

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

How Does One Live A Spiritual Life?

- 1 -- **Reasons for Spiritual Living.**
- 2 -- **Identifying Carnal & Spiritual Living.**
- 3 -- **Securing Spiritual Life.**
- 4 -- **Developing a Spiritual Life.**
- 5 -- **Hindrances to Spiritual Living.**
- 6 -- **The Challenge to Spiritual Maturity**

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Lesson One

"Reasons for Spiritual Living"

Is your life satisfying, meaningful, and rewarding? If not, do you feel that something is missing in your life? People often remark: *"I am searching for meaning for my life."*

What do they mean by this statement? _____

Is it possible that they are searching for something more than just physical existence? _____

Every human that is born into this world:

- a) Develops physically to adulthood;
- b) Eats food every day (if available);
- c) Sleeps each night;
- d) Toils and works each day;
- e) Reproduces;
- f) Grows old and eventually dies after a long life of doing the same things over and over.

Is this the purpose for which we have been placed on this earth? _____

Gadgets, glamour, and glory fade too quickly! Drugs, Liquor, and Immorality bring no real meaningful existence. There has to be more to man's existence than this!

The only other thing left is **SPIRITUAL LIVING!** Is this what Jesus was talking about in the following passages?

John 10:10 _____

John 4:9-14 _____

Is Jesus contrasting two ways of living—The "earthly" and the "spiritual?"

Would you say that the World Religions have come about because of man's search to find this kind of life? _____

If a person views his life as going nowhere but the grave, maybe it is time to look into what Jesus says that He can give to man—meaningfulness and a higher purpose for existence! This is a life that Jesus calls an *"Abundant Life."*

VALID REASONS FOR A SPIRITUAL LIFE

If a human being makes changes in his life, it is often done because he is either forced to by circumstances or because of a deep dissatisfaction!

Who did Jesus say He came to call? (Matt. 9:13) _____

Why did He come to call this kind of people?
Is it because the self-satisfied and self-righteous have no desire or reason for change and the dissatisfied do? _____

The dissatisfied person is one that seeks for something better. If he can see that Spiritual Life is superior, then the change can and often will be made. What 4 things will help one to see the need for change?

1. When a person sees the bad fruit of carnal living. Carnal living not only brings pleasure, but it bears bad or evil fruit also. It can bring harm, hurt, tragedy, and even death to the person or other innocent persons.

Heb. 11:24-26 _____
Gal. 6:7-8 _____

Some actions can bring immediate bad results while others will take longer. But carnal living will reap its harvest. When these are clearly seen, it often encourages a change—for who wants to reap a bad harvest?

2. When a person sees the "emptiness" of his life. Man is both a physical and spiritual being!

Jas. 2:26 _____
Matt. 4:4 _____

He has been designed to live on a carnal level or a spiritual level. He makes the choice! Living on the carnal level seems to give some satisfaction for a time, but does not completely satisfy man's inner longings. There remains an emptiness within that needs to be filled. We believe that this is what Jesus is offering to man—that deep satisfaction.

John 7:37 _____
John 4:13-14 _____
Matt. 5:6 _____
John 6:27 _____

Jesus says that He can fill that emptiness with a man's soul!

3. When a person sees the Desirable fruit in the lives of the Spiritual. Whatever life man lives will bear fruit or produce a crop. What comes up is determined by what is planted! Sow to the flesh and a person will reap corruption; sow to the Spirit and a person will reap everlasting life (Gal. 6:7-8). This is a basic law of life!

Take a look at the fruit of the spiritual life (Gal. 5:22-23):

- a) Love _____
- b) Joy _____
- c) Peace _____
- d) Longsuffering _____
- e) Kindness _____
- f) Goodness _____
- g) Faithfulness _____
- h) Gentleness _____
- i) Self-Control _____

When a person perceives an emptiness in his life, and experiences the bad fruit of a carnal life, and then sees the very **desirable** fruit of a spiritual life, he has good reasons to make a change!

4. When a person realizes that the Spiritual Life is the only correct way to deal with sin and guilt in his life! Man has a tendency to try to cover up or masked over his sin and guilt feelings in the following ways:

- a) He may deny the reality of sin and guilt or call it a sickness.
- b) He may try to blame others or his environment or circumstances for his wrong actions.
- c) He obviously wants to hide his wrong doings from others.
- d) He will either try to punish himself or try to make up for wrong actions by doing good works.
- e) Some people actually turn more inward and withdraw from life itself.

