible, such as: **Anxious, Troubled, Fretful, Agonize, Lose sleep over, be bothered, undue concern.**

We determine in our minds whether we will be happy and content or worry and discontent. Obviously, outside influences try to take away our peace and security. We need to fight and win the battle internally so that we can show contentment and peace outwardly.

Worry can become habitual in our lives. "Gloom and Doom" can become a part of our make-up as a person. If this habit is formed early in life, it will make it very hard to put such away. God has made it clear that He does not want His children to be anxious, worried, or fretful over things in their lives, but to be contented, at peace, and trusting in His promised care.

Basic Things People Worry About!

Jesus mentioned several things in Matthew 6:25-34 that humans usually worry about, such as:

Matt. 6:25 _____

Matt. 6:27 _____

Matt. 6:34 _____

Putting Away Worry!

What God commands, we can do—and must do! He definitely does not command something that we are incapable of doing. Since worry is something done inside with the heart or mind; then, we must find help to deal with our mind or heart so we can put away worry from our lives.

Phil. 4:4 _____

To rejoice is a thought process of the mind. We need to place our thoughts on the good things that we are thankful for—so that we can find joy and not be fretful.

Phil. 4:6

Prayer is our way of turning to God for help, for answers, and for encouragement in the midst of life's challenges. But, like Job, we may not find an answer to the "why" things are happening to me like they are. Prayer helps us to place these things in God's hands—trusting that all will work out for our good (Rom. 8:28). Jesus reminds us that God takes care of the birds—will He not be more concerned for His children than the birds (Matt. 6:26). God calls upon us to **trust Him** and enjoy the peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Phil. 4:8

We are called upon to place our mind and heart on virtuous and noble things; rather than the undesirable things about us. This requires some self-control on our part, but this also is possible and is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23).

Matt. 4:31

Doubt shows that our faith or trust in God is weak—it needs to be made stronger! Go to the source of strength—go to the promises of God. We must believe that God will take care of His people (1 Pet. 5:7; Rom. 8:31-32; Jer. 17:7-8; Prov. 3:5).

1 Tim. 6:6-8

It is important that we learn to accept ourselves, our limitations, and our abilities! Our world is still one in which some are given **five** "talents," and **two** "talents," or even **one** "talent!" (Matt. 25:14-30). Being anxious or fretful about what we do not have will not give us more. Unrealistic expectations can make life gloomy and hopeless. Ambition is needed, but so is realism. It may be good to reach for a star, provided one keeps his feet on the ground. Acceptance of ourselves will help us to be ourselves and be at peace. People can worry themselves sick trying to be something they are not.

Phil. 4:13

The Apostle stated that He could do all things (whatever that is required by God) with the help that he received from Christ. We **can do** what we need to do to be right with God! It requires strength to live up to our responsibilities, but that strength is continually available to us in Christ Jesus! When we have done our best, why should we worry?

Matt. 6:34

"Live one day at a time!" is the advice of Jesus! But Jesus is not saying we should not plan for the future. But He does condemn the person who plans his future activities without saying: ***"If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that."*** (Jas. 4:13-16). None of us knows how long we will live or when we shall die. The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today what needs to be done. Do not worry about tomorrow; but rather, do your duty for today the very best you can!

Prov. 16:27-30 _____

The wise man describes this person as an "ungodly" man. He doesn't believe in, nor does he trust in the God of heaven. He looks for the evil, not the good. He even helps to bring about the evil that is in the world. The godly man is the one that sees not only the evil, but he also sees the good all around him and rejoices in such. His thoughts are not built around all the evil in the world but the good that is all around him.

Concluding Thoughts

God does not want His people to put on a long face and expect the worst, but rather He has provided help for us to wear a smile and anticipate the best. Worry, anxiety, or fretfulness does not make my world better, but worse. We are commanded to rejoice and be exceedingly glad (Matt. 5:12).

