

*Important
Decisions for Youth*

13 Lessons in 4 Sections

Prepared by Paul E. Cantrell

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IMPORTANT DECISIONS FOR YOUTH

Prepared by:
Paul E. Cantrell
84 Northview Dr.,
Mechanicsburg, PA, 17050

pecantrell@juno.com

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Lesson One

To Have the Courage to Stand Alone!

*Have you ever heard the expression—“Everyone is doing it?”
Well, here is a concrete illustration of it!*

“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Gen. 6:5)

If there was ever a time to use this expression to justify doing something, this was the time! Everybody was wicked! Only Noah was acceptable to God! Talk about the courage to stand alone—Noah illustrated it! People use excuses for doing wrong—such as:

- a) “The majority believes its okay, so I am going to do it.”
- b) “The best people in town are doing it—it must be okay.”
- c) “Most religious people believe it this way—it must be right.”

People seem to feel safe when the majority are involved. But not necessarily in the lives of godly people. Moses rejected the majority and went with the slave minority. Joseph was sold into slavery but did right among so many that did wrong. Joshua and Caleb was a minority of the 12 spies, but stood their ground against the whole congregation of Israel. The Old Testament prophets, most of the time, stood against the majority and died for it. (Heb. 11:32-40). The Apostles gave their lives in continued service to God—even dying for it. The early Christians, as a minority, were persecuted unmercifully at times but were faithful to death. So many have stood for Righteousness even if it meant standing alone!

- a) How were they able to do such?
- b) What gave them the power to stand alone in the face of great odds?
- c) What kept them from giving up and joining the crowd?

FOUR THINGS THAT GIVE US COURAGE!

1--THEY HAD FAITH—TRUE FAITH—IN GOD!

1. What was said about Noah? (Heb. 11:7)? _____

- 1) The Scriptures emphasized FAITH in Noah’s life.
- 2) Noah was a just man, perfect in his generation, and walked with God.
- 3) In a world where everyone did wrong, Noah stood alone as righteous!
- 4) Noah did not have a dead faith, but a justifying faith—strict obedience to God—even when all others would not!
- 5) Illustration:
 - a) A man’s son was going to undergo serious surgery.

- b) He was afraid—asked his father to stay with him through surgery.
- c) The father promised he would.
- d) The surgeon asked the father to leave after the boy was put under.
- e) But the father insisted on staying—for he had promised his son he would be there.
- f) He wanted to be there when he awoke.
- g) When the boy awoke from the operation—he ask his dad if he had stay through the operation.
- h) The father was so thankful that he could honestly say, “Yes, I was there to see you all the way through.”

2. Why is faith so important? (1 John 5:4) _____

Those who have a deep faith in God are the ones who will be there with God all the way through. They will even stand alone when necessary—like Noah!

2--THEY HAD CONVICTIONS—TRUE CONVICTIONS OF TRUTH!

3. Why was Stephen able to speak so boldly that led to his death? (Acts 7:51-58; 6:3, 5) _____

- 1) Stephen had preached his convictions about Jesus being the Christ.
- 2) The Religious Leaders arrested him & brought him before the council.
- 3) They accused him of speaking against the temple & the Law.
- 4) He was permitted to speak—and he preached them a great sermon.
- 5) He did not compromise nor give in—he stood firm on his convictions.
- 6) He ended his sermon with strong accusations that led to his death.
- 7) He had to be truly convicted to face what he faced.

4. With what kind of spirit did Stephen show towards his persecutors? (Acts 7:60) _____

- 8) Illustration:
 - a) A high school sophomore quit playing volleyball and basketball rather than go back on her vow.
 - b) She had made a vow to remain a virgin till marriage.
 - c) She was part of a group that was trying to turn the tide of sexual indulgence on the part of teens.
 - d) They wore a ring on the left ring finger.
 - e) And vowed they would not remove it until their marriage.
 - f) The school had a rule that no one could play with jewelry on.
 - g) So, she quit playing rather than go back on her vow.

5. What was the Apostle John’s greatest joy? (3 John 3-4) _____

- 9) True conviction helps us to stand for that which is right.
 - a) Convictions help us not to be wishy-washy, uncertain, or tossed about by the crowd.
 - b) Convictions can help us to stand alone, if necessary, for the right.

3—THEY WERE SINCERE—NOT HYPOCRITICAL

6. Who demonstrated sincerity in the face of persecution in Acts 4:19-20? _____

- 1) Peter & John had been preaching Jesus as the Christ to the people.
 - a) The religious leaders were greatly disturbed over such.
 - b) They put them in jail overnight.
 - c) The next day—they were threatened with severity if they did not cease preaching Jesus.
- 2) In the face of these warnings, they said:
 - a) We can't stop—we got to preach what we have seen & heard.
 - b) We must obey God rather than your command.

7. Where did they go upon being released? (Acts 4:23) _____

8. What caused them to be so strong—to stand alone, willingly? _____

- 3) Illustration:
 - a) One Sunday morning, during worship service, a 2,000-member congregation was surprised to see two men enter.
 - b) They were covered from head to toe in black.
 - c) They were carrying sub-machine guns.
 - d) One of the men proclaimed: *“Anyone willing to take a bullet for Christ, remain where you are.”*
 - e) Most of the congregation fled.
 - f) Out of the 2,000—about 20 remained.
 - g) The man who spoke took off his hood.
 - h) He said to the preacher—*“Okay preacher, I got rid of all the hypocrites. Now you may continue your sermon.”*
- 4) Hypocrisy is one of the great evils plaguing the religious world.
- 5) Jesus dealt quite severely with the hypocrisy of the leaders of his day (Matt. 23).

9. What common admonition is given in these passages? (Joshua 24:14; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 1:10) _____

- 5) Sincerity of conviction helps us to stand alone, even in the face of death.
- 6) It is easy to do right when everyone else is doing right.
- 7) The real test of our sincerity comes when we have to stand up and be counted!
Especially, when we have to stand alone!

4--THEY HAD CHARACTER—INTEGRITY

10. What three men are held up in high esteem because of their character? (Ezek. 14:12-14) _____

- 1) These three righteous men were known for their great character!
 - a) It takes character—integrity to stand up & face the giants of this life.

- b) Character is the real me—not an outward put-on—but reality!
- c) These three men had backbone—courage—faith, etc.
- 2) Illustration:
 - a) A young man was in need of some serious counseling to help him.
 - b) He went reluctantly, but arrogantly to someone who was more mature than he.
 - c) He said brashly, *“O.K., counsel me.”*
 - d) The Old man looked at him intently and then said, *“I have two questions to ask of you, first.”*
 - e) *“O.K., have at it!”*
 - e) *“Suppose you were offered a \$1,000 to tell a lie—with the assurance that no one would find out and no one would be hurt—what would you do?”*
 - f) After thinking for a moment, he said—*“Sure, I would tell it.”*
 - g) Counselor then asked him, *“Would you tell such a lie for a dime?”*
 - h) *“Of course not, what do you think I am?”*
 - i) Counselor then said, *“I already know what you are. I am now trying to establish your price.”*
- 3) These three men did not have a price—They had character!

11. How is this character demonstrated? (1 Cor. 15:58) _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Whatever it was that helped these great people to take a stand for righteousness, we need it today also. They stood for God, Jesus, Truth, and Righteousness. What about us today? What do we stand for? Would we stand alone?

Lesson Two

To Respect Parental Hedges!

Literal hedges can serve more than one purpose.

It is important that we also realize that

Parental Hedges can be of great value to us.

Years ago people use to hedge their property in. Farmers would often leave what was called a hedge row to define their property line. It was a simple way of saying—this is where my property line ends. When my family and I lived in Camp Hill in the 1970s, one of the members of the church had to deal with a neighbor who planted his hedge row quite a bit on to their property. Obviously, he was claiming it as his. He went beyond what he should have legally and morally.

Spiritually, we plant hedges! Parents want to be protective of their children. They set up hedges or boundary lines for their children not to go beyond. They do it for the well-being of their children.

Christians need to make wise decisions for their lives. So, they voluntarily set up hedges or boundary lines for themselves—not to go beyond. They do it as a safe guard for their spiritual condition before God. What are the reasons for these hedges!

