

*A Study of Sin,
Challenges, and
Decisions for Youth*

12 Lessons in 3 Sections

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Title Page

***A STUDY OF SIN, CHALLENGES,
AND DECISIONS FOR YOUTH***

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*Youth
Studies*

**Section I
Characterizing Sin**

1

Summary Terms To Identify Sin

Both Sin and Righteousness are identified in Summary or Generic Terms in the New Testament. But both also are identified with Specific terms as well.

Man is a creature of Responsibility! He has the power of **CHOICE!** With choices comes **RESPONSIBILITY!** With choices also come the **CONSEQUENCES** of choices!

1. How does 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 indicate the above concept? _____

2. Is MAN only responsible for his actions? (Matthew 12:36-37) _____

3. Is MAN totally depraved and incapable of being responsible before God? (Acts 10:34-35; Joshua 24:14-15)

DEFINING OF SIN

Sin is a commonly used word, but how many really know its meaning? Sometimes it is good to go back to the original Greek word in order to get an idea of the meaning that should be attached to our English translation. If you have a Greek Lexicon, Young or Strong's Concordance, you can look up its meaning. The Greek word is:

Harmatia -- Harmatia

The original idea behind this word is “a missing of the mark!” It is to fail in doing what I should have done. The “mark” is “perfection”—that is perfect law keeping! Or another way to put it—it is complete submission to the Law or Will of God. Obviously, I have failed in doing this—in fact, all men have failed (Romans 3:23)—“*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

Thus, **SIN** is something that man does contrary to God’s Law or fails to live up to the demands of His Law.

GENERIC TERMS TO IDENTIFY SIN

There are several other terms that identify sin in the New Testament. By looking at these additional terms, it should be helpful to better characterize sin in our minds. Please look up the following Scriptures and see the generic word for sin in each one and write out what you understand to be the idea in the term used:

S I N I S	1 John 3:4 _____
	1 John 5:17 _____
	2 John 9 _____
	Hebrews 3:12, 19 _____
	Hebrews 3:16-18 _____
	Romans 1:18 _____
	Romans 13:12 _____
	Romans 13:14 _____
	Colossians 3:9 _____
	1 John 1:6 _____
	1 Timothy 1:9 _____
	1 Thessalonians 5:22 _____
	1 Timothy 1:10-11 _____
	Ephesians 6:13 _____

Ever since man disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden...he has tried to escape the responsibility of his wrong choices—not wanting to suffer the consequences of such! Adam excused himself by blaming the woman that God gave him. Eve blamed the Serpent because he beguiled her. We, today, are generally no different! We endeavor to blame others, our environment, our circumstances, etc. And...there are plenty of people sitting on the sidelines willing to help us with our excuses. Many Psychiatrists have contributed to this escape mechanism as well by saying to their “patients”:

“Man’s actions are because of circumstances beyond his control.”

“Man is not really responsible for his actions”

“The solution is to alter man’s circumstances and he will act right.”

Also today, men are trying to replace the word “Sin” with the word “Sickness!” It is advocating that an “alcoholic” or a “homosexual” are not responsible for their situation. It is to believe that such people are not to be held responsible for what they cannot help being. And sinful man can feel “justified” in his disobedience of God’s Law. However, we need to point out that not all Psychiatrists go along with this concept of irresponsibility.

Dr. William Glasser, in talking about Juvenile Delinquents said: *“Regardless of what causes his bad behavior, the child is primarily responsible...(and) we never intimate in any way that entering into Psychiatric treatment relieves him of the responsibility for what he does....If everybody working with a delinquent child holds him responsible to himself for what he does, the child soon learns the pleasure of doing well and getting credit for it.”*

The wrong approach to man’s problems is to tell him he is justified in his wrong conduct! And it would be more helpful if we stop trying to explain why wrongdoers do wrong, and instead, point out how and why they ought to do the right thing! God’s Word makes it quite clear that man is ultimately responsible for his choices, his conduct.

4. How does Deuteronomy 30:19-20 indicate man’s responsibility for his choices? _____

5. What is indicated in Romans 2:4-11 about man’s accountability? _____

SPECIFIC TERMS FOR SIN

Sin is not only characterized or identified by generic or summary terms, but it is identified in plain, descriptive, and understandable terms. To serve as an example, make a list of specifically named sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and clarify with a dictionary meaning to each:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Unless man can:

- 1) See that he is responsible for his choices;
- 2) That he is going to give an accounting to God for his actions;
- 3) And, that he will suffer the consequences of his wrong choices.....