1 Pet. 1:8 _____

1 Pet. 4:13 _____

1 Thess. 5:16 _____

Lesson Five

"How to Deal with Enemies"

To brag that you have no enemies could be an indication of a "two-face person." By this we mean that if you have no enemies, it could show that you have no convictions about things (Lk. 6:26). Why do people have enemies? It is usually because of a difference in outlook, beliefs, or actions. Jesus assumed that His followers would have enemies and taught them how to deal with them (Matt. 5:43-45; 5:11). The inspired Apostle stated the likelihood of such when he told Timothy: ***"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*** (2 Tim. 3:12). I think that "persecutors" are generally considered to be enemies. How should God's children deal with such people?

What Causes Enemies?

The Christian should strive to ***"live at peace with all men!"*** (Rom. 12:18). I guess no one really wants to have enemies. God wants His people to be "peace loving" people—not the kind of people that causes harm or hurt to anyone. However, such may not be possible simply because of the attitudes and actions of people.

Ps. 35:19 _____

2 Thess. 3:2 _____

Some times it is just impossible to deal with or reason with people. People can be so full of enmity, hate, pride, resentment, bitterness and vengeance that they become unreasonable. They will often take their enmity out of even innocence people. Following are Scriptures that indicate why we have enemies:

Prov. 26:28 _____

Jas. 4:4 _____

John 17:14 _____

Gal. 4:16 _____

Matt. 7:6 _____

People usually become our enemy because they consider us a personal threat in some manner to them—their dignity, job advancement, popularity, social standing or financial welfare.

Matt. 2:1-18 _____

III John 9 _____

But, whether we have enemies because of what others think or whether we make them by our actions—they are all our enemies. How should we treat them?

How Should We Treat an Enemy?

Matt. 5:44 _____

Rom. 12:20 _____

Rom. 12:19 _____

1 Sam. 24:17 _____

Lk. 23:34 _____

Acts 7:60 _____

1 Pet. 2:23 _____

Prov. 24:17 _____

Ps. 59:1 _____

Concluding Thoughts

I may not be able to keep from having enemies at the best that I can do; but, I can help from having a wrong attitude and wrong actions towards them. With proper insight, attitudes, and actions—my enemies could become my friends!

Lesson Six

"How to Make Proper Friends"

Proper friends are very desirable in anyone's life! They can be a source of great encouragement in facing the challenges in life (Prov. 17:17). And, since we are all made somewhat different, friends can be a help in areas where I am weak. We can help to "sharpen" one another (Prov. 27:17). We can feel free to share the inner-most thoughts of our heart with a true friend. Yes, friends are a blessing; but, with friendship comes responsibility. I have to learn not only to choose friends wisely, but to also act wisely to keep them as friends. To have friends, I need to be a friend to others (18:24).

Prov. 6:3 _____

Prov. 16:28 _____

Prov. 17:9 _____

Prov. 22:24-25 _____

Jas. 4:4 _____

Jesus spoke of Himself as being a friend sinful man—he laid down His life for us to show His friendship (Jn. 15:13). He was said to be a friend to Publicans and Sinners (Lk. 7:34). He showed His friendship as we must do (Jn. 15:14; Prov. 18:24).

Making and Keeping Friends!

Making of friends should not be based upon their wealth, education, or prestige, but rather upon their being the right kind of people, regardless of their status in life (1 Cor. 15:33). We need to think seriously about what we can do to attract more friends and be able to keep them.

Prov. 18:24 _____

Even the lowly dog can show us that to make friends, you must be friendly. There needs to be something about us that would cause another person to want to be our friend.

Prov. 17:17 _____

It is hard to get and keep friends with bare compliments! In the story of the Good Samaritan, who was truly the friend to the wounded man? (Lk. 10:30-37). Many a friendship is only "skin deep." Trials and adversities can help to show who is a true friend or if it is only an acquaintanceship.

Phil. 2:3 _____

A spirit of humility can help to make true friends. Jesus associated with all classes of people, but did not partake of their sins. He was truly a friend of Publicans and Sinners (Lk. 7:34).

Phil. 2:4 _____

Matt. 20:28 _____

Jesus has shown us the way to be true friends (Jn. 15:13-14). He stayed with God's plan to redeem us even when it required giving up things, or even His life. He came among us to be a servant and not to be served. We show our friendship to others by our unselfishness.

Col. 3:13 _____

Eph. 4:31-32 _____

Friendship is shown to others when we are forbearing and longsuffering with the mistakes and actions of others. Jesus stated it well in Matt. 7:3!