- a) There are quite a few things that the Bible does not specifically deal with.
- b) We are called on to make decisions for our lives & those of our children on these matters.
- c) Hedges are set up as warning or danger signs—“Danger Ahead!”
- d) To participate in these things can be fraught with danger.
- e) The safe course is not to engage in them.
- f) Don’t go beyond the hedges!

It is important that we remember that we are talking about things that the Scriptures do not specifically state as being wrong. But these things could lead to what the Scriptures do condemn. The purpose of this lesson is to illustrate why we set up hedges and their benefits.

LET’S LOOK AT DANCING

The Bible no where specifically deals with this by name. Then, why do some parents try to set up a hedge to discourage their children from dancing? It is evidently because of the dangers of what such could lead to. The reasoning goes like this: “*When you dance you have bodily contact that can increase sexual urge that could lead to overt sin.*”

1. What can be found in these two passages that would give this impression? (Matt. 15:19-20; Gal. 5:19-21)_____

The downfall into overt sin has come to some that started on the dance floor, then to privacy of a car, and then fornication. Are there dangers there? Is there sufficient evidence to warrant a hedge about this matter?

2. But do all people who dance wind up in this condition?_____

If they do not, then why the hedge? The hedge becomes a safe guard spiritually & morally. You avoid the temptations that go with the situation. Is it a sin to dance? The Bible doesn't say so in so many words!

LET'S LOOK AT GAMBLING

The Bible no where specifically states gambling to be a sin. Then, why do we set up a hedge to discourage our children and ourselves not to gamble? Is it because of the dangers of what gambling can lead to. The reasoning process suggests: *"A person can become addicted to gambling and not take care of his family."*

3. What does the Bible say about the person who does not provide for his family? (1 Tim. 5:8)_____

The evils that are often connected with gambling are sufficient for many to want to avoid such.

4. Do all people who gamble wind up in these terrible conditions?_____

Can a person gamble and not get addicted or not hurt himself or his family?

- a) Such as matching pennies
- b) All put a dollar into a pot—drawing for a prize.
- c) Possibly yes!
- d) No one hurt & someone is even blessed that may need it.

Then why the hedge? Is it because of the possibilities of getting hurt or hurting others? Is it because of the possibilities of addition to gambling and bringing on terrible consequences? Is it the safe course to take?

DRINKING WINE OR STRONG DRINK.

I know of no scripture that specifically states that such is wrong. There are even Scriptures that would seem to say such is okay.

5. Did Paul do wrong in what he said to Timothy? (1 Tim. 5:23)_____

6. Did Jesus encourage drunkenness when he attended a wedding feast and performed a miracle? (John 2:1-10)_____

7. How do you understand these three statements?

a) 1 Timothy 3:3 _____

b) 1 Timothy 3:8 _____

c) Titus 2:3 _____

In view of the above passages why do we set up hedges for our children and for ourselves that forbids drinking of any intoxicating drink? Isn't it because of the dangers of a lack of control? Isn't it because of the consequences of intemperance? Isn't it because the Bible specifically condemns DRUNKENNESS? (Gal. 5:21). Isn't it because of the warnings of Scripture in regards to drinking strong drink? (Proverbs 20:1). We all know that the dangers are real! This is one of the most obvious facts of life!

8. Will everyone who drinks some wine or strong drink get drunk; be rude, nasty, and hurtful to others; accidentally kill someone; hurt or destroy his family? _____

Then, why the hedges? Not to drink strong drinks is obviously a safe course to pursue!

WHAT ABOUT OTHER AREAS?

A. Slang words can lead to Cursing, or even taking God's name in vain.

B. Taking drugs can become an addiction and damage the person & family.

C. Smoking can become an addiction—the cost—the damage to one's health, etc.

D. Pornography can lead to lustful or evil thoughts—even to fornication itself.

We know that none of these are specifically mentioned in Scripture. But we also know what is safe and best for all concerned. So, we set up hedges—don't do these things!

THE DANGERS OF HEDGES

The obvious danger of hedges is the binding of our opinion as Law on others. The first natural question that the Christian should ask is—“Where does the Bible say so?” If it doesn't say so, it is a hedge that we have voluntarily set up for our spiritual and moral safety. Such cannot be bound as Law on others. We can bind it on ourselves, but not others Biblically! Hedges can also go to extreme at times.

9. What extreme did some at Colossae go to in this regard? (Col. 2:20-23) _____

10. What had some done in this regards in 1 Timothy 4:1-5? _____

Dancing in some forms may pose no problems. Gambling in some situations may hurt no one. Drinking in temperate amounts may hurt no one. We need to watch out for extremes!

Hedges can pose a problem for our conscience if we look upon them as the Law of God and under pressure I give in. I will feel guilty, but in reality I didn't go against the Law of God. But I did go against my conscience—which can help to undermine the benefit of the work of my conscience (Romans 14:22-23).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Do we really need hedges for ourselves and our children? I believe they do have a value when properly understood. I want to safe guard my children and grandchildren from dangers. I would like to safe guard young Christians to stay away from dangers that could cause them to go back into the world. I want to set a high standard for myself. I have set up these hedges for myself. But I try not to bind them on others as law. But at the same time, I would like to emphasize the dangers involved.

Some questions to ask yourself if you plan to set up your own hedges:

- a) Do we want to think, act, dress, and conduct our lives like the world about us?
- b) Are the examples that we want to follow—those of the world or those that are godly and righteous?
- c) Do we want to see how close to the world we can get or how far away?

Yes, Hedges have their value, but they also can be misused. Let's recognize them for what they are—hedges, not law. Let's appreciate them for what they are trying to do. Let's appreciate those who are showing a concern for our welfare by hedges. Let's make our own hedges.

Lesson Three

Who Will Get My Soul?

Our society has been made fearful over possibilities of someone stealing our children. Many children have been stolen away. Only a few have been recovered. Desperate efforts by parents to find them are in vain. How sad!

But there are more ways of losing our children than this. Parents should also be concerned about the question: “*Who will get my child’s soul?*” This question needs to be seriously considered just as much as though someone would abduct our child—because someone will get our children! If parents and other interested persons do not help our children to give their lives to God with all their heart & soul.....Then, others will get them. The Devil, the world, the liquor industry, the drug dealers, the immoral, and the ungodly will get them. What needs to be done....so we can save our children from such? But probably just as important—What do you as young people need to understand in order to let God win your soul? Someone will get your soul and you are the determining factor!

YOU NEED MEANING & PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

A survey was made of young people from ages 16-26 and one of the questions was: “*What is the greatest need you have?*” Over and over they said: “*We need meaning for our life!*” This age group makes some critical decisions during this time in their lives: **(a)** Whom they will marry; **(b)** What will be their life’s work; and **(c)** What kind of life they will live. Some important questions need to be asked by this group:

- a) “Who am I?”
- b) “Why am I here?”
- c) “Who put me here?”
- d) “Is there a God to whom I owe allegiance?”
- e) “Is there punishment or reward after death?”
- f) “Just what is the meaning of our existence here?”
- g) “What is worth the investment of my efforts?”

And some answers need to be given and some priorities need to be set. And at the top of the list should be:

- 1—That God should be uppermost. (Mtt. 6:33)
- 2—That my family should be second. (Eph. 6:1-3)
- 3—And my friends third. (Jn. 13:35)

1. What advise did the wise man give to youth in Ecclesiastes 12:1? _____

TO BE REMINDED THAT FAME IS FLEETING.

Youth often sets out to make a name for themselves. They try to break the records of others. They want to be better than anyone else. Let me tell you about something that I have noticed about such. While I was in college I received several honors. Most people don't even know about them and could probably care less. To most people—what really counts is what I am now, and what can I do now. If we live long enough, life will discard all of our honors that we worked so hard to win. We need to ask some serious questions, such as:

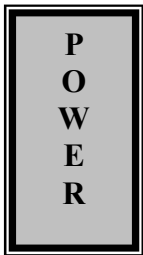
- a) Was it worth the effort?
- b) Does it have meaning now?
- c) What really counts NOW?
- d) What will count in the day of Judgment?