Man will see no need for a change and will see no need of a redeemer! It is Jesus who has provided our escape from the just penalty and horrible consequences of our "SINS!" But He is able to deliver only those who recognize their need of Him and turn from their sinful walk to a walk of righteousness (Hebrew 5:8-9).

2

Summary Terms To Identify Righteousness

How can man know what is right or wrong to do? What is the basis for his decisions about sin and righteousness? What are some generic terms that help to identify what is right?

If Sin is defined as the breaking of God’s Law; then, Righteousness can be defined as the keeping of God’s Law. If breaking God’s Law makes us “unjust;” then, the keeping of God’s Law should make us “just!”

1. Who does the Apostle Paul say is “just” before God? (Romans 3:13) _____

2. Why does this same Apostle say that by the deeds of the Law no person will be justified? (Romans 3:20)_____

3. Why does the Apostle also quote the Old Testament in saying that “none are righteous?” (Romans 3:10)_____

4. In view of the above passages, can any man be called righteous? (Matthew 13:17, 43; James 5:16)_____

“**Righteousness**” can only be used in its absolute sense with reference to Deity! (Revelations 16:5, 7). Jesus lived a sinless life—He kept God’s Law perfectly (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:8-9). But it is obvious from Scripture that man is also called “righteous.” Upon what basis can a man be called righteous? It certainly would not be because we live perfectly—for all have sinned (Romans 3:23)! Job was called a righteous or upright man because he feared God and turned away from evil (Job 1:7-8). He was not called righteous because he lived a perfect life before God—yet, in some real sense he could be called righteous instead of being called a “sinner.”

5. In what sense can a person be called righteous? (1 John 2:29; 3:7)_____

“**Righteousness**” can be simply defined as “**right doing, actions, or thoughts.**” Instead of “missing the mark” he “hits the mark.” But because of man’s frailty, he does occasionally miss the mark even when he is doing his best to live right. So, the term “righteous” with reference to man has to be an “accommodative” use—that is, indicating that he is doing what God’s Law teaches most of the time to the best of his ability. It should be evident that when Paul stated by inspiration that “*none are righteous;*” it had to be in the sense that no man lives God’s Law perfectly. And because we break God’s Law, we are then in need of a Redeemer to deliver us from the penalty of breaking His Law—**DEATH!** (Romans 6:23). And because we have been—and are continuing to be—forgiven of those trespasses, we are looked upon as righteous before God (in spite of our past sins) (Romans 4:7-8). We take on righteousness from Christ—and at the same time are motivated to live as perfectly as we can be (Matthew 5:48).

SUMMARY TERMS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The New Testament uses several terms to identify righteousness or a righteous person. By looking these various expressions, it is hoped that we can have a better concept—not only of righteousness—but as well, have a better concept of what sin is! Please look up the following Scriptures and see the generic word for righteousness in each one and write out what you understand to be the idea in the term used:

Matthew 7:12 _____

1 Timothy 4:8 _____

1 Thessalonians 2:10 _____

1 Thessalonians 2:12 _____

1 John 1:7 _____

Colossians 3:10 _____

1 Timothy 6:3 _____

Matthew 5:45 _____

1 Timothy 3:2 _____

Matthew 22:36-40; Colossians 3:14 _____

Revelation 2:10 _____

Hebrews 5:8-9 _____

The Apostle John said by inspiration that a person is righteous when he practices righteousness! (1 John 3:7). That means that we make the right choices, we think the right thoughts, and continually do the right things—or be continually obedient to God. A man can be made righteous by the blood of Christ, but he is a righteous person as he continually practices righteousness.

SPECIFIC TERMS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

What are some right things for man to think and do? What are the things that not only please God but make us acceptable to Him? For an example of some terms, turn to Galatians 5:22-26 and make a list and clarify each word with a dictionary meaning:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

If you will notice, God says that people who practice righteousness are those who have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” They are the kind of people who heard what the Spirit (God or Christ also) says in His Word, but they are doers of that Word (James 1:22). They listen, they live in, and they walk in the Spirit. But they have also turned away from wrong kinds of actions.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man needs to be very careful that he does not think he is living righteously when he is not. God’s Word continually warns us of the dangers of self-deception in these matters. Jesus even told a story (parable) about a man who trusted in himself that he was righteous—when he was not! (Luke 19:9-14). Our right standing before God can only come through Christ, but we must live a righteous life to continue to be pleasing to God and keep that right standing in tack (Philippians 2:12-13).