None of the above really deals correctly with "wrong" actions (SIN).

- Gen. 3:8** _____
- Prov. 28:13** _____
- Isa. 29:15** _____
- Job 34:22** _____

Man needs his sins covered in such a way that they no longer pose a problem to him. David expressed the blessedness of such, as quoted in:

Rom. 4:6-8 _____

God's way of dealing with sin is through atonement (see next lesson).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man obviously has the choice of whether to live on a carnal, fleshly level of life or a spiritual level. God has so designed man to encourage him to choose the spiritual life, but he does not force that upon man. We, therefore, have to observe, experience, listen, and understand the two choices of life—and make our choice! We have briefly tried to see some valid reasons for choosing this way to live. In the next five lessons, we will look deeper into the concept of Spiritual Life and Living.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**True or False**

- 1. Man always sees clearly the choice between carnal living and spiritual living.
- 2. World Religions were man's way of trying to find satisfaction and reasons for his existence.
- 3. An "abundant life" is both physical and spiritual.
- 4. "Bad fruit" of a carnal life should serve as a warning to men to search for something better.
- 5. All "bad actions" bring immediate bad results!
- 6. For a person to say that his life is "empty" is to indicate that he does not have a good reason for his existence.
- 7. Jesus claims that He can give satisfaction to the emptiness in man.
- 8. Most people are able to appreciate the "good fruit" of a spiritual life.
- 9. Man's way of dealing with "sin" and "guilt" has not solved his problem with such in his life.
- 10. Man can only hide his sin from God for a short time.
- 11. God deals with sin by forgiveness based on Atonement.
- 12. God does not force man to live a spiritual life.
- 13. Man is incapable of seeing the great value of the "abundant life" that Jesus is offering.
- 14. Man's body cannot survive apart from his body.
- 15. Carnal living is the lower way of living on earth, while the spiritual life is the higher way of living on earth.

Lesson Two

"Identifying Carnal & Spiritual Living"

Man has a choice of two ways to walk in this life—carnal or spiritual. People's understanding of these two ways to walk can be wrong or incorrect. It may be generally correct to say: *"It is the Christian that walks the spiritual life while the non-Christian walks the carnal life."* But, this is not necessarily exactly correct from a Biblical standpoint. The Apostle Paul wrote two letters to the Christians at Corinth. In his first letter (3:1-3), he said that they were "carnal" and behaving like "carnal" men. Christians should be living the spiritual life, but at times they may fall back into their old carnality. This is the reason for the following exhortations:

- Eph. 4:22-24** _____
- Col. 3:1-2** _____
- Col. 3:9-10** _____

So, even the Christian has to make a choice every day how he will walk—whether in carnal living or spiritual living! Since man is both flesh and spirit, there is a constant warfare going on inside of the Christian trying to determine which will be in control (Gal. 5:17).

IDENTIFYING CARNAL LIVING

The following passages would seem to be identifying what is meant by carnal living and the attitudes and actions connected with such:

- Rom. 8:5** _____
- Rom. 8:7** _____
- Rom. 8:13** _____
- Gal. 5:16** _____
- Gal. 5:19-21** _____
- _____
- _____
- Gal. 5:24** _____
- 1 Cor. 1:21** _____
- 1 Cor. 2:14** _____
- Eph. 4:17** _____
- Eph. 4:18** _____
- _____
- Eph. 4:19** _____
- _____

Several other passages could be added to the above, but hopefully this will give a good insight into how to identify "carnal" living.

IDENTIFYING SPIRITUAL LIVING

It is important to realize at this point that a person has to be given spiritual life before he can be involved in spiritual living. This point will be dealt with more in detail in the 3rd lesson (**Securing Spiritual Life**). Jesus said that He came to give men "life" and that more abundant (John 10:10). Once that we have been given spiritual life; then, we are ready for spiritual living.

The following passages would seem to be identifying what is meant by spiritual living and the attitudes and actions connected with such:

Rom. 6:1-2 _____

Rom. 6:6 _____

Rom. 6:11 _____

Rom. 6:17-18 _____

Rom. 8:5-6 _____

Rom. 8:9 _____

Rom. 8:14 _____

Rom. 12:2 _____

1 Cor. 2:14-15 _____

Gal. 5:22-26 _____

Eph. 4:31 _____

Eph. 4:32 _____

Several other passages can be added to the above, but hopefully these are sufficient to impress us with how to identify spiritual living.

