

The Ideal Christian

#2—Rules For Happy Living

12 Lessons

Prepared by:
Paul E. Cantrell

2010

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Lesson One

"Remember, You Are Blessed!"

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

Introduction

We are always looking for the ideal man or woman about us. There are several reasons for this:

- a) We are looking for an "ideal" marriage partner.
- b) We are looking for "good" people to become friends with and enjoy social relations that are very desirable.
- c) We are looking for "outstanding" people who can be examples for us to follow after. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1).

Jesus, obviously, is the only "ideal person" who has ever lived—that is, from God's viewpoint. He was perfect! (2 Cor. 5:21). He did the Father's Will completely as He indicated on the Cross—**"It is finished!"** (John 19:30). But when we talk about the "ideal person," it has to be with the understanding that he or she is not perfect. We should not only look for the "ideal person," but shouldn't we also desire **to be** the "ideal person!" (Matt. 5:48)

This is the **second** in a **planned series** of four Bible Study Books under the general title of: **"The Ideal Christian!"** The title for this study book is: **"Rules for Happy Living!"**

The Need to Remember!

The Apostle Peter expressed the thought well: *"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you..."* (2 Pet. 1:12-13). We have a song that we sing in our worship assembly entitled: ***"Count your many blessings!"*** We probably ought to sing this song fairly often—less we forget to remember that we are a greatly blessed people! Scripture emphasis upon being greatly blessed:

Eph. 1:3 _____

2 Pet. 1:3 _____

Rom. 4:7-8 _____

Man's tendency is to take blessings (the good) for granted! However, we usually concentrate on the problems (bad). It is somewhat easier to think about the bad things that bring hurt or harm to me personally rather than the blessings (good) that constantly comes into our lives. The very fact that we constantly are reminding each other by one expression in particular shows we tend to be dilatory in our remembering—***"God is Good...He is Good ALL the Time!"*** The very fact that Inspiration tells us we need to be reminded (2 Pet. 1:12-13) shows what our tendencies are! God has blessed us with the ability to remember—let's use this ability to the fullest for the good of ourselves and others!

Challenging Questions to Discuss

1. What is the difference between conditional and unconditional blessings?

- ◇ **Unconditional**—Matt. 5:44-45. Jesus mentioned two items that with which He blesses all men _____. It would be easy to add to this list of blessings: **air, livable conditions, beautiful sky, landscape, etc.** Fortunately we live in an orderly universe that blesses us all (Ps. 19:1-6). For a long listing of general blessings for all, see Job 37:1-39:30.
- ◇ **Conditional**—Acts 2:38-41. These are blessings that come when we are called upon to do something in order to obtain them. Name the actions _____ and list the blessings _____. God tells us we are to work for our food (clothing & shelter)—Gen. 2:15; 3:17-19; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8. James tells us that the person who endures is blessed (Jas. 1:12) and that the person who is a doer of the Law of God is blessed (Jas. 1:25). Those who keep God's commands are blessed and will have access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14). The wise man tells us that to have friends, we need to be friendly (Prov. 18:24). Jesus said we can be His friends if we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:12-14). Blessings are upon the head of the Righteous (Prov. 10:6). The person with a generous eye will be blessed (Prov. 22:9). The person who fears the Lord will be blessed (Ps. 128:4). God told the Jewish Nation that if they would bring their tithes into the storehouse that He would bless them greatly (Mal. 3:8-10). The "Beatitudes" are all conditional blessings promised to those who will do or be what Jesus taught (Matt. 5:3-10). On and on this list of Scriptures can go to see how God offers to bless those who do what He ask.

2. Why do we take blessings for granted?

- ◇ **We naturally expect the good!** God is "good" (Lk. 18:18-10) and He is the giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift" (Jas. 1:17). If we believe these two Scriptures, it is natural to expect good things to come into our lives because God is supposed to be good to His creatures! When we receive good things, our needs are satisfied and we are generally happy. When some good things don't come, we begin to grumble and complain—because we expect the good! (Phil. 2:14-16).
- ◇ **We center too much on the bad!** Because we receive so many blessings constantly—that when problems come, they get our "undivided" attention! We are disappointed! We may even be in pain and agony! Some things really get our attention! Then, we tend to forget that we have still been greatly blessed. James tells us that even in the midst of "trials" or "tribulations," blessings can come out of such (Jas. 1:2-4).

3. Why are handicapped people usually happy?

- ◇ Possibly not all, but a large number of handicapped people wind up being quite happy and contented. But it is something they have to learn. The Apostle Paul stated that he suffered the loss of all things that men count as desirable (Phil. 3:7-11). Was he contented and thankful? Absolutely! But it was something that he had to learn by

- experiencing such that helped to build his faith in God stronger (Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-8). Remember also that he had a "handicap," it was a "thorn in his side!" He wanted it **removed**, but God said that he needed it for his benefit (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
- ◇ But why should handicapped people be happy? Shouldn't they gripe, complain, and murmur against God because of what He brought upon them? Why do they have to endure such? Quite a few handicapped people have overcome some great obstacles in order to live a "normal" life upon this earth---How did they do it?
1. **Realization**—They had to come to the conclusion that it was up to them to find a way to deal with their handicap in order to do the "normal" things in life. All of us can live a mediocre life on earth or a great and meaningful life—**it is our choice!** No one else can make this choice for us! (Prov. 23:7).
 2. **Counted their many blessings**—They had to stop "counting" their many problems, calamities, trials, etc.; and start putting their emphasis (their mind and thinking) on things that are good and honorable (Phil. 4:8). They had to keep reminding themselves of how blessed they were in spite of their handicap. And those who hasten to turn to the Lord's ways will be greatly blessed (Ps. 119:59-60).

Concluding Thoughts

"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Lk. 17:11-19). Jesus had cleansed ten men of leprosy, but only one returned to give glory to God (a Samaritan!). Do we take for granted our many blessings or do we stop and give glory to God for them? Do we take time to "smell the roses," or "complain about the thorns?" Can we see how much better off we are than so many others in this world, or do we constantly complain and murmur about how bad our situation is? What about learning how to "share" our blessings with others—so they, too, can be blessed as well?

Maybe we can help one another to openly express our gratitude to God and to each other for the wonderful blessings that we enjoy—especially as a Christian! The Christian is a blessed person, a happy and contented person. And he is also one who remembers to express his gratitude for them constantly (Eph. 5:20). If we do so, we can be among those who could be called the "ideal" Christian!

Lesson Two

"Express Love to Others"

"My little Children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18)

Hollywood wants the "ideal" person to act the part of the chief character in the movies they make! Why? Is it because that person can either "make" or "break" the income from the movie? Also, as viewers, we often identify with the actor or actress. They become the "role model" for all who want to become actors or actresses. **Spiritually**, God wants us to look at the "Ideal" Christian and follow after that person. Jesus is obviously our ultimate, perfect, and ideal person to pattern our lives after; but, godly men and woman can help show us how we all ought to live!