2. What did the wise man have to say about such in Ecclesiastes 2:4-11? _____

3. What were Jesus' wise words in this regard in Matthew 16:26? _____

TO BE REMINDED THAT POWER IS FLEETING ALSO

Men seek after power over other human beings. They give their lives to such. They neglect everything else in order to have that power. And then, once attained unto.....it is soon gone. A good example of this can be seen in the life of Don Regan.



- 1. Don Regan was a powerful man during the Ronald Reagan years in office.
- 2. He was a man you didn't mess with.
- 3. But one day, he clashed with Nancy Reagan.
- 4. He was fired.....just like that, he was gone.
- 5. He had power to send detachment of Marines anywhere in the world.....
- 6. But he was seen carrying his own things out of his former powerful office.
- 7. Power can be very fleeting also.

The Bible is filled with examples of such. Power is often fleeting because someone else wants your power for themselves—so, there is a constant struggle to get it and to hold on to it (Matthew 20:25).

4. What did the Wise Man have to say about this in Ecclesiastes 2:17-23? _____

Unfortunately, the same can be said of Wealth as well. It too can be fleeting. But it can become our Master if we are not careful (1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 16:26).

YOUTH NEED TO TAKE A “TEST”

This test is called the “end of life” test! You need to think of yourself at the end of your life looking back at all you have done. And then, ask the question: *“What will really count or matter in the day of Judgment?”*

5. What advise does the Apostle Paul give in this situation? (Philippians 3:12-14)_____

Listen to this awoken father’s thoughts about his son:

1. A man said he saw a famous athlete die on the gym floor.
2. It caused him to go home and talk to his 17 year old son.
3. He told him about the athlete’s death.
4. He said, *“It impressed upon me one grand thought....that when I awoken on that resurrection morning, I want you to be there.”*
5. *“Nothing will be more important to me then than for you to be there with me.”*

6. What should be the ultimate goal in my life! (Ecclesiastes 12:13; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)_____

If this is uppermost, all else will fall into proper order. This is the highest goal of parenting....to help our children to get to heaven someday. Nothing will mean more than seeing them there with you. If parents have everything this world can offer, but lose their children to the world....they won’t mean a thing. Why shouldn’t we tell our children that we want them to be there on that resurrection morning to go together to be with the Lord. But shouldn’t Youth feel the same about their parents?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Parents need to ask the question: *“Who will get my children? Will it be God or the World?”* The admonition to parents is to train them in the way they should go so God will get them (Prov. 22:6). It takes great effort on the part of parents to do it right....but it is worth it all....especially in that day you stand with them before God in Judgment. **But shouldn’t children be concerned as well who will get their soul?**

Lesson Four

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

People seek after many things in this life, but how many are seeking to have a relationship with the God of Heaven?

Men seek after many things in this life: **Money, Fame, Fortune, Power, Social Acceptance, the "Good Life," etc.** But, unfortunately, not many people really and truly seek after the true God of Heaven in order to form a relationship with Him! (Matt. 7:13-14). Yet, there are those, who like the writer of the Psalms, realize their need of God! He describes his desire for God in the following way:

Ps. 42:1-3 _____

What a vivid way of describing one's need for God and the satisfaction that is to be found in Him. Shouldn't all men seek after God, so that we can enjoy that relationship with our Maker?

WHY SEEK THIS RELATIONSHIP?

1. Because it is natural! He is after all described in such terms as our Creator, Healer, Savior, Deliverer, the One Able to Bless, to Guide us, and even to Save us from future Punishment. This "naturalness" has been demonstrated among all peoples from the early beginnings of human history.

2. Because a man will be discontent until he does seek for and find God. There seems to be a certain discontentment within man without God in his life. He is struggling for something beyond what he is. It is a longing that is unfulfilled. He can reach to the heights in this world, and still be unsatisfied. We believe that this is the human spirit thirsting for its Maker. We want to know the ONE who made us and why He made us. We want to know why He set us here on this planet and what He intends to do with us. And we need to know what He expects of us.

Jesus states that he can satisfy that thirst of man's spirit!

John 7:37 _____
John 4:13-14 _____

Only the living God can satisfy the cravings of the soul of man! Our hearts want rest that we long for.

Matt. 11:28-29 _____

Man may successfully suppress these feelings, but such numbness of feeling is not to be equated with satisfaction. It is like a man who goes on a 10-day fast. After 7 days, he no longer wants food and will slowly starve to death. We believe that it is the same spiritually! We may trifle with the yearnings of our spirit until the yearning ceases. And we will slowly starve to death, spiritually! But the lack of satisfaction is still there.

3. Because He alone can help us escape the just penalty of our sin. Until a man finds God, he is under the curse of breaking the Law of God!

Gal. 3:10 _____
Rom. 6:23 _____

Because of this fact, God's prophets have tried to warn mankind of the gravity of turning our backs on the God who wants to save us.

Isa. 55:6-7 _____

1 Chron. 28:9 _____

IMPROVING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Once a person has come to find God and has come into a relationship with God, he should naturally want to improve, mature, and deepen this relationship. What are some basic factors that I need to be aware of in order for this to happen?

- 1. I must want a deeper relationship with God!** God does not force Himself on me. I must want God in my life—deeply in my life. Each of us may need to ask some very probing questions:
- a) Is my relationship to God as meaningful as it needs to be?
 - b) Is my spiritual life lacking in depth and dedication?
 - c) Am I pleased with my rate of spiritual development?
 - d) Do I feel a need for renewal in my spiritual life?

We need to sincerely ask such questions to show that I really do want a deeper relationship. The self-righteous person usually sees no need for such questions or for such improvements.

1 Cor. 10:13 _____
Mark 13:15 _____

2. I must continually deal with sin that would destroy this relationship. King David knew that his sins had affected his relationship with God and wanted that sin removed so his closeness could be restored.

His expressed desire for this restoration is recorded in the following passage. See if you can find six requests that he makes.

Ps. 51:7-12 _____

When making the above requests, David also knew that sincere repentance was called for:

Ps. 51:16-17 _____

2 Cor. 7:10 _____

He realized the terribleness of his sin before God and knew it had to be dealt with correctly. Sins not dealt with properly (in God's way) destroy or undermine our relationship with God (Isa. 59:1-2).

3. I must make this the primary relationship of my life. God will not take a back-seat to anyone or anything. I can still have other, meaningful, deep relationships in my life with my **Mate, Parents, Children, Friends, Christians, etc.** But, they must NEVER challenge the primary place of God in my life.

Lk. 14:26 _____
Matt. 6:33 _____
Acts 5:29 _____

4. I must engage in those activities that help to deepen relationships. Closeness comes from intimacy! It is the revealing of our inmost thoughts, desires, and aspirations. But, at the same time, we also share our struggles, sufferings, sins, etc. This, of course, is accomplished through Prayer to God constantly!

Phil. 4:6-7 _____

This is accomplished by listening to Him in the reading, studying, and meditation on His Word.

2 Pet. 3:18 _____
Jn. 17:3 _____

We also need to be engaging in those activities that stabilize our relationship with God, such as:

- a) Worship Activities
- b) Godly Living
- c) Doing good works
- d) Those things that prove to God that He is first in my life.
- e) I really want a deep relationship.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We can not only have a relationship with God, but one that is deep and satisfying—if we desire it!

James 4:8 _____

Have you found God? Is that relationship deepening into a meaningful one with Him?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Why do men not seek a relationship with God?**

- 2. What are some reasons for wanting this relationship?**

- 3. What is the first thing that I must realize if I want to have a deep relationship with God?**

- 4. What is the chief factor that tends to undermine or destroy our relationship with God?**

- 5. What other relationships tend to compete with God for first place in our lives?**

- 6. What are some activities that I must engage in to have and deepen my relationship to God?**

Lesson Five

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

People want Christ, but do not want any connection with the church! Young people are often forced to "go to church" and often stop when they are able to make their own decisions. Why build a relationship with the church?

In a society that emphasizes individualism, it is possible that this mentality will be held by some who have come into the Lord's church. This attitude can be seen in the following attitudes and actions:

- 1) They do not believe the church is important.
- 2) The church is something you can take or leave as you please.
- 3) The church is like a club that you can join it or not.
- 4) The church is just something that men have started for their own ends.
- 5) I can accept Christ and ignore the church.