To put it generally, but simply—Carnal Living is to live to fulfill the lusts (evil desires) of the flesh, but Spiritual Living is to allow the Spirit of God to teach, lead, direct, control our lives so that we live according to the teachings of God's Word!

Carnal living leads to death, but spiritual living leads to eternal life! The choice should be an easy one to make for us!

WHO IS A SPIRITUAL PERSON?

The Apostle Paul admonished those who were "spiritual" to try and restore a brother who had been overtaken in a trespass. He is to do it with the right spirit (Gal. 6:1). How do we know who is a "spiritual" person in the church? We believe the following passages will give an indication of how to identify such:

- Rom. 8:6** _____
- Rom. 8:9** _____
- Gal. 5:16** _____
- Gal. 5:18** _____
- Gal. 5:25** _____
- Gal. 5:22-23** _____
- 1 Cor. 3:1-4** _____

We do not believe that a Spiritual person is identified as:

- a) One with a sad face and foregoes all pleasures of this life;
- b) One who has to have his emotions aroused;
- c) One who has to have unstructured and free worship;
- d) Or one who is guided by his emotions rather than by the Spirit of God.

God commands His people to be "*filled with the Spirit.*" (Gal. 5:18). One of the qualities of the seven men chosen by the church to see after the Grecian widows was—they were to be "*full of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 6:3). This obviously is not talking about "Miraculous gifts of the Spirit." In the first place, the Apostles had not laid hands on these men until after they were seen to be qualified and chosen (Acts 6:6). In the 2nd place, "to be filled with the Spirit" is a command we are to do or a quality we possess because of our actions. Also notice, that to require such a quality automatically assumes that there are many others who are not "filled" with the Spirit, but are Christians. The idea seems to indicate that one has committed his life fully to listen to and obey all that the Spirit of God requires of him. It is an attitude of total submission and surrender to the Will of God. Such an attitude becomes obvious to those around such a person. They will see a maturity that is not in all Christians.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God calls upon those who have been given "spiritual life" to live their lives in accord with this concept. It is a Spirit-driven life that every Christian is expected to live—but unfortunately, not all do! The challenge is before us—put off the Old Man and his sins; and, put on the New Man who lives a life of holiness (1 Pet. 1:13-19). We need to push forward each day to meet this great challenge.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. A Christian can only live a spiritual life.
- ___ 2. Since man is both flesh and spirit, he has a war going on inside trying to determine which way he will live.
- ___ 3. Carnal living can be identified by attitudes and actions.
- ___ 4. Spiritual living can be identified by attitudes and actions.
- ___ 5. The carnal person lives after the lustful (evil desires) of the flesh.
- ___ 6. Causing division and strife is an indication of carnality.
- ___ 7. Bringing peace and joy into others' lives is an indication of spirituality.
- ___ 8. One who lives in an adulterous relationship is carnal.
- ___ 9. One who has not crucified his flesh is living carnally.
- ___ 10. A person guilty of selfish ambitions is living carnally.
- ___ 11. To "bite and devour one another" is to live carnally.
- ___ 12. Spiritual living is shown by one who is living according to the teachings of the Spirit of God.
- ___ 13. A spiritual person is one who "minds the things of the Spirit."
- ___ 14. A spiritual person can be identified as one who is on an emotional "high."
- ___ 15. To be "filled with the Spirit" is to be baptized in the Spirit.

Lesson Three

"Securing Spiritual Life"

As indicated in Lesson #2 (p. 6), we need to look at the question of **"How does a person secure spiritual life?"** While a carnal person can do many things that are good and right, that does not mean that he possesses "spiritual life!" A spiritual life is not only something to be lived, but it is also, and foremost, something to be possessed. It is a gift from God. Jesus came to give men "life!" (Jn. 10:10). It is not something that man can give to himself or others, but something that must come from the "giver of life"—God, Himself! Notice these passages:

- John 1:4** _____
- John 5:26** _____
- John 5:40** _____
- John 6:48** _____
- John 6:63** _____
- John 14:6** _____

There should be no doubt about who is the giver of life! If we want this life, we must go to Jesus, believe and obey Him, if we want to possess this life (John 3:16, 36, Heb. 5:8-9).

WHAT IS THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE?