1 Cor. 11:1 _____

Heb. 13:7 _____

1 Thess. 5:12-13 _____

Love needs to be Expressed!

Can a person truly love another person and not show it or express it in some way? True love for another seems to **DEMAND** some kind of expression! The greatest example that Deity set before us is that of expressing love!

1. This love for mankind has been stated!

Jn. 3:16 _____

1 Jn. 4:20-21 _____

2. This love for mankind has been demonstrated!

1 Jn. 3:16 _____

1 Jn. 4:9-10 _____

3. We need to follow God's example!

1 Jn. 3:18 _____

1 Cor. 13:1-3 _____

Challenging Questions

1. How can we be sure God abides in us? (1 Jn. 4:12-13, 16)
2. What does love do for us in regards to the Day of Judgment? (1 Jn. 4:17-18)
3. Why is it important to know that God first loved us? (1 Jn. 4:19)
4. Why are we reluctant to express love to God and to each other?
5. How can we overcome this reluctance?
6. How can we know we love the children of God? (1 Jn. 5:2)
7. Why are God's commandments not grievous? (1 Jn. 5:3)
8. How can the world know we are the disciples of Jesus? (Jn. 13:34-35)
9. How do we show our love for God? (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23, 24)
10. How can we abide in God's love? (Jn. 15:10)
11. Why is love stated to be greater than Faith and Hope? (1 Cor. 13:13)
12. What are the two greatest commandments and why? (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10)

Action Thoughts

1. Make an effort to express love in word to God and others each day. Say sincerely—"I love you." (Rom. 12:9)
2. Make an effort to express love in a good deed to others each day. Put others before ourselves (Phil. 2:3). Fill a need! (1 Jn. 3:17).
3. Be sure we are showing our love to God by keeping His commandments. (Jn. 14:15).
4. Express it according to 1 Cor. 13:4-7! Make a list!

Concluding Thoughts

Love has been expressed in word and deed by God! Now, He commands all men to follow His example and to learn to love as He loves! God's Spirit is that of expressing love—He wants us to have that same spirit within us as well. (1 Jn. 4:12-13). If we have God's love abiding in us, it will certainly tell a lot about us—notice the following:

1. That we are followers of God (1 Jn. 3:10).
2. That we are disciples of Jesus (Jn. 13:35).
3. That we have passed out of death into life (1 Jn. 3:14).
4. That we have been born of God and know God (1 Jn. 4:7-8).

If perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18); then, we will no longer be fearful about stating and showing the love of God to those about us. We will no longer hate our brother either (1 Jn. 4:20-21).

*Lesson Three****"Be a Giver!"***

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

Introduction

I do not believe you will find an "Ideal" Christian who is not also a "Giver!" The reason should be obvious—the one who has first given him or herself to the Lord is also a giver to others as well (2 Cor. 8:1-5). The first Christians demonstrated this attribute of being a giver (Acts 5:32-37). They even sold possessions in order to give to their new brothers and sisters in Christ. Being a giver easily identifies with being an "Ideal" Christian. To help show the importance that God places on being a "giver," it has been suggested that there is more said about proper attitudes and use of money than most other topics in Scripture. Correct giving needs to be characterized by having Biblical reasons for our giving. Just because someone gives does not automatically put him into the same category as the dedicated Christian's giving.

What True Givers Learn!

When our giving is correct and proper, there are consequences that follow—that is, good things that come! Following can give some indication of this:

- 1. We learn we are the happiest when we are givers (Acts 20:35).**
- 2. We stir up others to be givers (2 Cor. 9:2).**
- 3. We reap bountifully from our giving (2 Cor. 9:6).**
- 4. We are loved of God (2 Cor. 9:7).**
- 5. We are given an abundance with which to do good works (2 Cor. 9:8-10).**
- 6. We cause God to be praised (2 Cor. 9:12-13).**

These and other blessings can come to the one that learns to be correct givers! See if you can add to this list of good things that come to the giver.

Four Areas of Giving

In the minds of some people, giving may only deal with the giving of money. But all of us should be aware that there are at least three other areas in which we are called upon to be givers. See the following ideas, evaluate them, and see if there are other areas in which we can be givers.

1. **The giving of money!** In some societies over the thousands of years of man's existence, there may have been very little place for the use of "money." (That is, stamped coins, gold, silver, precious stones, paper money, etc.). But whatever was used as a means of exchange, it would be considered the same as our money today. It was the giving of what one possessed (that which he called his own). Under the Mosaic Law System, the Jews were expected to *"bring the tithe into the storehouse."* (Mal. 3:10). Under the New Testament System, the Christian is expected to *"lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper."* (1 Cor. 16:2).
2. **The giving of time!** Time is precious! We only have so much of it and it is quickly gone. Proper use of time can bring money, possessions, enjoyment of life, etc. Because time is precious, it is considered a valuable gift by those who fully appreciate the concept. Eph. 5:15-16 seems to be indicating that Christians (Givers) need to make good use of their time. James tells us that time is like a vapor, it is here for such a little time (Jas. 4:13-16).
3. **The giving of Abilities!** It is obvious to all that each of us have one or more special abilities that we have been blessed with by God and/or that we have studied and learned how to do things that are useful or valuable for ourselves and others. When we give of our time in the use of our abilities to help others—we are in reality "double-giving!" The Parable of the "Talents" indicates that there are differences in people's abilities—but that all are expected to use what we have to help others or to serve God (Matt. 25:14-30).
4. **The giving of ourselves to God!** The person who wants to go to Heaven someday is told that he must *"deny himself"* or *"die to self"* or *"be crucified with Christ!"* (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:7-11, 6). It was said of the Macedonia Christians that they *"first give themselves to the Lord"* and obviously became great givers! (2 Cor. 8:5).

Challenging Questions

1. Does giving have anything to do with one's salvation? (Matt. 25:32-36)
2. Of what is giving a proof? (Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:8)
3. Does a person have to be a Christian to be a "giver?" Give reasons for your answer.
4. What sins do we avoid when we are givers?
 - a) Rom. 1:29—
 - b) 1 Cor. 5:11—
 - c) Rom. 13:7-8—
 - d) 1 Tim. 6:10—
 - e) 1 Tim. 6:17-19

Concluding Thoughts

We believe that making money, using money, and giving money as good stewards is not only essential to our salvation, but it is also a means to our happiness here and hereafter

1 Cor. 4:2 _____

Acts 20:35 _____

Lk. 16:9 _____

Giving is something that we have to be motivated to do—that is, we have to have a good reason for giving of our Time, Talents, Money, and Self. The following reasons would seem to be very motivating:

- 1. God has commanded such (1 Cor. 16:2).** He always has good reasons for what He commands. We certainly should want to please God and show that we love Him and our fellow-man.
- 2. Because of the dangers connected with the "love of Money" or the misuse of money (1 Tim. 6:10).**
- 3. Because we have to make a choice between two masters—God or Mammon (Matt. 6:24).**
- 4. Because of the rewards promised (Acts 20:35; 1 Tim. 6:18-19).**
- 5. Because it is acting like God (Jn. 3:16).**

Lesson Four

"Stay as Positive as Possible"

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Rom. 8:5-6)

Introduction

Is "positive looking," "positive thinking," and "positive actions" possible for all humans? If not, then we have no choice and are not responsible; but, if such is possible, then we do have a choice and are responsible before God and man! We can choose to think, look, and act carnally or we can choose to think, look, and act spiritually! We make the choice! We can set our minds on carnal things or spiritual things! We also need to realize that one "mind-set" leads to death; the other leads to life!