Obviously, how one views the church will determine his relationship to it. Thus, it is important that we see how God views the church before we write the church off as a non-essential.

GOD'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

1. It is something He planned before the world was created.

Eph. 3:10-12 _____

It took thousands of years for it to come into being. But finally, men heard the preaching of John the baptizer: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (Matt. 3:1-2). The "kingdom" and "church" are the same.

2. He purchased it at a great price.

Eph. 5:25 _____
Acts 20:28 _____

In comparison to any other institution or organization, the church has cost the most of any of them!

3. It has an exalted head over it.

Eph. 1:20-23 _____

Headship carries with it the idea of: authority, chief concern, the one who is in charge, etc. No institution has a greater head than Jesus over His church. All things have been put under His headship!

4. The church is made up of redeemed people.

Acts 2:38, 41, 47 _____

The saved are constantly being added to this group of people.

5. It is a body of people that Jesus is coming back for someday.

Eph. 5:25-27 _____

Rev. 3:21 _____

Only those who have come into this "kingdom" or "church" will be the ones that Jesus plans to take back to heaven with Him.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH

1. The church serves as a common body for "all" the saved!

Eph. 2:16 _____

Those who have been reconciled to God are in that "one" body of Christ.

2. It serves as a brotherhood of redeemed people.

Rom. 12:5 _____
Matt. 23:8 _____

The concept of brotherhood is closeness (family). The church is pictured in the New Testament as God's family (1 Tim. 3:15).

3. It provides an atmosphere and fellowship where growth and edification can take place.

Eph. 4:11-15 _____

Spiritual growth for the Christian is not only important, but commanded by God (2 Pet. 3:18).

4. It provides a fellowship through whom God can work.

Phil. 2:13 _____
Eph. 2:10 _____

The church provides a collective means of doing God's work among men.

5. It provides a fellowship through whom God can be glorified.

Eph. 3:21 _____

Man has been created to bring glory to his Maker! (1 Cor. 10:31). It is in and through this body of people that glory, honor, and majesty are attributed to God.

It would certainly seem obvious that the church is something that God highly values—shouldn't we?

HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THE CHURCH

From the above study, we believe that the following thoughts should be our view towards the church:

- 1) The people that God planned for before the creation (Eph. 3:10).
- 2) The people purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28).
- 3) The people God saved and redeemed to Himself (Eph. 5:23).
- 4) The people Jesus is head over (Col. 1:18).
- 5) The people that Jesus has promised to return for (Eph. 5:27).
- 6) The people that carry out God's work and thereby glorify Him (Eph. 3:21).

What does a proper view help to bring about in our relationship to the church?

- 1) It helps us to put the "kingdom" or "church" first in our lives.

Matt. 6:33 _____

- 2) It helps us to set our affections on things above.

Col. 3:2 _____

- 3) It helps us to be submissive to the correct head.

Col. 1:18 _____

- 4) It helps us to do God's work together, correctly.

1 Cor. 12:20 _____

What are some dangers of an incorrect understanding of the church?

1. It can lead to incorrect attitudes about the importance of the church as God views it.
2. It can cause a person to try to make the church something that God never intended for it to be.
3. It can corrupt the purposes of the church as God designed it.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Have you been evaluating your views towards the church to see if you have correct views? How important is the church to you? Are we truly grateful to be a part of the church that Jesus built? (Matt. 16:18). If you are not a member of the "body" of Christ, don't you think that it is important enough to engage your serious attention?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Why does "individualism" and some people's view of the church tend to collide?**
- 2. What is so important about the coming of the church?**
- 3. What was the price paid for the church?**
- 4. Who composes the church?**
- 5. What affect does a proper view of the church have?**
- 6. What affect does an improper view of the church have?**
- 7. Is the church the only ones that will be saved since it's establishment?**
- 8. Through what people does God work?**
- 9. Why is the church compared to a human body?**

Lesson Six

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY BROTHER & SISTER IN CHRIST

Brothers and sisters do have their time of challenges as they live together in a small close group (family), but they are also bound together by a common bond!

Upon one occasion during this public ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of love by saying that love for God and love for one's neighbor summed up the Law and Prophets.

Matt. 22:36-40 _____

But Jesus also emphasized the closeness that men should have in this new kingdom or church he would establish.

John 13:31-35 _____

He stressed that love for one another was new, at least, in the sense of loving like Jesus had loved them. The love of Jesus caused Him to give up His life so that others might live (Rom. 5:8). This new commandment was to be the central principle of a New Religious System among men. It was to regulate the relationship between brothers and sisters **in Christ!** Its importance is stressed throughout the New Testament—especially in the inspired writings of the Apostle John.

REASONS FOR LOVING

1. Because it is commanded! (John 13:34). Jesus commanded it and exemplified it!

Jn. 15:13 _____

2. Because such determines if we are a true disciple of Jesus (Jn. 13:35). Love for one another is possibly the greatest argument to convince the world that I am a follower of Jesus, the Christ! It serves as a testimony to my discipleship. An interesting side-line to note is that "loving one another" was a badge of discipleship for all to see. The Christian is not to be known for:

- a) His peculiar manner of dress;
- b) His peculiar customs held to;
- c) His peculiar speech;

d) But...by his love for one another.

First century writers took notice of such in their writings.

a) *"See how they love one another! They are ready to lay down their lives for each other!"*

b) *"Their master makes them believe they are brothers."*

c) *"They love before they know each other."*

3. Because such determines if we truly love God (1 Jn. 4:20). Love for God does not exist where there is hatred of a brother in Christ. Love of the brethren is not only a command, but a test of our love for God.

1 Jn. 4:21 _____

4. Because such determines if we have passed from death unto life (1 Jn. 3:14). Death unto life is the conversion process. It is not only a change of heart (repentance), but such must be accompanied by a change from disobedience to obedience to God.

1 Jn. 3:16-18 _____

One who has been converted to God strives to walk a new kind of life after Christ. This new life is motivated out of love for God.

The necessity of love for our brethren should be obvious! This is not just a game we are playing. This is for real—high stakes are involved—for all eternity! It is not an optional, nor an ideal, but something that is practical, workable, possible, and necessary!

WAYS TO EXPRESS LOVE

John 15:13 _____

Rom. 15:7 _____

Rom. 15:2 _____

Rom. 15:14 _____

Heb. 3:13 _____

Heb. 10:24 _____

Phil. 2:3 _____

Gal. 5:13 _____

1 Thess. 5:14 _____

1 Thess. 5:13 _____

1 Jn. 3:17-18 _____

WHEN TRUE LOVE IS PRESENT

1. Brethren will not bite and devour one another—nor fuss, fight, and argue!

Gal. 5:15 _____

1 Cor. 3:1-3 _____

2. They will put an end to envy, jealousy, vain ambition, and bitterness!

Eph. 4:31 _____

Eph. 4:32 _____

The change will be obvious for all to see! Unity will come and stay among such brethren!

Eph. 4:1-3 _____

3. Hypocritical love or insincere love will be put away!

Rom. 12:9-10 _____

Sincere love will produce peace, harmony, contentment, order and beauty in the church of the Lord. His love for us has humbled our haughty spirits and brought us to repentance.

4. We will always be ready to forgive!

Eph. 4:32 _____

Since we have been forgiven of such a huge debt, our forgiveness of others is small in comparison.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Who wouldn't want to be a part of such a fellowship! How beautiful for brethren to dwell together in love. The world will be attracted to such people.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. What two phrases are a summation of what the Law of Moses and the Prophets taught?**

- 2. Why is love of brethren called a new commandment?**

- 3. Should we love our brethren because God commands it or just because we dearly love them, or both?**

- 4. What was Christianity to be peculiarly known for?**

- 5. Can a person truly love God without loving his brother? Explain!**

- 6. What does the expression mean....."from death unto life?"**

- 7. Is love of brethren something we have to feel before we express it?**

- 8. What are some ways we can express our love to one another?**

- 9. What will be the outcome of love for one another?**

Lesson Seven

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY NEIGHBOR

Sometimes people have so many problems to deal with themselves that they do not even know who their neighbor is—much less, to show a proper attitude towards them! How do you feel about your neighbor?