If a person needs life, it is correctly assumed that he is dead! James reminds us that the body without the spirit is dead (Jas. 2:26). When God warned Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, he made it clear that they would die if they ate of it (Gen. 2:17). We know that they did not die "physically" that day; so, the kind of death that God was speaking about was "spiritual death." Thus, we know that disobedience to God can bring "spiritual death!" Notice these Scriptures:

- Isa. 59:1-2** _____
- Rom. 6:23** _____
- Rom. 4:15** _____
- Eph. 2:1-5** _____

If sin causes us to be dead (separated from God), then those sins need to be removed (remitted, forgiven) so that we can be alive again (in fellowship with God). Jesus came to give us this life—spiritual life! (Jn. 10:10). He alone has made this possible by His willingness to take on our "just" punishment for sin so that we could be set free from the bondage of our sins.

Notice how the Apostle John clarifies who is really in fellowship with God (or has spiritual life with God). People may claim it, but the proof is in the way a person conducts himself.

1 John 1:1-6 _____

1 John 1:7 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

Spiritual life is a forgiven, cleansed, and saved state when a person has been born anew into the kingdom of heaven. See passages:

John 3:3-5 _____

1 Cor. 6:9-11 _____

Acts 2:38 _____

Rom. 6:17-18 _____

Because we have been redeemed, cleansed, and justified, we are privileged to have access to God's assurances, promises, and blessings (Eph. 1:3). We also possess a great hope of a resurrection unto everlasting life. This hope and these blessings are also dependant upon our living a spiritual life before God and man.

Rev. 2:10 _____

Heb. 5:8-9 _____

Phil. 2:12-13 _____

Heb. 2:1-3 _____

Heb. 3:12-14 _____

This spiritual life is given by God and secured and maintained by man upon the basis of an obedient faith in God and His Son, Jesus the Christ.

1 Pet. 1:22-23 _____

Mark 16:15-16 _____

Jas. 2:21-24 _____

When men hear the Gospel message of Life and we believe that message to the point of being obedient to it, we receive the forgiveness of our sins and are thereby born into the family of God (1 John 3:1). God is dealing with responsible people. When men turn away from God, they are still held accountable. God does not take away man's responsibility, but He does for man what man cannot do for himself—have spiritual life.

While God alone can give man spiritual life, man is required to be responsible for certain things in order to receive this life. It is not something he earns or deserves, but a gift that is given upon meeting certain requirements by God.

MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL LIFE

If man did not have anything to do to maintain this spiritual life (right relationship with God), then he could live anyway that he wanted to. Such a thought is certainly foreign to the teachings of God's Word. It is one thing to be given spiritual life, but something entirely different to live this life and thereby maintain this spiritual life (my relationship with God). Securing spiritual life is only the beginning of what we call the "Christian Life!" We cease being a slave of sin and become a slave of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18). Spiritual life is not only a gift from God; but, as well, a way of living that pleases God. The ultimate goal of spiritual life is:

1. To become spiritually mature.

- a) James 1:2-4 _____
- b) Heb. 6:1 _____
- c) Eph. 4:11-13 _____

2. To make it to Heaven.

- a) Phil. 3:20-21 _____
- b) Matt. 5:10-12 _____
- c) Matt. 7:21 _____
- d) 1 Thess. 4:16-17 _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Things that we need to give recognition to below are very important concepts in this study:

1. We are "spiritually" dead because of our disobedience to God.
2. We need to be made alive or given "spiritual" life from God.
3. Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for God to give us this life.
4. But man is given certain requirements before God will give him this life.
5. Upon meeting the requirements, a person is born anew to walk in the newness of life.
6. Spiritual living is to live according to the direction of the Spirit of God (given in the Bible, the Word of God).
7. This spiritual life needs to be developed and matured.
8. This life has promise of eternal life with God (heaven).

Are we meeting the challenges of such a life?

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

1. Only God can give man spiritual life.
2. A carnal person can practice some good and right things that indicate that he has spiritual life.
3. There is nothing that man can do in order to receive spiritual life.
4. Spiritual Life is a right relationship with God.
5. Belief and obedience is required of man in order to have spiritual life.
6. Spiritual death means that we are separated from fellowship with God.
7. The Bible states that man is dead in his trespasses and sins.
8. The only one who can give life is the only one who can remove the sin that separates us from God.
9. A person, even though he walks in darkness, can be in fellowship with God.
10. A person receives life from God on the basis of faith only.
11. Only those who have spiritual life have access to all spiritual blessings in Christ.
12. To maintain spiritual life (our relationship with God), we must be "faithful to death."
13. Faith only is said to be a "dead faith."
14. There is only one Goal of Spiritual Life.
15. Only those who have been given life by God have the promise of heaven.