God does not want His creatures to be controlled by wrong thinking, but right thinking. That is the reason why He wants to transform our thinking so that we will think correctly and thereby act correctly. In this lesson, we want to challenge each of us to think correctly—think as positive as possible about God and our fellow-man! The road that the "Ideal" Christian must take, in order to be the "Ideal," is the road of correct thinking!

Three Challenges!

1. To fill your mind with Good Things! The power of the mind is shown in many Scriptures in the Word of God. Let's evaluate the following Scriptures:

- Prov. 23:7 _____
- Col. 3:2 _____
- Matt. 15:18-20 _____

Phil. 4:8—Things to Meditate upon:

- a) Things that are true _____
- b) Things that are noble _____
- c) Things that are just _____
- d) Things that are pure _____
- e) Things that are lovely _____
- f) Things that are of good report _____

This passage ends with the expression: *"Praise what is worthy."* But did you notice that every one of the above things to be meditated upon is **"positive!"**

- Matt. 7:1-5 _____

- a) Is Jesus condemning "judging" others or is He condemning a certain kind of "judging" of others?
- b) With what kind of attitude are we to judge others?

2. To fill your life with Good things! We certainly should not want to fill our lives with "bad," "worldly," or "evil" things! Our emphasis should be on the "good!"

Matt. 5:16 _____

Tit. 2:7, 14 _____

Tit. 3:8 _____

Eph. 4:22-24 _____

The "good" is beneficial to all! If we will fill our lives with the "good things," then we will have a positive influence for good in the lives of others. But we have to think "good" in order to fill our lives with "good."

3. To look for the Good in everyone and everything! If we meet the challenges of filling our minds with good things and filling our lives with good things, we should be able to see the "good" in everyone and everything about us. It is not that we can't see the bad and the evil all around us—we do! But we choose not to put our time, thinking, and emphasis upon them, but on the good in all people and things. We need to look for and appreciate the good qualities in the lives of others—especially God's people! (Gal. 6:10).

Eph. 4:31-32 _____

Col. 3:12-13 _____

Challenging Questions

1. What are the advantages of looking for the good in others?
2. What qualities do we want others to see in us? (Matt. 7:12)
3. Why does it seem easier to see the faults in others rather than to see the good qualities?
4. Why do Newspapers and Television accentuate the bad news so much?

5. Do we talk positive or negative about others?
6. Is there anyone that doesn't have anything good in their lives?
7. What are some things that can help us to be more positive? (Phil. 4:13)

Concluding Thoughts

We believe that all people have some good qualities! Our challenge is to look for the good in people and say something good about them. God loves us even with all of our faults. While we were yet sinners and ungodly, Christ died for us! (Rom. 5:6, 8). But we were not totally bad or hopeless; rather, we were worth saving! We need to work on eliminating the negative outlook and develop a more positive one. We need to be more like Christ—He did not stick his head in the sand and He knew that men were ungodly. But to give His life to save them, He had to see the potential good that was there!

If we will cultivate a more positive outlook, we will be happier people! This will certainly help to make us "Ideal" Christians!

Lesson Five

"Pray Every Day"

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7).

Introduction

Can you imagine a person, who is supposed to be a Christian, not praying to God every day? But even more, can you imagine an "Ideal" Christian not praying daily? Prayer is a great privilege of the Christian. It is one of the many spiritual blessings given to the redeemed (Eph. 1:3). And it is amazing to discover that many who claim the name of Christ and they do not pray very much at all. There are possible "reasons" for this not taking place.

1. Continual prayer requires time and discipline.
2. Continual prayer requires faith that God will hear and answer our petition.
3. Many do not know or realize what they should be praying about.
4. They don't seem to be interested in knowing "how to pray."
5. Prayer is not an easy subject to deal with and understand fully—it takes time and patience.

There may be possibly other "reasons" that could be given. We would like to challenge each of us to study this lesson with the purpose of understanding the need to learn—not only how to pray, but the need to pray every day. Why not strive to be an "Ideal" Christian????

What is Prayer?

It is **not** something we do to be seen of men and they praise us for our "spirituality!" (Matt. 6:5-6). It is **not** "vain repetition" so that we can be praised for our many words! (Matt. 6:7). It is **not** to inform God of our needs (Matt. 6:8). It is **not** to impose our will upon God! (Matt. 6:10). It is **not** a "magic wand" so we can get everything we want. (Jas. 4:3).

Then, what is prayer—How do you characterize it?

1. It is an act of humbling ourselves before the throne of God. (Jas. 4:10).
2. It is open admission that we need God. (Matt. 6:11).
3. It is one of the ways that we can give praise, honor, and glory to our Heavenly Father. (Matt. 6:9, 13).
4. It is one of the ways that we can enter into the presence of God through Jesus. (Jn. 16:23; Rom. 8:34).
5. It is the means of forgiveness for the penitent child of God who is walking in the light. (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:7-9).
6. Prayer is petition, intercession, requests, praise, and thanksgiving to and for the God of Heaven.
7. Prayer is our way of giving recognition to God as our Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:9).

8. A model prayer—Petitions that show we depend upon God (Matt. 6:9-15).
1. For food (the necessities of life on earth);
 2. For forgiveness of sins;
 3. For victory over temptation;
 4. For power over evil forces;
 5. For the Mission Field;
 6. For our enemies.

Challenging Questions!

1. Why should we pray daily?

- ◇ Some might insist that we do not need to pray every day—and possibly, a large segment of the church may not pray every day.
- ◇ What are some possible reasons for praying daily?
 1. **Sins to be forgiven** (1 Jn. 1:7-2:1).
 2. **Daily needs** (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) (1 Tim. 5:8).
 3. **Concern for others** (physically & spiritually) (Gal. 6:1).
 4. **Concern for the church—lost souls!** (Mk. 16:15)

2. Why did Jesus, the perfect person, need to pray to God?

3. Why did a godly man like the Apostle Paul need to pray and why did he request others to pray for him? (1 Thess. 3:12; 2 Cor. 13:7-9; Col. 1:9-18; Eph. 1:15-21; 3:14-21).

4. Why do certain people's prayers avail much? Does that mean that others' prayers do not avail? (Jas. 5:16; 1 Tim. 2:1).