Phil. 1:10 _____

Rom. 13:13 _____

It is easy to make friends and keep them when we are sincere, truthful, and honest in our words and in our actions. Friendship is usually natural and spontaneous. It cannot be forced. There must be words, attitudes, or actions that help to portray something to others that causes them to want to be my friend.

Matt. 7:12 _____

To treat others as you want to be treated can certainly help to make friends of like-minded people. When we take advantage of one's friendship, we tend to lose them.

2 Tim. 1:16 _____

Paul was in prison and appreciated so much the friendship of Onesiphorus. He was not ashamed of Paul being in prison for the preaching of Christ. His loyalty was shown by being there when others had forsaken him. Job was hurt because his supposed friends were not loyal to him (Job 19:14; 19:19). Disappointment in a friend can come sometimes because of our unreasonable expectations. Let's be sure that our expectations are reasonable.

Friendship can be a "one-way-street!" But, it is best if it is a "two-way-street!" Let's be sure that we are upholding our part in a friendship.

Concluding Thoughts

It would be very hard for us to compare our friendship with others to the friendship that Jesus has offered to all men. But He is the example that we should be using in order to be a true friend. True and deep friendship can truly be a blessing to each other. It is worth the effort to deepen our friendships with others. Most of all, we need to be true friends of Jesus (Jn. 15:12-14).

Lesson Seven

"How to Make the Best Use of our Time"

Everyone who is born into this world is given time to live upon this earth. To some, their time may be short; but to others, it may be long. Yet, for all, whether short or long, we need to make good use of our time that we are granted. The main reason is obvious—our lives will be full of challenges (Job 14:1-2) and we never know what the next day may bring forth for us (Prov. 27:1). Time is a precious commodity, but once neglected or misused, it cannot be recalled. So, we need to face up to our challenges and learn how to deal properly with what time we are given.

Ps. 39:4 _____

Ps. 90:10 _____

Ps. 90:12 _____

We all need to eat nutritiously, sleep adequately, work sensibly, exercise sufficiently, and relax restfully. I need to be concerned about whatever may contribute to my longevity in this life.

Eph. 5:16 _____

If we are to make the best use of our time, we have to come to grips with **idleness!** Idleness is the wasting of time. Idleness is condemned because it leads to other bad things as well.

1 Tim. 5:13 _____

But there is another problem that needs to be faced up to in regards to the use of our time—**procrastination!** This is the temptation to put off until tomorrow what should be done today. The emphasis in Scripture is upon "now" or "today."

2 Cor. 6:2 _____

Heb. 3:7-8 _____

Prov. 27:1 _____

Lk. 12:16-21 _____

How many things have we put off until tomorrow, but we just never got around to doing them. One of our greatest challenges is to use our time wisely so that we will not be ashamed of our negligence's.

Ways to Misuse Time!

We "save" time by not wasting it. We waste time when we do not use it properly. Let's look at some ways we misuse time.

1. Application. If we are to accomplish things, we must apply ourselves to the task before us. Play is easier and more fun for children, but adults need to put away our childishness and apply ourselves.

a) **Eccl. 9:10** _____

b) **1 Cor. 13:11** _____

2. What I put into my mind. There is all kinds of demoralizing literature and movies that we can fill our minds with. Such does nothing towards building us up; but rather, it lowers our ability to be of use by God.

a) **Phil. 4:8** _____

3. Recreation. Everyone needs some recreation; but, let's be sure that it recreates! If it tears me down physically, mentally, morally or spiritually, it is not recreation but dissipation.

b) **2 Tim. 3:4** _____

4. Thinking on past mistakes. No human is perfect and all of us have our weaknesses. The Bible points this out about some of its greatest "heroes." The Apostle Paul made it clear that he had sinned grievously by persecuting the church. God forgave him and he put all of that behind him. We must not get bogged down in the past or we cannot go forward.

a) **Phil. 3:13** _____

b) **Heb. 8:12** _____

5. Worry over the Future. We need to keep our faith strong in the promises of God. We need to turn loose of yesterday and live to the fullest today!