Lesson Four

"Developing a Spiritual Life"

The Christian is born into the family of God by a spiritual birth (Jn. 3:3-5) and starts out as a "babe" in Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-2). The development of a spiritual life begins and will last until he dies. It takes time to develop a deeply spiritual person. It is not a magical process of instant osmosis. It is a gradual growing process—possibly faster at first, but slower in later years. It is important to recognize:

1. That a spiritual person may not be a mature spiritual person.
2. That a spiritually-minded person may not be a mature spiritual person.

To be a spiritually-minded person is to have one's mind on what the Spirit of God teaches. His teachings affect our thinking and actions for good. But one cannot become spiritually mature without being spiritual or spiritually-minded.

All Christians share a common goal—the challenge to become spiritually mature in Christ. It is what God wants—it is not an option! But such needs to be looked upon as a challenge and a blessing—not a curse!

2 Pet. 3:18 _____
Heb. 5:12-14 _____
Eph. 4:11-16 _____

BASIC ELEMENTS IN THIS DEVELOPMENT

There are some very basic elements that are necessary in order for our spiritual life to grow and become mature.

1. Spiritual-mindedness must replace carnal-mindedness!

Rom. 8:5-6 _____

We must come to set our mind on the things that God's Spirit says. Our lives need to come more and more into the control of the Spirit's teaching. He does not do this directly—He does not cancel out our human will or responsibility. He does not force us to act contrary to our own desires. We are controlled by our willingness to listen to what the Spirit says in the Word of God:

Eph. 6:17 _____
1 Cor. 2:13 _____
2 Tim. 3:16-17 _____

There must be a willingness to have our thinking transformed into right thinking—like God thinks (Rom. 12:2). It is necessary that we allow the Will of God to become supreme in our lives. It is the ever-increasing recognition of the authority of Christ over our entire being. It is to recognize that we have the mind of Christ in His "inspired Word!" But, it is to also realize that the mind of Christ must be in our lives...in our hearts.

1 Cor. 2:16 _____

Phil. 2:5 _____

2. Our affections must be set on things above.

Col. 3:1-2 _____

Our life before the new birth was taken up with loving the world and the things in the world. We are now urged to no longer love these things. Our main interest is no longer to be fleshly or carnal, but spiritual. Our development is to cause us to cease from sin, loving sin, or walking in sin.

1 John 2:15-17 _____

Rom. 8:5 _____

1 Pet. 4:1 _____

3. We are now to live a holy life.

1 Pet. 1:16-17 _____

Our relationship with God leads us to become like Him. He is holy and we should be holy. Our lives will increasingly reflect God's control and living within us. It should be more than mere submission to authority. It should be a loving obedience.

1 John 5:3 _____

It is giving recognition that our inner man has been reconciled to God. Duty becomes both an honor and privilege to serve and even suffer for Christ's sake.

Gal. 6:14 _____

Our lives will more and more manifest the fruit of the Spirit. It is to think God's thoughts. It is to do God's Will. And...the end results will be a full grown spiritual person.

Gal. 5:22-23 _____

Eph. 4:13 _____

THINGS THAT ENCOURAGE GROWTH

1. A giving of one's self to the study of the Word of God.

1 Pet. 2:1-2 _____

We need to study the Word of God together with other Christians, as well as privately on our own (2 Tim. 2:15). His Word is food for our souls, it can perfect us before God, and lead us to spiritual heights in Christ.

Deut. 8:3 _____

2 Tim. 3:16-17 _____

John 17:3 _____

2. Public and Private Worship.

1 Cor. 11:17 _____

1 Cor. 11:29-30 _____

The Christians at Corinth were under-mining the purpose of the assembly. It is designed by God to uplift us—not to cause us to become weak and sickly. Corrupt, unspiritual, and hypocritical worship does no good.

Matt. 15:7-9 _____

It should be uplifting and edifying. It should create a very desirable atmosphere. There is togetherness, love, and concern shown for each other. It should call our minds to what the Spirit has taught us in his Word.

1 Cor. 14:26 _____

Ps. 119:63 _____

Private worship of prayer, study, and meditation upon God's Word gives us opportunity to see how it relates to life. It is one way of drawing nigh to God, so that He will draw nigh to me.

James 5:13 _____

James 5:16 _____

Ps. 1:1-2 _____

James 4:8 _____

Matt. 6:6 _____

A close personal fellowship can be developed with God in private worship and study.