5. If God knows everything, then why pray for things?

6. How do you deal with God not answering your petition? (1 Jn. 3:22).

Concluding Thoughts

In studying about prayer, there are a lot of questions that can be raised. It may take some time before some of our questions can be answered or cleared up. Possibly, we may never have a full and complete answer to all our questions. Our biggest challenge is to believe that God definitely wants us to pray—and probably daily—for our own good! Just imagine what would be the outcome or benefit of each of us praying more sincerely and more often!

Our challenge:

1. To improve our prayer life—to always pray and not faint!
2. To increase our faith in prayer (Matt. 21:22).
3. To increase our prayers and petitions to God for ourselves and others (1 Thess. 5:17).

Lesson Six

"Prioritize Your Life"

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. 6:33)

Introduction

Can you imagine a person wanting to be a farmer, but he spends his time, energy, and thinking on everything else but farming? Can you imagine a person wanting to be a medical doctor, but he spends his time, energy, and thinking on everything else but that? But.....can you also imagine a person wanting to be a devoted disciple of Jesus, but he spends his time, energy, and thinking on everything else but that? Shouldn't that be the first and primary interest of his life?

Why does Jesus teach that if a person wants to be His devoted disciple that he must:

1. Deny himself (Matt. 16:24);
2. Take up his cross (Matt. 16:24);
3. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness (Matt. 6:33)?

I believe we all know the answer to the question!

You can't be a devoted follower of Jesus without putting first things first!

If a person wants to be successful in any worthwhile endeavor, he must:

1. Want something bad enough to be successful;
2. Try to envision him or herself as being successful;
3. Work hard towards succeeding;
4. Seek help from those who have gone before you and have been successful;
5. And.....put priority on the things that are the more important to the success of what is undertaken.

What is meant by prioritizing?

To prioritize is to put certain things, events, actions, or people first in order of importance! The Greek word here is "**Proton**" which means "to put before," "first in a sequence or order," "first in rank or dignity." In Matt. 6:33, Jesus said there were two things that must be put before all other things—(1) The Kingdom of God; and (2) God's Righteousness! These must be sought first. They are uppermost—they must be put before everything else. They cannot be put secondary and be effective in our lives.

The Kingdom of God is primarily the Church of our Lord! (Matt. 16:18) To be in and a part of this Kingdom or Church is more important than any thing else on earth!

God's Righteousness is the process that God has worked out through Christ to save or justify us and puts us into this Kingdom or Church where we are to maintain our righteous state with God. There is no other way to be right with God! (Jn. 14:6).

Who or What could replace these as the First?

There are two occasions in the teachings of Jesus that come to mind that specifically pose a real danger in replacing that which should be sought first in our lives:

1. Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:20-22).
 - ◇ We can allow persecution to turn us away from God's Kingdom and His Righteousness.
 - ◇ We can allow the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches (Matt. 13:22), the pleasures of this life (Lk. 8:14).
 - ◇ These things choke the word in our lives to make us unfruitful!
2. Parents or Possessions
 - ◇ The rich young Ruler (Lk. 18:18-25). Jesus saw that something in his life was more important than the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness—Possessions!
 - ◇ Family (Matt. 10:37; Lk. 14:26). Family members and our attachment to them can take over first place in our lives and make it impossible to be a devoted disciple of Jesus!

Making Hard Choices!

Everyone, to some degree or another, will be faced with some hard choices in order to seek first God's Kingdom and His Righteousness. Whatever things or persons that stand in the way, they force us to make a choice.

1. We must decide on which Kingdom we want to be in! There are two Kingdoms to choose between. We are in one or the other—there is no other choice of Kingdoms! It is a choice between the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God.

1. The Kingdom of Satan is identified by whose it is and what makes it different from the other Kingdom.

Col.1:13 _____
Matt. 6:24 _____
1 Jn. 2:15-17 _____
Rom. 8:5-8 _____

2. The Kingdom of God is also identified by whose it is and what makes it different from the other Kingdom.

Col. 1:13-14 _____
Matt. 6:24 _____
1 Jn. 3:7-8 _____

Rom. 8:5-8 _____

2. We must put a priority on those things that make us Righteous and keeps us Righteous!

Rom. 10:1-3 _____

Rom. 5:1 _____

Rom. 6:1-2 _____

1 Jn. 3:7-10 _____

Heb. 2:1-4 _____

Heb. 3:12 _____

Heb. 3:14 _____

Rev. 2:10 _____

Challenging Questions

1. What does it mean to prioritize my life?
2. Why should we put God's Kingdom and His Righteousness first in our lives?
3. In what sense did Jesus put His Heavenly Father first?
4. In what way did Jesus put us before Himself?
5. What are some passages that emphasize prioritizing our lives?

Concluding Thoughts

Just how much do we really want to see first God's Kingdom and His Righteousness? How much are we willing to give up to be a devoted disciple of Jesus? Jesus spelled it out clearly in Matthew 7:13-14—*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* But He also added: *"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."* (Matt. 7:8). Anything worthwhile is worth the effort—especially the salvation of our soul!

Lesson Seven

"Trust in God"

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. 6:31-33)

The Jewish people that Jesus was born among and grew up in the midst of had been given a revealed Law and Covenant that gave them all the evidences they needed to have a strong faith in the "One True God" of Heaven. And yet, He called them a **"faithless and perverse generation"** (Mark 9:19). Upon several occasions Jesus pointed out Israel's lack of faith—but, in contrast, He praised some Gentiles for their greatness of faith (Matt. 8:5-10).

The importance of faith is obvious in the Scriptures. There is probably no other word that is emphasized more! For an example:

Hab. 2:3

Heb. 11:6

John 3:16

1 John 5:4

If we ever make it to Heaven, it will be because of our faith in God. The Letter to the Hebrew Christians gives a long list of worthies who will be in Heaven because of their faith (Heb. 11). God wants our faith to be strong and grounded in Him:

1. **He wants it enlarged (2 Cor. 10:15);**
2. **He wants us to be sound in the faith (Tit. 2:2);**
3. **He wants us to be steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:9);**
4. **He wants to perfect what is lacking in our faith (1 Thess. 3:10);**
5. **He wants us to have a full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22).....etc.**

Several reasons are given in Scripture as to why our faith in God needs to be strong and grounded:

1. **It is possible that our faith can fail us (Lk. 22:32);**
2. **A person can be deceived into doubting God (Jas. 2:5-8);**
3. **A Christian can go into unbelief (Heb. 3:12, 18-19);**
4. **A Christian can depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; 5:8; 6:10).**

James' Letter to Christians takes a little different approach to the question of faith. He doesn't talk about a weak faith or a growing faith, but a "dead" faith or an "obedient faith." (Jas. 2:17-26). It is not only important what we believe, but our faith needs to be the right kind of faith as well!

Don't Worry—Believe in God!

The primary thrust of this lesson is to see why "trusting in God" helps us to live happily upon this earth. We want to turn to Matt. 6:25-33 and analyze these verses quickly

V. 25—Don't worry about your life—what you will eat, drink or wear.

V. 26—God cares for the birds and infers that He will care for us.

V. 27—Worrying cannot change our situation.

Vs. 28-30—God cares for the beautiful lilies of the field and vegetation; He will certainly care for us.

