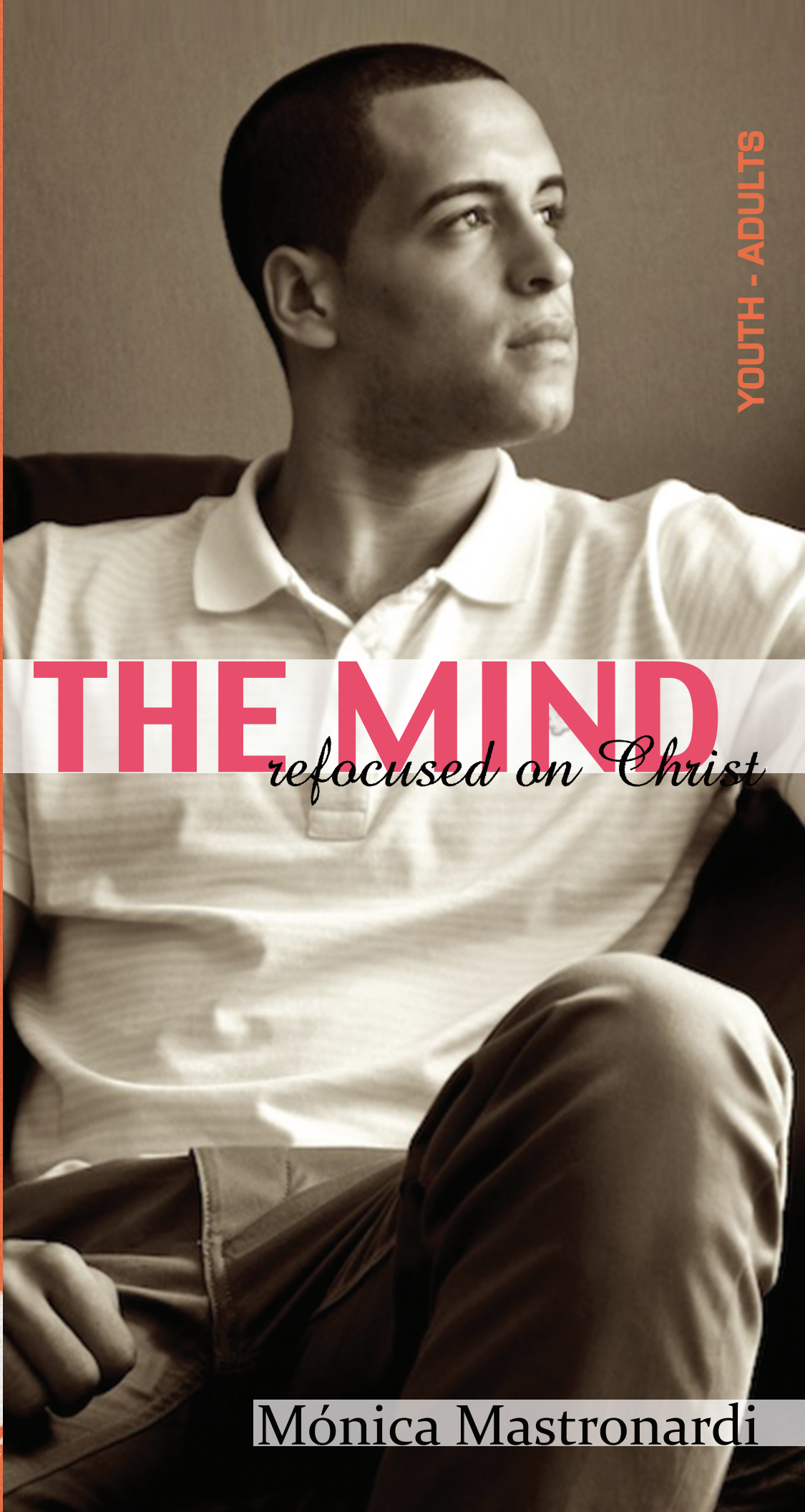


Series:

Filled with the Spirit

13 Studies
for groups

• DISCIPLESHIP •
abcde
growth in holiness



YOUTH - ADULTS

THE MIND

refocused on Christ

Mónica Mastronardi

The Mind Refocused on Christ

Mónica E. Mastronardi de Fernández

Church of the Nazarene
Mesoamerica Region



Level C - Growth in Holiness
Youth/Adults

Title: The Mind Refocused on Christ

Book of “Discipleship ABCDE”
Stage C - Growth in Holiness
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Presentation



The Christian's life is a continuous walk in the process of discipleship, in which our whole being is being transformed to become like Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit's work in us. All of us who have been "born again" need to participate in this process of formation so that we can become mature and holy Christians in all areas of our lives.

This volume titled: *The Mind Refocused on Christ* is the second of a three-volume series that completes the basic studies for level C of the ABCDE Discipleship Plan of the Church of the Nazarene in the Mesoamerica Region. The series is called: *Filled with the Spirit* and covers 9 months of studies. Each book contains 13 discipleship lessons focused on the consolidation and growth needs of people who have recently been incorporated into local church membership.

These lessons have been written with the thoughtful discipler/teacher in mind, and offers guidelines about how the teacher should instruct the group of new members in such a way that the class is interesting, dynamic and applicable to their lives. These books present the doctrine and practice of the life of holiness in simple practical language, and at the same time connect with the ideas of the contemporary world. The holy life is studied emphasizing:

A) The natural and progressive changes that are produced in the Christian, as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit in one's life; changes that are observable not only by oneself, but by all those around him or her.

B) The life full of the love of God as an indispensable requirement to serve the Lord and our fellow man.

C) The progressive and total transformation of the life of believers as we become more and more like Jesus Christ.

The Mind Refocused on Christ has the purpose of guiding believers to identify sinful aspects that may be present in how they think and how the world around them is thinking, so that they can renounce those sins and learn to think like Christ. Each lesson presents a new opportunity for God to continue to work and transform each disciple so that we all might become more like Jesus in the way we think, in our emotions, and lifestyle, through bible studies, examples and illustrations, self-assessment exercises, reflection, as well as the opportunity to set new goals for spiritual growth.

It is my prayer that these lessons will help the members of our churches to understand and live more in the holy lifestyle of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Rev. Monte Cyr
Discipleship Ministries Coordinator
Mesoamerica Region*



What is Discipleship ABCDE?

In the Church of the Nazarene, we believe that making disciples in the image of Christ in the nations is the foundation of the mission of the Church and the primary responsibility of the leadership (Ephesians 4:7-16). The work of discipleship is continuous and dynamic, that is to say, the disciple is never to cease growing more like the Lord. This process of growth, when it is healthy, occurs in all dimensions: as individuals (spiritual growth), in the corporate dimension (becoming part of the congregation), as well as in holiness of life (progressively becoming more like Jesus Christ), as well as in a life invested in service to God and others.

The ABCDE Discipleship Plan has been designed to contribute to the comprehensive formation of members of the churches of the Nazarene in the Mesoamerica Region. We have published materials to cover all discipleship levels. The three books in The Spirit-filled Life series correspond to the basic series for Level C, and have been designed for those who have gone through previous levels of discipleship with New Life in Christ materials and Keys to Abundant Christian Living (Level B1 and B2), and have been incorporated into church membership.

The books of the series Filled with the Spirit are intended to guide the new member of the church to become like Jesus Christ. As each person advances in the study of these materials, he or she will be discovering those areas of their lives that Jesus Christ wants to transform, so that the Holy Spirit of love can fill their whole being. The Spirit-filled life is the indispensable prerequisite to enable every son or daughter of God to realize the special plan that God has for his/her life.



Dr. Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández
General Editor ABCDE Discipleship
Church of the Nazarene - Mesoamerica Region

•DISCIPLESHIP•
abcde
church of the nazarene

Level A | Approach

Evangelism.

Level B | Baptism and Membership

Discipleship for New Believers.

Level C | Continued Growth

"Full of the Spirit" Discipleship.

**Level D
Ministry Development**

School of Leadership.

**Level D
Professional Development**

Specialized Training at
Theological Institutions.

Level E | Education for Life and Service

Wholistic Growth in Christlikeness.



How to use this Book

This book belongs to a series of three volumes on the theme “Filled with the Spirit.” The books are designed to be studied in the following order:

1. The Spirit-filled life
2. The Mind refocused on Christ
3. The Fruit-filled life

The purpose of this series is to help the members of the churches of the Nazarene get to know the biblical teaching on the holy life and to put what they are learning into practice in their daily lives in order to grow in their likeness to Jesus Christ.

How much time is needed to cover the study of the book?

Each book contains 13 lessons. If you guide them to study one lesson per week, the entire study will last three months. Sometimes groups prefer to go slower and spend two weeks studying each lesson. In that case, the study of the book will take 26 weeks (about six months). Remember that the goal of discipleship is not about rushing through to complete a book, but that group members might grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ. And in order to grow, they need to study, understand, and apply these new teachings to their lives. So planning the time for the study of each lesson in advance is very important, to ensure the disciples’ progressive learning.

By their didactic design, the books can be used in different modalities; either for one-on-one discipleship, in small groups or in classes of more people.

What do the lessons contain?

Each lesson contains the following:

- Objectives: formulation of the learning goals that the students are expected to achieve at the end of the study of each lesson.
- Resources: ideas are included to illustrate and make learning more interesting.
- Introduction: the subject of study is introduced in an interesting way to awaken the interest and participation of students.
- Bible study: this is the most extensive section since it is the development of the contents of the lesson. These lessons have been written with the book as a teaching agent in mind, so its content is expressed in dynamic, simple language and makes connection with the ideas of the contemporary world. This section includes notes to the teacher about student participation in lesson development (Bible reading, questions, exercises from the Work Sheet).

- Summary of the main teaching of the passages studied: at the end of the lesson a small summary is provided. This summary is very useful to use at the end of the class as a closing point and/or the beginning of the next session to remember the topics discussed.
- Definition of Key Terms: This section is intended to clarify or broaden the meaning of some of the terms contained in the lesson.
- Work sheets: This page can be found and copied for the students, although ideally each student should have their own copy of the study booklet. As the lesson progresses, both individual and group learning activities related to the topic will be included.
- Recommended Readings: At the end of the Work Sheets, there are bible readings relative to the topics studied. Both teacher and students are encouraged to use these verses in their devotions during the week.

What is the role of the student?

The student is responsible for:

1. Acquiring the book and studying each lesson before each class. This is recommended, depending on the possibilities of each church.
2. Attend classes promptly.
3. Participate in class activities by completing the Work Sheets.
4. Apply the teachings of the Bible to their daily lives.

What is the role of the teacher?

1. Prepare the class session beforehand, studying the content of the lesson and scheduling the use of class time. The teacher needs to study the lesson with a Bible and a dictionary available for consultation. Pay attention to the vocabulary used in the lessons, and explain in simple words what might be difficult for the students to understand.
2. The teacher should allow the Holy Spirit to transform his/her own life and put into practice any new teaching, in order to be an example to the students.
3. Pray every day so that the objectives of each lesson becomes a reality in the lives of the disciples. Pray for the specific needs of each one of them.
4. Bring extra copies of the Work Sheet when students do not have a copy of the book. Complete the activities to become familiar with the exercises.
5. Prepare the teaching resources well in advance.
6. Connect with disciples outside of class. These lessons are intended to enable people to have transforming experiences which will help them to become more like Christ. Share with them and encourage them to apply to their lives what they are learning, and make sure they know that you are there to help them.

How to teach a class?

The lesson should last from between 90 to 120 minutes depending on the number of students and their participation. It is recommended that students read the lesson in advance so that they will have more time in class for discussion and application of the teachings.

In the course of the lesson, directions for the activities in which the students participate are included, such as Bible readings, discussion questions, or exercises to complete in the Work Sheet.

Whether you choose to study one lesson per week or one lesson in two weeks, we recommend that you distribute the time as follows (for 90 minutes of class):

- 5 minutes: welcome, review the theme and main points from the previous lesson, and prayer together.
- 10 minutes: introduction to the lesson topic.
- 60 minutes: lesson development. Use visual aids such as blackboard, graphics, drawings, objects, pictures, among others, and encourage student participation through questions or assigning students to take part in the lesson, etc.
- 10 minutes: share testimonies and a time of prayer for the issues raised in the lesson (challenges, personal situations, problems, goals, gratitude, among others).
- 5 minutes: announcements and farewell.



The Fruit of the Self-Centered Mind

Lesson 1



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Understand how the self-centered mind is the cause of conflict in the Christian life.
- Identify the fact that personal desires may be in conflict with the desires of Christ.
- Reflect on what it means to put the Kingdom of God above all other things.
- Give up the desires that oppose the will of the Lord.



Resources

- Have James 5:17 and Galatians 5: 22-23 available in three different versions of the New Testament (these could be, New International Version, The Good News Bible or the Message, among others).
- Bible Dictionaries and Dictionaries of synonyms and antonyms.

In the last quarter (The Spirit-Filled Life), we studied that the life of the Spirit-filled Christian is a life of constant growth in which we learn step by step to live as Christ did. This development implies being molded into the likeness of Christ in our mind, in our emotions (heart) and in our behavior.

This growth is not easy because the Spirit-filled Christian lives his/her life between two worlds that oppose Christ. One is the outside world: Jesus prayed lest we be carried away by its impetuous currents.



.....◦ **Have a student read John 17: 14-17**

In this prayer Jesus intercedes for each of his disciples to receive strength from God to overcome the temptations that are presented daily in this life.

There is also another world against which the Christian struggles. It is how the world in which we live affects our inner being.



.....◦ **Ask another volunteer to read Ephesians 4:22-24**

As we see, the process of sanctification that occurs after the fullness of the Spirit in the Christian's life not only consists in rejecting the temptations that come from outside, but also in being completely “renewed in the spirit of our mind”, so as to have a mind similar to that of Jesus Christ.

||| Ask the class: Why is it so important to have a mind like that of Christ? |||

The overall purpose of this trimester is to help us identify some sinful aspects that may be present in our thinking, as well as how the world around us thinks, so that we can renounce them and learn to think like Christ.

In this introductory lesson, we are going to see how the world thinks and what is the difference between that and how Jesus thinks. We will identify the fruit, or in other words, what can be seen in the life of the follower of Jesus. Then in the successive lessons of this quarter, we will analyze one by one some of the fruit of the mind contrary to that of Christ, so that in the next trimester we can turn our attention to fruit seen in the person who has a mind similar to that of Christ.

[[[Bible Study

1. A MIND IN DISORDER



.....◦ **Have a student read James 3:18 a 4-3**



.....◦ **Then ask the students to complete activity 1.**

In this passage, James clearly says that in the mind of the Christian, there are confrontations that are like a war. To describe this war, in the original Greek language, words are used that depict small fighting groups, similar to guerrilla warfare. It is not a war in an open field, in which it is easy to identify the enemy army, but small attempts that fight against the will of God and that try to weaken our spiritual defenses.

It is difficult to point out in our lives where these conflicts come from, but James clearly says: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (4:3). Here James is pointing out as wrong some of the things we desire or crave for in our lives. Identifying these self-centered desires is not easy, but it is necessary, because sometimes we may find ourselves asking God for good things but for selfish ends.

The desires that drive our life are generated in our minds. Worldly thinking is selfish and sinful, amounting to rebellion against God and His plans. The problem is that self is in the center. The self-centered person asks himself: What will I get out of this? Who will meet my needs? When will I have what I want? The Christian full of the Holy Spirit has not completely got rid of this way of thinking and sometimes his mind may want to return to work in this sphere motivated by selfish ambition and pride. The difference is that now the Holy Spirit confronts these selfish interests in our minds and shows us a new orderly perspective of seeing life with the mind of Christ.

The self-centered mind is the old disordered mind, the mind of the old man.



.....◦ **Ask students to see the graph in activity 2.**

The desires that govern this mind have four great roots:

1. **Self-sufficiency:** fear, disbelief, excessive self-confidence. This leads the person to believe that he is always right.
2. **Self-idolatry:** pride, self-worship. This is a sense of superiority, an excess of self-esteem that leads people to exaggerate their own importance and virtues. These people love themselves beyond measure, and seek to satisfy their own desires at any cost.
3. **Self-government:** disobedience, rebellion. These people oppose the humble character and the servant attitude that God wants to cultivate in us. They refuse to accept correction and when they are reprimanded for doing what is wrong,

they tend to justify their actions, and justify themselves saying “I did it for a good cause.”

4. Self-complacency, sensuality, bad desires. This leads to laziness, and satisfying the desires of the flesh, rejecting discipline.

In the Christian there are frequent temptations to want to guide one’s own destiny, to control one’s own world, to be one’s own god. The temptation to pride will always be present, trying to steal from God the place we have given Him as Lord of our life. It will seek to lead us out of obedience to God so that we may regain control of our own lives. James 4:3 says clearly that there are Christians who innocently let themselves be carried away by these selfish desires and want to make God a part of them. However, God does not listen to such prayers, and unless we understand why, we can become angry with God.

Take for example this Christian’s wish list (write the list on the board). These desires are in order of his priorities:

1. *A pair of new shoes*
2. *A washing machine*
3. *Honor God through my discipleship lessons*
4. *An insistent desire for..*
5. *Have more confidence that God has control of his problems*
6. *A new larger TV*

The first two desires were because he had been out of work for two years and needed these things. But he was ashamed to put third on the list, honoring God instead of putting Him first.

When asked what the number 4 was about, he did not say what it was, but it was a desire that returned frequently to his life. Trying to resist it had become for him like trying to resist scratching when a mosquito bites.

He wrote number 5 because he admired this quality in a church friend and really wanted to have that confidence that his friend had.

The sixth wish surprised him because he believed within himself that he had overcome his love of material things. But he realized that he still wanted many more things, so he continued to fill the page and discovered that on his list and in his mind the good and bad things got intermingled and confused.

2. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

A healthy practice in the Christian life is to evaluate our desires. Make your own wish list now.



.....○ **Ask students to complete the activity 3.**

We should not feel so bad if we find that our wish list arises from a self-centered mind. Remember that none of us are perfect, but we are all continually being perfected. The important thing is to recognize these desires that are in us that belong to the old life, and to

make decisions about how to deal with them. Whenever we recognize and change something so that our lives are more like that of Christ, it means that we are growing. Each time we go to the altar in church in response to the preacher’s call to give something to God or give back something that has slipped a bit out of God’s control, we are growing, and we are becoming more like Christ.



Have a student read Romans 7:18-25

Invite the class to discuss these questions:

- *What kind of mind does Paul describe here: a disordered mind dominated by the flesh or one which is under the control of God’s Spirit?*
- *What kind of life is the result of a mind in disorder?*
- *What kind of life is the result of an ordered mind?*
- *How can the Christian be freed from this mental conflict according to verse Rom. 8:1-2?*

3. THE CHRIST-LIKE MIND

Make the following chart on the board:

	An ordered mind	A disordered mind
<i>Dominated by</i>	The Will	Desires
<i>Decide on the basis of</i>	The Will	Desires
<i>Desire subject to</i>	Christ	The Will

An ordered mind, like the mind of Christ, must be dominated by the will. The spiritual Christians makes decisions about what thoughts will fill their minds. They learn to reject desires that are in conflict with the desires of Christ. They learn to live their lives motivated by the desires of Christ: His desires become theirs. These Christians experience a progressive freedom from all desires and thoughts opposed to the will of God.



Ask students to complete activity 4. Congratulate those who marked the “C” answer. Christ is the one who takes the initiative, and when we respond positively by submitting our desires, He gives us new desires equal to his own.

4. WHAT IS THE MIND OF CHRIST LIKE?

To get rid of the desires that keep us from being like Jesus, we need to know how Jesus thought and where he focused his interests, for this is what He wants to cultivate in each one of us. Next we will learn about 17 virtues that are part of the mind of Christ that God wants his sons and daughters to develop.



Have a student read James 3:13-17

In these verses James speaks of the wisdom that comes from above, that is, divine wisdom. In verse 17 he lists eight virtues all reflecting the character of Christ.

||| On the board on the left-hand side, write the list of the virtues of the mind of Christ in this passage from James: |||

Virtues of the mind of Christ in James

<i>Purity</i>	<i>Full of Mercy</i>
<i>Peace-loving</i>	<i>Fruitful</i>
<i>Considerate</i>	<i>Impartial</i>
<i>Submissive</i>	<i>Sincere</i>

These eight virtues do not describe the whole mind of Christ, but point to some very important aspects. These virtues harmonize with each other and reinforce one another. Let's look now at the other list of nine virtues that the apostle Paul gives us in Galatians 5:22-23. There is no doubt that Christ had the Holy Spirit dwelling in his life and the fruits of the Spirit were in His mind and were part of His way of being.



.....○ **Ask a student to read Galatians 5:22-23.**
Then write on the board the list of virtues of the mind of Christ in Galatians in a column to the right of the above and in a different color.

Virtues of the mind of Christ

<i>In James</i>	<i>In Galatians</i>
<i>Purity</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>Peace-loving</i>	<i>Joy</i>
<i>Considerate</i>	<i>Peace</i>
<i>Submissive</i>	<i>Patience</i>
<i>Full of Mercy</i>	<i>Kindness</i>
<i>Fruitful</i>	<i>Goodness</i>
<i>Impartial</i>	<i>Faithfulness</i>
<i>Sincere</i>	<i>Gentleness</i>
	<i>Self-Control</i>

||| Ask the class: Do these lists of virtues compete with each other? |||

Both lists of virtues do not compete with each other. On the contrary, love produces joy. Peace and patience go hand in hand. All of them complement each other and strengthen each other.

Each of these lists of virtues is complete in itself. If we observe well, we will notice that in Galatians Paul uses nouns and James uses adjectives. So we can combine both these lists to describe more fully the virtues of the mind of Christ. For example we can say that Christ had: sincere love; firm faith, kind patience, etc. There is no conflict between them.

The mind of Christ is an orderly, integrated, balanced mind. On the contrary, the mind that is not like that of Christ is a disordered mind.



- **Have students re-read James 3:17 and Galatians 5:22-23 in several versions and then complete activity 5.**

5. THE SUPREME DESIRE OF CHRIST

[[[Ask the class: Did Jesus ever express any desire?]]]

Let's look at three statements Jesus made:

- When he was 12, he said: *“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”* (Luke 2:49).
- When he was 30: *“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”* (John 4:34).
- When he was 32 he said: *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me”* (John 6:38).



- **Ask students to complete activity 6.**

Jesus' passion was to do the will of his Father. From the age of twelve, he had this firm purpose in his life and did not depart from it. At the end of his ministry on the night before he died, he said in prayer to his Father: “ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17: 4). Until the last moment of His life, He was busy doing the work of His Father. In His life, there were no inner desires motivated by evil, and He did not allow other desires from the outside to interfere either. Jesus' mind was focused on His one goal, one passion, one yearning.

In order to have a mind similar to that of Christ, we need to control our tendency to have self-centered wills, and this is only possible by the intervention of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Without Him, we are helpless. Without Him, we will get caught up in a web of desires that are opposed to the will of God.

The truth is that many of us have been slaves of passions for a long time, and we need a special intervention of the Spirit in our lives so that the mind of Christ may be formed in us.

At the beginning of this class, we talked about a Christian brother who made a wish list. He finally learned to live under the promise of Matthew 6:33: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well,” and when he was mindful of the things of God, God provided him with the material things which he needed. When we are so busy taking care of our own things to the point of neglecting to serve God, we get in the way and He cannot work. But when we put God's things first, He opens the windows of heaven and does not let us lack anything we need. When we begin to live as Christ and align our desires with God's will, we discover that God is very pleased to help us with our needs.



- **Invite the students to finish completing activity 7.
Invite someone to pray for God's help.**



Definition of Key Terms

- **Virtue:** Morally good behavior or character.
- **Patience:** Tendency of a person to be understanding, tolerant or compassionate.
- **Mercy:** Inclination of compassion towards the sufferings or mistakes of others. In Christian doctrine, mercy is a divine attribute. Through God's mercy we can receive forgiveness of our sins through what Jesus did on the cross.
- **Self-Control** is the quality that allows people to stop themselves from doing things they want to do but that might not be in their best interest.



Summary

The mind of the Spirit-filled Christian must conform to the mind of Christ. This is a gradual process of cleansing in which Christians, with the help of the Spirit, identify the desires of the old life that are rooted in their lives and replace them with the desires of Christ. Before we were saved, our minds were focused on our own desires and lifestyles, and very likely lacked peace and order. A well-ordered mind like that of Christ is one in which the will is in control over thoughts and desires. It is a mind totally devoted to serving God as the most important goal in life. The lessons of this quarter will help us to identify the evil desires that come from within us as well as those in the world around us. We need to renounce them and replace them with the one desire that Jesus had: to do the will of the Father in this world.



Activity Sheets

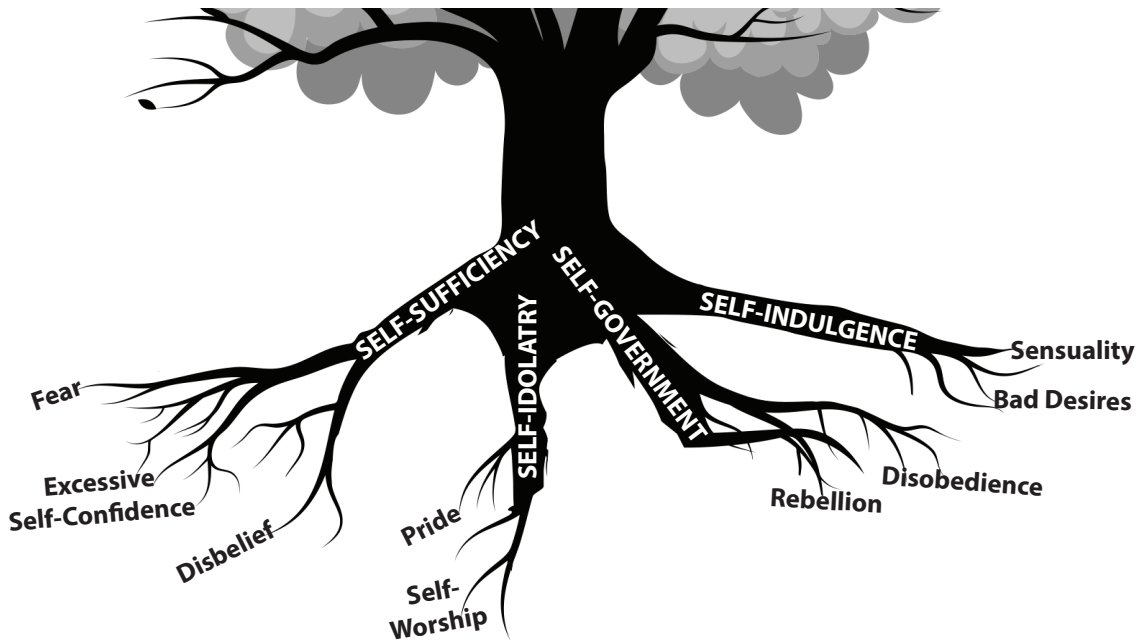
ACTIVITY 1

Answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever asked God for things for selfish reasons? _____
2. If you answered yes, mention some of the things you have asked for. _____
3. Do you remember ever having in your mind two thoughts that were fighting each other? _____
4. If your answer is yes, describe this struggle in a few words. _____

ACTIVITY 2

Trends that govern the disordered mind



Write a list of your desires, beginning with what you most yearn for. Then answer the questions.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

1. Are there opposing desires on this list? _____
2. How many of these desires are dominated by your will? _____
3. How many of these desires are to give glory and honor to God? _____

ACTIVITY 4

Which of the following sentences describes what you must do to be free from desires opposed to God? Tick one of them.