3. By accepting and benefiting from chastisement.

Heb. 12:5-13 _____

God's way to cleanse and purify us for more fruit bearing is through the trials, tribulations, and chastening that comes into our lives. It can lead to making us better or bitter—depending upon how we view such. Problems successfully faced today makes us better fit for tomorrow.

John 15:2 _____

James 1:2-4 _____

God does not tempt man to sin, but allows temptations to come so that we can be strengthened. And He has stated that He will not allow us to be tried above our ability to deal with it.

James 1:12-14 _____

1 Cor. 10:13 _____

4. By exercising ourselves in service to God.

1 Tim. 4:7 _____

We are called upon to offer these spiritual services. They go up as a sweet smell before God. It is obedience, doing our duty, and engaging in good works. It is also a denial of self and bearing of our cross to follow Christ.

Rom. 12:2 _____

1 Pet. 2:5 _____

Matt. 25:31-46 _____

Matt. 16:24 _____

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. There is a difference in being spiritual and being mature.
- ___ 2. Growth as a Christian is a must!
- ___ 3. To grow as a Christian we must let God's Word be supreme in our lives.
- ___ 4. Obedience is a duty, but it should not be grievous.
- ___ 5. Our heart is where we set our affections.
- ___ 6. Ultimate holiness is the goal of the Christian.
- ___ 7. A spiritual person will more and more manifest the fruit of the Spirit.
- ___ 8. Study of the Word of God is a feeding of our soul in order to grow.
- ___ 9. Public and private worship helps to draw us closer to God.
- ___ 10. Chastisement is for our good, not our hurt.

Lesson Five

"Hindrances to Spiritual Living"

Spiritual development towards maturity is a long and some times painful process. As James points out, maturity (perfection) comes out of trials and tribulations faced correctly with faith in God (1:1-4). As we work at the job of growing, many hindrances will try to stop the process, slow it down, or discourage us. We want to look at four basic areas of study that can affect our growth—two of which comes out of the parable of the Sower and the other two will be quite obvious as we look at them.

Matt. 13:18-23:

- 1) **Hardened Soil** _____
- 2) **Rocky Soil** _____
- 3) **Thorny Soil** _____
- 4) **Good Soil** _____

PERSECUTION

Matt. 13:20-21 _____

God has warned us that persecution will come!

2 Tim. 3:12 _____

1 Pet. 4:12-16 _____

If a person is not committed and prepared for such, he will not remain faithful nor develop spiritually. Notice that the seed planted in "good soil" remained faithful and was fruitful, but the seed planted in the "rocky soil" did not do either one. Why? No root or depth in the Word of God.

Col. 2:6-7 _____

Persecution can come in the form of "peer pressure." Some call this the "Herd Complex." The idea, of course, is the feeling of having to go with the group.

Exo. 23:2 _____

A Christian can also be exposed to too much evil and not enough spiritual contact to help deal with the evil. This is many times the problem with youth, they do not have enough spiritual help.

2 Cor. 6:14-18 _____

WRONG PRIORITIES

Matt. 13:22 (Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14) _____

Look at the things that are mentioned that men place before the spiritual:

- 1. Cares of this world** _____
- 2. Deceitfulness of riches** _____
- 3. Lusts of other things** _____
- 4. Pleasures of this life** _____

God's priority for man is to seek first the kingdom and God's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). But man has his own priorities—his affections are still on the things on this earth (Col. 3:1-3). His life is filled with worry and anxiety over things of this life (Matt. 6:25; Phil. 4:6-7).

Another underlying problem here is found in (Matt. 16:24-25). He is still too centered on self! He is not willing to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus! His sincerity could easily be called into question! And notice that it is the good and honest heart that produces fruit!

FAILURE TO DEAL WITH PAST GUILT

1 John 1:1-10 _____

Unless guilt is properly dealt with, it will hinder or even stop our spiritual growth. It can be like a cancer in our soul. We need to do what God tells us to do, and then accept God's kind forgiveness and go on with our lives.

When we do not deal properly with past guilt, it may be because we have not died to the way of sin as we should.

Rom. 6:1-2, 6 _____

"It is not the ship in the water, but the water in the ship that sinks it. So, it is not the Christian in the world, but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger."

We need to clean house of sin so that we can rid our lives of guilt. We need to put off the old man (former behavior) and put on the new man (the Christian walk). We need to mortify (put to death) the ways of sin. Complacency here will doom our spiritual development.