a) **Rom. 8:28** _____

b) **Matt. 6:33** _____

6. Gossiping. To say the least, gossiping and listening to such is a poor waste of time. It is also hurtful and most of the time false. I need to refuse to use my time by listening to gossip or passing it on to others.

a) **Lev. 19:16** _____

b) **Prov. 26:22** _____

7. Sleep. Too much sleep that is not needed by the person can be a waste of time. Humans need sleep, rest, and work—but we must keep them in proper proportion.

a) **Prov. 20:13** _____

Concluding Thoughts

We can make poor use of time by being so disorganized that we get little done. We can also make poor use of time by delaying in making critical decisions. The 5 foolish virgins that Jesus told about were probably good women, but they failed in the proper use of their time (Matt. 25:1-12) in order to be ready when the Bridegroom came. ***"Too late"*** is not what we want to hear in the Day of Judgment! So, let's make better use of our time.

Lesson Eight

"How to Have Good Work Ethics"

All of us have the challenge to supply our needs so that we can survive upon this earth. We call this "work" or "labor." God desired for man to work or labor for his survival from the very beginning. Even while Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they were given work to do.

Gen. 2:15 _____

After man's fall, God increased the need for man to work for his survival.

Gen. 3:19 _____

The necessity of work is again emphasized in the New Testament, but in stronger terms.

2 Thess. 3:10 _____

Jesus worked, probably as a carpenter, while he was upon the earth.

Mk. 6:3 _____

While some men may look upon work as a curse, there is good reason to believe that God has designed work for man's good.

The Value of Work!

1. It strengthens the mind and the body. An unused muscle remain underdeveloped or withers into helplessness. Physical activity develops the body, study stimulates the brain, and adherence to moral principles strengthens man's inner nature.

a) **1 Tim. 4:8** _____

2. It makes sleep and rest more enjoyable. The body and the mind can awake refreshed and ready for the next day's activity.

a) **Eccl. 5:12** _____

3. It avoids the destructiveness of idleness. *"An idle mind is the devil's workshop!"* God designed that we be busy about life's challenges. People who retire from work leave themselves open to temptation with too much time on their hands. There are plenty of good works that we can busy ourselves with rather than "rusting away!"

a) **2 Thess. 3:11** _____

b) **Titus 3:14** _____

4. It brings happiness to the mind or heart of man. God designed work for our well-being. The mind needs to be constantly challenge or it will gradually go down hill.

a) **Prov. 6:9-11** _____

5. It helps avoid wasting our life (time). If we waste time, we waste life. Proper working helps us to make the best use of time and blesses our life.

a) **Eph. 5:16** _____

Things that Make a Good Worker!

Some workers are good; some are poor; and some are medium. A Christian should be a good worker! He should understand that he is a part of the world's work. He should realize the value of his work in the lives of his fellow-workers and their families. For instance, a farmer grows wheat that puts bread on the table of mankind. The carpenter helps to build a house for the shelter and protection of the ones who buy it.

1. The worker needs to see himself as providing help for others and that which blesses others. He is not alone in his efforts to bless others. He not only blesses people with the services he offers, but makes money to care for his own family and even to help others.

Eph. 4:28 _____

2. A worker needs to enjoy his work to be the most productive. Surveys show that workers do not produce as well in a job they dislike. In fact, it is believed that most workers only produce about half of what they are capable of in an undesirable job situation. Liking your employment is not wholly dependant on the job, but on self and self-discipline.

Phil. 4:11 _____

3. A worker needs to see the need for diligence. The slothful man can not succeed or bless others. Doing a good job does require diligence on the part of the laborer. It just doesn't happen by itself.

Prov. 10:4 _____

Prov. 22:13 _____

4. A good worker is an honest person. He is honest in words as well as in his deeds. He needs to understand that to take pay for services not rendered is theft.

Rom. 12:17 _____

Eph. 4:28 _____

5. A good worker is a productive worker. He is being paid to produce. There will always be a demand for a productive worker; but not for the worker who produces little or nothing.

Matt. 21:19 _____

Matt. 25:26-30 _____

Concluding Thoughts

Labor can be either a blessing or a curse—it depends upon how we view such. God has designed us to work. He not only wants us to be busy at work but to also be a good worker, a productive worker. A good "work ethic" can make labor a blessing for ourselves and others.