- Remove from my list all desires that would not be approved by other Christians and replace them with desires "approved" by them.*
- Wait for God to transform my bad desires and make me what he wants me to be.*
- Get rid of selfish desires and allow Christ to replace them with those which make me more like Him.*

ACTIVITY 5

Work in groups of 3 to 5 members.

The virtues of the mind of Christ are listed below. Read Gal. 5:22-23 and James 4:17 in several versions and write a word that describes the opposite of each virtue, the worldly mind opposed to Christ. If you have doubts about the meaning, consult a dictionary or a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms.

Christ-like Virtues	Mind opposed to Christ
Purity	_____
Peace-loving	_____
Considerate	_____
Submissive	_____
Full of Mercy	_____
Fruitful	_____
Impartial	_____
Sincere	_____
Love	_____
Joy	_____
Peace	_____
Patience	_____
Kindness	_____
Goodness	_____
Faithfulness	_____
Gentleness	_____
Self-Control	_____

ACTIVITY 6

What was the great passion or great desire of Christ? Mark one.

- Jesus wanted to be famous or popular and please people.*
- Jesus wanted to do the Father's will and please Him.*
- Jesus wanted to do the things he liked and that gave him pleasure.*

ACTIVITY 7

Mark in the following list where you are now in the process of Christ forming His mind in you:

- A - Christ has set in me the desire to be like him.
- B - I need help identifying bad desires in my life.
- C - I want to give up the desires that are opposed to those of Christ.
- D - I want to have the supreme desire in my life to serve God as Christ did.
- E - I am cultivating spiritual desires and seeking that Christ governs in all things.
- F - I have in my life the same longings that Christ has.

PRAYER

Lord, please do in my life what you have to do in order to put my desires in the right order. I understand that your will is that my mind be similar to the mind that Jesus has. Help me to cultivate these virtues in my life and get rid of all thoughts and desires that fight against your will.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *Matthew 6:25-34*
- *Matthew 15:1-20*
- *Matthew 16:21-28*
- *Matthew 21:33-46*
- *John 17*



Jealousy and Envy

Lesson 2



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Know the levels or stages of jealousy as well as the immediate consequences of an envious heart.
- Reflect on the importance and priority of not looking away from the perfect man - Jesus Christ and to analyze each day the intention of each action in the light of His example.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to purify the area of intentions and motivations in their lives
- Practice honest words of praise or gratitude for themselves and others.



Resources

- A blackboard
- Bibles
- Prepare some gifts to give to all your students. Think of something that they all would really like such as chocolates, ballpoint pens, greeting cards, or something else nice.

Introduction

||| Start the class by handing out the gifts to some of the students and say something like this: “We have chosen a group of students of this class to give them a special recognition.” Ask for applause for them and pause momentarily to see how the students react. Then ask them: “How did you feel when you did not receive gifts?” |||

||| Write “What is envy?” on the board and record their answers and summarize them in a single phrase or sentence. Then ask if they agree with the synthesis you have made. (After the discussion, give gifts to the rest of the students.) |||

Solomon says that “envy rots the bones” (Proverbs 14:30); William Shakespeare called it “the green-eyed monster.” Aristotle called envy “pain at the good fortune of others”; In the New Testament, it is mentioned as one of the “acts of the flesh” (Galatians 5: 19-21). Envy is not a gentle emotion, but an aggressive one. Sometimes it is difficult to recognize the envy in our life and we try to camouflage it in other emotions or to justify it.



.....◦ **Have the students complete activities 1 and 2.**

We have all experienced at some point or other this feeling called jealousy. So, how far should we allow it to go? In this lesson we will see that jealousy can be good and healthy or become so bad that it destroy people and their relationships.

Bible Study

1. HOW TO DISTINGUISH GOOD JEALOUSY FROM BAD?

The word zeal or jealousy in the Bible is the translation of the Hebrew word “*ganna*” and the Greek word “*celos*”. The verb *ganna* conveys the idea of “becoming dark red.” Its meaning is associated with the reddish color in the face of a person as if they were burning hot, in other words what we call today “blushing” or turning red. That often happens when we feel things strongly, we are filled up with passion about something, and there is fervor, zeal or intense enthusiasm. This passionate feeling can be associated with something or someone.

To feel passion or zealous for something or someone is not bad, it is something of our nature. What distinguishes bad zeal is the reason for this passionate reaction. Jealousy can be addressed correctly or incorrectly according to the nature of the person’s heart. For example, falling in love is a good feeling that leads us to commit ourselves to marriage and to bear children. But if a married man or woman falls in love with another person, this situation is not good, because passion has overflowed outside the limits that God has established.

2. THE HOLY ZEAL

In the Bible we are told of two types of jealousy, holy zeal and sinful zeal.

Holy zeal is devotion and consecration; it is to be passionate about a good cause, a worthy goal or the right person.



...o **Ask volunteers to read the following passages: Numbers 25:11, Exodus 20:5 and 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24 and 6:15. Then ask: Who are these passages referring to? And for whom does God feel jealous?**

If the Bible tells us that God is jealous, then feeling jealous is not always bad; as long as it arises for the right reasons. God's jealousy for Israel is compared to that of a husband for his wife. This jealousy or zeal is based on the fact that God wants His Church to be faithful to Him. This kind of zeal is a logical and healthy consequence of love. What husband in love does not feel jealous for his wife and the other way around? The zeal of God is holy and is part of His character as well as His love and justice. His zeal led him to give up His treasured son to rescue His Church and bring it to its full potential.

The Son of God showed jealousy when He cast out the merchants who had made a market in the Temple of Jerusalem (Luke 19: 45-48). Titus 2:14 tells us that Jesus Christ *“...gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”* God expects His people to be jealous in the sense that they must be passionate about doing good in this world, actions that show God's love to those who need it badly.

This holy zeal comes from God and is good because it leads people to be true worshipers, to strive to do the will of God, to serve others with care.



.....o **Have the students do activity 3.**

3. JEALOUSY WHICH IS SINFUL:

Sinful or negative zeal in the Bible is called envy or jealousy. In this case, it is a carnal zeal because jealous or envious people seek total and complete devotion to themselves. Therefore, they do not tolerate anything or anyone who tries to take their place or who may be a potential competitor.

Envy arises from a greedy heart. This greed can be directed to the desire for material things, fame, love, skills or talent, beauty, being “worshiped as a god,” or the desire to have power and dominion; or want to have absolute control over things or people.



...o **Let's see some examples in activity 4. For this activity, depending on the number of students, you can assign a character to each one, or divide them into groups and distribute the assignments evenly. Then ask them to share what they said to the rest of the class.**

Envy is carnal because it is produced by selfishness that responds to the desires of the flesh, and that are contrary to the love of God because they seek to satisfy inappropriate

desires in inappropriate ways. These passionate feelings, and the thoughts that relate to them, lead us to tread on dangerous terrain. Envy is a serious sin that leads to other major sins, such as resentment, hatred and even murder.

4. WHAT ARE THE FRUIT OF ENVY?

Envy does not produce anything good. Envy corrupts and dehumanizes. Let us see its fruit:

It brings permanent unhappiness

Envy produces dissatisfaction, which is a state of permanent unhappiness. Envious people are never satisfied with what they are, what they do, and what they have. Therefore, these people are never happy; they are always ambitious, and they despair if they do not achieve what they want, and this can lead to depression.

It destroy relationships

In the New Testament, envy is the antithesis of love, and consequently the number one enemy of true Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Envious people are often angry, and this causes people to keep them at a distance. Their own selfishness does not allow them to rejoice at the good that happens to their friends, so they harshly criticize the faults of others and expose them. When they become leaders in the church, they oppose the emergence of new leaders because they fear being “overshadowed” by someone else’s talents. These envious people often lose their best friends, and become resentful towards their family and co-workers.

The envious heart prevents us from truly loving other people and God, because true love desires the happiness of the other person, while the envious person is unhappy when others progress. Envy wants what the other has: friends, things, work, grades, family, etc. And to get these, they will often do whatever it takes.

Envious people make others suffer, hurting their feelings by belittling whatever they achieve.

It increases problems of low self-esteem:

Envious people suffer from low self-esteem, that is, they think of themselves incorrectly because they do not value themselves as God does. They live comparing themselves with others, but seldom feel good because of their mistaken concept of themselves. They try to feel good and increase their self-esteem by finding and pointing out faults in others, or devaluing who others are and what they do. Yet envious people always lose, and can do anything to destroy others who have what they want. Like Cain, some even kill someone thinking that this way of feeling dissatisfied with themselves will be go away (Genesis 4: 4-8).

The following story will help us understand how self-destructive this feeling can become if we allow it to grow in our hearts:

The story is told of two eagles. One of them could fly higher than the other, and his companion did not like it at all. It happened then that one day the less capable eagle spoke to a hunter and asked him to kill the other eagle. The hunter told him that he would gladly do so if he had feathers for his arrows. Being neither lazy nor slow, he tore two feathers off his wings and handed them to the hunter. The hunter fired his arrows, but could not hit the other eagle, which was flying high. The envious eagle continued to pluck out his feathers for more arrows until at last, he pulled out so many that he could not fly, and the hunter, taking advantage of the helpless eagle, killed him. Envious people, like the eagle of the story, not only harm others, but hurt themselves as well.

Envy sickens our heart



Read James 3:14-16

Envy produces bitterness, resentment, hatred of self and others, and even hatred towards God, who is often accused of not giving us what we want. Envy is a huge waste of mental, physical, and emotional energy.

Envy prevents the growth of the Christian



Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 3:3

In this passage, it is clear that envy is the fruit of the life in the flesh. Envious people manifest pride, “airs of superiority,” think that they are the best, believe that they alone can do things well, and tend to disparage other people by seeing them as useless and incapable. Envious people are usually self-sufficient, refuse to receive help, and want to be the best in everything, so it is quite difficult for them to work in a team. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 2:1-2 that it is necessary to discard envy to continue growing in the Christian life.

Ask the students to complete activity 5.

5. WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THE HEART SICK OF JEALOUSY AND ENVY?

In Mark 7:20-23, the Lord Jesus said that out of the heart come all evil, including envy. The only one who can change our heart is the Lord. The Holy Spirit wants to fill every area of our lives and purify our heart.

Finish with a prayer of repentance. Ask for cleansing of envious thoughts and for them to be replaced by the love of God. Ask the Lord to teach us to look at others as He sees them. Encourage the class to implement suggested activities for the week.



Definition of Key Terms

- **Jealousy:** Jealousy is a feeling of nonconformity, caused by the fear of losing something you already have, or wanting something that another person possesses. There may be jealousy for a loved one, an object, a situation in life, or many other circumstances.



Summary

- **Envy:** It is the desire to possess what others have; it can be something material, a person, love, respect, prestige, beauty, personality, among others.

Bad jealousy and envy do not come from a pure heart, but from a selfish heart which has not allowed Christ to purify it through His Holy Spirit. But we must recognize that there is a holy zeal that comes from God which impels us to dedicate ourselves with love and passion to His work. This holy zeal is the fruit of holy love. Only God can cleanse us of the selfishness that leads us to want what others have, and make us free to live happy and grateful



Activity Sheets

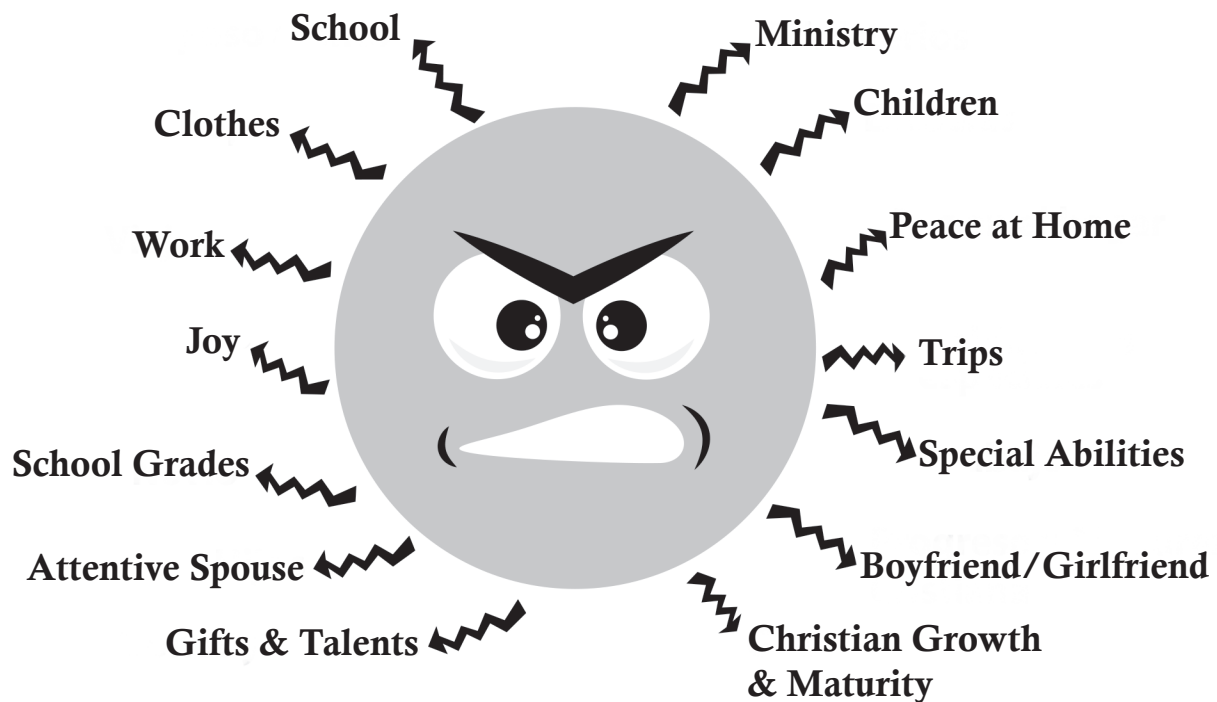
ACTIVITY 1

What do you think of the following statement by Martín Daly and Margo Wilson (from McMaster University) about jealousy and envy?

“Everyone who is immersed in an important relationship experiences them frequently.”

ACTIVITY 2

In the following chart, circle those things that have been a source of envy in your life.



ACTIVITY 3

Biblical examples of holy zeal.

Passage	Person who felt good or holy zeal	What was the object of their zeal?
Psalm 69:9a		
2 Corinthians 11:2		

ACTIVITY 4

Biblical examples of sinful zeal.

Passage	Who?	What led them to feel jealousy or envy?
Genesis 4:1-8	Cain	
Genesis 30:1	Rachel	
Genesis. 37 :5-11	Jacob's sons	
Psalms 73:3	David	
Mark 15:10	The Priests	

ACTIVITY 5

Test: How envious am I? Write yes or no at the beginning of each question (remember to be very honest):

Have you ever thought or said anything like this?

___ "I want what you have and I do not want you to have it".

___ "I want to take what you have and, if I can't, I'd rather damage it so that neither of us can have it".

___ "He deserves the bad thing that is happening to him".

___ "Why can't I get that from time to time?"

___ "Everyone is better than me".

Have you done something like this?

Do you continually compare yourself to others?

Are you happy when others fail?

Do you criticize the achievements, talents or appearance of others?

Do you often find fault with others?

Do you feel sorry for yourself?

Are you happy when others enjoy what you cannot?

Are you having trouble recognizing your failures?

Do you struggle to support people who succeed?

Do you always want to be first and best in everything?

Do you like to talk about yourself by comparing yourself with other people who you consider to be worse than you?

Do you always want more than others have?

Are you a jealous person and deny it?

Do you keep information for personal benefit only, instead of benefiting others?

If your answer is mostly yes, you need to be healed of jealousy and envy.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK:

- a. Give thanks to God for whom you are and have, and for what you will be and will have in the Lord Jesus. Be humble and recognize that it is by His grace that you have what you have. Do not measure your success by comparing yourself to others.
- b. Ask God to help you recognize the successes of other people. Recognize the effort he or she has made for the success they enjoy today
- c. Give thanks to God for what he gives to other people. Do not let envy take away the joy, satisfaction and purpose of God for your life.
- d. Praise people sincerely, starting with your loved ones, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Proverbs 27
- Luke 15:11-32
- Acts 5:17-42
- Acts 13:13-52
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10



Who Will You Trust to Control Your Future?

Lesson 3



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Identify divinatory practices related to the occult
- Reflect on the dangers of Christians taking part in these activities
- Examine their lives to identify if there are any of these practices in their past or present and give them up.



Resources

- Bible in several versions or printed copies of James 5:17 and Galatians 5:22-23 in two or three different versions that are easy to understand, such as the Living Bible, New International Version, Good News Bible or the Message.
- Sheets of drawing paper to distribute to students to draw in Activity 2.
- Cartoons or drawings that represent the popular belief about Satan to compare with the drawings of the students (can be printed or projected).

Introduction

Start the class by asking the students: What do more people read almost every day in the world ... the Bible or their horoscope? Ask them to vote. Then give the answer: their horoscope. 

Every day millions of people in the world consult the horoscope and give their money to fortune tellers, ignoring the forces of evil that are hidden behind these habits that seem harmless.

This lesson will be devoted to uncovering some lack of understanding and misconceptions people have about Satan and demons. In the next lesson we will continue to talk about the occult practices that are gaining ground in the contemporary world.

Bible Study

1. THE CHRISTIAN LIVES IN THE MIDST OF A CONFRONTATION OF POWERS.

Many Christians stumble when they try to grow in their spiritual life because they have misconceptions about how evil powers try to obstruct their spiritual development.

Is Satan real?

The first common mistake is to believe that the activities of demons have ended in our day, or that they are no longer as active as in the time of Jesus.

In Ephesians 6:12 the apostle Paul says: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

During Jesus’ ministry, as well as that of the apostles, Satan and his demons often met them head on. How did they do it? Through human people in whose bodies they lived. This should not be surprising because Jesus Christ came to put an end to the work of Satan (1 John 3: 8).

From the days when God created the first human couple (Genesis 3), and to this day, Satan has been trying to destroy human beings. How does he do it? By deceiving, lying, sowing doubts of the Word of God in our hearts, and making promises to give power, money, love, and fame to those who serve Him. He manipulates the media so that people don’t fear him, and incite human beings to destroy themselves by telling them that they have the right to satisfy their selfish desires at any cost. Also he is good at telling lies. He disguises himself, that is, he takes on the appearance of angels, or of people who have died, etc. to confuse and distract our attention from Jesus Christ, the only Savior. He is good at using distractions, that is, things that entertain us and rob us of time, ability and energies, instead of using these to seek Jesus, learn from Him and serve Him.

■■■ Ask the class: What are the names people use to refer to Satan? Write the list on the board, and then in another column, include the names we find in the Bible as we continue the lesson. ■■■

We have many evidences in the Old and New Testament that these spiritual beings use their power to influence human beings to live in opposition to the law of God. The Apostle Paul warns us that these spiritual powers are active in our time. Every day, movements like New Age, Satanism and the occult gain more converts, and expand in our world. The biblical teaching is clear and brings us to the knowledge of the existence of spiritual beings who are real and who oppose God. These spirits have Satan as their main leader, whom Jesus called “the prince of demons” (Matthew 12:24). This enemy angel of God receives different names in Scripture: devil, dragon, ancient serpent, Beelzebul and “Abaddon” and in Greek “Apollyon” (that is, Destroyer) (Revelation 9:11).

What was his origin? Ezekiel 28:1-19

The Bible does not accurately state the origin of these spirits, but we do have enough information to affirm that demons are fallen angels loyal to Satan’s leadership. In the book of Ezekiel, God sent warning words against the king of Tyre. In this passage the king’s haughtiness is compared with that of one of the chief angels of God who was filled with pride and wanted to usurp the place of God.



.....○ **Have students complete activity 1 and 2.**

2. WHAT ARE DEMONS?

From the Bible, we also know that Satan does not work alone; there are angels who have followed and supported him (Matthew 25:41). Angels and demons are spiritual beings similar in nature. They do not live in a body of blood, flesh and bones like us. They are invisible to our eyes, although they can be made visible sometimes. But angels and demons are different. Angels are loyal to God and serve Him. Demons try to enter men and women to control and use them against God and His people. Sometimes they appear conspicuous. They may appear as angels surrounded by light and beautiful faces (2 Corinthians 11:14) or as horrendous and terrifying beings (Revelation 9:7-10, 17; 16: 13-16).

Demons, like angels, have “person-hood.” They have names such as “Legion” in Luke 8:30. They have faculties of intelligence since they can dialogue, lie, deceive. They recognize the identity of other people, like Christ (Mark 1: 23-24). They fear and tremble before the judgment of God (Luke 8:28, James 2:19). They have free wills as seen in the fact that they rebelled against God.

Demons and angels are organized in ranks like armies. As Ephesians 6:12 tells us, there are principalities, powers and rulers who have under their order series of demons.

What true power do demons have for influencing humans?

The second mistake that is common is to believe that demons cannot influence Christians with their activity. The Bible reveals that Satan and his evil spirits have power and use it to destroy what God has created and to thwart God’s plans for the good of mankind.

Let's look at some characteristics of the demons:

- a. They have intelligence and supernatural powers (Ezekiel 28:12).
- b. They are capable of developing evil plans, both locally and worldwide (Ephesians 6:11-12, 2 Corinthians 2:11).
- c. They can influence and control human beings (Acts 19:14-16).
- d. They cluster, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac who had several thousand unclean spirits (Mark 5:1-4), who then entered into two thousand pigs (Mark 5:12-13).
- e. They can torment a person to the point of committing suicide (Revelation 9:13-19).
- f. They can produce misleading miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9), though with limited power, as in the case of the magicians at Pharaoh's court who tried to imitate the signs of Moses (Exodus 8:5-7 and 8:16-19).
- g. They can cross material barriers. They can move in space because they are not limited to physical bodies (Job 1:7).

Evil has been established on three levels. The first is the heart of the human being. This is personal evil.

||| Draw the graph: "Three Levels Where Evil Has Been Established" which is included on the next page. |||

||| Ask the class: Who is responsible for sin or acts of evil that humans commit? |||

The demons are not responsible for our sins; we make choices freely and can choose to follow the path of evil. The Bible says that we are not innocent, that God holds us responsible for the sin we commit intentionally.

The second level where evil has been established is in society, and this is called structural evil. This is the evil that arises from people with evil hearts working together. For example, structural evil manifests itself in corruption, in the exploitation of workers, in the unjust distribution of public resources, in institutionalized violence, in slavery, in sexual exploitation, in sexism, in laws that approve what God disapproves of, such as abortion, euthanasia, among others. The reason that evil has not spread further in society is because of the influence and teaching of the Church.

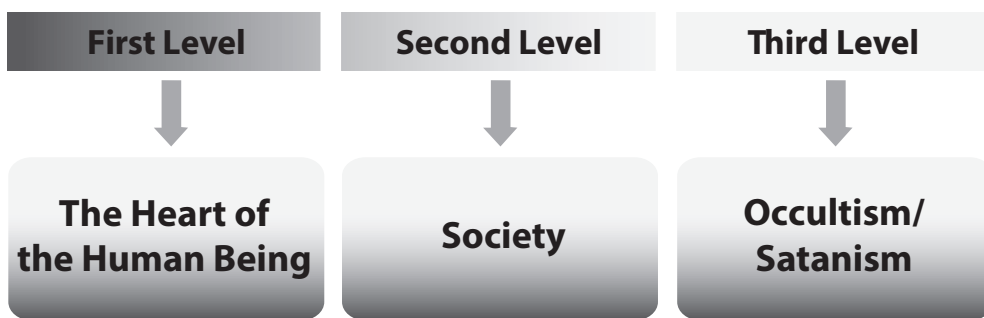
The third level of evil is the world of the occult, the people who worship, serve, or associate with Satan and demons. This is the level at which Satan has full dominion, but even people who have made a covenant to serve the demons can be released if they so desire by the power of Jesus Christ.

Christians must be aware of this power of evil that exists in the world and which is an inexhaustible source of temptations for our lives. We must not ignore that Satan has us in his sights. He could not divert Christ from his mission, but now he has an opportunity with us that he wants to take advantage of. Satan's preferred strategy is to attack our trust in God and His Word, tempting us to fall in our weak areas. He tries to destroy marriages and the unity

of the church by provoking jealousy, incomprehension, rivalry, rancor, and bitterness; and he tries to weaken the faith by introducing erroneous beliefs. Denying or ignoring the power of demons to tempt us is as dangerous as making Satan responsible for our sins.

However, we must not forget that knowing the enemy is a good strategy in war; we should not go beyond what the Bible allows us. Taking a look at what this evil spiritual world offers us is a very fashionable practice these days, and many Christians fall because of ignorance and curiosity. That is why has God prohibited his people, since the days of Moses, to imitate or participate in any occult practices. (Deuteronomy 18:9-13, Leviticus 19:26, Isaiah 8:19).

Three Levels Where Evil has been Established



3. CURIOSITY TO KNOW THE FUTURE.



Ask a Student to read Acts 16:16-23.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Philippi. They had evangelized a woman named Lydia, who has gone down in history as the first European convert (16:11-15). They had stayed in the house of this family, and every day they went to a place where the Jews met to pray. On these occasions a young girl came out daily to follow and shout after them. Her insistence was so intense that Paul wanted to know about her.

Who was this girl? In v. 16 it says that she had a “spirit by which she predicted the future.” In other words, she was a “pythoness” which means fortuneteller, the popular belief being that she was possessed by the spirit of Apollo, the god related to oracles.

This young woman was possessed by demons and listened to their voices. The Bible tells us that she was a slave and her owners took economic advantage of her condition. The spirits who inhabited her recognized the Most High God who lived in Paul and his companions, and so she shouted behind them saying that they served Him, announcing the way of salvation. Verse 18 says: “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!” At that moment, the spirit left her.