2 Cor. 7:1 _____

Eph. 4:22 _____

There are various reasons that could be given for man not dealing properly with guilt:

Fear (2 Tim. 1:7; Rev. 21:8) _____

Pride (Phil. 2:7-9) _____

God has given us the great example of humility. Man has two problems with himself:

- 1) He over-estimates himself, his work, his effort, and does not give glory to God.
- 2) Or, He over-estimates God's part, and thinks that He will do more than He says He will do. In so doing, he under-estimates man's responsibility.

Our lives need to revolve around God—not self!

Shame (Ps. 51:1-3) _____

Because we are ashamed of the sin we commit, we try to cover it up and not deal with it. King David did this! His spiritual development went backwards until he dealt with his guilt properly. We cannot hide anything from God—even though we may hide it from man (Ps. 139:1-10). Then, why not fully open up to Him? Why not request: *"Search me, cleanse me, and renew me."* God's way is best! He wants us to draw nigh to him so He can bless us.

James 4:8 _____

STUBBORNNESS

Matt.13:13-16 _____

Spiritual development requires turning to God, but the stubborn and close-minded person will not turn to Him. The first "martyr" as a Christian (Stephen) was brought on by this kind of people.

Acts 7:51-53, 58 _____

Inspiration said that they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear. And yet, they looked upon themselves as "children of God!" It is this kind of people that even the "Master Teacher" (Jesus) could not turn to God.

Indifference is also a part of stubbornness!

Rev. 3:14-22 _____

They liked the status quo and would not listen to the Lord and kept Him on the outside of their hearts. Our hearts need to be tender and open to God and His Word at all times.

Matt. 18:3-4 _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The spiritual person is:

- 1) One who has been convicted by the Spirit through preaching the Word;
- 2) One who has made a decision, a commitment, to die to sin and the world and to live unto God and righteousness;
- 3) One who, day by day, is learning from the Spirit (God's Word) how to live and thus, will more and more produce the fruit of the Spirit in his life.

Greater and greater strength is gained as the Christian walks with God. He will certainly experience the "abundant life" that Jesus came to give.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. **Spiritual maturity has to come out of trials successfully dealt with.**
- ___ 2. **Persecution does not necessarily come just because we become Christians.**
- ___ 3. **Peer pressure is a form of persecution.**
- ___ 4. **Being around too much evil will automatically cause a child of God to fall.**
- ___ 5. **The pleasures of this life are sinful, in and of themselves.**
- ___ 6. **A person's sincerity can be called into question when he allows the cares of this world to be a priority in his life.**
- ___ 7. **True guilt comes from engaging in sin.**
- ___ 8. **Fear can keep a person out of heaven.**
- ___ 9. **Pride is an over-estimating of ourselves.**
- ___ 10. **Shame will cause us to try to hide our sinful practices.**
- ___ 11. **Stubborn people martyred Stephen.**
- ___ 12. **A stubborn person can be self-deceived about his true state before God.**
- ___ 13. **Jesus said we need to be like little children.**
- ___ 14. **Spiritual strength is gained by daily walking with God.**

Lesson Six

"The Challenge to Spiritual Maturity!"

God, and God alone, can offer man spiritual life through His Son! If man wants it, he must accept it in God's appointed way—on His terms!

John 3:3-5 _____

Acts 2:38 _____

Spiritual life is something we receive, but it is also something we live. But, we always have a choice as to whether we will live a spiritual or a carnal life (1 Cor. 3:1-3). To live a spiritual life, we must cease being a servant of sin and become a servant of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18). The ultimate challenge for the Christian is spiritual maturity!

Matt. 5:48 _____

God's challenges:

- 1) **To grow (1 Pet. 2:1-2).** We start out as babes and grow to maturity. *"What ceases to grow begins to die!"* A converted, cleansed soul can revert back to the old ways of living, if he so chooses (2 Pet. 2:20-22). The challenge is "onward, forward, and upward!"
- 2) **To bring every thought into captivity (2 Cor. 10:5).** We need to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). We need to have our minds transformed (Rom. 12:1). We need to let God's Will become the supreme authority for my life.
- 3) **To add the "graces" to our lives (2 Pet. 1:5-11).** Faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If we do so, we will not be barren or unfruitful as a Christian. If we do not, we are shortsighted and have forgotten the purpose of our lives. We will need to be rebuked by the Hebrew writer (5:12-14)—as well as challenged too (6:1-2).
- 4) **The ultimate challenge—to become complete, mature (2 Tim. 3:17).**

MEASURING MATURITY

How can we know that we are growing and are becoming more mature in our spiritual lives?