Vs. 31-32—Why worry about these things. The Heavenly Father knows what we need!

V. 33—Put God's Kingdom and His Righteousness first and you won't have to worry!

Jesus is clearly saying to us...."Don't be fearful (worrying) about your life and its needs. Put your trust in God's care over you. He knows our every need and problems and He does care about us. Worry or fearfulness solves no problems and satisfies no challenges!

The Solution to Fearfulness or Worry!

The solution to fearfulness or worry is given in three significant passages....as follows:

1. **Rom. 5:1-4**—We are justified by our faith in Christ's death for us. Tribulations will come and will have to be faced with faith in God. Faith can help us to be patient (waiting on God)—so we will persevere and develop our faith to be stronger in God's care. This, then, makes our hope more meaningful and desirable—thus, making our faith stronger!
2. **Rom. 8:28, 31-32**—All things that come into our lives can be beneficial to strengthen our hope. If God is for us, who can succeed against us? If He gave us His Son, will He not much more give us what we need to survive on this earth?
3. **Phil. 4:4-13**—Christians are admonished to rejoice in the Lord always! And thereby, there is then no reason to worry (be anxious) over anything. Rather, we need to pray to God, offer up our supplications, and accompany such with thanksgiving. The outcome is very desirable—we have complete trust in God's care over us ("*the peace of God that passes all understanding*"). We can therefore be content in whatever condition we are in. Our minds and hearts can concentrate on only the good things in life. And finally, we are given the strength to handle anything that comes into our lives by the power of our faith in Christ Jesus.

Challenging Questions

1. How would you define worry?
2. How can you increase your faith or trust in God?
3. What do you worry about the most?
4. What role does fear play in causing us to worry?
5. How can we let God "take control of our lives?"

Concluding Thoughts

We are admonished by Jesus not to worry or be fearful over the things that makes it possible to exist on this earth; but rather, ***"Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."*** (Eccl. 12:13). Jesus basically said the same thing in Matt. 6:33—***"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness...."*** Without faith, we cannot please God nor go to Heaven (Heb. 11:6). We need to keep growing and strengthening our faith and trust in God's word and His care over us.

Lesson Eight

"Use Our Time Wisely"

"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

What is Time? How would you define it? The Encarta Dictionary defines it as *"A system of distinguishing events;"* or *"A dimension that enables two identical events occurring at the same point in space to be distinguished, measured by the interval between the events."* Time is our way of measuring when something takes place. Another way of looking at Time is....*"The present as distinguished from the past or the future."* An interesting side-line thought....Time is measured by three terms: Past, Present, and Future. It requires all three to make up Time. Thus, Time is a **Tri-unity** just like God is a **Tri-unity!**

How did Time begin? We believe that the origin of the concept of Time was started by God when He created the Sun and the Moon to measure the day from the night (Gen. 1:14-19). Since then, man has conceive of a large number of terms that help us keep up with the passing of Time—**Seconds, Minutes, Hours, days, Weeks, Months, Years, Decades, Century, Millennium, etc.** It is absolutely amazing when we begin to see the vast amount of thoughts that have been put into dealing with Time. Man has also invented not only the Sun-Dial to indicate the passing of Time, but the clock or watch as well.

Greek Terms

There are at least three Greek words used in the New Testament connected with Time—**Chronos, Kainos, and Aion.**

Chronos seems to be connected with the orderliness of things in Time.

Kainos seems to point to a definite point in Time (Acts 24:25). Jesus came in the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4).

Aion seems to point out the extension of Time. This word is often translated as "age" or "ages." When this Greek word is used twice together, it seems to be saying that Time is "forever and forever." Or, it is pointing out that something is without end in the sense of having no stated end.

Matt. 25:46 _____
Heb. 1:8 _____
Gal. 1:5 _____
Heb. 13:8 _____
1 Pet. 1:25 _____
Rev. 20:10 _____

Man's Existence

While man's Time on earth is limited; yet, his existence will not end at death! The Scriptures speak of another realm of existence after this in such terms as: **Sheol, Hades, Paradise, Tartarus, Heaven, Hell, Everlasting Life, Everlasting Punishment, etc.** This study is an important one in which to spend some Time.

Another interesting fact that the Bible points out about man's Time on earth is that it has changed drastically! Man's life's span at one Time (before the Flood) reached as much as 969 years.(Gen. 5:27). But it became evident that this span was cut down quite a bit. In fact, by the time of David (about 950 BC), it was pointed out that man's life-span has been cut to about 80 years (Ps. 90:10). So, this greatly shortens the Time we have on earth to prepare ourselves for Judgment. As the saying goes....."*We turn around twice and our time here is gone!*"

The concept of Time is used in various ways in the Scriptures:

1. The Beginning of Time (Creation) (Gen. 1:1)
2. The End of Time (Day of Judgment) (Heb. 9:27).
3. Time in the sense of measuring the passing of days, months, years (Ps. 90:10).
4. Opportune Time—the best Time to do something (2 Cor. 6:1-2).
5. An appointed event in Time (Gal. 4:4).

Primary Point of this Lesson

It is the intent of this lesson to quickly define and look at the concept of Time and how we make use of the terms; but primarily, to point out the importance of our use of the Time we have been given by God.

The common statement that is often made by mankind is....."*When I have a more convenient time, I will do something about my soul.*" (Acts 24:25). The idea is...."*It just isn't convenient right now!*" But God says that **NOW** is the opportune Time! In fact, this is the only Time that we know that we have! This may be the reason that God states over and over in His word that "***This is the acceptable time!***"

2 Cor. 6:2 _____

Heb. 3:12-15 _____

Rom. 13:11 _____

Luke 14:17 _____

Therefore, seeing that Time is precious and fleeting, we must act now while we still have Time! Look at this emphasis in the following Scriptures:

Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5 _____

1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:3 _____

Heb. 5:12 _____

1 Pet. 1:17 _____

Rev. 10:6 _____

Will Time end for man? When we talk about "*the end of time*" we usually are thinking about when I die or when God brings this present arrangement to an end. Will Time literally come to an end? When we look at the destruction that is described in 2 Peter 3:7-12, we are told that this present "universe" will be done away with. If so, then would that not end Time as we know it now? One thing we do know for sure—when this destruction comes, man will be ushered into the Judgment Day and will have no more opportunity to get his soul right with God!

Challenging Questions

1. How can we waste Time?
2. What are some things you spend too much time involved in? (Sleep, TV, Phone, etc.)
3. Why do people procrastinate?
4. Why do people try to live in the past?
5. Why is it important to get priority things done first?

Concluding Thoughts

One thing for sure—we can only really live in the **present**, not the **past** or **future**. We are admonished to forget the **past** and live for today! (Phil. 3:13-14). The **future**, if we survive, will fast become the **present**! We might live in the **future** in our minds and imagination, but that is not reality! So, we need to be challenged to live in the **present** the best that we can; let go of the **past** and all its mistakes; and plan to in the **future** to make progress for the better!