3

Terms That Identify Sexual Sins

As a young person, what do you consider to be your hardest area of sin to deal with? How well are you handling these temptations? Do you feel you are in control?

Someone has grouped sins into different categories with the desire of helping us identify sin better. The listing in the enclosure below can help to illustrate:

As an older person and trying to put myself back into your age group, I would guess that “Sins of Sexual Passion” would be your greatest challenge. I would also guess that “Sins of the Tongue” might be the next greatest challenge. This grouping of Sins can be studied more in detail in another study by this writer called: **“Sin: Its Character and Categories.”** As you might guess, this is one of the primary reasons for preparing this study for Youth—not only because of its challenge but the grave consequences that come into their lives when they give in to such sins!

*Respectable Sins
Sins of Strife
Sins of Fraud
Sins of Sexual
Passion
Sins of Superstition
Sins of the Tongue
Sins of Excess*

GENERIC TERMS FOR SEXUAL SINS

“PORNEIA” (Pronounced Porneia). This word in the Greek is translated **“Fornication”** in the older translations of the Bible, but in the later versions it is translated **“Sexual Immorality.”** (Acts 15:20). This term covers a lot of ground—all kinds of indecent sexual activities. It is generally regarded as **“illicit sexual intercourse,”** but there are other terms that might be considered generic also that would involve satisfying sexual passion without there being actual intercourse between a male and female. Our word “Pornography” also comes from this Greek word—indicating the satisfying of the sexual passion by sight. Fornication is called “illicit” because it is satisfying the sexual desires in the wrong way—not God’s ordained way—in the marital relationship. When we go contrary to God’s way, we are asking for consequences that will not be desirable—but such also separates us from a relationship with God.

There are several generic terms that could be connected with sexuality which are used to indicate or identify sinful activity or that which leads to such. Please look up the following Scriptures and see the generic word for sin in each one and write out what you understand to be the idea in the term used. You may need to use an English Dictionary or a Synonym book.

Colossians 3:5 _____

Ephesians 4:19 _____

Ephesians 5:4 _____

Ephesians 4:22 _____

Romans 1:24 _____

Romans 1:26 _____

Romans 1:29 _____

Romans 7:5 _____

1 Thessalonians 4:5 _____

It is also important to spend a little time looking at two generic terms in particular: **Uncleanness** and **Lasciviousness**. While there are specific words that identify certain activities as sinful—it is important to realize that generic or summary words are needed in order to cover activities are not specifically named. This would especially be true, we believe, of these two words.

Akatharsia (A-ka-thar-sia) is translated by such terms as: **Uncleanness, Unclean Lives, Foul Desires, base Motives, Indecency, Sexual Immorality, or Dirty-mindedness**. It is trying to emphasize the wrongness of impurity of thoughts and deeds. It carries with it the idea of moral depravity that disgusts the people who witness such. It is indicating unnatural lust and moral impurity of every kind. Romans 1:24-27 describes the perverseness of men, their degradation and shame—and ended with the expression: *“They receive proper recompense they deserve.”* Look at some of the places this word is used:

Hosea 2:10 _____

Proverbs 6:16, 18 _____

Micah 2:10 _____

2 Corinthians 6:17 _____

Ephesians 5:11-12 _____

Aselgeia (A-sel-gei-a) is translated by such terms as: **Filthy words, Indecent bodily movements, Unchaste handling of males and females** (Thayer’s Lexicon). The idea being communicated by this term is that of unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, and insolence. It is used in connection with the men of Sodom

(2 Peter 2:7). It stresses the idea of unrestrained violence or open indulgence in impurity. Such people love sin and do not care what God or man thinks. They sin openly flaunting their sinfulness. They have a disregard for public decency and public opinion. It indicates the loss of one's self-respect or the loss of shame. If man's lust and sensuality is not brought into check, it will progress to its end of open shamelessness.

SPECIFIC TERMS FOR SEXUAL SINS

Several terms are used to identify various sinful activities. It is important that you catch the distinctions in the context of the passages below. As you identify the term, please give a definition from a Bible or English Dictionary.