- 1) **By what we outgrow (Rom. 6:1-2, 6)!** Children outgrow clothes, etc.

When we can see that we are overcoming (outgrowing) sinful habits, attitudes, and relationships—we can tell we are growing!

Eph. 5:8 _____

2) By how we handle ourselves in trying circumstances (Jas. 1:1-4). Such times will come and we need to be prepared for them. We need to be able to:

a) Stand on our own two feet (Gal. 6:4-5) _____

b) Show wisdom in decisions and actions (Jas. 1:5; 3:17) _____

c) Show self-control (discipline) (Jas. 1:26) _____

3) By our outlook (Phil. 4:8). Such can be very revealing about us as a Christian. Especially in our outlook:

a) About how we see ourselves (Matt. 16:24-25) _____

b) About how we view others (Phil. 2:2-3) _____

c) About how we view the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17) _____

d) About how we view God (1 Cor. 10:31) _____

4) By my greater usefulness as a Christian (Eph. 2:10). We are motivated by God to not only to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but to reach out to others and be helpful and fruitful.

a) By maintaining good works (Tit. 3:8) _____

b) By abounding in the Lord's work (1 Cor. 15:58) _____

c) By being prepared for every good work (2 Tim. 2:21) _____

d) By glorifying God as a fruit bearer (Jn. 15:2, 8) _____

5) By a greater stability (Eph. 4:13). Without stability, we are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine and sleight of men. We show our stability by:

a) Not falling away when persecution comes (Matt. 13:20-21) _____

b) By not going into:

◇ Unbelief (Heb. 3:12) _____

◇ Not letting my heart be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13) _____

c) But, by holding my confidence steadfast to the end (Heb. 3:14)_____

**THINGS THAT DO NOT NECESSARILY
INDICATE MATURITY**

While the following things are not wrong in and of themselves, they may not be a good indication of how mature a person is.

- 1) **Possessing miraculous gifts.** The church at Corinth had all the gifts (1 Cor. 12). But they had envy and jealousy in their midst and were divisive in their actions. These miraculous gifts ceased by the end of the first century. We do not have such today (irrespective of what some may say). In principle, we could say that just because a person has certain talents or abilities to do things does not automatically say they are mature as a Christian.
- 2) **To be appointed a Leader.** If you know about Diotrefes, then you understand why that such is no guarantee of maturity (3 John 9-10). The church has been shamed and divided by immature leadership.
- 3) **To be a Preacher.** According to Paul some preached Christ out of envy and strife (Phil. 1:14-18). Some preachers show their great immaturity by preaching false doctrines (Rom. 16:17-18).
- 4) **To appear pious before people.** Jesus condemned some religious people who appeared outwardly to be righteous, but inside were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matt. 23:28). He also rebuked those who did religious activities to be seen of men or to receive the applause of men (Matt. 23:5-7; 6:1-8).
- 5) **To be in the church a long time.** Again, this is no guarantee of a person's maturity. The Hebrew writer rebukes those to whom he was writing for being in the church for a long time and had not become mature (5:12-14).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Spiritual maturity is a lifetime process. The "self-righteous" think that they have arrived—when they haven't! (Lk. 18:9-14). There is also danger of discouragement because growth comes slow at times (2 Cor. 4:16). There is also a danger of being too judgmental of ourselves (as well as others) (Matt. 7:1-5; Jn. 7:24). However, man's potential for spiritual development is unlimited. Let's reach out for it!

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. Spiritual living and spiritual maturity are the same.
- ___ 2. The Christian always has the choice of whether he will grow or go backwards.
- ___ 3. Our minds need to be captivated by the mind of Christ so that He can direct our ways.
- ___ 4. To be short-sighted as a Christian is to fail to see how much we have grown.
- ___ 5. We can know that we have grown by the kind of clothes we wear.
- ___ 6. We can know that we have grown by the kind of words we use.
- ___ 7. We can know that we have grown by how we view others.
- ___ 8. We can know that we have grown by our usefulness in God's hands.
- ___ 9. We can know that we have grown by not falling away in hard times.
- ___ 10. We can know that we have grown by our being steadfast to the end.
- ___ 11. Leadership in the church should be by mature persons.
- ___ 12. Many years in the church is no guarantee of maturity.
- ___ 13. The self-righteous person may think that he is mature, but is deceived.
- ___ 14. Our growth-potential as a Christian is unlimited.
- ___ 15. Only the mature Christian will make it to heaven.