*Lesson Nine****"How to Have and Keep a Good Influence"***

When Jesus told his Apostles and others that they were to be "salt" or "light" in the world (Matt. 5:13-16), he was talking about the impact or influence they could have upon mankind because of their connection with Jesus. Our influence on people can be either good or bad or both. A lot depends upon our attitude and concern that we have for others. Influence is exerting either consciously or unconsciously. We can try to sway people, persuade, or pressure people to do something or even try to control or manipulate people by our influence upon them. The reason **why** we want to influence people is important. Our motives can be either good or bad. Obviously, the Christian wants to have a good and strong influence on all people around them for their eternal good. Thus, we should want to have and to keep our influence as good as possible.

The Foundation of a Good Influence

If we go back to the context where Jesus told his audience that they could be "salt" and "light"—we can see what kind of people would have this kind of impact on the people around them. Jesus had just finished giving the "Beatitudes." (Matt. 5:3-12). It would be worthwhile to see what kind of people Jesus was referring to that would be influential in the world.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit. These are people who recognize their spiritual poverty! They are spiritually bankrupt without God's guidance and help. They know that God and He alone can meet their spiritual needs. Man's fall came because of his pride. His rejection of Jesus is because of pride. Until a man humbles himself and recognizes his true condition before God, he cannot be saved! The poor in spirit see themselves as rebellious sinners who need God's forgiveness and guidance in their lives.

Matt. 18:3-4 _____

2. Blessed are those who mourn. We are to mourn over our rebellious actions against God and our fellow-man. Mourning shows remorse and regret over our wrong actions and that we are desirous of changing our ways and letting God guide us. True joy comes from true mourning because we are blessed beyond measure to be accepted by God. Comfort (forgiveness) comes to those who are truly sorry over their sinfulness before God.

Rom. 4:7-8 _____

3. Blessed are the meek. The meek are under the control of God—they are strong, but gentle. They can be taught God's way (Ps. 25:9; Jas. 1:21). They have the strength and gentleness to help reclaim the wayward (Gal. 6:1). Meekness is used to identify Moses (Num. 12:3) and Jesus (Matt. 1:29-30). God loves those with a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4). Meekness is not weakness, spinelessness, or sentimental fondness—but strength under control.

Ps. 147:6 _____

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. To hunger and thirst after something infers a strong desire for righteousness. We are to seek God's righteousness, not man's way to be righteous (Rom. 10:1-2). And man will seek in vain to become righteous before God if he rejects Jesus as the Son of God—as Lord and Master (John 12:48). Those who are spiritually weak and sickly need to feed on God's source of righteousness—the Word of God that is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16).

Col. 2:6-10

5. Blessed are the merciful. To be merciful is to have compassion on the unfortunate (Matt. 15:22; 17:15). But it also can have reference to the sparing of punishment for one who justly deserves it (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Such a person will show compassion on the suffering and forgive those who sin against them. Showing mercy to the fatherless and widows is called "**Pure and undefiled religion.**" (Jas. 1:27).

Eph. 2:4-5

6. Blessed are the Pure in heart. We like and appreciate things that are clean: houses, streets, water, the air we breathe, etc. We generally like the pure, not that which is contaminated by mixture. We understand that things (such as gold) can be purified by heat. We believe Jesus is trying to stress the need of purity—morally and ethically! He is talking about hearts that have been purified. Only those whose hearts are pure can find God and be blessed.

Prov. 3:5

7. Blessed are the peacemakers. Peace is the absence of turmoil, fighting, and strife among human beings. But Jesus would include between God and man as well (Ps. 29:11). God offers peace to those who come to Him, and He also offers a blessing to those who help to make peace or maintain peace. Jesus said that it is the peacemakers that are blessed—those who help to keep a unity or oneness with others about them. It is the effort that is put forth to unite men in love and goodwill.

John 14:27

8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for Righteousness' sake. Jesus is not talking about those who are persecuted, but those persecuted for righteousness' sake! He promises a blessing to those who will faithfully endure such for the kingdom of heaven's sake! Persecution will cause some to fall away, but others to become more mature and stable as followers of Christ. It can also help us to see what is the more important things in life.