The branches of the occult that are dedicated to predicting the future are known today as “arts of divination.” People have been interested in knowing the future from the beginnings of history. It is something inherent in our nature since our future is related to God’s plan for our life. God has given us this curiosity to include Him in our decisions, to listen to His warnings, and to know that future events are in His hands.

One of the most widely read divinatory methods today is astrology, a system that is based on the belief that the stars influence our daily events, based on the date of birth.

Perhaps we have read the horoscope for fun, without thinking that this will affect our daily life. But in reality, it is not true, because our mind works by remembering and associating what we have read when such a situation occurs. If the horoscope said that we should do careful business with strangers, when the car buyer comes by, we may start to think about whether he will actually be the one or should we wait for another. This is called “suggestion.” Even if we do not believe in horoscopes, the idea is fixed in our mind and powerfully influences our decisions.

Any method of divination is used by Satan to manipulate people, whether with objects, elements of nature, or through people possessed by demons (mediums and spiritualists or under the influence of drugs). Satan has convinced people that they can know future events through other sources, that each person is the owner of their life, and that they can work out their destiny as they want, leaving God out.

This is how many believe today – that if there is a God, he is not interested in their personal affairs. They mistakenly believe that their future depends entirely on their own abilities or chance, “luck” or “good fortune”.



○ **Let us discover some of these forms of divination that Satan uses to deceive people, by completing Activity 3.**

[[[[Finish by guiding the class in a prayer of repentance and rejection of any of these divinatory practices in which they might be involved.]]]]



Definition of Key Terms

- **Pythoness:** A Pythoness was a diviner. According to Greek mythology, Python was a great serpent that had an oracle on Mount Parnassus. This god was famous because he could predict future events. The god Apollo killed this serpent and from there he changed his name to Pythias and became famous as a foreteller of the future. Because of this legend, all who sought to predict the future were considered to be influenced by the spirit of Apollo Phitius or Apollo Pythia. (Adam Clarke Bible Commentary Volume III, page 282).
- **Oracle:** Answer given by the gods, to questions about the future, when they were consulted by fortune tellers or priests.
- **Legion:** A legion consisted of six thousand soldiers, which is why its name indicates that the men of Gadara had many evil spirits. When they were expelled, they enter the two thousand swine that died in the lake (Luke 8:26-39, Matthew 8:28-33).
- **Occult:** The word “occult” is generally associated with secret knowledge and practices dealing with the supernatural or “psychic” phenomena, often for the purpose of obtaining personal power. Some occult practices rely on demons or “spirits” to achieve their goals.
- **Cherub, plural Cherubim:** a member of the second order of angels, whose distinctive gift is knowledge, often represented as a winged child or winged head of a child.



Summary

Satan and demons are real and are influencing the lives of all living humans in this world. Christians are not free from this attack, the purpose of which is to separate us from the family of God and lead us to be slaves of evil. One of his strategies is to make us distrust God's control over the events of our lives, and lead us to doubt that God will take care of our future. Today more than ever, there are multiple ways of hearing what other voices say about our destiny, but none of those voices comes from our God of love. All of them are generated in the plan of Satan to separate us from our Creator, confuse us, and lead us to abandon fellowship with our good God. As Christians, we must live a responsible life, moving away from all this evil work and entrusting our future to God.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Get the students into pairs to investigate in the Bible how demons influence humans and what their final destination will be?

a. What form did the devil take to deceive Eve? Genesis 3

b. What calamities did Satan cause in Job's life to prompt him to give up his faith in God? Job 1 and 2

c. What kind of influence did this demon offer over the life of King Ahab? 1 Kings 22:20-22

d. Who is the head of the army of demons? Matthew 12:22-28

e. Where do Satan and his demons dwell? Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:13, Luke 22:53

f. What is the power superior to the demons, against which they have no alternative but to obey? Matthew 12:28, Matthew 10:1

g. What kind of activity do demons carry out today to confuse humans? Mention some examples. 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 John 4:1-3

h. What is the final destination of Satan, the demons and all who serve him? Revelation 20:1-3 and 10

i. What is the activity of the demons in our day? 1 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 12:22; Mark 5:15; 9:18; Acts 5:16; Psalms 106:37,38; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 9:20,21; 1 John 4:1,2

ACTIVITY 2

When you think about the Devil, how do you imagine him?

Draw a picture of what you imagine the Devil to look like according to popular ideas, what you have been told or the drawings you have seen. Then complete the following:

a. Read Ezekiel 28:1-19 and compare your picture with this description that is made of a king where the wickedness of Satan is shown in this king's great evil, and note the differences. Does this comparison with Satan and the king of Tyre resemble the popular idea we have of what Satan is like?

b. What was the desire that seduced this cherub, which led him to fill himself with wickedness? Compare verse 28:1 with 28: 16-17.

c. List the special abilities or qualities with which this angel was endowed.

ACTIVITY 3

Identify with an X in the following list if you have ever participated in any of these divinatory practices.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aioromancy (signs or impressions in the air) | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphology (handwriting) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alectromancy (using a rooster) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydromancy (water) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arithmancy or numerology (numbers) | <input type="checkbox"/> I Ching (uses 8 symbolic trigrams and 64 hexagrams) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleromancy (dice or knuckle bones) | <input type="checkbox"/> Idolomancy (idols/images) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astrology (stars: horoscopes, birth charts) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lithomancy (stones or gems) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartomancy (Tarot cards or other cards) | <input type="checkbox"/> Macharomancy (knives, swords) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceromancy (patterns in melting or dripping wax) | <input type="checkbox"/> Oneiromancy (dreams) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chiromancy or Palmistry (palm reading) | <input type="checkbox"/> Onomancy (names) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crystallomancy (crystal ball) | <input type="checkbox"/> Onychomancy (fingernails) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dactylomancy (rings) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pyromancy (fire) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extispicy (entrails of animals) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasseomancy (plants: tea reading) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gastromancy (guttural sounds: of the stomach) | |

PRAYER

If you have been involved in any of these divinatory practices, say a simple prayer of rejection like this:

Our Lord and Father in heaven, I acknowledge that I have disobeyed your will in trying to know the future by other erroneous paths, instead of seeking your direction. Forgive me, even on those occasions when I did it as a game, without knowing the danger that this represented for my life. I promise you, my Lord Jesus, that I will withdraw from all these practices, I will remove from my home any object or book that spreads these bad habits.

Help me to trust in you, and only in you, to guide me in the future in all the decisions of my life, my family, my work, my church and in any other area.

I confess today before you and my brothers and sisters that only you have a wonderful plan for my life. Help me to walk every day in You.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *Psalm 42*
- *Psalm 31*
- *Proverbs 4*
- *2 Corinthians 4:7-18*
- *Revelation 22:6-21*



Are We Gods?

The New Age Deception

Lesson 4



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Get to know the philosophy behind the New Age Movement.
- Identify the occult practices that are gaining ground in our way of life and which are promoted by New Age Movement; to prevent them from enslaving and destroying our families
- Carry out a self-examination of their lives in order to identify any of these practices in their past or present, and give them up.



Resources

- Illustrations of satanic symbols, tattoos, board games, video games, movies, music bands, among others, related to the occult. (These could be printed or projected).
- Be prepared in advance to be able to explain the new words. You will find help in the section of definition of key terms. Also search in dictionaries, internet or Christian books for information on occultism and New Age.

Introduction

In this lesson, we will examine the principles of New Age thinking in the light of what the Word of God teaches. We will see that in fact this movement has collected and resurrected the ancient religions which are enemies of biblical Christianity, but this time they are presented as the solution to all of humanity's problems. Before we begin to study this movement, we will carry out a self-examination to measure how much we have been influenced by this misleading philosophy.



.....○ **Ask students to complete activity 1.**

Then ask how many answered the questions with a “yes”. This questionnaire helps to discover to what extent there has been influence by New Age beliefs. The more “yeses” marked, the greater the influence.

Thousands of people around the world are buying and reading New Age books, Satanism, encounters with extraterrestrials, mind control, yoga, among many others. New Age philosophy is already part of our culture, and its influence has spread to almost all sciences, this is the most widespread and powerful movement in our world. This is a current that has introduced, as a normal part of daily life, erroneous theories and heresies that contradict the truth revealed in the Word of God. This movement, although showing it appears to be positive with respect to all beliefs and religions, promotes practices of Satanism and the occult.

In this lesson, we will see that some things are not as innocent as they appear to be. We will unmask these strategies that Satan uses to destroy people.

Bible Study

1. ARE WE EQUAL TO GOD?

Actress Shirley MacLaine, one of the followers and promoters of this movement, said in one of her lectures: “... Just remember that you are god and act accordingly.” Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden, “... you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3: 5). The New Age returns to this idea and tells us “we are gods.”

¹. Published in the Los Angeles Times (July 19, 1987) Part VI, page 1. Quoted from Neil T. Anderson and Steve Russo in *The Seduction of Our Children*, Puebla, Mexico: Audio Visuals for Latin America, A.C.: 1994. p. 47.

New Age followers teach the ancient pantheistic belief that everything created is part of God, and that the essence of God is in all things. This includes living things that breathe like animals and plants, but also everything pertaining to the material world, such as stones, water, air, and what comes from their raw material, such as a book, a table, etc. They claim that God is only energy, not a personal God, nor that He can relate to us.

By denying the existence of God, everything that the Bible teaches us as a standard of living, or moral law, loses value for us. Good and evil are no longer established facts but depend on the criteria of each person. So we humans must decide what is good and what is wrong and we should not tell anyone about our actions. Denying the existence of God also denies the principle of truth. Each person, they say, is the owner of what he wants, and that is his own truth.

This idea is so old that it goes back to the origins of history. Many peoples in antiquity had the belief that their kings were gods. Egyptians, Medes, Persians, Romans, Eastern nations, Native peoples of America, among others, treated and paid honor to their kings as if they were divine and superior to normal human beings. The Hebrews lived in the times of these empires, and they were slaves or were dominated by some of them, such as Egypt, Babylon, and finally the Roman Empire. The presumption of these kings to be equal or similar to God was always condemned by the Lord.



Have students complete activity 2.

How different is the attitude of this king compared to that of Christ in Philippians 2: 3-8!

Read this passage and talk about the differences.

Although Jesus Christ is God, and has all the rights, power and glory of God, as Son of God He showed a servant attitude instead being a tyrant. He always sought the good of His creation, instead of seeking honor and glory for himself. He sacrificed His comfort and privileges to save us from sin. He preferred to weep with those who weep, rather than look at them at a distance.

To say that we are gods is to believe in a lie. When we believe in a lie, we are slaves of it. We are struck by the fact that this movement deceives so many people, spreading this illogical belief when we look at it in the light of the Word. Also, it has no scientific basis. What happens is that Satan knows the root of selfishness that is in the human heart, since he sowed it in our first parents. This egoism, when it does not submit to the authority of Christ, leads us to rebel against the laws of God and to make us want to be our own gods. In doing so, we put ourselves in the center of the universe and usurp the place that belongs only to God.

New Age teachers assert that when one comes to believe and desire something with all our force, this will come true, even if it is a lie. This is a statement that goes beyond all logic.

**Ask students did they ever want something “impossible”?
Did just wanting it make it happen?**

We can deceive ourselves by believing that we are gods and that we will be able to become equal to Him, which cannot happen. It is true that God wants us to be like Jesus, to imitate

Him in His love, in His dedication, in His selfless service, in His sincere relationship with God, and in many other things. That is why, since he created us, God made us all in His “image.” But even if we become like Jesus Christ in all these things, there will always be a difference of nature between who God is and what we are.

||| Read together Colossians 1:15-17. |||

This passage states that God is above all creation, whether it is the spiritual world or the visible or material world. Everything has its origin in God, and He maintains it with His power.

The New Age Movement does not speak the truth in wanting to make us believe that we are equal to God. We are not gods; He is the Creator and we the created! God is the center of the universe. Everything in the universe that He has created depends on Him. Our subsistence depends entirely on Him. He has not abandoned His role. He is still in control of all things. Whether people believe it or not, He is God, the only and omnipotent God, Creator of the Universe, the same God who is close to each of us.

2. WHAT IS WRONG WITH BELIEVING IN REINCARNATION?

Reincarnation is an idea taken from the Eastern religions that affirm that the soul of each human being, when dying, leaves its body, returns to the earth and begins to live in another body, as many times as necessary until it becomes one with divinity. New Age says that it does not matter if you have not been good and you do not achieve union with God in this life, after death you will have another opportunity to amend your faults and achieve your goal by ceasing to exist and becoming one with God.

Also, this union with God can be reached in this life when the person manages to detach himself from the physical world and attain “self-divinization”, that is, he becomes a god by his own merits and effort.

Reincarnation denies three biblical teachings:

- a. This life is the only opportunity we have to live and be reconciled to our God. (Hebrews 9:27)
- b. The only way of salvation is through Christ. We cannot save ourselves, and we cannot become “good” by ourselves (Luke 19:12, John 10:19, Romans 5:12-19).
- c. The resurrection of Christ would not make sense if we deny that after this life there is resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:19.

People who believe in reincarnation are trapped in this lie and will come to death without having had the opportunity to know the only way of salvation, which is Jesus Christ. There is no hope in this continuous chain of dying and rebirth as a way out of our struggles!

3. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER? BUT POWER FOR WHAT?

For New Age, the problem of human suffering has nothing to do with the sin of Adam and Eve, but with the state of ignorance in which they fell. For them, human beings are in a

process of gradual ascent to the understanding of their divine nature and their cosmic union to the universe.

The New Age denies that there is a problem of evil in the human heart, or that we need to be cleansed of our evil. They affirm that humans can get out of their problems without the help of God, through knowledge. They believe that humans are able to grow in knowledge until they become one with God, equal to God. In other words ... if they get to know what God knows, they can heal, do miracles ... and then they will no longer need God. This makes God disposable.

New Age says, like the ancient belief of monism, that there is no difference between humans, animals, stones, trees, snails, and God. All nature is in a process of evolution towards something better. How does this evolution come? Through learning that provides each experience in life and helps them achieve their own deification.

Where does knowledge come from?

New Age teachers agree that knowledge is power. They are instructed in this knowledge by “guiding spirits” or invisible teachers who instruct them about the secrets of the cosmos. These spirits are actually demons who make contact with them through various means. In ancient times, this practice was known as Spiritism, but in the modern world it is called “channalization”. This was one of King Saul’s sins.



.....o **Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 15:23.**

Innocent games?

In a recent survey of 1,725 students aged 11-18 from a public school in Southern California, 416 said they had consulted the Ouija board.²

There is a great naiveté in our young people who have been made to believe that the practice of contacting spirits is an innocent and amusing game. There is no such thing as good spirits, but there are thousands of demons waiting for the opportunity to induce people to serve Satan and to engage in occult practices.

The Ouija, ‘Dungeons and dragons’, ‘Vampires’, ‘The masquerade’, etc. are not innocent games. There are many testimonies of how young people related to these games are led to immoral practices such as group sex, satanic rituals, drinking blood and even murder.³

Because of the danger these activities present to humans, God has forbidden them, as we can see in Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

² Authors Neil T. Anderson and Steve Russo publish the results of this survey in their book *The Seduction of Our Children*. Published by Audiovisuals for America. Puebla, Mexico: 1994.

³ “Youth and the Occult”, by Jason Barker at www.watchman.org/articles/occult/youth-and-the-occult

Young people and the occult

Nowadays, television programs aimed at children and young people are plagued with teaching about the occult. Practices of witchcraft, satanism, vampirism, divination, parapsychology, among others, grow in acceptance by young people who find them exciting and exotic. Many young people wear black clothes and black makeup, and carry on their bodies charms and tattoos with satanic and occult symbols. This is their way of showing “rebellion” against their parents’ religion and against social norms. Many adolescents and young people are trapped in these practices.

The Bible tells us the story of King Manasseh who was trapped by these practices in 2 Chronicles 33: 1-6. Nowadays, witchcraft points its campaign towards young people, offering them easy money, passing exams, attracting the opposite sex, among others, in exchange for engaging in magical enchantments.

4. WHAT ARE THE DANGERS THAT THIS MOVEMENT REPRESENTS TO THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY?

Beware of what we read

How many of us read the book “Jonathan Livingston Seagull” by Richard Bach? This book, published in 1976 apparently so innocent, was the first mass publication of a book written by the “automatic writing” method, that is, a satanic spirit that uses a person (medium) to convey a message. 25 million copies of this book were sold.

Then the book “ The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge” by Carlos Castañeda in 1968, who is the greatest exponent of witchcraft. Since that publication, there have been 25,000 titles on New Age themes, and more and more books are published promoting New Age ideas and occult practices, generating millions of dollars in profits.⁴ We must be careful of what we read and what we allow our family to read.

Beware of what we look at

Witchcraft, sorcery, and so on are presented in movies and on TV as innocent and amusing.



Ask the students to complete activity 4.

Horror movies are not so innocent, they are addictive and enslave people to the fear of the occult. Many people lose their normal functioning and become suicidal because of the terror they feel day and night. Let’s not get caught up in the movies that spread this theme. By buying them and watching them, we are encouraging the production of more moves like them.

⁴ Jornal do Brasil, (January 1995, Cited in www.arbil.org).

Beware of what we hear

What is New Age music? It is a repetition of soft sounds and of nature that serve for relaxation and to enter Altered States of Consciousness. These experiences are known as “channeling” and those who practice them often help use drugs to relax the nervous system.

The purpose of these practices is to experience the spiritual world, to travel to the afterlife, to make contact with spirits, to listen to voices, etc. This is a very dangerous practice, since the will of the human being in a trance state is set aside and allows the door to be opened for any evil spirit to enter into that person.

Some of these “channeling” practices are known as:

- Visualization
- Contacting angels
- Alien Abductions
- Astral travel
- Viewing Spirits
- Mystical Experiences
- Transcendental meditation
- Drugs
- Satanic rock music
- Hypnosis
- Yoga
- Regression to past lives

Believers must make a break with everything that relates to these practices.



◦ **End the class with a time of prayer followed by the instructions for activity 5.**



Definition of Key Terms

- **New Age:** “The so-called “New Age Movement” is a strange religion, or complex of religions, that has come into increasing prominence in recent years. This phenomenon is actually a combination of modern science and mathematical physics along with astrology, occultism, religious mysticism and nature worship. Supposedly it is offered as a reaction against the materialisms of Western thought. The New-Age Movement appeal both to man’s religious nature and his intellectual pride, as well as his physical appetites. It is gaining a host of followers all over the world and aims eventually to become the world’s sole religion” (<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-r007.html>).
- **Automatic writing:** Automatic writing or psychography is an alleged psychic ability allowing a person to produce written words without consciously writing. The words are claimed to arise from a subconscious, spiritual or supernatural source.
- **Channeling:** Channeling is a means of communicating with any consciousness that is not in human form by allowing that consciousness to express itself through the channel.
- **Visualization:** It is the attempt to create or manipulate the physical world using the imagination or mental visualization applied to any goal that is desired, or to achieve health, prosperity, motivation, relationships, self-esteem, etc. The practices they often use are: relaxation, yoga, meditation, reiki (speech and music for self-healing) and the use of stones and / or crystals such as quartz. It is called mental alchemy.
- **Contact with angels:** It is the belief that through oracles, letters and the practice of relaxation, induced dreams and occult techniques and visualization, spiritual guides or angels can be contacted.
- **Alien Abductions:** Alleged abductions by extraterrestrial beings is a demonic manipulation of human consciousness, that is, the direct psychic implantation of a set of experiences (brainwashing). Those who have been subjected to this type of experiences relate the events only under hypnosis.
- **Astral travel:** a term used in esotericism to describe a willful out-of-body experience, where a person, through telepathy, assumes the existence of a soul or consciousness called an “astral body” that is separate from the physical body and capable of traveling outside of it throughout the universe.
- **Vision of spirits:** Demonstration of spiritual entities of dead people that transmit messages to living people through a medium in trance.
- **Mystical experiences:** Practices induced by meditation or other means such as drugs, which lead to experiences that go beyond those produced by normal functions of the intellect, will and emotions.

- **Transcendental meditation:** a technique for detaching oneself from anxiety and promoting harmony and self-realization by meditation, repetition of a mantra, and other yogic practices, promulgated by an international organization founded by the Indian guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (c. 1911–2008).
- **Past life regression** is a technique that uses hypnosis to recover what practitioners believe are memories of past lives or incarnations, though others regard them as fantasies or delusions or a type of confabulation (the replacement of a gap in a person’s memory by a falsification that he or she believes to be true).
- **Yoga:** a Hindu theistic philosophy teaching the suppression of all activity of body, mind, and will in order that the self may realize its distinction from them and attain liberation. A system of exercises for attaining bodily or mental control and well-being (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/yoga>).



Summary

The New Age movement promotes occult practices and beliefs contrary to the Word of God, fueling self-idolatry, self-government, self-complacency, and self-sufficiency. It denies that human beings only have the opportunity to be reconciled with God in this life, and the reality that we will all be judged after death. On the contrary, they teach that there are many opportunities to perfect ourselves through reincarnation. There are many dangers faced by people exposed to the influences of this false philosophy disguised as religion. Christian parents should be alert to take care of their sons and daughters, and even take care that they themselves are not confused by these misleading ideas.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Test to measure how much you have been influenced by New Age.

1. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe that ghosts exist and that these are spirits of the dead who contact the living?
2. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe some people have special powers, like moving objects, throwing fire, among others ...?
3. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe that witchcraft, black magic or voodoo are effective in helping to solve people's problems?
4. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe it is important that your inner self should grow through spiritual exercises like mysticism and others?
5. Yes ___ No ___ If someone offered you the chance to communicate with a family member already dead, would you try?
6. Yes ___ No ___ Have you ever had a psychic experience such as "extrasensory perception"?
7. Yes ___ No ___ Do you agree with the police asking for help from psychics to identify suspects, locate bodies and help solve crimes?
8. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe in reincarnation, that is, that a person when he dies returns to live in the body of another person?
9. Yes ___ No ___ Do you believe that extraterrestrial beings have visited this world and are looking for ways to contact the human race?
10. Yes ___ No ___ Do you have in your home crystals, pyramids, amulets, statues, Tibetan bowls, pendants, or other objects to give "positive energy" to your home?

ACTIVITY 2

Questions for inductive study on Isaiah 14:5-15

1. How did this king of Babylon treat people?

2. According to vs. 8, what comment did the trees make? What was implied in this comment?

3. What is the cause of this king's evil, according to vs. 11?

4. According to vv. 12-14, what was the self-deception in which this king had fallen?

5. How far did this king's arrogance take him?

6. Who received the benefits of this king's attitude and behavior?

7. Where did the king's arrogance lead him?

ACTIVITY 3

New Age followers claim that the world "is about to enter a period of peace and harmony that is known as the "Aquarius era." This "new world order," they claim, will bring a solution to all the problems of humanity." What would you respond to this assumption after reading Romans 3:9-26?

ACTIVITY 4

In groups of 2 or 3 people, mention names of movies or TV programs that promote occult practices accepted by the New Age movement:

- Talking to spirits
- Apparitions of the dead
- Extra sensory experiences, such as visions of the future or the past.
- Parapsychological powers such as telepathy.
- Occult or Spiritism games such as the Ouija.
- Satanic worship, witchcraft, sorcery, satanic symbols.

ACTIVITY 5

Read Acts 19: 17-20 and then complete this activity.

a) Have you participated in any of these or similar practices?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visualization | <input type="checkbox"/> Transcendental meditation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contacting Angles | <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alien Abductions | <input type="checkbox"/> Satanic rock music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astral travels | <input type="checkbox"/> Hypnosis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritualistic visions | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mystical experiences | <input type="checkbox"/> Regression to past lives |

b) Do you have relatives or friends involved in these activities?

c) If you have participated, or have relatives or friends involved in these activities, do the following:

- a. Pray for forgiveness of God and renounce these practices.
- b. Pray for your family and friends who are trapped in them to be free in Christ Jesus.
- c. Discard any book, video, DVD, and digital file on your computer or other electronic equipment that disseminates these ideas.
- d. If you have children, talk to them about the dangers of these practices, and talk about how to face this danger with the help of God.

Recommended Reading

- Deuteronomy 18:9-12
- 2 Chronicles 33:1-6
- Isaiah 44:1-20
- John 17
- Ephesians 6:10-20



Selfish Ambition

Lesson 5



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Understand how people, even Christians, can become slaves of greed.
- Identify some wrong ways of thinking about money
- Learn Biblical principles about how to be a faithful steward of their finances.



Resources

- Bibles in several versions or printed copies of the study passages. For example: New International Version and Good News Bible and the Message.
- Have ready the 5 principles that are developed in each point of the lesson and share each principle at the beginning of the section. This can be written on the board, or use Power-point.
- You can also distribute book markers with the list of these principles. If you need help, someone in the church could design them for you.
- You could invite a member of your church who has knowledge about administration of finances to come to the class and help the students make a family budget and answer any questions that the students might have on the subject. You will have to supply a copy of the lesson in advance so that they come prepared and instruct them about the amount of class time they can use.



◦ **Ask a student to read Luke 16:13 and ask the class: Can we serve God faithfully and also love riches? Why is it that serving riches and serving God are in conflict? Why does Jesus tell us we must choose one of them?**

We live in a society in love with material things, where people dream of getting rich overnight. All around us everything is prepared to help us hope for a stroke of luck. In the products we buy, we are invited to call and win prizes. We received tickets in supermarkets to get special things free. They offer us lottery tickets even while we wait at traffic lights. But not everyone dreams of just being rich; some also wish to be famous. For them, television programs like ‘Dancing with the Stars’, ‘Jamaica’s got talent’, ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire’ offer a fast track to fame. For others, the ambition of power and wealth leads them to take a short and dangerous path by engaging in lucrative but illegal activities.

The excessive ambition to acquire possessions presents a serious problem for the life of the Christian. The desire for money and for acquiring things in this life sometimes becomes uncontrollable and can distract us from God’s purpose for our lives. Some try to live a “normal” Christian life and educate their children in the principles of God’s Word, but at the same time they devote all their energies to getting money. From Jesus’ perspective, it is impossible to satisfy the materialistic demands of the world and at the same time fulfill the call of God for our life. Jesus is very clear in this passage: there are two things that are irreconcilable, serving the Lord, and living solely for the accumulation of wealth.



◦ **Have several students read 1 Timothy 6: 6-11 in different versions. Ask the class: How does a person become a slave to money?**

¿Does God ask us to make a vow of poverty? No, there is nothing wrong with being rich, nor is there anything wrong with not being rich. There are people who have been wise and have been able to invest more and have more economic resources than others. But it is one thing to be rich and quite another if that wealth possesses or controls us. Paul’s counsel to Timothy is to take care of falling into the trap of Satan and doing foolish and damaging things that will end up destroying his life. Paul warns his disciple Timothy of the danger of the love of money. The problem lies not in money itself, but in trusting that money will solve all our problems.