We need to learn to live daily (one day at a time) the best that we can—not tomorrow, but today! "*Today is the day of Salvation!*" If we live one day at a time, we can eliminate worry from our lives! Jesus said: "*Take up your cross daily!*" (Luke 9:23). We are to also "*Exhort one another daily while it is called 'today.'*" (Heb. 3:13)

Lesson Nine

"Laugh and Weep With Others"*"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Rom. 12:15)***Introduction**

We are all made with emotions! And when we stop and think about such, we are thankful! Emotions are experienced by both the mind and the body. In other words, we experience emotions inside of us (some call it our soul—the inner man) but they have physical manifestations. It is noticeable that women are more prone to express their emotions openly than men; and, it seems that it is easier for men to laugh than to weep openly. Emotions are the result of being stirred up by the actions of others, or by our own actions, or by events around us. Emotions are important in the motivating of human behavior. And interestingly enough—people are probably influenced more by their emotions than by reason or logic! We also communicate by or with our emotions. For example:

1. A **gloomy person** tends to spread gloom to others about him or her.
2. A **cheerful person** tends to spread good cheer.
3. An **angry person** tends to spread anger. (etc.)

Emotions cannot only affect human behavior, but they can affect physical or mental ailments or even death. Evaluate the following thoughts:

1. **Fear** may increase physical strength, prolong, the power of endurance, or cause insensitivity to pain; but it may also paralyze a person or affect our circulatory system.
2. **Anger** can affect the adrenal glands for good or bad.
3. **Worry** can affect our digestive processes.
4. **Sorrow** can affect our tear glands.

Emotions can play an important role in religious life. They can enrich worship or take it to extremes. Christianity sanctifies and purifies our emotions so that we do not go to extreme actions.

1 John 3:15**1 John 4:18****Proverbs 19:17****Matthew 10:28****The Church—A Family**

The Church was built by Christ to provide for mutual help for one another. We are directed to *"bear one another's burdens"* (Gal. 6:2). We can help each other cultivate sympathy and unselfishness towards each other (Phil. 2:3-4). Our spiritual lives and growth comes from reaching out to each other and identifying and being one with them. Brotherly kindness has to be (and is) stressed among us. The teachings of Christ help us to have mutual good feelings and similar sentiments (Rom. 12:15). **Joy** and **sorrow** are great facts of human life that all of us

experience—but without people to share such with, they become big minuses in our lives. Both **joy** and **sorrow** are to be shared and blessed by true Christian sympathy!

The Value of Sharing!

We share the feelings of others—that is, we try to identify with their feelings or make the feelings our own! The purpose is to help relieve the person of his grief or anxiety or to heighten his happiness. It is an attempt to express sympathy or joy from our hearts to their hearts. We do this by the following means:

1. **By expression of our countenance;**
2. **By words of congratulations or condolence;**
3. **By the tone of our voice;**
4. **By the offering of companionship;**
5. **By the offering of assistance.**

We can see this in the life of Jesus (the perfect human)!

1. **He wept with those who weep because of their sin, misery, and helplessness (Jn. 11:35-36).**
2. **He bore our sins and carried our sorrows (Isa.53:12).**
3. **He tasted of death for every man (Heb. 2:9).**
4. **He became our guilt offering (Isa. 53:10).**
5. **He rejoiced in our deliverance and the hope of eternal life (Isa. 53:11; Heb. 12:2).**
6. **He pitied the widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead (Lk. 7:11-17).**
7. **His heart was greatly saddened over the doom of the City of God (Jerusalem) (Matt. 23:37-39).**
8. **Jesus rejoiced with those who rejoiced....eating & drinking, marriage feast, etc.**

Inspiration states *"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."* (1 Cor. 12:26). A person that cannot rejoice must be a grudging or envious person. The Apostle John said: *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."* (3 John 4). This sympathy or rejoicing is to be with:

1. Our own family and Church family;
2. Our friends as well as our fellow-human-beings;
3. Widows, fatherless, aged, and infirm;
4. Unfortunate and deserted; oppressed and persecuted.

But in particular, as the Apostle Paul stated in Gal. 6:10.....*"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* Of all people, it should be the Christian that weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice....and especially to those who are God's children. The Apostle John added this thought to the above: *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (Jn. 13:35). We are family who cares for each other. We share with each other's grief and loss or joy and happiness!

Challenging Questions

1. Why do some people rarely show emotions?
2. Do men feel embarrassed to show emotions publicly?
3. Why did Jesus weep at Lazarus' tomb?
4. Why are some things we should cry over?
5. What are some things we should rejoice over?

Concluding Thoughts

Emotions are God-given and have special purposes and values in our lives if we learn to accept them wisely.

We should not be ashamed to express our feelings unless such would be inappropriate.

We need to learn how to effectively identify with the feelings of others so that we can weep or rejoice with them when needed.

Lesson Ten

"Form Happiness Habits"

"Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." (Ps. 128:1-2)

Our theme in this study is *"Rules for Happy Living!"* But rules are worthless if they are not put into practice by us. But one step further, we need to practice them to the extent that they become a "habit!" Look at the following passages to see this emphasis:

1 Thess. 5:16—*"Rejoice always"*

1 Thess. 5:17—*"Pray without ceasing"*

Phil. 4:4—*"Rejoice in the Lord always"*

2 Thess. 2:13—*"Give thanks to God always"*

Acts 24:16—*"Always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and Men."*

Jn. 8:29—*"I (Jesus) always do those things that please Him (the Father)."*

1 Cor. 15:58—*"Always abounding in the work of the Lord"*

2 Cor. 5:6—*"We are always confident."*

Phil. 1:20—*"As always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body"*

Phil. 2:12—*"You have always obeyed"*

The emphasis in these verses is to challenge us to a continuation in these good and right things to do. In other words—form your habits by doing these things continually.

One of the primary reasons for becoming a Christian is to be happy. There are many passages that emphasize this idea. The "Beatitudes" in the Sermon on the Mount is the best known ones that talk about what makes us "blessed" or "happy." (Matt. 5:1-11) The idea of this Greek word (**Makaristos**) is that of doing the things that will make us "happy." Happiness is not an automatic thing that comes into everyone's life; but rather, it comes from practicing what God says (Rev. 22:14). See these additional passages that use the same Greek word (Acts 20:35; Jas. 1:12, 25; Rev. 14:13). There is a difference in "worldly" happiness and "Christian" happiness!

Worldly happiness

- a) A sinful life has its pleasures or else there would be no appeal or motivation to go that way (Heb. 11:24-26).
- b) Jesus stated that the Christian who is caught up in the *"cares, riches, and pleasures of life"* will bring no fruit to maturity.
- c) "Worldly Happiness" seems to emphasize what pleases me and tends to selfishness.

Spiritual Happiness

- a) A life of righteousness also brings its joys and happiness. There is a constant emphasis in Scripture on those things that bring "blessedness" or "happiness" to the obedient child of God.