Have you noticed how that tree roots can potentially break a rock into pieces—all it needs is a crevice in which to start. **HATE** seems to have a similar potential! It has the power to break relationships into pieces. It can undermine business successes. It can ruin one's health. It can rob us of friends, leaving us lonely. It can drive men into insanity. It can lead us to be a murderer of people. It can eat away the finest qualities of our soul. It can shut the doors of heaven against us, etc. But by learning **LOVE**, we can escape the blight and terrible consequences of hate and enter through a door to a brighter and better world. No wonder that Jesus stated that "*loving our neighbor as our self*" is the 2nd greatest commandment!

The religious leaders of the Jewish people had put emphasis upon such commands as: the Law of the Sabbath, Law of Circumcision, and the Law of the Wearing Phylacteries. The Talmud had a list of some 613 Laws in the Old Covenant; with 365 of them negative and 248 of them affirmative or positive laws. Jesus, in contrast, gave two that summed up all of those laws!

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING ON LOVING THEIR NEIGHBOR

The Law was not without teaching on love for one's neighbor. The following Scriptures help to illustrate this teaching:

- Lev. 19:13 _____
- Lev. 19:17 _____
- Lev. 19:16 _____
- Lev. 19:15 _____
- Lev. 19:18 _____
- Exo. 20:17 _____

When Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, it was an outright rebuke to these people who were ignoring the above teachings. The despised Samaritan loved his neighbor, but the Jews did not!

MAN'S LOVE OF HIMSELF

The Old Testament taught and Jesus re-emphasized the need for men to love their neighbor...as themselves! To love one's self is not condemned unless we love ourselves to the exclusion of others! Man needs to grow up and be concerned for others and not just himself only.

If we love ourselves, we will show it by the kind of actions that will benefit us, such as:

- a) We will take care of our body:
Eph. 5:28-29 _____
- b) We will uphold our good name:
Prov. 22:1 _____
- c) We will not speak evil of ourselves:
Eph. 5:28-29 _____
- d) We will see after the salvation of our soul:
Matt. 16:26 _____
- e) etc.

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

The Good Samaritan showed his love by doing the following things for this needy Jew:

- a) He gave up his time to care for the man.
- b) He put himself to an inconvenience of walking.
- c) He gave personal attention to the person in need.
- d) He spent money on the unfortunate man.
- e) He did not let society's attitudes lock him out from helping the needy.

Can you think of any thing further?

What are some things that we are taught to do to show our love for our neighbor?

Tit. 3:2 _____

Gal. 6:1-2 _____

1 Pet. 2:17 _____

Rom. 13:10 _____

Rom. 15:2 _____

Eph. 4:25 _____

Some of the strongest teachings that Jesus did was his condemnation of the lack of love for one's neighbor! The following list can help to illustrate his teachings against the neglect of one's neighbor:

1. The Good Samaritan!
2. The Rich man & Lazarus!
 - a) Poor Lazarus was laid at his gate begging just for the crumbs that fell from the Rich man's table.
 - b) He turned him away—He was indifferent to this beggar.
 - c) He wound up in Hades in torment!
3. The Rich Fool! (**Lk. 12:15-21**)
 - a) He had much goods laid up for many years.
 - b) Yet, he had NONE to help the needy!
 - c) He, too, lost his soul because he was not rich towards God!
4. The Judgment Scene! (**Matt. 25:41-46**)
 - a) They didn't care about the hungry.
 - b) They didn't care about the thirsty.
 - c) They didn't care about the stranger.
 - d) They didn't care about the naked.
 - e) They didn't care about the sick.
 - f) They wound up in everlasting punishment!

The writing of James, the Lord's brother, deals with the wrong attitude towards our neighbor, as well as wrong action!

James 1:27 _____

James 2:1-8 _____

James 5:1-7 _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Three attitudes are illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan:

- 1) The Robber saw in the man someone to exploit.
- 2) The Priest and the Levite saw in the man someone to Ignore or avoid.
- 3) The Samaritan saw in the man someone to serve—to "love!"

Our relationship to God depends upon these two great commands:

- 1) To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- 2) To love our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus made it very clear that our soul is in danger of being punished forever if we do not learn to show love to those about us—especially those in need.

Lesson Eight

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD

What is meant by the word "world?" Whose is the "world" that the Bible is talking about that we should have a relationship with or not?

Unfortunately, there is a natural problem that exists between the Christian and the world. Jesus mentioned this in one of His farewell lessons to His close disciples.

Jn. 17:14 _____
Jn. 15:18-19 _____

How can the Christian overcome this problem of the world hating us, ridiculing and persecuting us? The answer is simple! The world loves its own, so we need to start believing and acting like the world!

Luke 6:26 _____

Of course, there is another way, but the likelihood of it happening is very small. It is to convert the world around us so they become children of God and love as God loves!

A CHRISTIAN'S OUTLOOK ON THE WORLD

1. To realize that we have quit the world!

2 Cor. 6:17-18 _____

Rom. 6:1-2 _____

We can't go out of the world, but we can forsake the wrong activities and attitudes of the world. We can be a separate community of believers in God (Gal. 3:26-27). We can try to completely separate ourselves from impurity! We can thereby "die" to the way of sin. The Israelite people had a hard time learning this lesson.

Num. 14:3-4 _____

The main reason we must quit the world is to escape its "just" punishment! We flee, as Lot fled from Sodom and Gomorrha (Gen. 19:17). We have also come to realize this great truth (see Scripture)!

Matt. 16:26 _____

If we gain all the world has to offer and lose our soul—we have lost the more important!

2. To realize that we must put off the ways of the world.

Rom. 12:1-2 _____

The Apostle Paul describes it in this way:

Eph. 4:17 _____
Eph. 4:31 _____

The world wants to "fashion" us so that we will become like them—to act and live according to their ideas.

- 1) Refuse to train and discipline our children.
- 2) The home and family are not important.
- 3) Women are not to be in a submissive role.
- 4) Homosexuality is an acceptable way of living.
- 5) Faith only salvation.
- 6) A religion that makes me feel good.
- 7) Any church is acceptable.
- 8) etc.

But the Christian must want his mind fashioned by God, not by men in order to please them.

3. To realize that I must quit loving the world!

1 John 2:15-17 _____

God makes it clear that we cannot love him and the world—a choice must be made! We also need to realize another concept in connection with this thought:

James 4:4 _____

We should not love the world because such will past away and perish! (1 Jn. 2:17).

4. To realize that I have dedicated myself to the conversion of the world.

Matt. 28:18-20 _____

The world is lost and will perish! We have been recruited by God to help to save the world from eternal destruction by proclaiming His glorious Gospel of Hope to all who will listen (Mk. 16:15-16).

Col. 4:5-6 _____

The world is watching the Christian and will strongly criticize us when we act hypocritical or insincere. But they need us and they know it! We are their means of being called to God. We are to show our love for them, but not love their ungodly and unrighteous ways. The saving message must be gotten out to all, so that they can make their choice of which way they want to live.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Jesus tried to help the world see its true self as we can see in the following Scriptures:

Jn. 3:19-20 _____

Jn. 5:39-40 _____

Jn. 7:7 _____

Jn. 8:21-24 _____

Jn. 8:43-47 _____

Those who have turned to God through Jesus in belief and obedience have dedicated themselves to quit the world, put off the ways of the world, no longer to love the world, and to try to turn the world towards God. The choice that the world needs to make is a simple one—become separated from the world or perish with it! What choice have you made?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. What is the problem that exist between the Christian and the world?**
- 2. Who does the world love?**
- 3. What decisions has the Christian made in regards to the world?**
- 4. Why is the world lost and in need of being changed?**
- 5. Can a Christian be a friend to the world?**
- 6. What are some descriptions that Jesus give of those in the world?**
- 7. What is the simple choice that one in the world needs to make?**

Lesson Nine

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY GOVERNMENT

One of the main reasons for Governments is to control the wrong actions of people who will not respect the rights of others. What kind of a relationship should the Christian have with a government that does mostly wrong things?