In this lesson, we are going to study the sin of greed. We will examine some wrong ways of thinking about money, and learn about five principles of the Word of God to guide us to be good stewards.

 Optional: In this section, you can instruct students to take note of questions they might have to share with your guest speaker at the end of the class. 

[[[Bible Study

PRINCIPLE 1: SEE YOURSELF AS AN ADMINISTRATOR

Are we owners or administrators? The fundamental principle to be free from economic slavery is to understand our position with respect to the things that surround us. We were created with the capacity to administer, not own, the material world around us, as well as other living creatures.



.....o **Ask a student to read Psalm 8: 1-8.**

King David reveals the great truth that God created the universe and entrusted us with everything in it as His administrators. Each of us has been assigned a number of years of life and a quantity of goods to administer. The big difference between the owner and the manager is that the owner knows that his possessions belong to him, while the steward knows that the possessions are not his.

A couple was economically burdened by many debts, especially since every month they had to pay the mortgage on their new home. The husband realized that they could sell their expensive house, buy a smaller one, and later when they had saved money, they could buy a more comfortable house. When he told this idea to his wife, she said: “No, not the house; anything but the house!

[[[Ask the class: Who thinks like the owner and who thinks like the administrator in this example?]]]

The wife was attached to the house emotionally. This prevented her from having a complete and realistic view of the situation. She felt that the house was theirs, when in fact, until they finished paying the mortgage; the house belonged to the bank. To be good managers, we need to get emotionally detached from things.



.....o **Invite students to begin to detach themselves emotionally from things as they complete activity 1.**

PRINCIPLE 2: LEARN TO LIVE IN CONTENTMENT

Greed leads us to live in discontent or dissatisfaction. Learning to live happily with what we have and enjoy life is the second important principle with regard to satisfactorily managing our finances. To be content is to be happy and grateful for what one has. A grateful heart to God and to others is indispensable if we are going to be content. Contentment is not the same as complacency. Being satisfied with what we have does not mean that we do not make plans for the future or that we stop working to achieve our dreams.

In the same day, two people were asking for advice from a Christian finance counselor. They wanted to know how to get out of the situation in which they had been living. They complained that the money they earned was not enough for their expenses. The first was a lawyer who made \$600 a month and the second was a secretary making \$300 a month. Both had the same problem, they were in debt because they were not satisfied with their standard of living. The lawyer had bought a larger house and a new car and the employee had bought all the new electronic gadgets for his house and had given the old ones to a friend.

People all over the world believe that having more money will make them happier, and they dream of having a lifestyle like the millionaires they see on television. However, if we were to ask millionaires if money has made them happier, how would they respond? A survey conducted in the United States revealed that citizens were much happier half a century ago than now, but the curious thing is that they now consume twice as much in material goods as 50 years ago!

Another aspect that we must take into account is that many of us do not live in a society of abundance like some countries do. Despite general improvements in living standards, poverty rates average 30 percent or more in many of the countries of our region. There is a real need in the world to share more equality in the distribution of goods so that the larger part does not stay with the very wealthy.

The truth we want to emphasize is that goods and money cannot meet our emotional and spiritual needs, such as the need for love, joy, and peace. Money can buy a house but cannot build a family. Money can pay for a good school, but cannot buy the love of the children. It is possible to buy a diamond ring, but you cannot guarantee the happiness of your husband or wife. Many believe that it is poverty that destroys homes, but in reality it is bad economic decisions and debt accumulation that causes marriage relationship to weaken in the face of economic pressure.



.....◦ **Ask a student to read Luke 12:15 then ask the class... If an abundant life does not consist of accumulation of goods, what does it consist of?**

Jesus knew how easily we forget how to “live” by spending our lives looking for ways to make more money or acquiring superficial things, instead of looking for those things that have an incalculable and eternal value. Learning to live, in Christian terms, means discovering what our purpose in life is, so that we can use the gifts and special abilities that God has given to each of us to accomplish that. To live a life in abundance is to learn to enjoy life by serving others, loving our family, helping the fallen to get up again, worshiping God for the beauty that His creation gives us every day, etc.

We must be careful not to believe in the lies spread by the advertising companies as well as prosperity evangelists. Deciding to live every day grateful for what we have is an attitude that will change our lives and give us the freedom to be happy and live in peace.



.....◦ **Have students complete activity 2**

PRINCIPLE 3: LEARN TO PERSEVERE IN HONESTY

The book of Proverbs tells us about the danger of wanting to get rich quickly.



.....○ **Have several students read the following verses:
Proverbs 20:21; 21:5; 28:20 y 28:22.**

Let's look at some dangerous ways that people try to accumulate money in a short time and that have led many to poverty and even prison:

- *High-risk economic adventures, where everything that the family has it put into financial danger.*
- *Gaining profits through unjust means. For example, lending money to others with high interest, taking advantage of the needs of the poor (Proverbs 28: 8), wanting to earn more than a fair price for sales or services, paying employees less or denying them the benefits of the law (Ephesians 6: 9).*
- *Obtaining profits through dishonest or illegal actions. In the business world it is often more important to make money than to tell the truth. Society has invented words to describe some maneuvers such as: speculation, evasion, fraud, scam, embezzlement, buying on the Black Market, "passing money under the table", "financial hooks", "telling white lies "... among other things.*

In almost all countries there are practices that may not be entirely legal, but they are so common that people come to accept them as something incorrigible in culture. But Christians do not live under human law but under the law of God. Christians should not justify unjust actions by saying that "everybody does it." Let us remember that Jesus prayed for the Christians who live in this world, so that we may be kept from doing all kinds of evil (John 17:15). The children of God are called to live a life of truth, justice and holiness. Christ's disciples do not deceive others with false weights, they do not lie about the quality of what they manufacture or sell, they do not pass money under the table to win a sale, and they pay the correct amount of taxes. Christians must stand out in the midst of a corrupt world for their honesty, even if that conduct leads them to gain less in the eyes of the world.

Patience and perseverance is the third key to financial freedom. To be patient is not to surrender and to sit and wait for a miracle without doing anything, but it is patience that moves forward. Patience in finance is something that is not very common in our context. On the contrary, people buy thinking that they will not have another chance if they wait. In our era of globalization, those who make better profits are those who manage their finances for the long run.



.....○ **Have students complete Activity 3**

PRINCIPLE 4: SAVE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

"Enjoy it today and pay for it tomorrow!" Sound familiar? If the seller told us the truth, the ad would say something like this: "Enjoy today and be my slave tomorrow!" People who become rich at the expense of those who fall into these advertising campaigns have made us believe that it is only by spending more than we earn that we can we live happily. Is this really true? No, because the truth is that we can never save by spending. Both are contradictory and opposites.

Having debts beyond our income, spending or risking money that is not ours, leads us to be slaves of debt. Proverbs 22: 7 says “...*the borrower is slave to the lender.*” Around us everyone is prepared to buy today and pay later: loans, lenders, credit cards, home loan, vacation loans, study finance, auto purchase credit. All this can lead people to a life of slavery, living and working solely to pay their debts off.

The same happens with the person who lives trapped by addictions leading to their loss of everything. Gluttony, alcoholism, addiction to sex, gambling, among others, will only lead to a life of economic slavery and poverty.

Those who have problems with their budget are spending more than they ought to. To avoid this, we need to develop resistance to purchasing; avoid buying things that we do not really need and for which we do not have money. One must learn to differentiate a real need from a desire, or an impulse (as we saw in 1 Timothy 6:6-11). The materialistic way of life that surrounds us pushes us to buy things without first evaluating if we really need them. It is the impulse to buy that controls us, and we become slaves of consumerism.

Items that are not needs should only be purchased when we have extra money. The other things we can call “luxuries” because we can do without them. Examples of these luxuries can be: vacations abroad, a new television, brand clothing, dinner in a restaurant, among others. But medicines, payment of services, payment of taxes, and payment of debts, among others are not luxury items.

King Solomon, one of the richest men in biblical history, told his friends to be thrifty like ants, who work in the summer months to have food in the winter. To save you have to plan, and for this we must start by making a list of our needs. Then we must review and eliminate everything that we will not be using immediately.



.....○ **Have students complete Activity 4**

PRINCIPLE 5: GIVE EVERYTHING YOU CAN

The story is told of an ambitious man who said to himself: “I will treasure all the riches I can.” And he worked for that. All the energies of his life were spent accumulating more money and possessions. The last will of this man when he died was that they bury him with all his money inside the coffin, since he wanted to take all his money with him. The day came and he died. As established in his testament, his butler, who had always been by his side, made arrangements for his burial, and had the responsibility of putting all the wealth of his deceased chief into the coffin. For this he used the power that his employer had granted him over all his accounts and assets. When the time came, the butler made a check in the name of the deceased and put it in the coffin. In the end it was the butler who was left with all the wealth that this man had accumulated in his frantic life.

Greed is a form of materialism. Greed is a disorderly appetite for accumulating wealth, and it takes away peace and causes suffering. The greedy person has an incorrect view of himself, the value of his life and that of others. The Bible teaches us that we cannot put an economic value on human life. Our value as individuals is that we are God’s creation, and have been given the ability to relate to Him, to serve Him, and to live eternally for Him and with Him. If we value ourselves and others for what they have, we have lost God’s

perspective. A person who makes decisions with an incorrect view of the value of human life will bring suffering and unhappiness to himself and to everyone around him.

Jesus warned of these dangers in Luke 12:15: “...*Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist of an abundance of possessions.*” The love of money leads to greed, which is opposed to the generosity that the children of God should practice.

In Matthew 6:19-21, there is a direct command of Jesus to his disciples: “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” To what is our life anchored? Where is our security deposited? The Lord warns us about anchoring our life to anything fleeting or transitory, rather than anchoring it on Jesus Christ the eternal rock.

God wants us to develop the quality of generosity in our character. Generosity is born in a satisfied and grateful heart. A heart where the Spirit of God’s love lives continually seeks ways to express that love to others. This generosity is not the same as that of the world where even non-believers give alms to the poor, give money for charity, and even contribute voluntary work for social welfare. But the Christian’s commitment to give goes far beyond this.

When the Bible speaks of giving, it refers to much more than the contribution of money. God expects us to give in the same measure that Christ gave Himself for our sake (Ephesians 5: 2). It is giving everything we have, but also everything we are; all our time, our abilities, our dreams and ambitions.

The life of the Christian, like that of our Lord, must be a life of complete and continuous surrender. The Christ’s disciples must give thanks for every opportunity they have to contribute to the work of God. There are at least three areas in which the Christian has the privilege of giving:

Give to your family. Christian parents have a responsibility to take good care of their children, to educate them in the ways of God, and to prepare them as much as they can to be useful people in life. A Christian father or mother who is miserly with his family is not a good example for his neighbors, or for his own children. There are people who show generosity toward the needy and give offerings in church, but are miserly with their own family.

It is important to teach your children these things:

- a. The value of money: give them some pocket money so that they can learn to manage it according to their age, and as they grow up, encourage them to earn their own money and manage it wisely.
- b. To give tithes and offerings to the church, as well as saving up to buy their own things.
- c. To manage a fixed income instead of letting them get accustomed to money coming from an inexhaustible source.
- d. To earn their own money. An evangelical pastor encouraged his children to be economically independent in an unusual way. When they graduated from high school, they no longer received pocket money for their personal expenses. These children had to look for work, in order to avoid being “maintained”.

Give for the work of the church. Christian churches are supported by the tithes, offerings and contributions of the believers. Giving to the work of God is a responsibility and a beautiful privilege that we assume as God's people. Some people make the mistake of giving God what they have left over. Many could put a \$10 dollar bill in the offering, but instead only place a few coins of little value. But the Bible teaches us to give just as we receive from God (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).



○ **Ask students to complete Activity 5**

Giving to the Needy: The Bible teaches us to share with those in need, both the poor around us and to our brothers and sisters in the church who are going through economic difficulties (Ephesians 4:28).

Sometimes we are given the opportunity to help a friend, and we need to remember that the Word of God recommends that we do so with prudence.

||| Ask the class: Do you know anyone who has served as a guarantor of a loan for a friend or stranger and had to assume the debt because the other did not pay? Do you know someone who lent money to a "friend" and lost it? |||



○ **Ask a student to read Proverbs 17:18 and then ask the class:
What will you do the next time a friend or stranger
asks you to go serve as a guarantor?**

The Bible does not tell us to be greedy, or to deny aid to a friend. But it is not wise to lend money that has been put aside to meet our families' needs. A good rule of thumb is: "Never lend money to a friend, because it is better to give the money than to lose a friend because of money lent".



○ **If there are brothers or sisters interested in knowing how to make a budget, encourage the class to do Activity 6, and ask the "invited expert" to respond to the classes' questions. Or you can use an additional class to discuss this topic further and help students create their family financial plan.**

||| End the class by reviewing the five principles by reading the list out loud together. |||



Definition of Key Terms

- **Consumerism:** Exaggerated tendency toward the consumption or acquisition of goods.
- **Materialism:** a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
- **Budget:** an estimate of income and expenditure for a set period of time. In the case of married couples, it is very important to do so together. Making a budget will help visualize how much is spent and on what. It helps keep costs down and to save for the future.
- **Greed:** intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food.
- **A miser** is a person who is reluctant to spend, sometimes to the point of forgoing even basic comforts and some necessities, in order to hoard money or other possessions.



Summary

Greed or selfish ambition is the cause of much suffering and evil in this world, and is the opposite of the generous attitude Jesus asks of his disciples. In order that we may not be swept away by the consumerist currents of the world around us, the Bible challenges us to build our economic life based on five healthy principles: seeing ourselves as administrators, learning to live in contentment, learning to persevere, saving everything that we can, and sharing/giving everything we can.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Below complete the chart by listing what you have in each of the rooms of your house. Husbands and wives can work on this activity together.

For example, in the kitchen: table, chairs, refrigerator, stove, cupboards, food. As you complete each room, pray a prayer of surrender, for the belongings of that room, to the Lord

Kitchen	Bedrooms	Living Room	Dining Room	Garage/ Storage Room	Bathrooms	Patio/ Green Spaces

ACTIVITY 2

1. According to the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:12-13, what is the key to living contentedly?

2. Look at this list of “Things To Do This Week That Will Make My Life Abundant,” made by a Christian father and then write your own list.

- I will play with my children in the back yard.
- I will visit my mother and read the Bible to her and pray with her.
- I will help paint the house for Peter, my neighbor, who is 87 years old.
- I will take that bag of clothes we no longer use to give to the needy.
- I will surprise my wife with a romantic dinner at home

My list of things I will do this week:

3. Who is responsible for the decision to be happy with where I am economically today and with the resources that I have at this moment in my life?

ACTIVITY 3

What advice would you give? Read the following examples and solve the problems that arise.

The best money managers make smart purchases. For example: you can buy a new car, but you know that the moment you take it out of the sales agency your vehicle has already lost value. If you sell it the following month you will have to subtract a good percentage from the value. Now, generally if you buy the same car, with a couple years of use, but in good condition, you will save a lot of money.

Let's look at another example: you can buy a refrigerator on credit or cash. To buy it on credit, you do not pay anything at first, but during the first year you will pay installments of \$60 dollars per month. In total, you will have paid \$720 at the end of the year. By paying cash, the refrigerator

costs \$400, and they might also give you a discount of 5 percent if you pay in cash, making the total \$380. If you wait and save \$60 each month, in less than seven months you can buy it and you will have saved \$340!

Another useful practice is to be selective in what you buy. That is, whenever you can, make sure you are buying something of quality and at the best price. This same principle can apply to almost anything you need. The one that saves the most is the smart buyer.

Problem 1

I'm about to go get some pants. In a store, I saw some very good quality ones that cost \$20. But a friend told me about an offer at the mall for pants that are an off brand (the same ones I bought last year and that broke after two months), But the offer is to buy one (\$15) and get the second at half price (\$7.50). What would a smart shopper do?

Problem 2

I am looking to buy a car and the car dealer has offered me a 2010 model car. If I buy it for cash I can get it for \$3,500. Although I have almost all the money in cash, I could use the money I've saved for something else and pay for the car in installments over the next five years. The down payment is \$1000 and then I will have to make payments of \$100 dollars a month. How much will I be paying in total? (To solve it multiply \$100 by 60 months and add the \$1,000 of the down payment.) What would you do if you were in his place?

ACTIVITY 4

Identify basic Needs with a letter "N" and Wants with a letter "W".

The following exercise will help you to differentiate between basic needs and things you want that are not basic needs.

1. Food	11. Medicine	21. Toys
2. Shirt/Blouse	12. Car	22. Laundry Soap
3. Shoes	13. House (you own)	23. Make-up
4. Steak	14. House to Rent	24. Perfume
5. Ice-Cream	15. Birthday Cake	25. Pets
6. Holidays	16. Christmas Gifts	26. Soda
7. Television	17. Transportation	27. New Cell Phone
8. Computer	18. Eating out	28. School Supplies
9. Radio	19. Trip to the Beach	29. Cable TV
10. Chocolates	20. Tools	30. Gym Membership

Note: Some of these things may be needed or wanted depending on what it will be used for, for example, a computer is indispensable for certain jobs or studies, but it is not necessary if it is only used for entertainment. The same thing goes for TV and radio. A home is indispensable, but you don't necessarily have to own a home. Holidays are necessary, but we do not always need expensive trips. Christmas gifts are a tradition in many families as a way to show affection, but they are not indispensable because that is not the only way to tell others how much you love them. The idea of this exercise is not to deprive us of what we want, but to limit our wants to measure up to our economic possibilities so we do not acquire unnecessary debts.

ACTIVITY 5

Read this article and write down your opinion below. Then share your observations with the class.

“In Latin America and the Caribbean, Christians need to grow in generosity and assume our responsibility for the extension of the kingdom of God in this world. For many years, we have been blessed with donations from brothers and sisters from other countries for the purchase of property and for sustaining our leadership.

Years ago, a student at the Seminary in Buenos Aires, asked her history teacher, missionary Norman Howerton: ‘Where the people who gave the offerings for the construction of the first churches in Argentina rich people of the United States?’ He replied: ‘No, this is a wrong concept that people here have. When these offerings were collected, it was during a time of economic recession in my country (years 1929-1939) and the people had no work. I remember working all day in the field, picking cotton for a dollar, and each Nazarene offered a day’s pay for missions. It was not easy to give that money, but people did it out of love.’

Many Christians do not come from rich families; on the contrary, our origins go back to the early church which was distinguished by its generosity (Acts 2: 44-45). The history of the churches of holiness and our denomination is full of examples of people who gave with sacrifice and gave themselves generously to spread the kingdom of God. To give sacrificially is to give beyond what we can give or to voluntarily deprive ourselves of something to give this value to the work of God (2 Corinthians 8: 3).

Giving generously is part of our identity and is one of the greatest privileges that life gives us. God places in us the desire and the measure in which we should give, when we have a willing heart.”

What do you think about this and what can you do about it?

ACTIVITY 6

Model to help you create a family budget and control it.

Total Income	
Estimated Expenses	Amount allocated from total income
Tithes and offerings (10% or more)	
Housing (rent, mortgage, taxes, electricity, services, cable, internet, etc.)	
Transportation (auto, taxes, gasoline, maintenance, bus)	
Food and cleaning	
Debts (cards, loans)	
Medical expenses (dentist, doctor, medicine, insurance fee, etc.)	
Clothing	
Savings (10% or more)	
Education (books, tuition, fees, supplies, uniforms)	
Insurance (car, house, life or other)	
Miscellaneous expenses (magazines, hair cuts, gifts, laundry, others)	
Recreation (restaurants, vacations, trips and others)	
Unforeseen items	
Total expenses (cannot exceed Total Income above):	

RECOMMENDED READING

- Mark 12:41-44
- 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
- James 1:9-11



Don't Let Your Feelings Manipulate You

Lesson 6



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Get to know the place feelings and emotions play in our lives, according to our Creator's design.
- Understand the importance of admitting feelings and emotions rather than suppressing or expressing them badly.
- Identify wounds of the past in order that they might be healed, as well as the process of dealing with the negative feelings those wounds bring up.
- Decide not to let feelings from the past or the present hinder their spiritual growth.



Resources

- Cartoons, photos or audiovisuals (PowerPoint or other) that show people expressing different emotions.

Introduction



- Show audiovisual resources and complete activity 1.

||| Read each statement of activity 1 and ask the students to take turns reading their answers aloud. The answers will be something like this: I got angry when . . . , I wanted to run away when . . . , I made a gesture of disgust when . . . , I blamed my husband when . . . Then ask: What thoughts were going through your mind while experiencing these feelings? Allow them to express their feelings, the good ones as well as the bad ones, but without judging themselves about whether those feelings were right or wrong, or what they should have felt. **|||**

||| Then, pray asking God to help you all to recognize the relationship between your thoughts and feelings. **|||**

Bible Study

1. UNCONTROLLED FEELINGS LEAD US TO SIN



- Have two students read Ephesians 4:26,27 and 1 Peter 5:7,8.

In these two passages, we are warned about how Satan tries to take advantage of our feelings and emotions when we become angry or anxious, leading us to make wrong decisions in our minds and to commit sin.

Where do feelings originate from? Feelings are the product of our thoughts. If our thoughts are not centered on what is right, on what is true, they will generate negative feelings and emotions. Sometimes we believe that feelings are created from outside of us, and that we simply react to what is happening around us or what other people do. If we think this way, we will come to the conclusion that emotional overflow is something that cannot be contained, so thus we can do nothing to stop anger, wrath, rudeness, and other manifestations. But this is not true. What is inside, in our minds, our memories, how we think, etc. will affect our feelings.

It is God who determines who we are, and not the events that surround our lives. God has given us the power to decide how we are going to interpret these events and how we are going to handle the pressures that life puts us through. If we say: “that person made me angry!”, what we are really saying is: “I have no control over the thoughts that generate these

feelings and guide my reactions!” We cannot control our feelings and emotions, but we *can* control our thoughts, and how we respond to those feelings and emotions. That is why it is so important to fill our minds with the truth revealed in the Word of God. If we learn to see life and people as God sees them, we can respond to circumstances with the same maturity that Jesus did.

If our beliefs are not based on truth, then there is a danger that our feelings will react in a negative way. The only source of truth about our lives and all that surrounds us is God. That is why we are encouraged to believe the truth, to think about the truth and to live in the truth (John 13:17). When we prefer to believe our own thoughts instead of believing in God, our behavior will be far from the will of God. It is very important that we learn to recognize our feelings and emotions; if not, these same feelings may lead us to do things that we will have to repent of.

Feelings have been given to us by God to play an essential role in our lives. They are the indicators that show us what is happening in our inner being, that is, in our soul. For example, we have indicators that tell us what happens in our bodies. When we feel acute pain, we go to the doctor. When we feel exhausted, we rest, when we feel thirsty, we drink, etc.

Feelings and emotions play the same role but tell us about our heart. When we feel love, we show it, we embrace, we say nice things, and we look at each other with affection. When we feel joy, we smile, we sing, we praise. When we feel sorry, we cry, we put on a sad face or we feel weak. When we get angry, we scream or stop talking, we slam the door or we isolate ourselves in our room.

Feelings are the traffic lights that tell us how our emotional health is. In the same way that we respond to physical signals, we have to learn to respond to emotional signals.

2. HOW DO WE RESPOND TO FEELINGS?

There are three ways people respond to feelings: deny them, express them uncontrollably, or recognize them and seek help. Let’s look at each one of them.

The conscious denial of feelings



○ Have two volunteers read Psalms 32:3-6 and Psalms 39:1-2.

The Psalms are prayers and songs in which people express their feelings before God. In these two Psalms, the author speaks of his own personal experience of the pain that has caused him to try to suppress or hide his emotions.

Suppressing feelings completely is so harmful that it makes people sick. It is an incorrect response that damages the person and also their relationship with God and with other people.

Feelings that are bottled up make the person become like a pressure cooker that is ready to explode at any time. They may explode internally and in private or explode in public. To deny feelings their expression can lead to mental illness, murder and suicide.

The uncontrolled expression

Read James 1:19-20.

In this case, the apostle warns us of the other extreme, of giving free rein and expressing our feelings indiscriminately. This way of dealing with emotions is just as harmful as the previous one. Expressing feelings can lead to pain; the way we express them often damages other people. After bursting out, the person feels that he or she has taken the pressure off, but in the process, they may have hurt their children, spouse, friends or siblings.

To face emotions realistically

The healthiest option is to be honest with ourselves and with God first about what we are feeling. For this we must recognize that feelings have been given to us by God, and are part of His image carved in us. There are people who think that they should only pray when they are happy and grateful. But this is not what we see in the examples of the Bible.

Read Psalms 109:1-13, 26, 30.

The best place where we can express our feelings is in front of our Creator, in the intimacy of our communion with Him. God loves us unconditionally. With Him, we can be who we really are and we can express what we think. Nothing that we confess to Him about our feelings will change His love for us. God will not be surprised by anything we say. He really is pleased when we are sincere and transparent with Him.

Afterwards, we may feel the need to return to God and ask His forgiveness for that prayer we said when we were in the moment of anguish and pressure. God is pleased that we do this, because He knows that it is in this process of opening our heart and expressing our feelings that the Holy Spirit can produce healing in our soul and heart.

If when we are angry and frustrated, we often pray pretending that nothing has happened. We are lying to God and being hypocrites. This was the accusation Jesus made to the Pharisees. God does not listen to those prayers. With God, if you are not sincere, you are not holy. He wants us to speak the truth at all times.

When we release our burden before God and allow our emotions to heal, we prevent others from being harmed.

3. HOW TO DEAL WITH THE EMOTIONAL BURDENS OF THE PAST?

Our growth in holiness depends also on dealing with emotions in a realistic way, and this includes dealing with the emotional wounds of the past. All of us have a history of painful experiences in our life that have left us wounded and with emotional scars.

Examples of bitter experiences could be:

- Suffering physical or emotional abuse at the hands of a relative.
- Having been betrayed by a friend.

- Suffering an accident or illness that incapacitated us in some way.
- To have been rejected or deprived of love and affection.
- The death of a loved one.
- A divorce.
- To have been terrified of something.

These or other painful experiences leave the person with an “emotional load,” and are scars that are carried inside.



○ **Have students look at the lines of their hands.**
Then explain, “In the same way that these lines cannot be erased, the emotional wounds that remain inside you are the scars that life has left you.”