Romans 7:1-3 _____

Romans 1:26 _____

Romans 1:27; Leviticus 18:22 _____

1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10 _____

1 Corinthians 6:16 _____

Leviticus 18:23 _____

Leviticus 18:6-18 _____

Our society has come up with specific terms to identify the above illicit activities, such as: **Bestiality; Incest; Pedophile; Rape, etc.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Sin is being treated like a "play-toy" by many in this country. Even those who claim to be saved are engaging in such activities openly. Sooner or later sin will take its toll on the lives of those involved. God warns: ***"He that shows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption..."*** (Gal. 6:7-8). People think they can beat the game and play with sin without paying the penalty. But God's Word is sure and sin will bring its retribution. It is important to understand that the body is not sinful in itself. It is the corrupt use of the body and its desires that God warns against. But it is also warning about a heart that is in rebellion or disobedience to God (Matt. 15:19-20). Those who walk this way cannot inherit the eternal kingdom (Gal. 5:21).

4

Listing of Terms For Other Sins

God has given to mankind a long list of activities that are identified as sin. Just because an action is specifically listed does not necessarily indicate it is not wrong. The generic terms cover many of such activities.

It is important for mankind to understand that God is Holy (1 Peter 1:16) and that he cannot condone sin in man, nor can He fellowship with sin or the sinner. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross clearly demonstrates God’s hatred of sin and what it does to His creatures. But at the same time, God loves His creatures and wants to redeem them from the outcome and penalty of sin. God’s coming in the flesh shows clearly that God does care about us. Both the Old and New Covenants vividly show God as not only worthy of man’s worship, but that He is a loving, forgiving, longsuffering, and compassionate God. But man needs more than forgiveness—he needs to be turned from the path of sin and rebellion for his own good. This is one of the reasons for these first four lessons—to show us what God says is sin. It is obvious that we will not exhaust the list of things given, but much will be made evident by this short study.

ADDITIONAL TERMS FOR SIN

In the previous lessons, we have seen a listing of terms to identify sin, to identify righteousness, and to see in particular terms that identify sexual sins. In this last of four lessons, we need to be exposed to the long list of sins mentioned in the New Testament. (This list is not complete!!!). You may want to use a dictionary to further define the terms

1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 _____

Galatians 5:19-21 _____

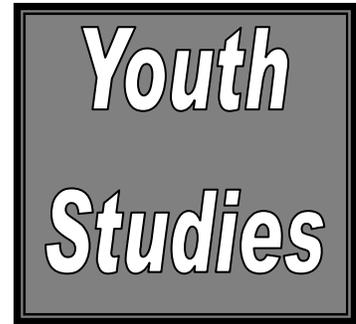
OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SIN

Man does not inherit sin, but he grows up from a baby in the midst of a world caught up in sin. The above list of sins are obviously not all the sins that man can commit, but they do give an overview of sinful activities that mankind has been (and will continue to be) involved in. Sin has at its root a wrong perception of God as well as a wrong attitude towards God and His Law. Basically, sin is disbelief of the one true and living God and what He says to us in His Word. Sin is generated in our lives by an attitude of indifference, unbelief, or a rebellious spirit. It is shown by our thoughts, words, deeds, and of a settled disposition and conduct.

God tells us that He created man in his image. We know that that has no reference to the body of man—for it is physical and God is Spirit! Thus, the spirit part of man must be in the image of God. Which seems to give the impression that we have some of the attributes of God—possibly in a very limited sense, but sufficient for man to live and act as he should. One of the things that would seem to be obvious is that man has an inner consciousness of right and wrong. Paul's statement about the Gentiles would certainly leave this impression. He stated that the Gentiles, which did not have the Law of Moses; yet, they were able to discern what the Law taught from their own conscience (Romans 2:13-16). In Romans 1:18-31, Paul gives a long list of sins that the Gentiles committed—so, they must have had some way of knowing what was right and wrong from their conscience. And the very fact that sin is the breaking of God's Law certainly shows that they had knowledge of the Law of God somehow. The chapter ends with: ***“Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”*** (Rom. 1:32). Thus, mankind cannot claim innocence or ignorance in regards to sinful activities.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God's statement to Cain should serve as a warning for us today: ***“Sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”*** (Gen. 4:7). Cain didn't listen to God again and he allowed sin to rule over him, rather than he ruling over sin. God is calling on all mankind to repent and turn away from sin (2 Peter 3:9). He wants us to be set apart unto Him to do His Will for our forgiveness and eternal reward someday. But the decision is up to us—**what will it be?**



Section II

Special Challenges

5

The Value of Righteous Restraints

Man has a tendency to rebel against Law or the restraints of men and God. He wants to be free to do as he pleases.