Rev. 2:10

Concluding Thoughts

The above things are some of the basic fundamentals in order to have a good influence in our lives. It is possible that much more could be shown, but these do help us to see that influence is something we have over a period of time by dealing with the challenges of being right with God. Our influence does not have to be forced upon others, but it will come because of who we have become over a period of months and years. We definitely believe that the above people will truly become "salt" and "light" to those around them.

Lesson Ten

"How to Deal With Unpleasant Things"

Life has its challenges! To survive, to get ahead or just to hold our own sometimes, can be a challenge. Life has many pleasant things for us to enjoy—but, it also has its unpleasant things too. We are happy for the pleasant things, but what about the unpleasant things? How well do we cope with them? Our Lesson is trying to prepare us for dealing with these unpleasant things of life. The following thoughts are given for your evaluation and use if you feel they can be worthwhile.

1. Be prepared for unpleasant things that come to all! Living on earth requires exertion and struggle at times. We not only struggle to deal with things in this physical world; but, also the forces of evil in the moral and spiritual world.

Eph. 6:11-12 _____

God allows these challenges to come, but assures us He will not give us more than we can handle.

1 Cor. 10:11-13 _____

Becoming a Christian does not give us a "bed of roses" for our journey on earth.

Matt. 7:13-14 _____

God's children have had to struggle in all ages against hate, misrepresentation, betrayal, persecution, and plans that go bad.

1 Pet. 4:12-16 _____

Unpleasant things can discipline us, humble us, and make us more dependant upon God.

Heb. 12:11 _____

Unpleasant things can also test our faith in God.

Heb. 11:17 _____

2. Examples to encourage us. It is one thing to be aware of the coming of unpleasant things, but quite another to properly cope with them. God not only tells us, but He has given us examples to reassure us that we can deal with them.

a) Joseph (Gen. 37-41).

- ◇ He was sold into slavery by brothers who were envious of him and hated him (Gen. 37:28).
- ◇ His good name and reputation was ruined by a lying and conniving woman. (Gen. 39:7-20).
- ◇ While unpleasant things were plaguing him, God was preparing him for an important job ahead—to save his family (Gen. 41:38-41).

b) Paul (2 Cor. 11:24-27).

- ◇ He was told when Jesus appeared to him that he would have to suffer many things for His Name's sake (Acts 9:16).
- ◇ And the suffering came one after another—but, he was able to weathered each one and began to realize their value in his life (Phil. 1:12).
- ◇ He could say at the end of his life.....(2 Tim. 4:6-8)!

c) Job (Job 1:1-21).

- ◇ He was a perfect and upright man—who feared God and hated evil.
- ◇ He was the greatest man in the east.
- ◇ But, the unpleasant things came quick and heavy: he lost all of his animals, most of his servants were slain, and his children killed in a bad storm. (1:13-19).
- ◇ His reaction—Job 1:20-22.
- ◇ But more unpleasant things came—he was covered with boils, his wife told him to curse God and die, and his "friends" accused him of grievous sins.
- ◇ His reaction—Job 2:9-10; 23:10.

3. Potential unpleasant things we may have to face! Not all will face the same things, but most of us will face the following things:

- a) Betrayal or disappointment by "friends."** Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.
- b) Persecution by enemies.** We cannot control the actions of others, but we can control our own actions. (Matt. 5:11; 5:44)
- c) Hurt by a lying tongue.** We are challenged to return good for evil. (Matt. 5:44).
- d) Financial backsets.** Possibly a loss of work, failure to be promoted, or unwise investment. (Lk. 12:15).
- e) Physical sickness or loss of health.** Some things we have to learn to live with—for they may be with us the rest of our lives. (Phil. 4:11; 3:13). Acceptance can save us from useless resentment. Victory over adversity can bring our finest days.
- f) Disappointments of various kinds.** We must remember that this world is not heaven! (1 Thess. 2:18)
- g) Death of a loved one.** This can be a most unpleasant thing! Yet, it is God's will that men die. (Heb. 9:27). David's word could be our words. (2 Sam. 12:23).