These feelings are activated when something happens in the present that our mind associates with them. An example would be if in the past you had an authoritarian and insensitive boss who was called Peter, and now 20 years later in another job you are introduced to the new boss also called Peter. Your reaction will probably be different than if his name was Joe, since Joe was your best friend from childhood of whom you have very grateful memories. Our emotional responses, our reactions, are based on our life story and the feelings that have been engraved from our past. It may be that these emotions are imperceptible, but they activate when we hear or see something that brings to our minds this unpleasant experience.

What should we do when this happens? To avoid allowing the past to dominate our present, we must learn to live with these feelings that we have. The first step when these feelings emerge or become active is to focus on the present, and distinguish between the feelings of the present and the painful experience of the past. The emotions of the past are called primary feelings. It is important to stop for a few moments to reflect and evaluate these feelings in light of the truth. In this way, we can allow our mind to control our feelings, rather than let these primary feelings erode our life. When these primary feelings become manageable in our minds, they are called secondary feelings.



○ **Let’s see some examples in activity 2.**
Read each statement aloud and ask the students to suggest ideas of how we can assess the issue and what the secondary emotion should be. In the Activity Sheet there are suggestions, but allow them to complete these ideas themselves.

[[[Maybe some students will want to tell of an experience which would illustrate this point. Encourage the class to deal with the feelings and emotions of the past in this way, and as they do this they will mature more and more in Christian holiness.]]]

4. HOW TO DEAL WITH PAST EXPERIENCES?

In the previous point, we talked about how to deal with emotional loads. Now we will talk about something even more difficult, that is how to deal with the painful memories of our personal history.

We all have people or experiences that have negatively influenced our lives. There are no magic recipes that can erase from our memory these bitter episodes, but there is good news

for all of us, and it is what 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”*

What the apostle Paul says here is that in Christ, we have been freed from our past. This means that the Spirit of God can heal us of our wounds if we give them to Him. This will not happen instantly. Just as the wounds in our bodies need time to heal, our emotions will gradually heal as well.

However, for this to happen we have to do something: we have to forgive. Forgiveness is the only thing that can free us from our past, and is the key to initiating the healing process. We will talk more about forgiveness in the next lesson.



..... ◦ **Complete Activity 3.**

||| End the class with a prayer putting our past in the hands of God, and asking for healing for those wounds that have left traces in our lives. Ask for God’s help to deal properly with the emotional load of the past during this week. |||



Definition of Key Terms

- **Feelings and emotions:** Feelings are sparked by emotions and colored by the thoughts, memories, and images that have become subconsciously linked with that particular emotion. Emotions play out in the theater of the body. Feelings play out in the theater of the mind. <http://www.thebestbrainpossible.com/whats-the-difference-between-feelings-and-emotions/>.
- **Anger** is an emotion that expresses a strong sense of dislike for something or someone.
- **Emotional Wounds:** An emotional wound is a trauma caused by a bad experience of the past. This experience may be something that happened at one time (such as an accident) or an experience that has been repeated for a long time (such as mistreatment). Emotional wounds leave deep scars on the emotions and affect a person's behavior.



Summary

Feelings and emotions are not bad. They have been given to us by our God, and through them we can know what happens in our inner world, which is our innermost feelings, our heart. It is very important to learn to recognize our feelings and respond to them with the mind of Christ. It is not good to suppress them, nor is it good to let them flow in an uncontrolled way. Mature Christians learn to face their feelings realistically, opening their heart to God (our closest friend), and allowing their emotional charge to flow away. It is in this intimate dialogue where the healing of the wounds of the past takes place. This does not happen from one day to another but as a result of a process of restoration. Bad experiences of the past must be recognized and healed, so that they do not negatively interfere with our relationships in the present.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

How do you feel in cases like these?

- You are changing the tire of your car on a road, and the tool you need most is broken.
- You are cooking and you forget to turn down the gas, so the food burns.
- You are distracted while driving and you almost hit the car in front of you that stopped suddenly.
- You come home from work tired and you find that your neighbor's dog has pooped on your path for the fifth time this week, and although you have asked your neighbor time and time again to clean it, they don't do anything about it.
- You are driving and the car behind you honks continually for you to hurry.
- You are sitting comfortably watching your favorite TV show and your wife asks you to take out the trash.
- You discover your teenager watching pornography online.
- You discover that your daughter is going out with the "vagrant" of the neighborhood, who does not go to church and who is not known to have a job.
- Your boss yells at you because you are not doing the job as well as he expects of you.
- A co-worker accuses you of something that you didn't do.

ACTIVITY 2

How to put the emotions of the past under control?

First case: You are cooking and you forget to turn down the gas, so the food burns.

- **Fact of the past:** Your mother and father told you: "you are useless! You're no good! When are you going to do something right?"
- **Primary feeling:** Frustration, hatred
- **Mental assessment:** "I am no longer a child. The fact that I make a mistake or forget shows that I am human and my mind is not perfect. This food can be remade or replaced by another dish".
- **Secondary feeling:** Increase self-acceptance and compassion (self-esteem), and reduce anger.

Second case: You discover that your daughter is going out with the "vagrant" of the neighborhood, who does not go to church and who is not known to have a job.

- **Fact of the past:** You were married to a non-Christian young man who cheated on you and was cruel to you.
- **Primary feeling:** anxiety, despair.
- **Mental assessment:** My daughter is the Lord's. I have given her to Him. Although she is going out with this boy, that does not mean that he will make her suffer as I suffered. I will

continue to be my daughter's friend. I will continue to give her my love. I will pray for her and for this young man, and if God gives me the opportunity, I will be able to advise her if she has any need in the future.

- **Secondary feeling:** Concern without despair and a peaceful heart.

Third case: A co-worker accuses you of something that you didn't do.

- **Fact of the past:** Your father always pressured you to defend yourself against the attacks of your comrades who beat you in the schoolyard.
- **Primary feeling:** rage, revenge.
- **Mental assessment:** God knows the truth of this situation. I trust that He will bring to light the truth of this matter. It is not for me to take revenge on my enemies.
- **Secondary feeling:** rage diminishes and confidence in God increases.

ACTIVITY 3

Evaluation of my feelings

a. What is the most important thing for my life that I learned in this lesson?

b. In what way do I need God's help to deal with my feelings and emotions this week?

c. What are the frequent ways in which I manifest that emotional load that I bring from my past?

d. A painful experience of my past that I need to deal with is...

RECOMMENDED READING:

- 1 Samuel 1:1-28
- Psalms 119:25-32
- Psalms 62
- Psalms 143
- Psalms 69



The Polluting Effects of the Lack of Forgiveness

Lesson 7



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Understand that unforgiveness leads to a life of bitterness.
- Be aware that bitterness can result in a chain of sins.
- Confess any bitterness in their lives.
- Pray to be forgiven and forgive those who have offended and hurt them.
- Decide not to accumulate more resentment and bitterness in their lives.



Resources

- Newspaper clippings showing articles about lack of forgiveness, passions, revenge, etc. If you do not have enough for all students, you can put them together in groups.

Introduction

Let's begin our Bible study by reflecting on a fable that is not from the Bible, but which will help us to understand better the problem of resistance to forgiveness.



.....○ **Have students complete Activity 1.**

||| As students read the fable, write the following list of the polluting effects of the lack of forgiveness on the board. |||

Polluting Effects of the Lack of Forgiveness

- Broken relationships
- People with injured hearts
- Bitterness
- Effects on health
- Wounded pride
- Shame
- Hatred
- Rebellion
- Isolation
- Ingratitude
- Lack of desire to continue living
- Pain

||| When the students have finished reading, ask the class: Which of the polluting effects of the lack of forgiveness listed on the board can be seen in this fable? |||



.....○ **Share the newspaper cuttings. Have students complete activity 2.**

We live in a society where forgiveness is often not practiced. Revenge, hatred, and bitterness have taken hold of people's hearts, and just as a contagious disease, it often passes from parents to children, from grandparents to grandchildren and continues to destroy people's lives.

In this lesson and the next, we are going to talk about the problem of resistance to forgiveness when we are hurt, and how to ask for forgiveness when we have done harm. Let's see the way out that the Bible offers us to end this plague in our life.

[[[Bible Study

1. FORGIVENESS IS THE LIFESTYLE OF THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

[[[Read together Matthew 6:12 and 13.]]]

In this model prayer that the Lord left us, we find that the condition that God has for forgiving us is that we must also forgive those who offend and hurt us. Jesus knew that one of the most frequent temptations for the Christian is to resist forgiveness.

In this prayer, we see that forgiving is not an option, but a condition of belonging to the family of God. It's not something we can leave for tomorrow, next week, or next year. To refuse to forgive immediately is sin. It is to let oneself be carried away by evil, instead of doing good.

If we keep things in our hearts against our brothers or sisters, we are not worthy of being a disciple of Christ, not because God excludes us, but because we are not demonstrating that Jesus is king of our lives. Where there is no forgiveness, there is hatred, rancor, revenge, resentment and other fruits of selfishness. But when we forgive, we allow the power and glory of God to flow through our lives and to touch the lives of others. The glory of Jesus Christ was manifested on the cross of Calvary, not because Jesus called an army of angels and took revenge on his torturers, but when he uttered the words: "Father, forgive them ..." (Luke 23:34).

Where does bitterness come from? Bitterness arises from the resistance to forgive.

Forgiveness is a decision. When we are wounded and refuse to forgive, instead of healing, the wound produces bitterness.

An emotional wound can occur when someone does us some harm or damages us with words or actions, which causes us to have a bad experience. These can be: verbal abuse, physical violence, deception, robbery, gossip, rebellion, inattention, among others. When there is no forgiveness, this wound festers and fills us with bitterness. Bitterness produces a very deep pain. Just as a wound in the flesh becomes infected when it does not heal, an emotional wound that does not heal leads to bitterness.

In other cases, the offense may come from something that we perceive or assume to be an offense, whether the other person is aware or not that we have been hurt.



Complete Activity 3

Some people are mistaken by thinking that over time, offenses are forgotten and bitterness has gone. On the contrary, everything that is not immediately forgiven grows and multiplies like a bad seed, which contaminates all of life until good growth is paralyzed. As Winkie Pratney writes: "In bitterness you focus on what that "horrible person" has done to you. You make a filing cabinet with their name on it saying, "Rotten Things This Person

Has Done To Me.” Now this is a big filing cabinet, and every time that person does even the smallest thing that hurts or bothers you, you file it in with the rest of the hurts. Usually we have more than one filing cabinet.”¹

That is why the author of Hebrews warns us about the danger of letting this root of bitterness burst forth in our lives.

[[[Read Hebrews 12:12-15.]]]

Bitterness not only affects those who do not forgive, but also contaminates the lives of all those around them. Bitterness paralyzes our growth in holiness, distances us from God, and ultimately leads us to lose our salvation. Bitterness gradually consumes the fruits of the Spirit (joy, peace, patience, etc.), bringing the believer to a state sometimes worse than he had been in before accepting Christ as Savior.

2. BITTERNESS LEADS TO A MULTITUDE OF SINS

The person who allows bitterness to take control of his life begins a process of falling into an abyss of sin. This begins with the disobedience to forgive, which as we saw in the previous point, is to disobey a commandment that Jesus has given us, and sin never comes alone. Usually the initial sin is like the locomotive of a freight train, and it brings with it more and more attached sins. Let us then see what the Word teaches us about the signs and sins that manifest themselves in a person who has been filled with bitterness.

Bitterness separates us from other people

People who are sick with bitterness act like the wounded beasts that are licking their wounds. Negative thoughts invade them, they are full of self-pity.

They may hide from people because they are afraid of being hurt again. Sometimes they confine themselves to their own room or house, or they close themselves up emotionally. Some walk with long faces, others show a smile that is not really true and say they are fine. But in reality they are afraid to trust other people, to open their hearts to being hurt again. They don't want to expose themselves to receive more harm.

This isolation does not really help, because it also alienates them from the love and words of encouragement and understanding that others can give them. The truth is that people who are sad, complaining, negative or distressed push others away. That is why Proverbs 18:14 says, “*The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?*”

Bitterness makes us ungrateful

When one is continually feeling self-pity or focusing on oneself, one comes to think that one is a victim and that one has a right to be restored. In other words we feel that everyone owes us an apology and that we owe nothing to anyone.

¹ Winkie Pratney “Hurt and Bitterness”- http://www.lastdaysministries.org/Articles/1000008556/Last_Days_Ministries/LDM/Discipleship_Teachings/Winkie_Pratney/Hurt_and_Bitterness.aspx.

Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy about an extreme case of this condition. A low concept of ourselves leads us to continually need something to raise our self-esteem, such as praise for what we do and are.



○ **Ask a student to read 2 Timothy 3:1-2.**

Ungrateful people are not kind to those who serve them, and they become demanding and they mistreat those around them. In order to praise themselves, they despise others, pointing out their mistakes and the things which they believe themselves to be superior to others. Such a person comes to love himself only; he or she becomes their own god.

Bitterness leads us to judge others with harshness



○ **Ask a student to read Matthew 7:1-5.**

Due to the damage received (or believed to have been given), bitter people feel entitled to be the judges of others. They cannot stop judging others and this is wrong, because all they are doing is seeking to point out flaws and mistakes, instead of focusing on the positive or the good in others.

Bitter people judge others, not based on evidence or concrete facts, but based only on assumptions, i.e., what they “feel” or “think” to be true, but for which they often cannot provide the evidence for their judgmental comments. In fact, the bitter word of judgment against a person has already condemned them, as has been seen in the examples of activity 2.

In this passage of Matthew, we are told that we must be careful not to judge other people. Humans are not capable of judging the intentions that are in the heart, only God can do this. This means that we must leave this in the hands of God, instead of wanting to usurp what is God’s responsibility. The apostle Paul warns us of the gravity of judging the intentions of others.

[[[Read Romans 2:1-2.]]]

The only things human beings are capable of judging are concrete facts, or things we can see. For example, in Matthew 7:20 Jesus said: *“Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them”* and in John 7:24 tells us: *“Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.”*

The problem of bitterness is that it screws up the balance of justice, and makes us lose the objectivity of the concrete facts that are before our eyes. The measure with which God judges us is governed by justice and truth, but also by love and mercy. The bitter person, blinded by his resentment, cannot see the whole picture. Truth and justice are replaced by their own view of things. Love and mercy are not present in their thinking.

True justice will not flow from a heart laden with hatred and desire for revenge. People who are bitter not only judge without mercy, but spread those judgments in the form of rumors and destructive criticism, damaging other people’s reputation.

Bitterness produces an attitude of rebelliousness and stubbornness

Bitter people hold within them feelings of anger that they want to somehow express. This anger seeks to avenge itself for the damage received, or to return the evil, thinking that in this way their pain will be relieved. This desire for “revenge” shows up as an attitude of rebellion towards all those who have some function of authority, especially those who occupy positions similar to those of the person who has hurt them.

For example, a young man who has been harmed by his father may show rebellion to every male figure of authority that appears in his life, such as his pastor, his boss, among others. On the other hand, if someone continues to be under the leadership of a person who has offended them (or whom they believe has offended them) they may show a lack of submission and a rebellious attitude.

Bitter people may refuse to obey other people or be stubborn for several reasons:

- a. They do not trust other people’s loving good intentions.
- b. In their quest to raise their self-esteem, they may become selfish and arrogant, which is opposed to the attitude of humility required to submit to leadership.
- c. Because of their wounds, they believe that they have the right to judge and condemn everything that the leader does or says.
- d. They believe that they are entitled to have their opinion or ideas which they consider more important than those of others. They close their minds and become stubborn, centering on their own thoughts, devaluing the others’ opinions.

The worst thing about this attitude of rebellion is that it finally ends up turning these people away from God. What they think and want come to have more weight than the Word and the will of God. They resist obeying the Lord, which can lead them to seeking for other ways or other gods that are in accordance with their desires. In the Bible, the people of Israel often fell into idolatry when God did not respond or give them what they thought they deserved.



...o **Ask a student to read 1 Samuel 15:23 and then ask the class: What sin does Samuel associate with the attitude of rebellion and the stubborn heart?**

If uncorrected, bitterness will sooner or later lead the person to live in enmity with God. Nothing causes God so much distress as disobedience, when we put our wills in opposition to His. That is why it is called rebellion and obstinacy, and is considered to be as bad as witchcraft and idolatry. Living in disobedience to the true God is equivalent to serving other gods.

Rebellious people put their destiny in their own hands. In their heart, they “guess” their own future since they believe they know where they are going. Stubborn people only do what they want to do and do not let anyone else rule their lives. This is idolatry, following their own wills, becoming their own authority or god. When people are stubborn and rebellious towards God, and they have a leading position in their family or in the church, they will try to divert other people from obeying the true God, leading them to serve their own desires and their own selfish will. Sometimes these people give the false appearance of piety and become experts in interpreting the Word of God, and use it to say what they

want and for people to idolize and obey them. They are leaders who do not listen to other opinions, who only work with people who are far below their level, and often become authoritarian.

Bitter people associate with each other

The need to receive compassion leads bitter people to seek a remedy by wrong means by trying to draw attention to themselves. Once they have caught the attention of others, they infect as many as possible with their point of view. It is not something that is done intentionally, but bitterness is like an infected wound or a rotten fruit that cannot avoid contaminating or damaging the life of those who are near them.

The bitter person feels better in the company of other people who are in the same condition. The rebellious person feels comfortable among other rebels. Moses had to face a group of people who had been involved in rebellion with Korah.



.....○ **Ask a student to read Numbers 16:1-3.**

Korah led a rebellion against Moses, the leader God had called to guide his people. Korah convinced 250 important men to join with him. They were angry with Moses because he had brought them out of Egypt, where they had some comforts that they had obtained in exchange for slavery. They blamed Moses for not having led them into the Promised Land. But when they rose up against Moses and Aaron, they were also going against the God who had called them to fulfill that leadership role. God endorsed his leaders by destroying the families of the men who spread bitterness and rebellion among the people.

Rebels often disguise their rebelliousness with false spirituality, and manage to deceive many people. One characteristic of these people is that they use worldly methods or tactics to accomplish their purposes, such as: disseminating gossip, damaging others' reputations, distorting facts, belittling others, making plans in secret to harm other people but making sure that no one knows that they are responsible.

The bitter person has a defensive attitude

Every person who is hurt by another tends to blame himself. Inside he thinks he could have done something to keep this painful experience from happening to him. This leads him to feel guilty; guilty for not having done anything to prevent it, or guilty for having done something to deserve what happened to him. He also feels guilty for not forgiving and for doing things to get revenge on the offender.

As a natural response to get rid of guilt, the person projects it on other people. Inside they are convinced that making others seem guiltier, the weight of their own guilt will be easier to carry. This is how bitter people become experts in justifying their bad feelings and actions, saying for example: "I have a good reason to be bitter, do you not know what they did to me?" Or "I might be wrong, but others are worse than me." If they speak badly about others, they might say, "I have the right to tell the truth." If someone speak to them harshly, pointing out their mistakes and flaws and hurting their feelings, they might say, "That is what I am like, take it or leave it" indicating that others have to accept them as they are. If the person they talk to feels hurt, they blame them for being too sensitive!

When these people come to occupy positions of authority, they use it as an excuse to deal with people harshly and blame them for their own inefficiency.



.....○ **Have students complete activities 4 and 5.**

3. HOW TO BE FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF BITTERNESS?

The only way out of the bitterness trap is when we allow God to heal our wounds. How do we receive this healing?

Forgiving the offender is the key!

The first step is to forgive the offender. One of the best examples the Word offers is David's forgiving attitude. David had real reason to be angry with Saul, who had repaid him bad for good. However, David never returned evil, and even when he had the opportunity to take revenge, he did not. David knew that Saul was a leader who had gone wrong, but he also knew that God had made Saul king of Israel, and that if he raised his hand against him, he would be rebelling against the will of God. David knew that it was not for him to condemn the king for his deeds.

In those times, there were no elections like we have in our churches today, where the people could approve or disapprove of their leaders according to the fruits of their leadership. A king was king until his death. David never wanted Saul to die. He knew that Saul would one day stand before the presence of God and be judged for all the injustices he had committed against him and against others (I Samuel 16-31).

How should we forgive?

A few years ago there was a custom to reconcile children when they quarreled. They were put facing each other and the one who had offended had to say: "Forgive me" and the offended had to say: "I forgive you" and then they gave each other a hug to seal the covenant. Not that this was wrong, but it was not very effective because the initiative did not start from the children, but from the parents, and it often ended up as a faked act of asking for forgiveness.

To forgive someone, you have to be honest, to communicate to the other person how much you have been hurt through their words or actions. Pretending that the other person's actions did not really hurt, or that they did not do anything when it is not true, will not help to heal the wounds.

In order to forgive, one must not justify or excuse the other person for the wrong they have done. Every Christian has to learn to be responsible for what they say and for what they do. In this way, we will be helping those who have offended us to correct their behavior, rather than continue hurting other people.

Forgiveness has to be unconditional, that is not taking into account what they might have done to us. We do not have the option to choose which things we will forgive and which we will not. Even in cases where we cannot face the aggressor or the aggressor does

not admit his guilt, or when they have already died, we must forgive and give this person to the Lord.

To truly forgive is to bless the offender, that is, to desire good things for them, to return good for evil (Matthew 5:44).

How do you know when you have truly forgiven someone?

When we have made a decision to forgive, and it has not only been lip service or just a good intention, but we have determined to “delete the file” where we have recorded the debt that person had with us, that is when we really are able to forgive. It is between God and us to know if we have truly forgiven. We should not expect that as a result of having forgiven, we immediately will be filled with feelings of love towards the offender. However, there are some fruits or results that will come to our life gradually when we forgive. These include:

- Peace returns to the heart.
- We wish good for the offender
- By being present in front of that person or remembering him/her, we do not feel resentment.
- We can pray for the well-being of the offender.

Once we have cleared our minds of these harmful files that we have kept for days, weeks, months or even years, we have to prevent them from coming back again, forgiving any offense and seeking healing from the Spirit in any circumstance where we feel hurt or have been treated unfairly.



..... ◦ **Complete this lesson with prayer as indicated in activity 6.**

Definition of Key Terms

- **Self-esteem:** confidence in one's own worth or abilities; self-respect.
- **Obstinate:** firmly or stubbornly adhering to one's own purpose, opinion, etc.; not yielding to argument, persuasion, or entreaty.
- **Bitterness:** anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly; resentment.
- **Resentment:** bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly. A feeling of indignant displeasure or persistent ill will at something regarded as a wrong, insult, or injury. Feeling hostility toward a person or group that you consider to have treated you wrong.

Summary

When someone offends us by word or deed and hurts our feelings, an emotional wound occurs in us that if not immediately healed by the Holy Spirit may lead to bitterness. Bitterness is a deep pain that fills us with resentment, negative thoughts, robs us of hope, makes us see the negative and the ugly side of things and people, and finally leads us to focus on ourselves and our desires and thoughts. Isolation, rebellion, ingratitude and stubbornness are some of the sinful manifestations produced by bitterness. Bitterness is not content with harming the person, but it also infects everyone around us. The only way to be free from bitterness is to forgive the offender, and this is possible only by the power of God's love acting in us.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

In his book “Forgive and Forget,” author Lewis Smedes relates the following fable that has been adapted for use as discussion material.²

The Little Fable Of The Magical Eyes

In the village of Faken, deep within Holland, lived a tall and slender baker named Fouke. He had a long chin and a sharp nose. Fouke was such a straight man that straightness seemed to come out of his mouth to such an extent that people chose not to approach him.

Hilda, his wife was a round woman with full arms and a well-formed body. Hilda was the opposite of her husband and people approached her because she was a warm hearted woman who shared with others.

Hilda respected her husband, and loved him as far as Fouke would allow her. But her heart yearned for more of him than his righteousness. Her bed was witness to her need, expressed in her tears. One morning, having worked his dough for the ovens, Fouke returned to the house and found another person in bed with his wife.

Hilda’s adultery became the conversation of the taverns and the scandal of Fouke’s church. They all assumed Fouke would kick her out of the house, because he was so strict. But he surprised everyone by saying that Hilda would continue to be his wife and that he forgave her as the Bible commands.

But within his heart, however, Fouke could not forgive Hilda for bringing shame to the house and his name. When he thought of his wife, his feelings toward her were filled with anger and harshness. He despised her as if she were a common prostitute. He really hated her for betraying him after he had been such a good husband to her. He was only pretending to forgive Hilda so that by his righteous mercy he could punish her.

But in heaven they saw Fouke’s hypocrisy. Every time Fouke felt his secret hatred for Hilda, an angel came down from the sky and dropped a pebble in his heart. Every time a pebble fell, Fouke felt a pain in his heart, like the pain he had felt when he saw Hilda in the arms of another. Then he hated her even more, his hatred brought more pain and pain brought more hatred. Pebbles multiplied. And Fouke’s heart became very heavy, to the point that his torso was leaning forward by weight. Fouke felt so tired that he began to want death.

The angel who had dropped the pebbles in Fouke’s heart visited him one night and asked him if he knew about the remedy that could remove the pain and weight. There was only one cure for the wounded heart. Fouke would need the miracle of magical eyes. He needed eyes that could see Hilda like before his pain began, not seeing Hilda as the woman who had let him down, but as a weak woman who needed him. Only a new way of seeing things through magical eyes could heal the hurt and pain of yesterday.

Fouke protested. “Hilda is guilty, nothing can change the past, not even an angel.” “Poor wounded man,” said the angel, “you are right, you cannot change the past. You can only heal the wound that comes from the past. And you can only heal it through vision with magical eyes.” Fouke asked,

² Lewis B. Smedes “Forgive and Forget: Healing the hurts we don’t Deserve”. USA: Pocket Books 1984.

“And how can I acquire these magical eyes?” The angel replied, “You only have to ask for them and you will receive them. And every time you see Hilda with your new eyes, a pebble will leave your aching heart. “

Fouke could not ask at first because he had come to love his hatred. But the pain in his heart finally motivated him and he began to ask for the magical eyes promised by the angel. He asked and the angel answered. Soon Hilda began to change before Fouke’s eyes, unbelievably and mysteriously. He began to see her as a woman in need who loved him instead of a bad woman who had let him down.

The angel fulfilled his promise and removed the pebbles from Fouke’s heart one by one, although it was a long time until all of them were removed. Gradually Fouke felt his heart lighter, began to walk straight again, and his nose and chin seemed less sharp. He invited Hilda back into his heart and she came, and they began a walk together full of joy and humility.

ACTIVITY 2

Examine the newspaper clippings and answer the following questions:

1. What are the causes behind this news?

2. How does what happens in our society resemble “The Little Fable of the Magical Eyes”

ACTIVITY 3

Has something like this ever happened to you?