Liberty in Christ is a very precious thing! This does not mean that we no longer have to obey the Law of God—we must! But in spite of the obligation to obey God’s Law, we do have areas of freedom from the binding of men’s traditions and opinions on us. However, we are warned that in these areas of judgment or opinion, we do not use our liberty to do harm or hurt to our fellow-Christian (1 Cor. 8:9). We are even encouraged to give up our liberty if it means a soul can be saved (1 Cor. 8:10-13). These are restraints we willingly put on ourselves for the good of others (1 Cor. 9:22; 10:23-24, 31-33).

This lesson begins a series of four lessons that are a great challenge to Young People! In this lesson we want to look at the challenge to see the value of restraints that our parents and other concerned persons encourage us to accept.

WHAT ARE RESTRAINTS?

Restraints can be at least two-fold: Violent and Non-violent.

A. Restraints can be violent, strong, and forceful.

- 1) Such are often needed because people have lost control.
- 2) Some are restrained by a “Straight-Jacket” to keep them from either hurting themselves or others.
- 3) Sometimes such are the only recourse.
- 4) It may be like putting people in prison.
 - a) They will not restrain themselves.
 - b) So, society places an external restraint over their lives.

B. Restraints can be non-violent, voluntarily accepted, and even mild.

- 1) Most of these are considered good and serve good purposes.
- 2) Most people have a certain amount of these in their lives.

1. Which kind of Restraint would you prefer to have in your life? _____

HOW VALUABLE ARE RESTRAINTS?

No one normally would like to be forced to do anything that they do not want to do. This is usually recognized as one of the major weaknesses of the violent method of restraint. However, there still could possibly be some value even in the violent method.

A. How valuable are violent methods of restraint?

- 1) When you take a person out of the “Straight-Jacket;” what will happen?
- 2) Will he be okay, unless treated for his condition?
- 3) When a person is released from prison; what will happen?
- 4) Will he become a good citizen unless there have been some good changes internally?
- 5) When children are disciplined; will they act differently—or will they do the same things over again?
- 6) While strong measures are definitely called for at times, it may only be a benefit to others—not the person being restrained.
- 7) Japanese saying: *“A snake is orderly and straight as long as it is kept inside a bamboo stick. When released, it wiggles and acts snaky again.”*
- 8) People may be much the same!

B. How valuable are non-violent methods of restraint?

- 1) They are needed for a period of time—and can lead to good results.
- 2) Some people are like boards glued together.
 - a) You put glue on edges, put them together, clamp them tight.
 - b) When the clamps are removed—the boards remain together—strong.
 - c) People can be like this also.
 - When the restraints are removed—they remain good & strong.
 - They then show true character.
 - They show where their heart really is.
- 3) However, some people can be like a barrel.
 - a) While the loops are around the barrel, it stays together—does its job.
 - b) But if removed—the barrel falls apart!
 - c) People can be like this too.
 - They are fine, maybe model people, as long as the restraints are there.
 - Removed the restraints—they fall apart!

C. There are many good restraints to help people walk in the right way.

- 1) They serve their purpose, but may only be a limited one.
- 2) We cannot, and must not fully depend upon them.
- 3) When the exterior props are taken away—it can often bring some startling surprises.
- 4) True conditions of the heart are revealed!

FOUR TYPES OF RESTRAINTS

Physical Restraints

2. What kind of Restraint is mentioned in Prov. 19:18; 22:15) _____

-
- 1) Since God advocates such—it must have a value!
 - a) With some children, it may be more necessary.
 - b) Discipline can serve as a restraint for children—“Don’t do that!”
 - 2) The problem with physical restraints:
 - a) If not properly administered, it can back-fire.
 - b) The child may do what he is told while at home, but look out when he is away from home.
 - c) He can even put on a show of submission to parents.
 - d) But totally change when he gets away.