Dealing with **any** Government can be challenging; but living in America, our relationship to our Government should be much easier. It is also easier to be a "Christian" in this country; because, in some countries, you could lose your life if it were known that you were a Christian. It should also be easier to respect the Laws of the land in a country where an effort is made to be fair and just to all.

In 1958, a Presidential proclamation established "Law Day" to be celebrated (recognized, etc.) by the people of this country. The purpose was to:

- a) Encourage respect for Law.
- b) Encourage the American people to a greater appreciation of Freedom.
- c) Stress "Just Laws," and "Just administration" of Laws.
- d) Let the world know we are a country ruled by Law.

We believe that all who profess to be Christian should be happy and grateful for such high purposes and aims..... and attempt to uphold and honor these ideals.

TWO BASIC FUNDAMENTALS

It has been suggested that there are two basic fundamentals of our freedom that we need to recognize:

1. A regard for the Sovereignty of God. Our laws are based upon the understanding that there is a higher Being to whom we are accountable. The Apostles illustrated this concept.....

Acts 4:19-20

The first Amendment to our Constitution states: "*Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*" As long as such is held to, we shall enjoy religious liberty; be free to worship, assemble, and propagate it; and as well serve God

without governmental interference or control. Many nations do not grant this right to certain of their people!

2. A regard for the rights of the individual. His rights and his need to serve God should be respected (Matt. 6:33). These rights are recognized by the Courts of the land. They do not have the right to take away what is called certain "inalienable rights!" But at the same time, we are not allowed to use our rights to take away the rights of others.

Matt. 7:12 _____

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FREEDOM

Freedom does not come without a price to be paid—not only to secure it, but to maintain it. Two suggestions could be given that I am sure that we all can see the value of:

1. To hold a deep sense of Gratitude. The Christian's freedom in Christ was bought with a great price—the death of the Son of God (Rom. 5:8). The freedom that we hold "dear" in this country has come and continues to require a heavy price of sacrifices in order to have such and continue to enjoy such. When people cease to be grateful for the freedom that they enjoy, it may not be long before that freedom will be taken away.

Eph. 5:20 _____

1 Tim. 2:1-2 _____

We not only need to be thankful to God, but also for those who have given their efforts, and some even their lives, that we might enjoy this continued freedom. Unthankfulness is in the list of sins that the Christian is to avoid.

2 Tim. 3:1-2 _____

2. To be a Law-Abiding Citizen! One of the disappointing things that is happening in this country is the increase in "Law-Breakers!" Too many are showing disrespect for the Laws of the land that are fair and just. The Christian is commanded to be law-abiding!

Rom. 13:1 _____

1 Pet. 3:14-15 _____

To disrespect Law is the same as resisting God who ordained that there be governing powers and laws to regulate people's actions.

Rom. 13:2 _____

In addition to the above reason, God also gives at least three other reasons to be law-abiding Christians:

- a) **Because they are servants of God (Rom. 13:3-4).** Righteous people should have no reasons to fear the governing powers.

- b) **Because of our own Conscience (Rom. 13:5).** We should not only obey out of fear of punishment, but to keep our conscience clear. This puts us on our honor!
- c) **Because, when we obey, we put to silence false-accusers (1 Pet. 2:13-17).** The first Christians were falsely accused by unbelievers of being disloyal to the state, etc. By being law-abiding citizens, it took away their efforts of justly condemning Christians.

OUR CHALLENGE

In addition to the above concepts, we are challenged by God to do the following things in order to have a good relationship with our government:

1. **We are to pay our Taxes (Rom. 13:6-7).** Sometimes it hurts, but it is a necessary thing that governing powers be supported.
2. **We are to honor or respect them (Rom. 13:7).** To honor someone is not done by disrespecting them, condemning them, complaining about them, etc., but rather we uphold them and cooperate with them (Jude 8-9).
3. **We are to pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2).** To pray not only that they will function in the way God would want them to do, but that we, as Christians, may live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and reverence.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In comparison to many countries, we live in a wonderful country in spite of its many faults. It is important that we not only recognize this, but that we do not take such blessings for granted. We need to take full advantage of this "freedom of religion." And by all means, let's be law-abiding citizens and uphold law and order in our midst.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Why do you believe that having a day set aside to honor law and order is beneficial?**
2. **Should Christians join in the observance of a special day to uphold the rule of law?**
3. **Can nations have just laws without believing in the True God of Heaven?**
4. **What would be the basis (standard) by which such laws were established?**
5. **What do we mean by the expression: "the rights of an individual?"**

- 6. How does one show his gratitude for the freedom that we enjoy in this country?**

- 7. Are we showing a disrespect for God when we disobey the laws of our land?**

- 8. What are 3 basic reasons for being a law-abiding citizen as a Christian?**

- 9. What are 3 basic challenges that the Christian has in regards to the governing powers?**

Lesson Ten

Great Decisions Determine Our Destiny!

*Decisions, Decisions....every way we turn!
No one gets by without making decisions.*

Some decisions are easily made, while others are hard. Some affect us greatly, while others do not. Some decisions can be crucial ones...they can determine our eternal destiny. Most decisions affect our course of life. Unfortunately, Christians can fail to make right decisions in crucial situations. This can be done through: Weakness, Timidity, Lack of Understanding or Experience, etc. So many Youth are lost to the Lord because of bad decisions. In this lesson we want to look briefly at several Bible examples of decisions that were made that affected a lot of lives.

JOB'S DECISION

Job was faced with grave decisions:

- a) All of his children were mysteriously killed at one time (Job 1:9-19).
- b) All his possessions were taken by robbers.
- c) His own body was covered with sores from head to toe (Job 2:1-8).
- d) His own wife gave up on God, seemingly (Job 2:9).

1. What was Job's reaction to all of this? (Job 1:20-22; 2:10) _____

What helped Job to make his decision to continue trusting in God?

- a) He realized "That God was God and not a man."
- b) If we can receive good at God's hand, why can't we receive evil?
- c) If God is God, He can do no wrong.
- d) If God is God, what is to be gained by giving up on God?
- e) We don't need to have all the answer!
- f) And Job was never told the reason for all his suffering!!

JOSEPH'S DECISION

We need to see Joseph's misfortunes in life:

- a) He had been sold by his brethren into slavery (37:12-39:20).
- b) Over a period of time, he had been raised to a place of authority over Potipher's house.
- c) But, there was a fly in the ointment.
- d) Potipher's wife burned in her desire to have Joseph.
- e) She tried every way she could to get him to have sexual relations with her.

2. What Decision did Joseph make to deal with this great temptation? (Genesis 39:7-12) _____

3. To whom did Joseph feel responsible in this situation? _____

JOSIAH'S DECISION

When Josiah became King at a very young age he was faced with a giant undertaking. As people were working on the Temple, the Book of God was found. They brought it to the King. When he read it, he was greatly disturbed. The Children of Israel were in great disobedience to God. He realized that God punishes disobedience; so, something needed to be done quickly. But, he also realized the great obstacles that were before him. He realized that the majority of people would be against his efforts (2 Kings 22:1-11).

4. What decisions did he make that gave him the strength to bring about a great restoration among the Jewish people?

a) 2 Kings 22:2 _____

b) 2 Kings 22:11-13 _____

c) 2 Kings 22:19 _____

d) 2 Kings 23:1-3 _____

5. What did God say about this young man? (2 Kings 23:25) _____

DANIEL'S DECISION

Daniel was one of the first captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon. A law had been passed while he was there that endangered his life. It was passed at the instigation of some of his enemies. It was signed into law by the King upon the insistence of these enemies of Daniel by their flattery of the King. The law stated that no one was to make a petition to their gods for a certain period of time. If anyone was caught, they would be put to death. This put Daniel into a very precarious situation. He was accustomed to praying at certain times. He had to decide whether

to continue praying and take a chance on being caught and put to death, or whether to stop praying as was his custom. He made the decision to keep on praying (Daniel 6:1-10).

6. What helped him to make that choice?

a) Daniel 6:4 _____

b) Daniel 6:10 _____

c) Daniel 6:16 _____

d) Daniel 6:23 _____

Daniel had convictions and stood by them, regardless of the consequences. He believed in something worth dying for!!