- a) A friend bought the same shoes that you liked and you think she did it with bad intentions because another mutual friend who knows you like them had told her so.
- b) Two friends are talking, laughing and looking at you. You feel offended because you think they are laughing at you.
- c) You husband forgot to buy your son’s birthday cake and now the shop is closed. You’re offended; you do not think he loves your family enough.
- d) Your wife put that condiment you do not like on the food, and you think she no longer loves you as before.
- e) That Christian at church did not greet you today in worship, and even looked away. You think he did it on purpose and you were offended by this snub.

f) The pastor forgot to mention you among the list of those who have worked on the project. You feel hurt because you think he does not value your work and he does not want you on his team anymore.

g) Your Experience: _____

ACTIVITY 4

Answer the following questions with Yes or No to see if there is any bitterness in your life?

- ___ Is there anyone who has done something that bothered you whom you have not forgiven yet?
- ___ Do you sneer silently in their presence or at the mention of their name?
- ___ Do you feel bad when music, a movie, or a TV program reminds you of the unpleasant interactions you had with that person.
- ___ Do you speak in a mocking or degrading way about them?
- ___ Do you have nightmares or unpleasant thoughts about them?
- ___ Have you gotten stuck in your personal growth efforts as a Christian without knowing why?
- ___ Do you feel angry for no apparent reason?
- ___ Do you feel sad and depressed and have trouble getting out of those moments when you feel negative?
- ___ Do you avoid mentioning or discussing any subject that is related to the last time that person disgusted or made you uncomfortable?
- ___ Do you grind your teeth and smile when you really want to scream when you hear about that person?
- ___ Do you pretend to be enthusiastic about being with that person when in reality you would prefer not to know anything about them?

ACTIVITY 5

Make a list of the major offenses that others have caused you. Mark with an “R” those who, by remembering them, you respond with resentment and bitterness, and an “L” when you react with love and mercy.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

ACTIVITY 6

Prayer Guide

1. Ask God to forgive you for having resentment or bitterness in your life, and for not having forgiven this person before.
2. Communicate to God your decision to forgive those who have offended you.
3. Ask God to forgive those who have sinned against you.
4. Ask God to change your resentment into love for that person, and help you to demonstrate it.
5. Ask God to help you talk to that person you would like to forgive so that you can share how you have been offended and that God is helping you to forgive them. If you have done something vindictive against them, such as speaking evil about them, or being rebellious, etc., ask God to give you the courage to confess your sin and ask for forgiveness.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Genesis 16, 21 y 27
- Genesis 33, 37, 39, 42-47
- Matthew 5:38-42
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Matthew 18:21-35
- Ephesians 4:26-32



Restitution: Repentance in Action

Lesson 8



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Get to know what the Bible teaches about the discipline of restitution.
- Value the benefits that making restitution brings to their lives and growth in the experience of holiness.
- Understand the process of rectifying the harm done to others.
- Make a personal plan to restore those whom they have offended or damaged in their past and present actions.



Resources

- Dictionaries or pieces of paper with definitions of the word “restitution” written on them.
- White board or a large piece of paper to write on.


Introduction



- **Begin the lesson by asking students to complete activity 1.**

Have you ever been in a situation like the ones mentioned in this activity? Have you been the victim or the offender? What have you done about it? Have you experienced feelings of sadness, remorse, pain, guilt, or indifference?

What is a Christian to do in cases like these? The Bible says we must make restitution...

Write the word RESTITUTION on the board and let the students share their personal ideas about what it means and dictionary definitions. Then write this definition on the board and ask if they agree with it: "Restitution is the act of restoring something to its rightful owner, or of making good, or of giving an equivalent or compensation for loss, damage, or injury; indemnification." 

Bible Study

1. THE RESTITUTION FOR DAMAGE CAUSED TO THE PROPERTY OF ANOTHER.

Within the teachings that God gave to the people of Israel through Moses, there are those that have to do with restitution. Exodus 22:1-8 presents a series of laws to repair damage done to others, intentionally or unintentionally. What were the restitutions ordained in the law for the people of God in the Old Testament for each of the offenses that are mentioned?



- **Have students complete activity 2.**

2. DAMAGE CAUSED TO ANOTHER PERSON'S PROPERTY IS A SIN.

Also in Leviticus 6:1-7 and Numbers 5: 5-10, we find other laws about compensation in case of damage to another person's property through fraud or violence.



- Ask two students to read Leviticus 6:1-7 and Numbers 5:5-10.

||| Then ask the class: What kind of offense to the neighbor does this passage in Leviticus 6 speak about? Who else is implied in the offence in addition to the neighbor? What kind of restitution is applied in these cases? Who should be reciprocated? |||

In the original text of these passages in the Hebrew language, “damage” describes an offense by which compensation can be made. This compensation for the damage must be complete.

In the case of Leviticus, the offender had to confess his sin. In some of the cases studied in activity 1, if the offender says nothing, no one would know what he/she has done. Confessing offenses is part of the restoration process. For the offender to acknowledge that he did harm is a step that will lead him to repentance. True repentance consists of feeling pain for what we have done (our sins). The offended person has an opportunity to express his pain to the one who hurt him, and also to forgive him.

In Leviticus 20, more was to be added to the payment of the retribution. This showed regret and a sincere interest in reestablishing the relationship that had been broken. It was not a blackmail to “buy” the pardon, but a sign of the desire to do everything possible to erase the anguish that had been caused to the offended party.

In these passages, it is clear that sin is both offending God as well as another person. To sin against another person is considered to be of the same gravity as sinning against God. To offend or cause harm to any living being or God’s creation is to cause harm to God Himself. Both types of sins lead us away from fellowship with God, and will not be forgiven without genuine repentance.

For the people of Israel, the relationship between religion and ethics should be inseparable, that is, their way of living should reflect the God in whom they believed and whom they worshiped and served.

3. MASSIVE RESTITUTION

In the history of Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus, we can observe a case of massive restitution (Luke 19:1-8). Zacchaeus was chief of the tax collectors, possibly for the entire province of Jericho. He had taken advantage of his position to enrich himself. What happened when this man met Jesus?



- Have students complete activity 3.

4. RESTITUTION FOR EMOTIONAL WOUNDS

In the Bible passages studied, we saw different situations in which a person may be involved in damages to others, and how the children of God should restore those grievances in obedience to the will of God. Restitution - whether in the case of voluntary or involuntary damage - is a prerequisite for growth in the life of holiness that God expects from each member of his people.

In the same way, we can see that in most of these biblical cases, material restitution (especially properties) had to be made. However, restitution should not just be limited to that, but also covers the emotional wounds inflicted on other people, which is much more difficult than making material restitution. Ultimately, whatever the type of restitution, it always teaches the believer to develop the discipline of humility. To admit our faults to others requires courage, but above all we need to humble ourselves and go through that embarrassing moment of having to ask for forgiveness.

Restitution for the offenses that we have done to others can be of many kinds: words that have been hurtful, spreading gossip, discrediting another person, lying, stealing credit for an idea or work that someone else did, sexual harassment, rough treatment, ignoring others, etc...

||| Ask the class: Do you think it is easier to return something that you have stolen or to ask forgiveness for having offended a person? |||

God does not ask us to make restitution because it is easy. The Christian who wants to live in obedience to Christ must develop this discipline of restitution in his life, regardless of the cost or humiliation that will happen in doing so. Nor should we think that we are better Christians than others because we are able to be humble in this respect. Let us remember that it is the power of God working in us that makes it possible for us to carry out this act of obedience, and that the humility and courage to recognize our faults comes from the Holy Spirit of God that dwells within us.

5. RESTITUTION IS PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Restitution, that is, to repair the damage we have done, is not easy, nor is it popular. For Christians, it is a question of obedience. After restitution, there will be freedom from the feelings of guilt that occurred within them when they knew that they had done wrong.

Luke records the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 24:16: “... *So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.*” This feeling of guilt is like a stone in the Christian’s shoe.

When Christians practice restitution, they receive the following benefits:

- a. They will experience joy, peace, and freedom from guilt for having done the right thing. Relationships with others will be restored and the bond of intimacy with God will be strengthened. Because we experience freedom from guilt, there is also a greater willingness to serve God without that weight on our conscience.
- b. It will give one authority to teach and advise others on this matter.
- c. It will help them grow in humility, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that must be developed in our lives. The opposite would be to show indifference, since pride does not allow us to experience humiliation and shame.
- d. It will make them more prudent so as not to repeat the same mistakes again. Remembering the painful experience of restitution will help them in the future to avoid once more committing those actions that damage their personal relationships.

- e. They will be able to testify that their experience of salvation is true, and develop a lifestyle that inspires and teaches others.
- f. They will demonstrate their loyalty and obedience to the Lord.
- g. The spiritual lives of all the people involved will be strengthened. This is an excellent antidote to the emergence of negative feelings such as anger or bitterness which can lead to spiritual stagnation, and even spiritual death. In other words, being humble and confessing our faults and seeking to restore our relationships will help to remove any resentment, bitterness and rancor that would impede the spiritual growth of both people involved.
- h. It will strengthen relationships and friendships.

6. HOW TO MAKE RESTITUTION PROPERLY

As we saw in the previous point, restitution is not an option for the Christian. Matthew 5:23-24 says, *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”*

||| Ask the class: According to the teaching of Jesus, what is the correct order to follow in regard to worship and interpersonal restitution? |||

In order to make restitution, we need to take the following steps:

a. Be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to your spirit.

Once the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, act immediately, because delay in making restitution is disobedience to God. You may think that what you have done has not been serious enough to ask for forgiveness, but remember that the Spirit not only knows your heart but the other person’s as well. If He troubles your conscience, be obedient and do not quench His voice.

b. Make a list.

After praying, make a list of past and present issues or offenses that the Lord brings to your memory to begin making restitution. Choose one at a time and go about making things right with every situation or person you have on your list.

c. Prepare for the encounter.

Identify the offense, actions you did, or attitudes or situations in which you hurt people, and think clearly about the words you are going to say. Just confess your offense and ask for forgiveness. Do not try to soften or make excuses for what you have done, or defend yourself. Do not say that it was not your intention, that you had no choice or that circumstances forced you. Do not try to blame other people. Do not apologize that it was just a misunderstanding.

If the other person acted wrong, do not talk about it, but focus on what you did. Remember that you are asking for forgiveness for your own actions, words or attitude, that is, what you did only. All confession must begin with, “I am to blame, or I did wrong, or I was wrong or I made this mistake,” and after confessing it all, say “I apologize for what I did. Will you forgive me?”

d. Look for the best moment.

When making restitution for a personal matter, do it privately with the offended person, at an appropriate time and place. The restitution must be made person to person. Only in cases where the offended are far away or outside the country should a letter of confession be sent to them.

Carefully decide if the occasion is appropriate or not for sharing your testimony. If you are asking for forgiveness for what you did before becoming a Christian, you can mention that now that you are a disciple of Jesus, you know that you should ask forgiveness from all those whom you have wronged in some way. Do not try to convince the person of the changes God has made in your life. Let the Holy Spirit dialogue with that person, and they may very well come to you later and give you the opportunity to talk about your testimony.

It is likely that the other person will want to talk about their feelings. This is good as it is part of the emotional healing process. Let them talk, do not interrupt them. If the other person at the end says they forgive you, thank them. If they tell you that they cannot forgive you or if they say nothing, say goodbye with humility and thank them for listening.

e. Thank God for giving you the courage and humility to ask for forgiveness.

After making restitution, smile and rejoice because you are growing in your spiritual life. You came closer to God, became more holy, and your account is clear and in order before God. Whenever you sense that there is some difficulty between you and some other person, immediately act to put things right. This habit will become a normal part of your Christian lifestyle as you are changed more and more to be like Jesus.

Living in holiness means keeping our “accounts” up to date, although of course it is far better not to have any “accounts” to fix. Mature Christians do not have to make restitutions all the time, because they have stopped hurting and offending others. The aim of the Christian life that God has given us is not to hurt others but to love them. The will of God for our lives is that we become perfect in our motivations, in our words and in our actions; and for this we have the model of the life of Jesus and of many other servants of God throughout history and today.

God’s plan for our lives is that we will always grow in holiness. This growth must come to the point where you don’t have anything to complain about, or where you do not have any burden of guilt on your conscience for having knowingly treated or acted unjustly to another person. However, as long as we are in this life, we will never be completely free of doing something that offends another person, whether we realize it or not. We cannot avoid being misunderstood or confused by other people.



Complete the lesson with activity 4. Start this activity with your personal testimony, or a testimony from one of your students or with a guest recounting a restitution experience that helped them to grow in their Christian life. Then continue with a brief prayer time as indicated at the beginning of activity 4. Instruct students to try to put dates close to their projected restitutions, for example, to start with one next week.

Once the students have completed their lists, have an open time for questions. Then finish with a prayer asking God to direct them in the restitutions that they are going to make this week and the weeks to follow.

Remember to start the next class by asking for testimonies of what they have put into practice.



Definition of Key Terms

- **Restitution:** Correction of any deception, falsification or restoration of damaged or stolen property. It is not only to return and rectify what has been done wrong or said, but also to confess and ask for forgiveness for the pain caused to another.
- **Mass restitution:** Making things right to a particular group, as Zacchaeus did in Luke 19:1-10.



Summary

Restitution is a God-ordained practice for the Christian's life which helps us to develop the holy character of Christ in our lives. Restitution consists of being honest and humble in recognizing when we have hurt others. Restitution strengthens interpersonal relationships, and helps us to be sensitive in dealing with other people and to respect the properties of others.

Keith Drury (2004). *Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Have you ever been a victim of situations like these? Identify in the following list, marking with an x in the corresponding column, to whether you have been the offender or the victim.

	Situation	Offender	Victim
1.	A parent who insults their son in an act of anger and yells at him, saying hurtful words.		
2.	He likes a book he found in the library, but since he cannot buy it, he borrows it and does not return it.		
3.	A child, taking advantage of his parent's trust, takes money without asking.		
4.	One person hurts another in a rush of jealousy.		
5.	A lady who pays for a kilo of rice in a supermarket and after the cashier accidentally gives her too much change, she puts it in her pocket and leaves the shop.		
6.	A neighbor is offended by something done by an acquaintance, and starts a rumor in the neighborhood about him to discredit him.		
7.	A friend borrows the car and returns it with a new dent and doesn't say anything.		
8.	A child breaks a little friend's toy through plain badness.		
9.	Any other experience		

ACTIVITY 2

Based on the passage read in Exodus 22:1-8, what are the actions that must be done to repair the evil that has been done?

Below you will find two columns: in the first there is a list of the bad actions mentioned in the passage, and in the second the actions that must be done to repair the damage in each case. Order the columns by placing the corresponding letter from the left column into the right column as appropriate for each case.

	Damage caused		Restitution
A	Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it...		...must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft
B	If a fire breaks out and spreads into thorn bushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field		...must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.
C	Anyone who steals...		... the offender must make restitution from the best of their own field or vineyard.
D	If a stolen animal is found in the thief's possession and alivethe thief, if caught, must pay back double.
E	"If anyone gives neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house..."		...whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double.
F	"If anyone grazes their livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in someone else's field..."		...the one who started the fire must make restitution.

ACTIVITY 3

Read the passage from Luke 19:1-10 and answer the following questions.

a) What kind of harm did Zacchaeus do to the people of his village?

b) What view did people have of Zacchaeus?

c) To what extent did Zacchaeus restore the people he had taken advantage of?

d) What was Jesus' observation when he heard these declarations from Zacchaeus?

e) Below is a list of some actions that demonstrate restoring wrongs done to another person. Mark with X the things that Zacchaeus did to make restitution?

___ Restore what belongs to a person, whether it is property, respect or reputation.

___ Return something borrowed or taken a long time ago.

___ Pay for something taken, stolen or not declared to the authorities.

___ Refund some money that was improperly collected or should have been paid.

___ Return money or property unjustly taken or improperly charged.

___ Confess and ask for forgiveness for words, comments or actions that caused pain and suffering to others.

___ Admit past faults in interpersonal relationships.

ACTIVITY 4

Pray for a few moments, asking the Spirit to show you if there is anything that you need to make restitution for from your past or present. Make your own list of people to whom you need to contact. Are there any offenses you need to fix? Is there any refund you need to make?

People I need to make restitution to	What I need to do	Date I will do it by
_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____

RECOMMENDED READING

- Leviticus 5:14-19
- Psalms 82:1-4
- Isaiah 1:16-20
- Philemon 1:8-20
- James 5:1-20



Addictions: Invisible Chains

Lesson 9



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Recognize different types of addictions and how people become addicted.
- Examine their own lives to identify possible behaviors or substances that might endanger them to addictions, hindering their freedom to serve God.
- Give up everything that constitutes a threat to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.



Resources

- Images of some addictions, such as those mentioned in activity 2, to show during the introduction to the lesson.

Introduction

**||| Start by asking the group: What is an addiction?
Allow your students to express themselves freely.
Write down the main ideas on the board as they answer. |||**



○ **Have students compare their ideas with the definitions included in activity 1 and share their personal definitions with the rest of the class.**

Ask them: How much do you know about addictions? Did you know that 10 to 15 percent of the world's population is addicted? This is an epidemic that affects 50 percent of households because each addict has relatives who suffer the consequences of their addiction.

In this lesson, we will talk about addictions and the danger they pose to the lives of all people, including Christians.



○ **Complete activity 2. This activity includes a test to evaluate your students knowledge about addictions. At the end, check the students' responses to make sure they have the correct answers. The correct answers are included at the end of the activity sheet.**

Bible Study

1. TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD DO NOT PRACTICE HABITS THAT HARM THEIR BODIES.

Believers in the Corinthian Church had a serious problem. They wanted to obtain eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, but they wanted to be free to continue the bad habits to which they were accustomed.

||| Ask students how we can differentiate between a healthy habit and a habit that is unhealthy. Ask them to mention some healthy habits, for example: having a balanced diet, exercising, smiling, sleeping adequately, personal hygiene, check-ups with the doctor, prayer, and many others. |||

Vices or addictions belong to the area of bad habits. We have just identified a few that are common today in activity 2. Some of these vices belong to the modern era because they relate to technology or substances that were not common in the time of the Roman Empire. But everything that Paul includes in this list has reached our times.



○ **Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

What are the addictions that Paul mentions in I Corinthians 6:9-10? Let's see what these practices consist of:

- Sexually immoral are people who have sex as single people.
- Idolaters are those who worship anything that is not God.
- Adulterers are married people who have sex outside of marriage.
- Homosexuals are people who have sex with people of their own gender.
- Thieves steal what is not theirs.
- Greedy people put money making and accumulating goods as a priority over their needs and those of others.
- Drunkards have an addiction problem with alcohol.
- Slanderers swear and use words to hurt and insult others.
- Swindlers cheat and make unfair trades in order to make more than their fair share.

The apostle calls people who live enslaved by different vices “wrongdoers,” people who have not yet been saved from their sins. A person who has repented of his sins and has decided to leave them has been justified by God. This means that God has forgiven their sins. Some believers in Corinth had believed in Jesus, but they had not abandoned their vices that are sinful before the eyes of God. There is a big difference between being a sympathizer of Christianity (someone who has not changed his life) and being a Christian, a follower of Jesus (one who lives life away from sin). Paul is clear in pointing out that those who maintain these evil deeds of the old life are disqualified from being followers of Jesus.

Many of us know the case of Diego Maradona a famous South American footballer. He gave much satisfaction to his country in that sport. He had it all: youth, talent, fame, money, future. However, his addiction to drugs, alcohol and sex brought him many problems and somehow truncated a career that could have been much brighter.

In the same way, Christians who are part of God's team can lose their privileges if they allow themselves to fall into the trap of addictions. If we want to enter the stadium as “official” players on God's team, we have to give up everything that prevents us from meeting the conditions that are required to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

2. OUR BODY HAS BEEN SANCTIFIED

The work of salvation that God does in our lives is complete and three-dimensional. Not only are we forgiven and restored in the spiritual sense, but our emotions, our reason and our physical body come under the dominion of Jesus Christ. The Lord's disciple is called to a life of obedience to His will and away from sin. This includes our thoughts, our emotions, our will and our actions.

For the Christian, bad habits must remain in their past. For this, Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 6:11: “*And that is what some of you were ...*” and then continues to remind them of the work that God has done in their lives.

First, he reminds them that they had been “washed,” every stain or sign of sin in their life had been removed. Sinful conduct needs to be taken away from our lives, and this can only be done by the power of God.

Secondly, they were sanctified, that is, set apart for God, separated for a holy life and removed from evil to serve God with all their being.

Thirdly, they had been justified, all the crooked things in their life had been straightened out and continually they were being shaped in the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Our behavior as Christians must reflect the experience of salvation we have received by the grace of God. When Christians do not evidence this transformation of purity in their life, the testimony of the church loses its power.

3. A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Paul continues in verse 12: “...*All things are lawful for me, but I will not let myself be dominated by any.*” The people of the Corinthian church did not understand what it was like to live as God’s people. In the Old Testament, God called the family of Abraham to be His people, dedicated entirely to serve Him. When Christ came, He entrusted this task to his new people, the Church, and sent the Holy Spirit to sanctify and guide them in the fulfillment of His will in this world.

Jesus’ followers have the option of returning to sin. They can go back to the old bad habits if they decide to. No one forces them to follow Christ; they follow Him because they love Him. Christians do not sin, not because they cannot, but because they do not want to. They have made a decision that has changed their lives; to do everything with God’s approval, rather than that of any other person, including themselves. So, living life in the Spirit requires moment by moment and day to day decisions to keep on following the Master.

We cannot enter and leave the Christian life when we want. We cannot obey God in some things and not in others, and remain Christians in the eyes of God. Some people incorporate being a Christian in their life as if it were one more activity added to the many that they already have. If we compare this life with a house, we can say that these people add a room to the house. They put furniture into it, paint it and ask Jesus Christ to feel comfortable there. From time to time they go and visit Him, converse with Him, and then return to their routine. But like the Corinthians, we forget that this is not how the Christian life works. Christ wants to be the owner and Lord of our whole life, and not just put to one side! If He is not the Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all. He is only a guest!

If we are authentic Christians, what we want to do will be the same as that which suits the purposes of God. Jesus Christ will no longer be just a part of our life, but the whole and the meaning of our very existence. In this kind of life, there is no place for bad habits because everything should be full of good works through which the love of God flows, flooding our being.

4. OUR BODY IS GOD'S PROPERTY FOR ALL ETERNITY

Another misconception that the Corinthians had was about the sacred and eternal value of the human body. They believed that their flesh, bones, blood - their physical body - had no value because ultimately with physical death, the body would be destroyed and the only thing that would survive beyond death would be the spirit. If the body had no eternal value, they could feel at liberty to enjoy bodily pleasures while they could.

There are Christians who like to live near the edge. They still think they can have a little go at some sin and then later ask God for forgiveness. These people think they have enough control over their thoughts, their mind and their body not to let themselves be carried beyond the point which they know to be dangerous. This is one of the lies of the addict who says to himself: "I can stop doing this ... whenever I want." But the truth is that he has become dependent on that behavior or substance. The addict does not know how to live without his addiction. Denial presents the problem of the most dangerous side of addiction. Many Christians also live trapped by denial, thinking that it will never happen to them, that they will never be caught. But the truth is that addiction enters the life of the Christian when we try to replace our need for God with anything other than God himself.



.....◦ **Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14**

Paul shows how wrong the Corinthians were in verses 13 and 14 in thinking that the body will be eternally destroyed. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was an advance of what God will do with us in the future. Although our body becomes dust, somehow in a miraculous way that we cannot comprehend, our bodies will be raised from death to eternal life. When we are saved, we are born to a new life. If we are children of God, we will be faithful to the death, when our body as well as our spirit and soul will enter into eternal life.

5. IN OUR BODES THERE IS A SPIRITUAL UNION BETWEEN US AND CHRIST



.....◦ **Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 6:15-18**

In these verses, Paul is trying to explain the deep union that exists between Christ and the Christian. To do this he uses the illustration of the marriage union. For God, marriage is a sacred union between a man and woman. It is not just about physical union through sexual intercourse, it is a union that transcends the physical and closely links them together emotionally and spiritually. So when the Bible says that man and woman are "one flesh," it refers to much more than mere physical-sexual union. In Corinth, it was common to have sexual intercourse with prostitutes - women or men - and this was not condemned in the religions that those people professed.

Our God has created us with the need to be united to Him. This is the most important relationship in the life of the Christian. The second most important relationship is the family. The intimate bond of the couple in marriage is the closest comparison to our relationship with God that we will find in this world. Thirdly, we are part of the people of God, and we cultivate friendships with our brothers and sisters. Then come all the other relationships we can have in this life. None of these relationships, though important and good, can fill our need for God. We experience union with God through our physical body, which houses our mind, emotions and our spirit.

The Corinthians needed to know that bad habits and addictions represent sin, and lead to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual consequences. Everything that we do with our body, mind and emotions affects positively or negatively our spiritual life. So establishing a relationship with any substance, person or behavior outside the will of God separates us from the relationship that God wants to have with his children.

For example, for many people, Christianity becomes an addiction. They participate in it because they feel it is their “duty” to God, and they go so far as to neglect their family and their personal relationship with God because they are so involved in doing the “work” of the church. These people come to feel that being a Christian is a burden, something they cannot stop doing. They feel as if the work of God depends on them and they become slaves. These Christians are confused as to the life that God asks of them. When one feels that it is an obligation, there is no joy. The will of God is that we be free from all that separates us from fellowship with Him. Someone said: if Christians are too busy to pray, then they are far too busy; God does not want his children to be slaves. A slave is someone who does not choose what to do, but Jesus Christ wants us to follow him by personal decision, to serve him with joy, to enjoy service to others and to live a life of victory over any kind of addiction.

6. GOD WANTS TO GLORIFY HIMSELF THROUGH OUR BODY



Ask students to complete activity 3.

For Christians, stopping their bodies from taking control over their will could be a daily struggle. No Christian, even those who have been in the church for a long time and have high places of leadership, is free from the possibility of being trapped and enslaved by their bodily appetites. The apostle Paul shares his experience with us when he says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “... *I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*” To submit our body to perfect obedience to the will of God is personal. No one can do this for us.

Today there is a tendency to pamper our bodies. We give in to its dictates, stay a little longer in bed, or avoid inconveniences. We say that we do not have time to help our pastor and leaders over the weekend, but we do have time to relax in front of the TV, enjoying a movie or the sport that we like so much. In our modern life, we have misunderstood that caring for our body meant neglecting our duties and responsibilities. Often, we forget that there is one day a week to rest from our daily tasks and dedicate ourselves exclusively to worship and to replenish our energies, but the rest of the days were made for work!



Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

In this passage, Paul reminds us of some important principles to keep our body holy:

- a. Our bodies as Christians are inhabited by God himself, through his Spirit. The purity of God’s love has filled us when we ask Jesus Christ to be the Lord and master of our life.
- b. We have been bought with a price. This price is the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. It was not easy for our Lord to give his body to be tortured and killed. So it will not be easy for us to make sacrifices with our body. But God does not ask us to do anything which He has not already done for us before.