3. Can you give an illustration of this? _____

-
- 3) Such restraints can lead to good ends!
 - 4) The test comes when such restraints are removed—To see what they do then.
 - a) He may show the true condition of his heart quickly.
 - b) Obviously, the heart must be touched—affected for good.

Restraints of the home environment

4. What kind of restraint is mentioned in Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4? _____

-
- 1) This is possibly one of the greatest restraining influences in our society.
 - 2) It can have a great impact for good on children.
 - 3) Even non-religious homes can serve as a restraining influence for good.
 - 4) The real test comes when they are out from under the restraints.
 - 1) Illustration:
 - a) A son joined the Air Force.
 - b) He wrote his mother the following: “*Mother, I’m having a new experience. For the first time, I am away from home. There are many temptations to wickedness and evil. There is no one to tell me I can’t go certain places or do certain things. I am on my own. In spite of that, I find no interest in those things. I would rather be in church and have found a very excellent one here where I can worship with my fellow-Christians. Thank you, Mother, for helping me to realize that Christ and His teachings must be a personal and individual responsibility of every man. My faith in Christ is just as real, if not more so, away from home as it was there.*”

- c) Home, for him, was more than mere outward restraints.
- d) His heart had been affected in the process for good.
- e) His life with God was real.

Restraints of Associates

5. What kind of Restraint is mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:17? _____

- 1) Good friends and loved ones are wholesome influences for good.
- 2) They make living right much easier.
- 3) But the test comes when they are not around—then what?
 - a) Would we stand just as erect in righteousness by ourselves?
 - b) How much do we depend upon our external restraints?
- 4) Illustration:
 - a) Two young girls grew up together.
 - b) They always attended services together.
 - c) One went to college.
 - d) The other stopped attending services.
 - e) What happened?
- 5) Illustration:
 - a) A young couple seemed to be very devout and spiritually-minded.
 - b) The young man was killed in a car accident.
 - c) She never attended services again—started running wild.
 - d) What happened?
- 6) Radical changes often take place when restraining influences are removed.
- 7) It is then, that the true desires of our heart are seen.

Restraints of Task

6. What kind of Restraint is mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:58? _____

- 1) We all know that idleness has its subtle dangers.
 - a) King David found that out from the troubles he got into.
 - b) Being busy has its value as a restraining influence.
- 2) But sooner or later the test comes!
 - a) Work opportunities are taken away and given to another in the church.
 - b) What then?
 - c) Do wonderful attitudes turn into very critical ones?
 - d) Does the person stop attending worship?
- 3) What has happened?
 - a) Aren't they devoted Christians?
 - b) Haven't they been serving God from their hearts?
 - c) Or, is their religious interest dictated by some job to do?

- 4) Some think that the greatness of a man is determined by the bigness of his job.
- 5) It is more accurate to see what happens when the job is taken away.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

External Restraints are limited—but needed by all of us. They are mostly temporary holding actions until our hearts are sufficiently grounded in God. External righteousness sooner or later will be tested and seen for what it is—vener. Only a change of heart can sustain righteous living. “...*except you are converted, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matt. 18:3). “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (Jn. 3:3). Have our restraints led to deeper convictions and devotion to God? Have our hearts been grounded in God?

6

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!

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) _____

- 6) Those who have a deep faith in God:
 - a) Are the ones who will be there with God all the way through.
 - b) Who will even stand alone when necessary—like Noah!

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.

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) _____

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

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!”*
 - f) *“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?”*
 - 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?

7

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—the cost—the damage it does to 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.*
- E. We know that none of these are specifically mentioned in Scripture.*
- 1) But, we also know what is safe and best for all concerned.
 - 2) 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.

8

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 set 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:

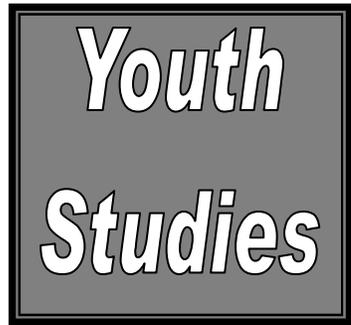
1. A man said he saw a famous athlete die on the gym floor.
2. It caused him to go home and talk to his 17 year old son.
3. He told him about the athlete’s death.
4. He said, “*It impressed upon me one grand thought....that when I awaken on that resurrection morning, I want you to be there.*”
5. “*Nothing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



Section III
Decisions for Youth

9

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 a 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?

10

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!**

11

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?

12

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?