Concluding Thoughts

Unpleasant things will come into the lives of all of us. We can either be prepared for such or lose the battle when they come and turn from God. But there is another danger as well—when things go well! One of the strange perversities of human nature is the likelihood of neglecting God when things go so well. (Lk. 12:16-20).

Lesson Eleven

"How to be Free Indeed!"

Freedom! What a wonderful word in our language! And oh how much we desire to be free. People came to this country so they could be free and not "slaves" to a bad government. We need to thank God every day for the people who were willing to give their lives so that we could be free! But freedom is not true freedom unless we are willing to abide by the laws that help to regulate the actions of people. What a blessing to be privileged to live in such a country!

But there is another concept about freedom that the Bible emphasizes—freedom from sin and its penalty. Only Jesus has been able to accomplish this for mankind. Jesus said that He could set us free from the burden and punishment of sin (Jn. 8:32; Gal. 5:1). He stressed that He could make men "free indeed." (Jn. 8:36). This freedom requires that we die to the way of sin in our lives.

Rom. 6:1-2, 6 _____

1 Jn. 1:7 _____

Yet, there is a problem that needs to be dealt with in regards to this freedom. God's truth can truly set us free from all things that would enslave us. But, we must be willing to turn loose of the false and hold on to and follow the truth of God. Following is a listing of things that could enslave us that we need to turn from or put away out of our lives:

- 1. Our wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes.**
- 2. Dwelling on past mistakes in life and not going forward.**
- 3. Trying to justify living in some of our past sins.**
- 4. Holding on to false teachings from our past.**

To be truly free indeed, we must let go of and give up those things that had enslaved us. We must turn to God's word to be enjoy this ultimate freedom.

Prisons We Make for Ourselves!

Let's look at four things that can imprison us and keep us from enjoying the freedom that God's truth offers for us.

1. The prison of inferiority. Inferiority is an exaggerated sense of inadequacy. It helps to bring on defeat of what we can and should be doing. Even the "self-assertive" person can wind up in the same "jail-house." His acting as though he knows it all is an indication of his self-imprisonment. God wants us to be free indeed and able to accomplish great things to honor His Name!

Phil. 4:13 _____

1 Pet. 2:5, 9 _____

2 Tim. 2:20-21 _____

With God's help, we can be strong, be useful, and accomplish His Will in our lives! When the problem of inferiority comes upon us, we need to turn to God for help. Read the following scriptures:

Ps. 46:1 _____

Ps. 93:17 _____

2 Cor. 4:13 _____

There is power in saying, "I can," whatever my difficulty is!

2. The Prison of Self-Satisfaction. Such is a kind of living death where there is no climbing, growing, or improvement. "We have arrived!" It is to be like the Laodicean Church—***"I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."*** (Rev. 3:17). There is no need nor room for improvement. Such people are usually devoid of vision and are happy in their little prison cell.

Prov. 29:18 _____

1 Cor. 14:12 _____

Lk. 18:11 _____

God's challenge is not to be average, but to excel—go the second mile!

Matt. 5:46-48 _____

Matt. 5:20 _____

3. The Prison of Superstition. It is estimated that over half of the American people believe in some form of fortune telling. Instead of going to the Bible for guidance and comfort (Ps. 119:105), they allow their lives to be shaped by a certain day (Friday, the 13th), a black cat, a ladder, a broken mirror, or a toothless old lady in a dirty tent. God warns us of reverting to such superstition in both the Old and New Testaments.

Deut. 11:10 _____

1 Tim. 4:7 _____

We live in God who is in control of this world, so why should I, as a Christian, have to depend on "omens and charms" to help me make my decisions. God wants us to be free of these things so that we can be free indeed!

Concluding Thoughts

We live in a restless world! People are bewildered, perplexed, and seeking to fill their lives with all kinds of activities. But their restlessness will only be dealt with through turning to God for the answers to the questions of life. One person observed: *"Much of the rushing hither and thither in a world of amusement and pleasure is only a superficial effort to find release for an imprisoned and troubled spirit."* True freedom and peace is found by following Christ (Matt. 11:28-30).