- b) This kind of life is geared more to reach out to others—to help and encourage others that brings "happiness" into our hearts.
- c) It is the way of unselfishness (Phil. 2:3-4).

Synonyms and Definition of "Habit"

"Habit" is defined as a regularly repeated pattern or action that becomes typical of a person. A habit is something we can do without thinking about it—it becomes automatic. When a person talks about his "habitation," he is speaking about where he continually dwells—his home. To "kick a habit" is to become free of an addiction that you once were using all the time; or, you have changed your habitual way of doing a certain thing.

Synonyms can help to define a word or give varying "flavors" to a word. Following are some of the synonyms for **habit**: **Custom, routine, practice, tradition, convention, pattern, tendency, and inclination.**

The Importance of Forming the Right Habits!

We know that we can form both good and bad habits. Husbands and wives wish that their mates would get rid of their bad habits and put on good habits that would make them easier to live with. This is certainly desired, but it rarely becomes their practice. Good habits need to be formed early and correctly. When they are not, it will require real motivation and effort to change our habitual actions.

Properly formed habits can help to protect us when we are suddenly tempted. Joseph, when tempted by Potiphar's wife fled the scene (Gen. 39:6-20). But yielding to such a temptation was not his habitual way of living; so, when the temptation became intense, he fled the scene. Something gave him the strength to flee!

Every Christian needs to form good habits that are spiritually directed according to the teachings of Christ. But more specific.....we need to turn to those things that God says will bring happiness. See the following Scriptures:

Matt. 5:3—*"Blessed are the poor in spirit"*

Matt. 5:4—*"Blessed are they that mourn"*

Matt. 5:5—*"Blessed are the meek"*

Matt. 5:6—*"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness"*

Matt. 5:7—*"Blessed are the merciful"*

Matt. 5:8—*"Blessed are the pure in heart"*

Matt. 5:9—*"Blessed are the peacemakers"*

Matt. 5:10—*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake."*

Matt. 5:11—*"Blessed are you when men revile you"*

Lk. 11:28—*"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it"*

Acts 20:28—*"It is more blessed to give than to receive"*

Jas. 1:12—*"Blessed is the man that endures temptation"*

Rev. 22:14—*"Blessed are they that do His commandments"*

The above are only some of the many passages that pronounce a blessing or happiness upon those who will do these things. We must let them become a way of life for us. They become something that we do automatically—not mechanically!

Challenging Questions

1. How do we develop good or bad habits?
2. Why are some people happy all the time and others are not?
3. Does a smile on a person face indicate that he is happy?
4. Can smiling become a habit?
5. Should Christians be happy people?
6. What is the value of forming happiness habits?
7. Can you name some things that make you happy?
8. How can we make God happy?
9. How can we make others happy?
10. What is true happiness?

Concluding Thoughts

Are we willing to take a hard look at our habits and evaluate them? Are we willing to make some changes in our habits that rub people wrong? Do we let people know that we are happy as a Christian? Our challenge from this lesson is to make a strong effort to develop or form happiness habits!

Lesson Eleven

"Eliminate Fear From Our Lives"

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Ps. 23:4)

Man's emotional nature is important to his health and happiness. Physicians indicate that a high percentage (65%-80%) of all illnesses are emotionally induced. When bad emotions are indulged over a long period of time, it cannot help but hurt the health of that individual. But on the other hand, the wise man says about emotions: ***"A merry heart does good like a medicine: but a broken spirit dries up the bones."*** (Proverbs 17:22). It is obvious that emotionally controlled decisions are the ones people regret the most because they didn't think them through. Also, youth are bad about making emotionally controlled decisions because this is the time when their emotional nature is the strongest (ages 14-24), and they haven't developed their minds to make logical decisions based on wisdom, experience and facts. The emotionally upset person is usually an irrational person—his thinking is affected!

Dealing With Fear!

Fear is one of the two main emotions that man experiences! **Fear** surfaced just after man's fall in the garden (Gen. 3:10). It was a fear of punishment for wrongdoing (a sense of guilt). Guilt-induced fear has greatly multiplied among the human race ever since. Admonitions concerning fear:

Josh. 10:25 _____

Ps. 56:4 _____

Matt. 10:31 _____

Rev. 21:8 _____

Fear can inhibit normal feelings of love, confidence, a sense of well-being. It can trigger negative thought patterns, breed anxieties, worry, etc., and gradually consume a person's life. Those who have made a study of the various forms of fear give at least sixteen different ones—Anxiety, Doubts, Timidity, Indecision, Superstition, Worry, Withdrawal, Loneliness, Inferiority, Cowardice, Over aggressive, Suspicion, Hesitancy, Depression, Haughtiness, Social Shyness.

Fear can be like cancer of the blood, invading the total person. For examples:

- Fear of failure, breakdown, and poverty.
- Fear of being unequal to demands.
- Fear of material insecurity.

Everyone faces fear in his life, but some have to work harder than others to deal with its grip on their lives. First-time-fears about doing something can be normal. Fear that keeps us out of danger is normal. But when fear inhibits us from doing what we should, then it becomes destructive fear and sin.

What Causes Fear?

1. **Childhood experiences.** Some basic needs of man is love, understanding, and acceptance. The child needs love most of all. When children do not receive satisfaction in these areas, it can cause fear in their lives. Even over-protection can make a child self-centered and fearful. It is far easier for a broken bone to be healed than the emotional scars of fear brought on by a worrying parent. A dominating parent that constantly brings out the faults of their children can cause hesitancy, insecurity, and fear. While correction is needed in the lives of children, it must be done in a proper way: (1) Emphasizing their strengths as well as their weaknesses; (2) Reassuring them of love. Constant disapproval is devastating. Parents need to build up their children and show approval to them.
2. **A traumatic experience.** Child molesting or assault leaves a lasting emotional scar upon some children that carries over into adulthood. It can cause fear in marriage relationships and other close relationships of life.
3. **A negative thinking pattern.** A defeatist pattern causes a person not to try anything. The “*I can't*” outlook tends to destroy a person’s ability to do a lot of things that he could otherwise do. Even ordinary task will become difficult. A more positive attitude is needed to overcome fear (Philippians 4:13).
4. **Anger.** Anger can erupt in harmful ways. It can even cause one to be fearful of what he might do.
5. **Sin.** Many people in mental institutions have religious backgrounds. They are there, to a great extent, because of fear-induced-guilt-complexes. People have guilt complexes in most instances because they are guilty of doing something wrong, or what the Bible calls SIN (1 John 3:4).
6. **Lack of Faith.** When a man will not really believe that his past sins have been forgiven by God upon his submission to God’s Will, he will be fearful. But it really shows a lack of faith on his part. Or, when a man worries about what the future holds, rather than listening to the assurances of God, it will bring fearfulness. The latter part of Matthew 6 was given by Jesus to help us overcome our worries.
7. **Habit can intensify fear.** Habit can intensify any negative force. If one allows his fearfulness to become habitual, it will make him a life-time servant of fear. Such habitual response of fear must be broken one step at a time.
8. **The basic cause of fear is selfishness.** Man is fearful because he is too self-centered. Fear is caused by too much concern over self and not enough over others. Man needs to get out of himself and seek to reach out to help others.