- c. When we consecrate our bodies one hundred percent in obedience to the Lord, we are going to expose ourselves to sweat, discomfort, and even bodily pain that tiredness produces. For Christians living in countries where they are persecuted for their faith, there is pain which can mean imprisonment, torture and even death. But for us it may mean depriving ourselves of a meal to give an offering; or buying a less comfortable car, but with more space to take children to church; getting up an hour early to pray for the new believers; going to sleep later to prepare the Sunday School lesson; sacrificing that football final to visit a fellow Christian in the hospital; overcoming our fear of dirt and squalor to serve food to those who live in the street; helping our family with housework instead of waiting for them to serve us; giving up buying branded clothes, so as not to put a heavy load on the shoulders of our parents; stopping doing something that we like to do in the church, to allow others to gain experience; or giving up what we like to someone who needs it more, etc. ...

To know if we are giving glory to God with our body, we must ask ourselves: Does this activity help me serve the Lord better? Does it make me healthier and stronger to serve Him? If someone sees me doing this, will he think I'm a good Christian?

Here's an example: You go to the gym or your aerobics class. How do you know if that activity is healthy or has become addictive?



.....o **Guide the class to complete activities 4 and 5.**

||| Finally, during a time of prayer, encourage the students to make a pact with God to give up everything that is not good for their spiritual, emotional and physical development. |||



Definition of Key Terms

- **Kleptomania:** a recurrent urge to steal, typically without regard for need or profit.
- **Pyromania:** an obsessive desire to set fire on things.
- **Abstinence Syndrome:** These are the physical and mental symptoms experienced by a person who is deprived of a substance(s) they are addicted to. Their behavior can range from nervousness and anxiety to episodes of loss of reason (delirium, hallucinations, among others).



Summary

The life of holiness includes control over the physical body and over appetites. For Christians to live in holiness they must recognize that their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that they should glorify God through their bodies. In the next lesson, we will talk more about addiction to pornography and sex that are some of the most widespread addictions today.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Read the following definitions of “vice” and “addiction” and write a definition in your own words.

Vice: “This term applies to immoral or evil acts that corrupt individuals and society. Vice is the opposite of virtue, as evil is the opposite of right, and darkness of light.”¹

Addiction: the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, such as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.²

Addict “to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively”³

My personal definition of addict or addiction is:

ACTIVITY 2.

How much do you know about addictions? The following test will help you measure how much you know about addictions. Circle the letter of the answer that you think is true for each of the questions:

1. Sexual promiscuity has been classified as addictive behavior in 1987 by the American Psychiatric Association because... (Check one).

- a) A famous Hollywood actor went into a clinic to recover from his sex addiction.
- b) It was the 20th anniversary of Playboy magazine.
- c) Psychologist Werner Gross won the Nobel Prize in medicine.

2. Today addictive behaviors are classified into two major types, those that relate to chemicals and those that belong to the area of behavior. Mark all the behaviors that have already been recognized by science to be addictive diseases.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| a. Alcoholism | g. Sex |
| b. Drug addiction | h. Gambling |
| c. Kleptomania | i. Taking a Shower |
| d. Pyromania | j. Eating |
| e. Sleep | k. Work |
| f. Narcotics | l. Computers |

¹ Richard S. Taylor: Beacon Theological Dictionary “Vice”. USA.: C.N.P., 1995.

² <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/addiction>

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addict>

m. Reading

q. Internet

u. Social Network

n. Studying

r. Pornography

v. Caffeine

o. Smoking

s. TV

w. Gossip

p. Shopping

t. Music

x. Chocolate

3. How much time do you spend playing video games? According to experts, more than _____ hours a week is already addictive (Choose one).

a. 20 hours

b. 8 1/2 hours

c. 10 hours

4. Of the following statements, mark those that are true with respect to video games and pornography.

a) There is no way for kids and teenagers to discover porn on the internet by accident.

b) Video games are healthy for the development of emotional intelligence.

c) Video games are the doorway of teenagers to pornography.

d) Video games sell excitement, and children become addicted to it.

e) Some children discover pornography by being pressured by their friends.

f) Pornography is good for children and teenagers as a way to learn about sex.

g) Pornography is only for adults because they can handle their content.

h) Pornography is a business that tries to win consumers by giving away free experiences.

5. What percentage of the population of any society in the world is addicted?

a. 45%

b. 30%

c. 15%

ACTIVITY 3.

Read the following paragraph selection and then answer the question below.

“If our body makes all the decisions and gives all the orders, and if we obey, the physical can effectively destroy every other dimension of our personalities. Our emotional life will be dulled and our spiritual life will be suppressed and eventually become anemic. “Over 200 years ago, Susan Wesley wrote:” Whatever increases the strength and authority of our body above the mind, that is sin for us.”⁴

Today, is my body and my desires or appetites controlling my life, or have I taken the reins and chosen to submit them to Jesus in the same way that my will is submitted to what Jesus wants for me?

⁴ Michael Quoist in *The Christian Response*. Cited by Jerry Bridges. In “En pos de la santidad” (In Pursuit of Holiness). Miami, 1995. pp. 120.

ACTIVITY 4.

How do I know if this activity I enjoy doing has become addictive? There are six clear indicators of an addiction:

- a. When that substance or activity has become something you want above anything else, such as being with your family or going to church, among others.
- b. When that desire is present, you constantly worry about the need for that “object of desire”, i.e., it has become an obsession.
- c. When there is a very strong feeling of wanting to do something repeatedly that is difficult to control, makes you tell lies and put aside other responsibilities. This is called compulsion.
- d. When that behavior is stronger than your decision to leave it. Your thoughts and ideas or behaviors cannot control it.
- e. When you have become dependent on that substance or activity and you cannot stop.
- f. When that habit has brought negative consequences to your life and that of your loved ones.

ACTIVITY 5.

How is an addiction recognized? Psychologist Werner Gross established four basic traits to recognize any addiction. If these four characteristics are present, the person has been trapped in an addiction. Examine if there are traits like these currently present in your life:

- a. The person loses control when he engages in an activity that “hooks” him.
- b. The person suffers abstinence syndrome if he cannot practice this activity.
- c. Dependence on this activity is getting stronger.
- d. The person loses interest in other people, and only has interest in that object or activity.

CORRECT ANSWERS FOR ACTIVITY 2

1= a

2= a,b,c,d,f,g,h,j,k,l,o,p,q,r.

3= b

4= c, d, e, h

5= c

RECOMMENDED READING

- Proverbs 21
- Proverbs 23
- Luke 21:34
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Ephesians 5:15



Overcoming Impure Thoughts

Lesson 10



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Understand how the process of temptation occurs.
- Learn to recognize when temptation has become sin.
- Examine their lives to identify temptations.
- Decide to live in the freedom that Jesus Christ gives us.



Resources

- Bibles in several versions
- Black board or large sheet of paper to write on.

Introduction

In the previous lesson, we talked about addictions and the dangers they represent. However, we decided to leave the most widespread addiction in our world to be addressed in a lesson on its own: sex.

A recent poll found that 62 percent of Christian men struggle with sexual temptations and sins. And we know that this is not an exclusively male problem. It is sad to see how in our day both women and men - even in Christian churches - fall into sexual sins!

We live in a society obsessed and enslaved by sex. The most visited pages on the Internet are not business or news, but pornography. Unfortunately, this is a business that rakes in millions of dollars a year around the world, and the main consumers are children or adolescents 12 to 17 years old. Millions of people are fed daily with doses of violent sex, torture, rape, sex with animals, and sex with children, homosexual sex, and sex with objects, among others. All they have to do is click a link on their computer.

Pornography not only disintegrates the family, but also destroys the individual. In pornography, women cease to be helpers, cease to be people, and become objects of pleasure and the target of sexual aggression. Pornography makes young people believe that women “enjoy” being undressed, abused and even raped. Pornography portrays relationships outside marriage as an exciting and desirable experience. Sex in pornography is a selfish experience, totally opposite to the man-woman relationship for which God has designed us. This is why it causes more and more divorces, and is interfering with young people in carrying out successful dating relationships.

It has been shown that addiction to pornography leads to sexual perversity and criminal acts, and promotes child prostitution, the rape of children by relatives, and sex tourism. Did you know that there are 300,000 child sex slaves in the world? And that these children have been sold by their parents or have been kidnapped and are imprisoned in prostitution networks? Many of them are in our countries.

All of this is offered continually and we are bombarded by the media and offered sexual pleasure without limits. Is it possible for the Christian to keep his thoughts pure?

We will devote this lesson to understanding the process by which we are tempted, and the keys that the Bible gives us to overcome.

Bible Study

1. WE MUST ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR SIN



Have students complete activity 1

In James 1:12-18 the apostle James shares the seven stages of the process of the temptations we face.

Verse 13 says: *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;”*. When people fall into temptation, it brings negative consequences to their life and home. Often the first thing they do is blame someone else. When a husband cheats on his wife, the excuse is that the wife does not look pretty anymore. When the son falls into drug addiction, it’s the parent’s fault because they did not love him enough. When a man rapes a girl, it’s because she dresses provocatively. People always look for someone else to blame, and some even blame God saying, “God did nothing to stop me.” or “God took me to that place or led me to that situation.”

This is what happened to our first parents, Adam and Eve. Adam blamed the woman that God had given him. Eve blamed the snake who persuades her to eat (Genesis 3:12-13). It is interesting that Adam mentions that the woman who led him to sin was the one God had given him. In other words, Adam was holding God responsible for his disobedience, rather than assuming his own guilt. When we sin, and accuse others of our weakness, we only make things worse.

James clarifies this important aspect. If we say that God is the culprit of our sin, or we want to hold others responsible, we are denying the truth. Taking responsibility for our actions, be they good or bad, is a sign of maturity.

2. THE SEVEN STAGES OF ALL TEMPTATION

In James 1:12-18, the apostle speaks of 7 stages of temptation. To understand them better we are going to see them in a historical example: David and Bathsheba.



Ask students to open their Bibles to 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

We all know the story of King David, one of the national Jewish heroes. The Bible does not hide David’s fall into sin. Thank God, the Bible shows us the servants of the Lord in their struggle with temptations, and we can learn from these examples. Let’s see how this story begins.

Verse 1 says that it was the time when the kings went out to war, and David stayed in Jerusalem. All his servants had gone out, all the men of the city who were old soldiers went out, but David stayed. Maybe he was tired of doing his duty or maybe a little stressed.

Verse 2 says that one day at dusk he got up from the bed and started looking from his balcony to see what his neighbors were doing. David was bored and he had spent the

whole afternoon napping! His idle mind and his boredom provided the opportunity for temptation. David had been a bad steward of his body; he had worn himself out at work. A weakened body, mind, or emotions make us weak to resist temptations. It was then that he saw a beautiful woman who was bathing.

First stage: “Take a look”.

James says: “... *but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire*” (v. 14a); tempted by an exaggerated desire for something.

Anything that breaks into our life can become a temptation: a letter, a website that opens, the neighbor’s new car, a friend’s handsome boyfriend, the cashier who gives us back too much change, someone who insults us in the street, a new job that takes us away from home, among others.

At this stage, there is still no sin, but when you feel that your thoughts are leading you into an area of danger or one that relates to an area that you recognize as a weakness in your life, flee from it and keep that thought away from you. David did not, and the temptation went on to the next stage.



Have students complete activity 2.

Second stage: The desire is activated...

James says: “*dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed...*” (verse 14b).

In the middle ages, monks and nuns were locked in monasteries because it was thought that if they should live apart from objects, people or situations that could present temptations, sin-free life would be possible. Eventually they discovered that although the sources of temptation disappeared, the sinful desires remained in their lives.

It is important that we can detect the source or the desire behind our temptations, because the temptations seduce us by the intimate desires that are in our mind and heart.

What James wants to teach us is that the source of temptation is not that pretty young woman, but the lustful heart; not the easy money through stealing, but the greedy heart; not my neighbor’s brand-new car, but my vain heart.

It is desires that make a temptation particularly attractive to us. Are all wishes bad? No. Desires were given to us by God. God made us with the ability to be hungry, but when we concentrate too much of our time in eating it turns into gluttony, it is sin. God made us with the ability to share love in sexual intimacy with our spouse, but when self-control is lost and satisfaction is sought outside of that relationship, it becomes sin.

In 2 Samuel 11:2-3, we see that David, far from looking away and doing something to keep that tempting image out of his mind, kept thinking about it. David’s sexual desire went out of control and he was burning for an unknown woman.

In the second stage, all temptation invites us to satisfy our desires by going outside the limits that God has established.

Third stage: sin seduces us.

David's own lusts for this woman laid a trap for him, baiting him. James says that we are drawn and seduced by our own desires. To seduce means to attract skillfully and awaken desire or hope for something. David was being seduced, so he goes about finding out who she was.

In this stage of seduction, sin was still in the arena of temptation. As desire grows in David, the desired object becomes the priority of his life, and everything else, including his family, his reputation and God himself, goes into the background. All energy and thoughts are now focused on what David wants.

In Proverbs 7:21-23, we have a good example of how temptation progresses in this stage of seduction: *“With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.”*

These three first stages of temptation work to provoke our desires. Satan knows he has more chance of knocking us down when he attacks our weakest areas; these are those in which we have fallen or almost have fallen previously. In those in which we have never sinned, it takes more time. However, exposing ourselves to continuous seduction may increase desire, and this area that was once strong may weaken.

In the third stage, temptation seeks to increase our desire, and for this desire to rule over our thinking and lead us to make decisions to satisfy it. Up to this point, you and I can stop the temptation. If it is external, get away from it. If it is in the mind, force yourself to think of other things to get your attention off of it! With the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we can control our unlawful desires! We must control this desire and not let it govern our thoughts and our lives!

Fourth stage: Temptation gives birth to the possibility of sin

James says: *“Then, after desire has conceived...”* (v.15). The stage of seduction begins when the desire has been awakened, and ends in the fourth stage when the person begins to reflect on the possibility of sin. At this stage, David is deciding whether to sin or not to sin.

David, perhaps in the hope that this woman would be single, asked who she was. If so, he could take her as another of his wives. But if she was married, this desire could lead him to break one of the Ten Commandments that says, *“You shall not covet your neighbor's wife...”* (Exodus 20:17). The informants tell him that her name is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11:3). Surely David, as we do, thought a few moments about what he would do.

Thoughts at this stage focus on the justification or rationalization of sin. We begin to argue in favor of the activity, and we tell ourselves why not? Am I not free to do what I want? Am I not entitled to satisfy this desire? We try to give ourselves permission to commit sin, but to do so we must first minimize the reasons for not doing so. What we try to do is take a negative reason not to do it and make it a positive reason to do so.

For example: A young man who is engaged as a boyfriend and is tempted to have sex with another girl before marriage. The negative reason is that he and his girlfriend made the promise

to stay virgins up to marriage. But the young man begins to seek justifications for not fulfilling that promise. He remembers then that on some occasions she had humiliated and treated him badly. Then he concludes by saying to himself, “After all, she does not deserve me to be faithful to her.” The temptation achieved its objective, transforming the negative rationale into positive. Now he feels free and entitled to sin. Now all that remains is to draw up the plan of action.

Let’s see the progression here: to be attracted, to think and to plan, everything happens inside us. So far, while we are still conversing with our conscience about this idea of sin, we are in the field of temptation. Can we go back? Yes, and if we do, we will not have committed sin.

If we continue to the front line of the battle, we will enter a dangerous zone. The next three steps are sin and more sin.

Fifth Stage: The decision to sin is made

When did David’s temptation become sin? When David made the decision to sin. James says “... *after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin*” (James 1:15).

In 2 Samuel 11:4, it says that David sent messengers to bring her to his bedroom; he slept with her and then sent her back to her house. This is what happens in the fifth stage: from thought to action. Once the decision has been made, sin is usually brought to action quickly. David sinned from the moment he sent for Bathsheba with the intention of committing adultery with her, because he had already decided to disregard God’s command and to satisfy his selfish desires.

Sometimes there is a time to reflect even after making the decision. In the case of the sons and daughters of God, the Holy Spirit speaks internally to our spirit and tries to dissuade us from the error that we are going to commit. When people are determined to sin and extinguish this voice of the Spirit in their hearts, there is no return. But if instead we allow the Spirit to help us examine this sin, we can be persuaded to abort the plan before it is too late.

That is why Jesus says in Matthew 5:28 that anyone who looks at a woman (or a man) to covet her, has sinned in his heart. This is why pornography is also so dangerous in any form: magazines, internet, movies for rent, television, nudist clubs, etc. Pornography offers us the possibility of having sinful sex only using our mind, senses and emotions. However, this does not satisfy the desire. Desire seeks expression, seeks to take us from thought to action.

If we have committed this sin or any other sin, it is better to repent and abandon it before it goes to the next level.

Sixth stage: Sin is realized

James 1:15 says, “... *sin, when it is full-grown...*”.

What happened to David’s sin? Did it end there? No, it became a chain of sin that enslaved him more and more.



.....○

Ask students to complete activity 3.

||| Ask students: How does this chapter end in 2 Samuel 11:27? The answer will be: "... But the thing David had done displeased the Lord." |||

David tried first to hide his sin, but he did not succeed. Then he tried to fix it, but everything he did with his human cunning made things worse. He believed that he had control, but in fact sin was controlling him.

Seventh stage: Sin enslaves us

James says that sin "...when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (1:15). Once sin has begun, it never ends. Sin is born and grows; it is repeated again and again. It becomes more extensive and deeper. Sin will never be satisfied until it has everything from us. Sin is like a fast car. Its goal is to crash into the rocks at the end.

If it is love of money, money will never be enough; if it is anger, we will not stop until it poisons the whole of our soul and that of our loved ones; if it is a sin of envy, we will never be happy with what we have; if it is sexual sin, we will never feel satisfied.

The Bible warns us about the danger of falling, even believers, under the dominion of sin. In David's case, adultery led him to lie, to deceive, to murder, and to be responsible for the death of his innocent son. But thank God that history does not end there.

3. JESUS CHRIST MAKES US FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

2 Samuel 12 says that the prophet Nathan visited David, and after hearing the word of God, David repented. David was restored by God, and never again committed that sin. He is listed in Hebrews 11:32 as an example of a man of faith, and in Matthew 1:6 as the ancestor of Jesus.

David understood that it was no use trying to hide his sin before God. He realized that by himself he could not get rid of sin. How is your life today?



.....○ **Ask the students to complete activity 4.**



.....○ **Encourage students to complete activity 5 at home and to read the "Recommended Reading" during the week.**

||| Finish with prayer, taking the needs of the students to the Lord. |||



Definition of Key Terms

- **Concupiscence:** sexual desire; lust; ardent, unusually sensuous, longing.
- **Sexual lust:** Intense sexual desire or appetite; when the sexual desire moves in the opposite direction to the will of God.
- **Seduction:** the enticement of a person to engage in sexual intercourse through the use of deception.



Summary

Desires serve our needs and have been given to us by God: eating, having friends, showing sexual love to our spouse, the taste for beauty, among others, are legitimate desires that we all have. When we are tempted to do wrong, these desires soar. We are seduced to satisfy them outside of the limits set by God. If we dwell on those thoughts, they will lead us to make decisions against the will of the Lord. And when we put them into practice, whether in our thinking, speaking or our actions, we will be disobeying God. Sin never fully satisfies these desires and seeks to enslave and bring death to its victim. Jesus Christ triumphed on the cross over sin and death. Thanks to him, we can overcome temptations and be completely free from the bondage of sin.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Put students in groups of two or three and have them read the passage from James 1:12-18 in different versions.

Here is the passage in the Message version of the Bible.

¹²Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.

¹³⁻¹⁵ Don't let anyone under pressure to give in to evil say, "God is trying to trip me up." God is impervious to evil, and puts evil in no one's way. The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us. We have no one to blame but the leering, seducing flare-up of our own lust. Lust gets pregnant, and has a baby: sin!

Sin grows up to adulthood, and becomes a real killer.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ So, my very dear friends, don't get thrown off course. Every desirable and beneficial gift comes out of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light. There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle. He brought us to life using the true Word, showing us off as the crown of all his creatures.

ACTIVITY 2

In groups of 3 to 4, discuss the following...

What can a Christian do if he is alone and accidentally opens pornography on his computer or finds a TV channel where there is a movie with provocative sex scenes? How can that person flee from temptation?

ACTIVITY 3

Read the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:5-27 and list all that David did to try to "hide and fix" his sin.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

ACTIVITY 4

Are you in danger of falling into temptation these days? Examine your life by answering the following questions.

- a. Is there a sin currently awakening desires in you? _____
(If your answer is yes, you have reached stage 1).
- b. On the scale of 1 to 10, how intense is that desire in you? _____
(If your answer is 5 to 10 you are in stage 2).
- c. How long have you been thinking about this? _____
(If you have spent some time thinking about it, you have already reached stage 3).
- d. On the scale of 1 to 10, how bad do you consider this sin? (1 is a sin that you consider to be not too bad and 10 very bad). _____
(Whatever your answer is, you are in stage 4, but if your score is greater than 8 you are treading dangerous terrain).
- e. Are you trying to find reasons to justify this thing you want to do? _____
(If your answer is yes, you have reached level 4).
- f. Have you thought of a plan to do this thing that you desire? Have you imagined or made a mental picture of what it will be like when you take this action? _____
(If your answer is yes, you are in stage 5).
- g. Have you carried out this plan of action only once? _____ (If you answered yes, you are in level 5).
- h. Have you been active in this sin for a long time? _____
(If your answer is yes, you are at level 6).

According to your answers, mark in the following graph which stage you are now in.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Looking	Desire	Seduced	Pregnancy	Birth	Realized	Death
“dragged away by their own evil desireis attracted (by desire)...	...and seduced. As a result...	...evil desire after it has been conceived...	... gives birth to sin;	... sin, when it is full-grown...	... gives birth to death.”
DESIRE			THOUGHTS	ACTION		
No Sin			Decision To Sin	Sin	More Sin	Great Sinfulness

ACTIVITY 5

Make a list of the qualities of right thinking that pleases our Lord, according to Philippians 4:8, and memorize this text for next week.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

RECOMMENDED READING

Respond to the temptation with the truth revealed in the Word of God. Below is a list of Bible passages that will help you fill your mind with the truth of God during this week and help you to pray to be free from impure thoughts.

- **Leviticus 18.** Examine your life to see if there is any impure thought related to these sins and confess to God these thoughts in prayer. If you are aware that this thought has become sin in your heart, acknowledge that continuing in it will hurt you, your family, your church and those who are being touched by your Christian witness and service. Ask God for forgiveness and renounce that sin.
- **Romans 6:10-14.** Pray: “I renounce this temptation and submit my whole being to serve God in righteousness and holiness. Thank God for the death of Jesus Christ who makes us free from sin.”
- **2 Corinthians 5:14 to 7:1.** Pray: “I recognize that there are desires in me that make this temptation seduce me. Lord, please give me self-control to control these desires with the power of your Spirit that dwells in me. Sanctify these desires Lord. May these desires be fulfilled in obedience to your will.”
- **Ephesians 4:22-32.** Pray: “I am aware that the Holy Spirit dwells in my life and I do not want to offend or sadden him by committing sin of any kind. Lord, deliver me from sinning in my thoughts, through what I say, and by my actions.”
- **1 Corinthians 10:12-13.** Confess with your mouth: “I believe that my Savior will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can resist.” Thank the Lord for His grace.
- **1 Corinthians 3:16-17.** Pray: “Lord, I have promised you to be holy in all my life. Help me fulfill this promise. Lord, I have submitted to your will and your leadership in all areas of my life. Strengthen my will to be faithful.”



Truth as a Standard of Life

Lesson 11



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Recognize that our God is a God of truth; He is both righteous and upright, hates lying and all kinds of evil.
- Understand that as children of God, they must commit themselves to live in truth and total honesty.
- Be aware of the damage that these works of the flesh produce in the life of the Christian.
- Examine their lives to identify any kind of these works of the flesh.
- Choose a life free from lies, gossip, slander and murmuring.



Resources

Find someone who is willing to get in disguise and act. The person will be hidden until the moment indicated in point 5. The idea of this representation is that the students understand more about appearances or hypocrisy as a form of lying. To hide the true person, you can choose from the following options:

- A mask and clothes that are totally different.
- If you can get a makeup artist to transform a volunteer. They must be so changed that their true appearance is hidden (you can use a wig, mustache, beard, eyebrows, clothes, etc.).
- You could use a complete disguise such as those used for publicity that completely hides the person. They could be dressed up as Santa Claus for example or in a sheet to look like ghost or as Batman etc.
- Another option is to use a computer program and make the transformation from a picture of someone known from the church.

Introduction

We live in a world where telling the truth is not the common thing. In most areas of life, lies, fraud, and deceit are like daily bread. Politicians, for example, lie, promising what they know beforehand they cannot fulfill. Advertisements do not tell us the whole truth about the products they offer, and to make more profit, they offer harmful products such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages and others, making us believe that if we consume them, we will be more loved and happier.

We live in a world full of lies, falsehoods, frauds, deceptions, false appearances and other kinds of evil. This problem also infiltrates our churches and homes.

Take the case of Christians who are asked why they are late or why they did not fulfill some assigned responsibility. More often than not, they reply with “excuses” which are lies. We also find Christians who give less tithe than they should; preachers who exaggerate the truth; parents who deceive their children with “white lies” or who ask their children to lie for them saying, “my mom is not in” when the debt collector comes to the door. Lies have corrupted our world, our society, our governments, our institutions and at times even our families.

But the Word of God tells us the truth about this problem - that falsehood is in the heart of human beings. That is where lies, gossip, deceit, hypocrisy and false appearances are generated. That is why in this lesson we will discuss the subject of lying from the divine perspective.

Bible Study



Begin this section by doing activity 1.

1. WHY, AND FOR WHAT, DO PEOPLE LIE?

Ask the class: “How and why do people lie?”

Write the question and summarize the class ideas on the board.

Let’s look at some reasons we find in the Bible for why people lie:

- a. We lie for fear of being harmed

Avoiding suffering of any kind is something that relates to our instinct for survival, so all human beings try to avoid pain. In the book of Genesis 12:10-20, we are told

the story of Abraham who lied about his relationship with his wife Sarah, saying that she was his sister (Gen. 12:13). Sarah was actually his half-sister, daughter of his father Terah, but of a different mother (Gen. 20:12), but she was also his wife. This was not strange since at that time, marriages between relatives were common. Sarah was a woman of rare beauty, so much so that a powerful man like the Pharaoh of Egypt would have no trouble killing her husband and making her a part of his harem. This was enough reason for Abraham to lie to protect his own life.