MOSES' DECISION

Moses had been raised by Pharaoh's daughter as her own son. But he came to the realization that he was a Hebrew. As he became more aware of his situation and the slavery of his people, he was faced with questions and a decision. He occupied a great powerful position. But he also saw the misery and mistreatment of his people by the Egyptians. He felt a strong pull to his people and wanted to help them. An occasion came where a decision could be made (Exodus 2:1-15; Heb. 11:24-25). He made a decision that resulted in his giving up all that the world holds dear: Power, Position, Prestige, and Possessions. What could cause him to even think of giving all of these things up?

7. What helped Moses to make his drastic decision? (Hebrews 11:26) _____

Moses was aware of something far more important than what the world had to offer. It was having God's favor. It was receiving the reward that God was offering. It was to be on God's side.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All of us are called upon to make great decisions in our lives. These will help determine our eternal destiny. They need to be made with wisdom & determination. And the greatest decision that I can make is to GIVE MY LIFE TO CHRIST. Have you made that decision yet?

Lesson Eleven

Important Decision-Making Principles!

Decisions, Decisions...every way we turn! Some times we wish we didn't have to make them, but we do! Some of these decisions are vital in our lives & relationship to God & others.

We need to realize two things about decisions: (a) To recognize the real important ones; and (b) Be prepared to make these wisely. In the previous lesson we looked at examples of some great & crucial decisions in the lives of God's people. We saw the basis for the making of their decisions correctly. In this lesson we will be looking at **Attitudes, Concepts, and Outlooks** to avoid in making decisions.

NAAMAN'S DECISION

In 2 Kings 5:1-14, we read about a man who was a commander of the Syrian Army. In the midst of his great success in the army, he discovered something that could ruin him and his career. In fact, it would isolate him from his people and eventually would bring a terrible death. He discovered that he had the terrible disease called "leprosy!" It just so happened that an Israelite maiden (who had been taken captive and was a servant in his household) told him of God's prophet (Elisha) and the possibility of being healed by him. He decided he would go and see him.

1. What was Naaman told to do in order to be healed? (2 Kings 5:10) _____

2. Why was Naaman furious at the Prophet Elisha? (2 Kings 5:11-12) _____

3. What ATTITUDE helped to heal Naaman? (2 Kings 5:13-14) _____

Naaman's first mistake was his preconceived ideas. His second mistake was making a hasty decision based on his preconceived ideas. Fortunately for him, he was willing to listen to reason by his aide. Should not we learn....don't make quick, hasty, prejudicial decisions!

CAIN'S DECISION

In Genesis 4:1-8, we read about Cain and Abel and their efforts to offer sacrifices unto God. Such was evidently commanded by God as an atonement for sins. While both brought sacrifices, God rejected Cain's and accepted Abel's. Cain's was rejected because he did not bring what God had commanded, while Abel obeyed God (Heb. 11:4). This didn't set well with Cain. God warned Cain that sin was trying to take control of his life and that he must master it. When Cain turned to Abel for some consolation and agreement against God's judgment, Abel would not agree with him. In a fit of anger, he rose up and slew his brother, Abel!

4. Why did Cain slay his brother? (1 John 3:12) _____

Cain was **too smart** to listen to God in the first place; and when God warned him, he would not listen a second time. He had a bad attitude—he would not accept the fact that he was wrong. He would not listen to his brother either. He let his anger overcome a sensible decision. His was a highly emotional decision. Shouldn't we learn from Cain the need to listen to God and others for our own good—and to especially face up to our sin (and bad attitude) and stay away from those strong emotional decisions!

THE RICH FOOL'S DECISION

In Luke 12:16-21, Luke records a parable that Jesus told of a rich man. One year his crop yielded plentifully! In order to properly take care of this great yield he had to build more room to store the fruit of his labors. After doing this, he told himself that he had much goods laid up for many years—take it easy, eat, drink, and be merry.

5. Why did God call this rich man a fool? (Luke 12:21) _____

This man evidently was shrewd, but unwise! He was blessed with plenty, but selfishly wanted to use all for himself. He did not use some of it to bless others, nor did he think about his responsibility to God. His decision was a selfish, self-centered decision. He made his decision based on **this life only!**

6. What important lesson can we learn about decision making from this man's mistake? _____

PILATE'S DECISION

In Mark 15:1-15, we read about Jesus being tried quickly and illegally before the Jewish courts and pronounced worthy of death. But, they had to get the Roman Governor (Pilate) to agree to it, and for him to allow the Roman soldiers to carry out the sentence. Pilate wanted to release Jesus because he realized that He was delivered up out of envy (Mark 15:10). But the mob cried for Jesus' blood and Pilate gave in to their wishes.

7. What was the basis of Pilate's decision by crucifying Jesus? (Mark 15:13-15) _____

It was obvious why Pilate gave in to their wishes—**go with the crowd!** This is generally always a bad decision. Christians, who have convictions of truth, usually will have to go contrary to the mass of humanity! Can we learn this lesson well???

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Decisions need to be made with: **SERIOUSNESS, CHARACTER, CONVICTION, AND WITH PROPER RESPECT FOR GOD & HIS WORD!** Our decisions need to be based upon Principles of Truth & Righteousness. How well are you making your decisions in life? Have you made the greatest decision of your life...TO FOLLOW JESUS!

Lesson Twelve

Wrong Attitudes in Decision Making!

*Wrong Attitudes can make or break a person!
They can make slaves of us!
One's outlook is critical to happiness in life!*

Most of man's unhappiness comes from within! Could this be the reason why the following statements are found in the Word of God?

- a) *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* (Matt. 12:34).
- b) *“A cheerful heart is a good medicine; but a broken spirit dries up the bones.”* (Prov. 17:22).
- c) *“Evil proceeding from the heart defiles a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”* (Matt. 15:20).
- d) *“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* (Prov. 4:23).

It would seem that our attitudes can largely determine our success or failure in life. Events or Circumstances are not the prime factors. Doesn't it make sense that our outlook (attitudes) determine whether life seems heavy and burdensome; or, whether we rise over our difficulties to success and happiness. We want to look closer at “Destructive Attitudes” in this lesson.

A CLOSED-MINDED ATTITUDE

This attitude shows that the person is closed to what is new and different. He will usually give a negative reaction toward new ideas. He will give a prejudiced response before any facts (or all of the facts) are heard.

1. How does Jesus describe this attitude? (Matt. 13:13-15) _____

2. What instructions are given in regards to this “destructive” attitude? (1 Thess. 5:21; John 8:32) _____

A PRIDEFUL ATTITUDE

This attitude is described as a kind of self-worship...elevating of self...haughty outlook. This person cannot make a mistake or admit it if he did because it would lower his self-image. This person will usually push strongly for his own ideas—regardless of the facts or situation, because his are the right ones.

3. What is said about a prideful attitude in the following passages:

a) Proverbs 29:23 _____

b) Proverbs 11:2 _____

c) 1 Peter 5:5 _____

A PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE

The person who has this attitude:

- a) Will always seeing how bad things are.
- b) Will have very little or no optimism for people or the situation.
- c) Will never be able to encourage others, because he is too pessimistic.
- d) Will never make a good leader in any situation, especially in the church.

4. What admonition does God give to such a person? (Philippians 4:4-7) _____

Unless this attitude is properly dealt with...it will bring continual unhappiness. God’s people, of all people, need to have a happier and brighter outlook on life. Even in adversity we should be a hopeful, optimistic person.

ENVY & JEALOUSY ATTITUDES

Envy and Jealousy will cause a person to be resentful of what others have or get. It is shown by a negative attitude towards those with greater talent, greater opportunity, or greater blessings. It is to harbor bad feelings toward a person that is praised by others and you receive none!

5. How does God identify this attitude and what is its outcome? (James 3:14-17) _____

If this attitude is not dealt with, it can destroy us. It can hurt us more than the person we are envious or jealous of. Such attitudes never bring happiness nor success.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING ATTITUDE

One of the chief allurements in life is the concept of “something for nothing!” It is seen all

around us. It is seen in the Lotteries, Betting, and Gambling in general. All of those “get rich quick schemes.” Or it can be seen in the attitude “the world owes me a living.” It is depending upon others to do my job for me, not self. Such people even expect God to do it for them!