*Lesson Twelve****"How to Truly See Ourselves"***

When we look in the mirror, we can see our outward self (body), but do we look closer to see if we can truly see ourselves as God sees us or as others about us see us? It would seem that a great number of people have a very imperfect conception of what they really are. We are blessed if we can truly see ourselves accurately and then began working to change our lives for the better. The members of the church at Laodicea had a perverted view of themselves (Rev. 3:14-17). The Lord told them the truth about themselves (Rev. 3:16-18). Humans can deceive themselves, but not the Lord who sees and knows all!

Examples of People discovering themselves

1. Jesus told a story about two men who went into the Temple to pray. One had taken a close look at himself and didn't like what he saw (a sinner); while the other, a Pharisee, thought of himself as being righteous (Lk. 18:11-14). The sinner found forgiveness; but, the Pharisee went home condemned. It takes a lot of honesty and study in the Word of God to truly be able to see ourselves for what we are.

2. King David failed to see himself on one occasion that should have brought his death, but God was merciful to him. We are thinking about David's affair with a soldier's wife (Bathsheba). The Prophet, Nathan, related a story to King David that aroused anger in David's heart over a man that was unjust to a poor man. But Nathan was trying to get David to see his true self! He told David, ***"you are the man!"*** (2 Sam. 12:1ff). Fortunately, David was willing to take a closer look at himself and confessed: ***"I have sinned against the Lord."*** (2 Sam. 12:13). It is possible that a person, like David, can have many wonderful and noble traits and still need to discover himself. The Apostle John said that the person who will not recognize sin in his life is self-deceived.

1 John 1:9

3. Isaiah was able to see himself for what he was in contrast to the sight of the Holy God of Heaven (Isa. 6:1-5). We all have to keep striving toward perfection because none of us have reached it yet! Like Isaiah, we are undone and a person of unclean lips. Paul's statement indicates this concept.

Phil. 3:13-14

4. Peter failed to see himself as he really was when he swore that he would never deny Christ (Matt. 26:33-35). A short time later he denied Jesus three times! Peter had a higher opinion of himself than he should have—and discovered such when he denied Jesus three times and with an oath. Later, he went out and wept bitterly. Jesus warned Peter of his weakness, but he was unwilling to see himself until he had actually done what he said he would never do.

1 Cor. 10:12

5. The Prodigal Son certainly failed to see himself as he truly was. He, too, had to learn to be honest with one's self! When his money was wasted, his capacity blunted, and his character gone—then, he came to himself—saw himself honestly! His image of himself changed greatly. Experience can be a great teacher, but at what a cost!

Acts 2:36-38

Self-Deception

The Prophet Jeremiah stated by inspiration: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jer. 17:9). Deception is a very old practice and has brought condemnation to most. It might be well worth the time to see just how our hearts deceive us.

1. By looking at the faults of others rather than ourselves. It is easy to see the faults of others, but we seldom are willing to see our own. How quick we are to see the mote in other people's eyes and never see the beam that is in our own eyes (Matt. 7:3-5).

2. By measuring ourselves by others who are weaker and less fortunate. When we compare ourselves with such people, we can look mighty good. Paul stated that such people are not wise. (2 Cor. 10:12). It is important that we use the "right" standard for our judgment. And that standard is Jesus, the Son of God! (1 Cor. 11:1; Gal. 6:4). God's Word is capable of fully revealing what kind of person I am.....if we will let it!

3. By assuming virtues which are not our own. A person may take pride in his family, but what has he done to make his family name great or honorable? We may claim to be a part of a large, active, and generous church, but what have we done to help make it that? A person is not honorable because he has an upright family; neither is he an active and generous Christian just because he has membership in a live and liberal congregation. I need to examine myself and see if I have the virtues that I am boasting about. (2 Cor. 13:5).

4. By disguising our sins with new names. Our society is definitely trying to cover their sins by giving a new term that takes away the sting. "Homosexuals" are gay now and only practice another lifestyle. "Fornication" is not wrong because I truly love the person. (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Murder is a sin, but I can "murder" (hate) my brother and that is okay. (1 John 3:15).

Concluding Thoughts

We all should strive to truly see ourselves and do away with this self-deception business. We are the loser if we do not do it. Improving of our lives can only come when we honestly see who we really are in God's eyes and the eyes of others.