The Results of Fear

1. **Emotional results of fear.** It can be a cruel taskmaster! In some instances it has brought on an emotional collapse. It can cause one to withdraw within a shell and let life pass him or her by. It certainly can limit one in doing a lot of good and right things because of a fear that something bad will happen. It has been estimated that one out of every twenty persons in American will have a psychotic disturbance severe enough to be hospitalized for the insane. Mental disease is the nation’s number one health problem.

2. **Social results of fear.** Fear dominated people do not make good company, so their social calendar is not too booked up. Their pessimism and complaining causes them to be shunned by even neighbors and relatives.
3. **Physical results of fear.** In Mr. McMillan's book entitled *None of these Diseases*, he illustrates over and over the harmful effects of fear in people's lives. He listed a possible fifty-one diseases resulting from prolonged fear, worry, and anxiety, etc. Some of the more obvious are: *Ulcers, Colitis, High Blood Pressure, Heart trouble, Strokes, Arteriosclerosis, Kidney Disease, Headaches, Mental Disturbances, goiter, Diabetes, Arthritis*. It should be obvious that one who has love, joy, and peace in his life will certainly be much better off than one with fear, worry, and anxiety. Some fear situations are temporary and cause no real lasting harm to the body. But prolonged fear can result in danger to the body. We are warned by God: **"Don't worry about anything"** (Philippians 4:6; Matthew 6:25). Man needs to: **"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."** (Psalm 37:5). Man needs to learn to cast his care upon God (1 Peter 5:7).
4. **Spiritual results of fear.** Fear can certainly keep us from being as fruitful as we could be and should be. It can keep us from being happy, joyful, and radiant as a Christian. Fear can make us thankless, complaining, defeated, and even unfaithful. A Christian will lose much of his influence for good on others by being fearful. Paul and Silas did not allow a beating and imprisonment (Acts 16) to cause them to be fearful, but were optimistic instead. It certainly opens the door to help the jailer spiritually. Fear can keep us from pleasing God and thus lose our reward.

Overcoming Fear

1. **Fear is overcome by faith.** Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The more we read and study and accept what the Bible says, the less reason we will have for fear in our lives. We need to come to a complete trust in God and his promises.
2. **Fear needs to be faced as sin.** When we allow fear to keep us from doing what is right, commanded by God, then we are sinning. We must not try to justify fear, but face up to it for what it is. Only by doing so can a person ever be able to overcome fear in his life.
3. **Fear needs to be confessed to God.** God promises that he will forgive our sins if we confess them (1 John 1:9). It is God's good pleasure to forgive those who are really trying to deal with sin properly in their lives. When we do confess our fears as sin, then we should be able to go on our way rejoicing.
4. **We can ask God to help us come to grips with our fears.** We are told that we can have this confidence in God that He will hear and answer our petitions (1 John 5:14-15). Certainly God does not want our lives dominated by habitual fear, but He will not help those who will not make a determined effort to face up to their fears.
5. **Express Gratitude to God when you are victorious over your fears.** We certainly should be thankful people. Expressing gratitude to God for our overcoming of fear is a way of showing faith in His promises (1 Thess. 5:18).

Concluding Thoughts

We definitely have a challenge to eliminate fear from our lives if we want to live happy lives!

Lesson Twelve

"Let God Take Control"

"The Lord is my Shepherd!" (Ps. 23:1)

Introduction

When there is mass confusion, we usually want to cry out....*"Who is in charge around here?"* We obviously expect someone to help direct the activities so there will be order and not chaos. And so it is in the spiritual realm, as well! In this Lesson we want to stress the need for "someone" to be in control of our lives—and are suggesting that God alone should be that "someone!" True Spiritual happiness here and hereafter can only come when we listen fully to God's directions. The conclusion of Solomon's discourse in Ecclesiastes is: ***"Fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person."*** (12:13).

Why should we be dependant upon God for directing our lives? The answer, we believe, is simple and obvious—we cannot direct our own lives successfully. Oh yes, we can and do direct our lives, but what have we done with it? The Bible—from beginning to end—is trying to tell us clearly and forcefully.....**"We need to listen to God!"** We need to let Him do the directing! But mankind in generally is not satisfied to follow this simple and clear request. Notice the emphasis on this concept in Scripture.

Matt. 13:14-15 _____

Jere. 10:23-24 _____

John 8:31-32 _____

John 8:47 _____

Prov. 3:5-6 _____

The Roman Letter is dealing with this very issue. Men do not want to listen to God and go their own way and get into deep trouble. He shows that both the Gentile world and the Jewish world have gone against the directions of God and are lost! Romans chapter three spells it out clearly:

3:10 _____

3:11 _____

3:12 _____

3:13 _____

3:14 _____

3:15 _____

3:16 _____

3:17 _____

3:18 _____

Man's Appeal to God for Direction

The 119th Psalm has 176 verses that are emphasizing man's need for guidance from God; but, it is written in a way to show the great value of the Word of God to mankind.

Ps. 119:12 _____

Ps. 119:33-34 _____

Ps. 119:72 _____

Prov. 1:22 _____

Prov. 12:15 _____

Prov. 13:12 _____

Mankind needs to recognize this need for God. He is very foolish to turn down what God offers. The first part of the Book of Proverbs stresses this thought strongly.

Prov. 2:6 _____

Prov. 3:13-14 _____

Prov. 3:22 _____

Prov. 3:23 _____

Prov. 3:24 _____

Prov. 3:26 _____

Prov. 4:11-13 _____

How do We let God be in Control?

"If you love Me, keep My commandments!" (Jn. 14:15). We must be willing to surrender our will to His Will. We must constantly seek His council and guidance (Prov. 3:13-18). It requires a denial of self (Matt. 16:24) and putting Him first in our lives (Matt. 6:33). It is to constantly seek His wisdom and knowledge for our lives. It is to abide in Jesus and in His Word (Jn. 15:4-11). He reminds us that we cannot serve two Master—we have to make a choice (Matt. 6:24). Peter's

sermon on Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 states clearly that Jesus must be Lord (v. 36). Jesus also said: "*Why call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?*" (Lk. 6:46) (Matt. 7:21). We are to confess Jesus as Lord and mean it (Rom. 10:9-10).

Challenging Questions

1. Who is in control—you or God, or someone else?
3. How do we know when He is in Control?
4. Does He directly tell us what to think, say, and do; or, do we gain his directions by reading and meditating on His Scriptures?
5. Why do we have happiness when God is in Control?

Concluding Thoughts

We trust that you have profited by our study together on these important "truths" or "rules" of happy living. We believe the above questions to critical to this lesson as well as the whole series! Let's not be "hearers only," but doers of what we learn! (Jas. 1:22).