6. What does God say about the person that will not work? (2 Thess. 3:8, 10-12) _____

Honest work, not idleness, brings happiness and satisfaction. We need to be responsible people!

PERMISSIVE, SELF-INDULGENT ATTITUDE

This attitude is expressed in these ways: “Anything is all right—there is nothing wrong anymore.” “Sex, liquor, drugs, or all kinds of sensual entertainment are all acceptable as long as I enjoy it, and I don’t hurt someone.” Self-restraint or self-control is old foggy ideas.

7. How does God identify a worldly outlook? (1 John 2:15-17) _____

For the moment, sin is pleasurable, but it brings its sting. God’s Word says that we will reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8). Harvest should be the time of rejoicing not deep regret.

DOUBT & SKEPTICISM ATTITUDES

Our age is identified with that of doubt & skepticism. The attitude that expresses this is: “We can’t prove anything--everything is relative”. Or, “There is no absolute truth—there is no standard of conduct.”

8. What does God have to say to the skeptic or doubter? (James 1:6-8) _____

Doubt or Skepticism only makes problems worse. It causes moral & ethical standards to become unstable. And for sure, happiness does not come thru doubt & skepticism.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Destructive attitudes need to be dealt with in our lives because attitudes determine the way of our life. They will also determine whether we will be happy or not. Life can be so much happier, more meaningful, and more peaceful with the right attitudes guiding us. The truly happy people, we believe, are those who:

- a) Believe in a loving, heavenly Father;
- b) Who believe in Jesus as Savior;
- c) Who know the joys of a new life in Christ;
- d) Who have a home in heaven to confidently look forward to;
- e) Who are sustained by their faith.

Is this the way you are walking?

Lesson Thirteen

Living With Bad Decisions!

All Mankind is called upon to make decisions constantly.

Some of these decisions are rough ones to make!

Unfortunately, a lot of bad decisions are made that affect our lives!

Bad Decisions bring undesirable consequences! An example of such can be seen in the life of Tina. She was seventeen and had found the person she wanted to marry. She and the young man were both Christians. They plan to go to college, get good jobs, and then marry. But as they grew closer, they became lax in their relationship and she became pregnant. They got married. Today, both are working, going to school, struggling to hold their marriage together, and trying to raise a little girl. Their college years should have been filled with fun and personal and intellectual growth; but instead, their lives were filled with worry about money, baby formulas, exhausting days, and finding baby-sitters. A bad decision that changed everything.

Let's look at another example to illustrate. Marie is happily married, except for one major problem. Her husband is of a different church. It was not a problem when they were dating and a minor one after they got married. Now that their children are old enough to understand, her husband wants to take the children with him. The wrong teaching they are receiving is causing her great concern. A decision that didn't matter years ago is now a great concern.

And still another example to illustrate. Eric and Lisa were childhood sweethearts. They lived in the same neighborhood, went to same schools. They both obeyed the gospel as teenagers. After graduation from college, they got married. They had children that were involved in sports and school activities. They started missing services to go to these activities. First, it was on Wednesday nights. Then, it was an occasional Sunday. And finally, they discovered that they were too busy to go most of the time. The children stopped asking about going to church and seeing their friends at church. Eric & Lisa started having marital problems, and were divorced.

Their son lives with his girlfriend in what is called a "live-in situation." Their daughter has been divorced twice. Decisions that seem so minor can have a major impact later in life, as well as upon others.

Yes! We are called upon to make decisions—wise decisions, hopefully! And when we don't, sometimes the consequences seem to be unbearable. And, we have no choice; we have to live with the consequences of bad decisions.

1. When Joshua called upon the people of Israel to make the right choice for God, he also warned them of the consequences of a bad decision....what was it? (Joshua 24:14-20)_____

God has tried to make it very clear that there are consequences to bad decisions (Gal. 6;7-8). And it is obvious that some consequences are worse than others.

2. What does the wise man say about good and bad decisions? (Prov. 8:32-36)_____

DOES FORGIVENESS ELIMINATE CONSEQUENCES?

One of the sad facts about bad decisions is that we have all made them! There are no exception to this statement that I know about! We all have and are suffering the consequences of bad decisions **right now!** There is not a one of us that has escaped it! This is the sad commentary on the human race!

We who are Christians know that forgiveness from God is possible when we make the wrong decisions in life. This is the very reason why Jesus had to come and die in our stead so that we could be forgiven.

3. What does Isaiah say about this? (Isaiah 53:5)_____

4. What did Peter promise to those people who were guilty of crucifying Jesus? (Acts 2:38)_____

These people were guilty of a terribly bad decision on their part—calling for the crucifixion of the Son of God! They were pricked in their hearts over the message they heard and eagerly wanted to know what they had to do to be forgiven of such a terrible deed. They were told that they could be forgiven and that the terrible consequences of eternal destruction would be removed from their lives.

DOES FORGIVENESS REMOVE ALL CONSEQUENCES?

The sad thing about bad decisions, even when forgiven, can bring undesirable consequences in this life. An example of such can be seen in a young man’s life when he made some bad decisions. He got in with bad crowd and wound up robbing a store with his friends. Can he be forgiven...yes! But does he have to go to prison....Yes, if Judge says so!

Some bad advice is often offered to youth----“Sow your wild oats while you are young.” So, young people make the decision to go along with crowd. Can they be forgiven...YES! But will that remove all the consequences of sowing their wild oats?

Parents realize this fact at times! This is the reason why they try to guard their children against bad decisions. And this is the reason why their hearts are broken when children will not listen. It is not that they cannot forgive them, or God forgive them. But, it is the terrible consequences of bad decisions that deeply grieve them. A poem has been written that tries to express this concern:

YOUTH AT THE CROSSROADS

**He came to the crossroads all alone, With the sunrise on his face;
He had no fear for the path unknown. He was set for a grueling race.
The road stretched east, and the road stretched west, No one showed him which was best
So the boy turned wrong, and went on down, And lost the race and the victor's crown,
And fell at last in an ugly snare. Because no one stood at the crossroads there.**

**Another boy on another day, At the self-same crossroads stood,
He paused a moment to choose the way, Which would lead to the greater good.
The road stretched east, and the road stretched west, But I was there to show him the best
And the boy turned right, and went on and on, He won the race and the victor's crown,
And came at last to the mansions fair Because I stood at the crossroads there.**

**Since then I have raised a daily prayer That I be kept faithfully standing there,
To help the runners as they run, And win my own—or another's son.**

**HOW SHOULD WE LIVE WITH
BAD DECISIONS?**

We need to face up to our bad decisions. Trying to excuse one's self is not the answer. This does not do away with having to deal with the consequences facing us.

5. Who faced up to a bad decision at the death of Christ? (Luke 23:40-41) _____

6. Why did Peter tell the people on the day of Pentecost to repent? (Acts 2:38) _____

It seems to be obvious that a sense of forgiveness helps us to live with the consequences of a bad decision. But we have to face up to the fact of what we have done! The Apostle Paul did just that (1 Tim. 1:12-16). He never forgot the terrible decision that he had made earlier. But with forgiveness, he could go on with his life. And with forgiveness, he could live with whatever consequences he had to bear. A clear conscience and a sincere effort to correct any mistakes that we have made should certainly make it easier to deal with consequences.

We need to use consequences as a means of becoming wiser & more mature. We need to learn by our mistakes! We should be learning not to make an important decision in the heat of the moment. We need to anticipate hard decisions ahead of time before we have to face them so we can be better prepared to make a better decision.

7. What admonition is given by the wise man concerning these kinds of decisions? (Prov. 7:1-5) _____

We certainly need to grow from them (James 1:2-4)! And we need to be sure our decisions are based on what God says in His Word (Matthew 7:21)...so we can take our stand with God and Truth!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All of us are faced with the decision of whether to be saved or lost. If we are to be saved, we must be willing to pay the price. If not, we will be lost and suffer the consequences of a bad decision. Has the decision you have made about your soul been a good or bad decision?