- **Ask a student to read Genesis 12:18-20 and ask the students “What happened when Abraham’s lie was discovered?”**

In fact, the lie exposed Abraham to a much greater danger when it was discovered.

- b. We lie to escape responsibility.

When we make up an excuse, it is to avoid the responsibility that we should have carried out. Lying does not eliminate responsibility for doing the right thing.



- **Ask students to give examples of excuses that people make to avoid responsibilities.**

- c. We lie when we think that God will not take care of our needs.

In Genesis 27, the story of Jacob is told of how he usurped his brother Esau’s birthright, lying to obtain his father’s blessing, which granted him the right to be the spiritual and material leader of the family. Jacob tried to solve his problem in his own way, using cunning and deception. Our lack of faith in God’s ability, or our doubts that He wants to act on our behalf, can make us take things into our own hands, which like in Jacob’s case will lead to serious consequences.

- d. We lie to take advantage of others.

Deceiving on the weight or the price of a product, lying about another person in order to damage their reputation, lying about a coworker so as to get a promotion, promising things we are not able to do, talking about ourselves so that people will think well of us, among others are examples of this. The Bible tells the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) who wanted to deceive the church by lying about the offering they were giving so that everyone would think they were very generous. But they could not deceive God who punished them by causing them instant death.

- e. We lie when we are not honest with God.

It should be natural for every human being to appear before God as we are; after all, we cannot deceive God, right? But the reality is that we human beings have trouble being absolutely sincere. There are many who deceive themselves by seeking God solely for deceitful motives. There are those who seek God for fear of going to hell, others for a miracle, others for economic prosperity. There are those who only seek him for work, and even those who want a boyfriend or girlfriend! Seeking God for illegitimate reasons is dangerous.



○ **Ask a student to read Jeremiah 29:12-13.**

In these verses, we find two sentences worthy of analysis: *“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*

“With all your heart” involves intentionally seeking what we want to achieve. What God is saying to the prophet is that He wants his people to seek Him with confidence and sincere interest. The opposite of sincerity is hypocrisy. The hypocritical person lives his life full of lies, lives pretending what is not true, and tries to deceive others much of the time. Jesus Christ openly showed God’s rejection of hypocritical persons, especially those who pretended to live a life of obedience to God in public, but actually took advantage of others to benefit themselves (Matthew 23:13-15).

Every lie is born of a selfish heart, and one which is fearful of losing what it has.

2. GOD IS A GOD OF TRUTH

Our God and Father has attributes or qualities of his own that make him unique. One of them is truth, truthfulness, honesty. One of the biblical passages that reveal this is Deuteronomy 32:4: *“He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”* As we see, our God does not lie and will never lie. Everything He has revealed is true. Everything he has promised has been fulfilled or will be fulfilled. All that remains to be accomplished will come to pass.

Our Savior Jesus Christ as God is also truthful; everything He has done and said is true. It is true when He says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). This statement is also true: *“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life”* (1 John 5:11-12). There is no other way, no other person can save us ... Jesus is life.



○ **Ask three students to read 1 Peter 2:21- 22, Isaiah 53:9, Revelation 3:14.**
Ask the class “¿What do these passages tell us about what Jesus Christ is like?”

If we know Jesus Christ well, we will see that He is sincere and honest. He did not and does not lie or deceive anyone.

The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of truth, and just one of His ministries is to lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

We can conclude this point by stating that our God is a God of truth. All His ways, ideas, plans, facts, and promises are true. He does not lie to get anything from us. He does not say one thing and do another. Our God is 100 percent reliable. He will never deceive us, nor will he lie to us. Neither will He let us down, or disappoint us.

3. GOD’S CHILDREN MUST BE LIKE THEIR FATHER.

God expects his children to speak the truth. Jesus gave us an example in this. The Bible says that He, *“...committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth”* (1 Peter 2:22).



Have students complete activity 2.

The children of God have been begotten by a true God. We follow a Lord who is the incarnate Truth of God, and we must live a life totally free of falsehood in everything we do. God wants us to get rid of lying, because this practice belongs to the old way of life, when we were not sons and daughters of God.

||| If those who tell lies are not recognized as children of God, then whose children are they? Have students look for the answer in John 8:44. |||

The life of people who constantly lie makes them look like their real father, who is the Devil. The children of God speak the truth, just as their Father does. Whoever lies is in sin, and this sin separates us from God, and will lead us to death. For that reason, God warns us in His Word to be careful not to be enslaved again through lies.

4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A LIFE BASED ON TRUTH?

We can mention at least five:

a. The truth makes us free from the need to wear masks or to carry out a façade.

In some countries, there are laws that protect old buildings. For example, in Barcelona, Spain, one can find the front of an old building that has been cut and separated from the original building which has been demolished. And behind, a meter apart, we can find the new building. They leave the door open in the old façade so that the people can pass through to the new modern building. The people who work in these hidden buildings have no other choice but to live with a façade that is not real; that does not say anything about who they are and what they do. Obligated by law, they are giving passers-by a false image. But Christians are not to live with a façade that hides who we really are. Nothing prevents us from living honest lives. There is no need to maintain an appearance of what we are not.

To live a life of truth is to be the same person in public and in private. Honesty includes projecting an outward image of what really is within us.

b. The truth frees us from the shame of being discovered in a lie.

The second benefit of living in honesty is that it frees us from the feeling of guilt or the fear that the lie will be discovered.

c. The truth frees us from deceiving ourselves.

The Bible teaches us that who we are and what we believe determines how we live (Luke 6:45). But if we believe things that are not true, we will be bound and limited. Sometimes we build our lives on lies. We live in a world of falsehoods where it is easier to believe in them because everyone else does. There are also the lies that we have invented. Many people deceive themselves in such a way that they come to believe their own lies. Over time, this bad habit leads them to not be able to distinguish between the lie and the truth.

d. The truth makes us free from guilt.

As God's children, if we lie, we feel bad and sad. This is thanks to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we continue living out lies and do nothing to make things right, our relationship with God is affected (Psalm 32:3-4, Romans 6:23, John 9:31). But when we speak the truth, we are freed from the burden of guilt (Psalms 32:5; 1 John 1:9).

e. The truth unites us more to God.



- Ask two students to read Psalm 15:2 and Proverbs 12:22 and Ask the class: "Who are the people God prefers to be with?"

When we speak the truth, we walk with God and He walks with us. We reflect Him when we live in the truth. We can only be useful to God and to our fellow human beings when we live in the truth.

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT PURIFIES LYING HEARTS AND LIPS

Perhaps you have that inner battle and you have been struggling for some time with this problem in your heart. If you are one of those people who are trying to change and leave behind lies and falsehood but have failed, this is because there is a bad habit that has taken root in your life.

||| At this point in the lesson, get the person in the disguise and makeup to come in. Ask the class, "Who is this person?" After laughter and comments, ask the class: "What is it that prevents us from seeing this person as he/she really is?" (They should be well-made up so that you do not see who they really are until the end of the class; they will probably have to fake their voice and walk and stand differently). Ask the actor: "What is your name? What are you doing this for?" (They must answer using pure lies). |||

The key to getting rid of deception is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:22-25.

||| After reading this passage, ask the students to mention the verbs (the ones that are commands to us) in this passage and write them down on the board. i.e. put off, make new, put on, put off falsehood and speak truthfully. Then ask the class. "Who has to do all this, God or us? The answer is, "us". |||

Some Christians fail in their struggle against sinful habits because they are mistaken in believing that God will do everything. But nothing will happen if we think this way. It is true that God purifies us, but it is us who must live in purity .. it is God who forgives us, but it is us who have to leave sin in the past of our life, instead of bringing it to the Christian life.

These four phrases show us the way to be free from the lies in our life. Let's look at each one of them.

Put Off

Ephesians 4:22 says: “*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;*”

A family was being plagued by ants in their house. They had fought the ants with aerosol products, chlorine, garlic and even the traditional smashing with shoes! But they could not get the ants out. At last they called the fumigator to come and give them his opinion of a solution. The homeowner asked him which product he was going to use in the process. The fumigator replied, “That will depend on how long you want to keep the ants out of your house. If you want the problem to end definitively, we must apply a very strong product, bathe all the internal and external walls of the house, cut the branches of the trees that touch the ceiling and re-examine and review from time to time.”

Christians sometimes try to get rid of the sin in their lives by doing as little as possible. But lives cannot be changed that way. We have to get rid of our past way of life. We have to get sin out of our life, just as we remove the rubbish from our house each week so that it does not rot and start to smell bad. In the Christian life, without renunciation, without paying the price, there is no possibility of winning the battle.

||| Ask your actor: “How do you feel with all these clothes and makeup? Do you want to get rid of all the makeup and the disguise to become who you really are?” (The idea is that he/she responds badly, feeling tired, hot, uncomfortable, and wanting to get out of this stuff!). Ask them to go change and take off their make-up and then come back. (See if they need to leave or if they can do it in front of the class with some help.) |||

Make new, Put on

Ephesians 4:24 says: “*...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

Jesus offers us new clean garments. What do we do when we are going to put on new clothes? We take the old ones off and we bathe first, right? Why are we doing this? For many reasons; one is that new clothes will not look good on top of the old ones and we do not want to dirty the clean clothes. The same is true of the life of Christ. This new life does not look good on a person where there is sin, and what is even worse, it is a bad testimony to unconverted people. People who follow Christ bear His name and we must live in the truth.

The only way to clothe ourselves with the life of Christ is to accept that we need to be transformed into a new person by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our daily lives. But if we keep thinking that our lives are good as they are, nothing is going to happen and we will continue to be tied to lies. Putting on Christ’s clothes is a never ending process. We have so much to learn from Him; so much to correct in our lives; so many areas to learn to imitate Him! Putting on Christ’s clothes is something we must do every day, as when we get dressed when we get up.

||| Now show the actor without makeup or disguise and ask the class: "Can we recognize him/her now? Who is he/she? After they say their real name, proceed to the next point. Although the actor should not talk, when asked if he / she feels better, he/she can respond with signs or with a smile or by giving a little jump of joy. |||

Speak truthfully

But putting off sin, renewing ourselves, and putting on Christ's clothing is not enough. We have only made some superficial changes. The truth is that the only way to change a bad habit is to replace it with a good one. The solution to stop lying is not to stop talking, but to speak the truth. The key to stop lying is to love. When we are filled with the Spirit of love, we receive the ability to begin to love as God loves. If we love our brother as God loves him, we will not lie to him, we will not speak behind his back, and we will not gossip against him.

||| Ask the actor now: "What should you do now to start speaking the truth with these people and ask their forgiveness for having lied to them." The idea is for the actor to move around the class and ask forgiveness of the students for wanting to deceive them, introducing themselves to the students with their real name. |||

God has the power to change a life of lies for a life of truth, but the decision is ours. There are only two ways to live, in falsehood or to live in Christ who is the truth. If we remain in falsehood, we cannot live close to God and serve Him as He wants. What will you choose to do?



Finish the class by inviting the group to complete activity 3 and to create a sentence like the ones included in activity 4. Encourage the students to speak the truth this week in all areas of their life, no matter what it costs.



Definition of Key Terms

- **To lie:** saying or doing something contrary to the truth. To make others believe something that is not true.
- **Hypocrisy:** the practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behavior does not conform; pretense.
- **Veracity:** conformity to facts; accuracy, always saying the truth.
- **Honesty:** honor, integrity, implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way.



Summary

Lies, deceit, hypocrisy and the like must die in the life of the Christian. Jesus taught that he who continues to lie does not belong to the family of God, but to that of the Devil. The only way to stop the bad habits of the old life is to make the decision to change. Jesus Christ has shown us how; we must live a life of truth, following His example. We must stop lying and speak the truth to one another; this is the only way to change this habit that brings so much damage to our lives, our family, our church, and society.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Evaluate yourself by this test: How sincere are you?

Instructions: Answer the following sentences using the key below:

T = TRUE (Yes, this applies to my life)

F = FALSE (No, this does not apply to my life)

? = Maybe (I'm not sure if this applies to me)

1. ___ Sometimes I say: "I would like to go, but I cannot," when in fact I could go.
2. ___ Sometimes I say that I was (or am) sick when I really am not.
3. ___ I have not always given the Lord's complete tithe.
4. ___ When someone asks me, "Do you know So-and-so?" sometimes I answer "yes" even though I do not know him or her.
5. ___ Sometimes I don't tell the truth about my age or my weight when I am talking to others.
6. ___ I do not comply with my responsibility to pay taxes.
7. ___ Sometimes I say, "I already sent you that mail" when in fact I have not.
8. ___ When someone asks me if I have read a certain book, I say yes when I have not read it.
9. ___ I say sometimes, "Yes, I remember that," when I had completely forgotten it until he/she mentioned it.
10. ___ I say sometimes: "I'm sorry I was late," giving any excuse I can invent.
11. ___ I tend to inflate numbers in reports and /or financial matters.
12. ___ I tend to manipulate and distort Bible verses to support what I say.
13. ___ Sometimes I say, "I will pray for you or I was praying for you" when it is not true, because I forgot.
14. ___ I admit that sometimes I add to the truth something that is not exactly the truth.
15. ___ Sometimes I use flattery or praise that is not sincere.
16. ___ Sometimes I am quiet when I hear a lie about another person, making myself an accomplice to that lie by my silence.
17. ___ Sometimes I pretend to be busier than I am.
18. ___ I cannot say that my resume for applying for a new job is completely accurate.
19. ___ Sometimes I lie because I am afraid that others will not appreciate me as I am.

ACTIVITY 2

Is lying among Christians acceptable or excusable? Read the following passages and complete the sentence. Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9, 1 John 3:5-8.

As children of God, we have been transferred from the kingdom of _____ to the kingdom of _____. We now have the power of God in our reach so we can drive away _____ from our life.

ACTIVITY 3

Make a list of those with whom you have not been absolutely sincere in the last weeks and months, to whom you should apologize.

ACTIVITY 4

If in the study of this lesson you have discovered and/or verified that you are not always truthful and honest with God, with yourself and with others, then you need to repent. "For lying lips are abominations to God..." (Proverbs 12:22a). It is necessary to die completely to that kind of life, to discard it, that is, to completely refuse to live a life that includes any kind of lie. If you have made the decision to change, do the following:

- Put all your faith in the true God who wants to help you live a life in the truth.
- Ask God in prayer for forgiveness; ask Him to cleanse you from the filth of lying, because you want to be His son or daughter of truth.
- Tell your Heavenly Father how much you want your life to change to be pleasing to His eyes.
- Make a commitment to God to leave in the past any lying word or behavior, and ask God for strength and perseverance to put on the truth of Christ each day.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Psalm 62
- Romans 1:18-32
- Revelation 14:1-5
- Proverbs 14
- 1 John 2:18-29



Let's Use Language to Bless

Lesson 12



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...


- Understand that being a blessing to others should be something natural in the lives of all Christians.
- Know the powerful tools they can use to communicate blessing to others.
- Assume their responsibility to be a source of blessing to their family, church, and all the people with whom they relate to day by day.




Resources

- Write on a large sheet of paper or the board this list of words: - Congratulations - Look how awkward you are! - Good Job! - What an idiot! - What did you wear? - That haircut looks horrible! - Did you see how fat she is ...? - Is that your friend? Be careful ... - Your participation was great! - I love you - Thanks - If you do this you will go wrong! - Forgive me - Let me accompany you in this pain! (You can add more harmful words if used on a daily basis by people in your context such as: silly, retarded, or other ... or replace some to make it easier for your group to understand the point).
- Highlight the five elements of being a blessing. You can write them on cards or on the board or you can illustrate with photos or drawings.
- If you were a person who was denied or given blessings in your home you can use your own testimony.

Introduction

Write on the board “God bless you,” “victorious, prospering and blessed” (you can include or replace these with other phrases used in context that include the word “blessing” or the verb “bless”). 

Encourage students to participate in answering the following questions: “What do people understand when we say phrases like these today?” “How do we use these words in the church?” They will mention for example: as a greeting, we bless children in dedication services, pastors bless new marriages, new houses, and new sanctuaries. 

Although we often use words like these, do we really understand what it means to bless? Is it important to practice blessing in our lives today? How much do we need to be blessed? We will answer these questions in the course of this lesson.

The verb, “bless”, in Hebrew literally means “to bend the knee.” In ancient times, this word expressed respect and reverence towards a person who was considered important. The blessing included words that emphasized a person’s worth rather than to only praise his works.



Have the class complete activity 1.

In this lesson, we are going to study the elements that make up a blessing, and how we can be people who bring blessing to our families and church.

Bible Study

1. A BLESSING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Old Testament times, a blessing was pronounced not in worship but in the heart of the family. This was carried out in the important moments of life such as a birth (Ruth 4:13-16), weddings (Genesis 24:60), and deaths (Genesis 48 and 49:1-28). The father of the family gave the blessing to each of his sons, and especially to the eldest son, the firstborn, who inherited double portion of the material possessions. But most importantly, the eldest son was given the responsibility of being the spiritual leader of the family (Genesis 27:1, 48).

The blessing in the Old Testament had unique characteristics. The first is that God used this concept of blessing to identify the line of the descendants of Abraham, through which our Savior Jesus Christ would come. The covenant of divine blessing was originally made with one family and passed on to its entire offspring, the people of Israel. The second is that God chose those who were to inherit this blessing, who in some cases were not the eldest

sons, as in the case of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 48:14) or Ephraim and Manasseh (Romans 9:11-13). The last particular aspect of the blessing in antiquity was its prophetic character. The words spoken in the blessing anticipated the supernatural action of God in the life of the person, and were irreversible. The blessing was imparted in perpetuity, that is, to all their descendants and could not be annulled or made inoperative (Genesis 27:33, 2 Samuel 7:29).

These three aspects of the blessing were unique to the people of Israel. With the coming of Christ, this blessing is for all the families of the earth who make it theirs when they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. However, we must emphasize the powerful elements that were present in this familiar blessing of the Old Testament and that we can use to bless others today.

2. THE FIVE BASIC ELEMENTS OF FAMILY BLESSING

There were five elements that were present in every blessing that was given in the families of Israel in antiquity and that still continue in the Jewish customs today. They were all present in the blessing of Isaac for his children, which we will use in this study.

1. Significant Physical Contact



○ Ask a student to read Genesis 27:26.

When a father pronounced the blessing to his children, he accompanied it with physical contact such as kissing, hugging, or laying on of hands, and this was an important aspect of the blessing. Today we know more about the importance of physical contact for healthy emotional development in people of all ages. “Touching” is a very important part of demonstrating affection and acceptance in almost all cultures, although customs vary.

||| Ask the class: “What are some forms of physical contact in our culture in which parents show their love and acceptance to their children?” “Can you give examples of different ways affection is expressed between spouses, friends, or children using examples from other cultures?” |||

In our time, science has shown that the sense of touch is not only in the hands, but in all the skin that covers our body. Underneath the skin there are nerve endings that transmit to our brain the sensations of pain, pleasure, comfort, heat, and cold, among others. God has made us all with the need to be loved and with the need to feel that affection through our skin. People who lack this kind of affection can get sick emotionally, psychologically and even physically. Shaking hands, patting backs, hugging and even kissing, as accepted by the customs of the social group, are small gestures through which we can impart integral health to the lives of those around us.

||| Ask the class: “What would be the appropriate and inappropriate ways to show affection and acceptance among people in the church, according to our culture?” If you have students in your class who are dating, ask: “What are the appropriate ways to show each other physical affection?” |||

2. Verbal Expression

Words of love and acceptance are the second element present in the blessing. In our time, the words of love and acceptance are scarce in many homes. Some families live in the same house but there is no meaningful communication between their members. Many parents mistakenly believe that children should understand that their parents love them because they care for their needs and are present at home, even if they never say it with their words. The truth is that these children will grow up insecure and see themselves as people of little value. Children interpret the silence of their parents as contempt. These are the children who then give work to counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

In the families of the Bible, the blessing was transmitted through speech. God speaks to his people, and with the birth of Jesus, we find that God blessed mankind giving us the “Word”, his Son, His Word made flesh, thus revealing the infinite magnitude of His love for us. God has been throughout all history a God who speaks and who communicates his love.

3. Expression Of Deep Appreciation

The third element of the blessing is the content or the message. These words expressed a deep appreciation.



◦ **Ask a student to read the words of Isaac’s blessing on his son in Genesis 27:27-29.**

These words describe a worthy person, a person before whom nations will bow! We should highlight the powerful use of metaphors in blessing by comparing our children with good things that have God’s approval.

||| Ask the class: “How can we use metaphors to communicate blessing?” |||

As for content, Isaac’s blessing to his son conveys strength, health, and prosperity, the latter refers to the fruitfulness of the family (Genesis 24:34-36) and of the cattle, which was the family’s livelihood (Genesis 30:25-27). The blessing points to the prosperity of the successive generations of the family. But it also produces peace and tranquility, security before enemies, and happiness and health of the family.

||| If the blessing contains words of appreciation, “What kind of words or phrases on this list can we classify as a curse these days?” Show the picture with the list of words you have prepared and ask a volunteer to come to underline the words. Then ask the class if they agree or if they think there is something that needs to be corrected?” |||

To be a blessing to our children, wife, husband, friends, we must speak words of affection, of value and respect.

4. The Description Of A Special Future



◦ **Ask a student to read Genesis 27:28,29.**

The fourth element found in the Old Testament blessing is the description of a special future for the person receiving it. These are words of good wishes that express the dream that a father or mother has for their children. In ancient times, these words were also a prophecy that God was in charge of executing. But our day is different.

Although today we cannot “guess” the future of our children, we can help them to value the capacities that God has given them and encourage them to have significant goals in their lives. We all feel safe when we are walking the path that leads us to be what God has planned for us. Many young people and adults today do not know what to do with their lives; many feel they have nothing of value to give to others.

As Christian parents, we have a responsibility to convey to our children a feeling of self-reliance so that they have the courage to make the effort necessary to become the good people God wants them to be.

We must ask ourselves questions like these: “What does God dream for my future?” “What does God dream for the future of my husband or wife?” “What does God dream for my children?” The answers to these questions will relate to the special abilities and potential that God has given each one to develop.

5. An Active Commitment

The fifth element of blessing refers to the responsibility assumed by the one who pronounces the blessing. The best example of this is in God’s relationship with the people of Israel.



.....○ **Have a student read Genesis 12:3.**

The Lord’s blessing to Abraham was not just words of good wishes that God communicated to him. God himself intervened in the life of his servant for this future to come to fruition. Even after Abraham’s death, God remained faithful and remained with his descendants while the blessing was brought to fruition in human history.

3. HOMES THAT LACK BLESSING

As we have seen so far, when our family cares about us and blesses us, they leave a positive mark on us. But some people have lived in homes where they were never blessed. This usually occurs because the parents lack knowledge or the ability to transmit it. This lack of blessing is sometimes transmitted from generation to generation.



.....○ **Ask a student to read Exodus 20:5 and ask, “What could be the effect of living in a home where no blessing has been given?”**



.....○ **Ask students to complete activity 2 which describes homes where no blessing has been given. Then ask the students if anyone wants to share their answer or their experience.**

The people who come from such homes keep anger or resentment in their hearts unless they forgive their parents or the relatives who have hurt them. They may have difficulty now giving and receiving blessing in their relationships. Christians are called to feel compassion rather than to criticize their parents. Most parents are people who really love their children, and even though they do not know how to show it, they do the best they can. Even in cases where it was not so, it is in our hands to treat them with love, to value them and to forgive them in the same way that God has forgiven us. The first step is to accept the fact that we have lacked the blessing in our home, and then make the decision to change history for ourselves and our family, instead of repeating this painful past.

4. THE MODEL OF BLESSING IN JESUS CHRIST

The understanding of blessing in the New Testament is guided by the Old Testament. The model of blessing in the New Testament is the person of Jesus Christ, who fulfills the promise of blessing to all the families of the earth that God made to his servant Abraham (Galatians 3:8-14). In Christ, the blessing of God became present in human history, putting an end to the power of sin. He who lives in the Spirit is under the blessing of God, and begins to enjoy in this life that complete and eternal happiness that God has prepared for his creation when Jesus Christ comes a second time to establish his eternal kingdom. In this new heaven and new earth, we can at last experience the full blessing of God, for all will be a blessing, and all that brings misfortune and curse can no longer reach us (Revelation 22:14).

In the New Testament, both in the life of Christ and in the Early Church, we find that the blessing was expressed not only on special occasions, but in the everyday and even casual situations of life. In the Gospels we find, for example, that Jesus blessed the children.



.....○ **Ask a student to read Mark 10:13-15.**

The disciples were surprised that Jesus took time to bless these children and their mothers. What for them was a waste of time, for Jesus was an investment of his life into valuable people. Jesus reveals to us by his conduct that the gospel is good news of blessing for all ages. For Jesus, children are people who have needs for words of affection, appreciation, caress, friendship. Blessing them is like a having a key to their growth towards mature Christian character.

Jesus taught his disciples that they should be agents of blessing.



.....○ **Ask a student to read Matthew 10:1-16.**

In this passage, Jesus sends them on mission to evangelize in different places where Jewish people lived. In verse 12, he orders them to give a greeting full of blessing when entering the house where they were given accommodation. The Hebrew word they used to ask for the Lord's peace over that house was "shalom," which is the form of greeting that the Jews use even to this day. It is interesting that Jesus tells them that they are bearers of the blessing and should take it wherever they go, even when they are in the middle of a hostile environment.

In this passage, we can see then that the blessing is not conditional on who can pay for it, or to who gives something in exchange for it, or to who "deserves" it, or because of

special friendship, or because of good treatment. We have in our hands the power to carry the message of salvation, the words of blessing that our world needs. This message of blessing is Jesus Christ.



.....○ **Ask students to complete activity 3.**

The mission of the disciples and Jesus was to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to show solidarity with the suffering of humanity. His goal was to bring happiness to people's lives. In the farewell blessing of the community of disciples, Jesus includes the elements of the blessing (Luke 24:50-53 and Matthew 28:16-20). Here the Lord communicates a sense of purpose to their lives and the promise of His presence so that they can carry it out successfully.

5. THE CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF BLESSING



.....○ **Have two students read Genesis 12:2-3 and Acts 3:25-26.**

From ancient times, God called Abraham to give birth to a people called to be a blessing to all the other families of the earth. In the New Testament, the blessing of God became flesh in his Son Jesus Christ. The Church is the Body of Christ that is present and acting in this world. Everything that Christians do in our daily lives and in the ministries we carry out should bring blessing to others.

In the book of Acts, we see that the blessing was not transmitted only by words in the Early Church, but by helping people achieve their full potential, (an example can be seen in the account of Acts 3 when Peter prays for the healing of the lame). People outside the church can only see God's blessing when they see believers committed to loving one another and loving unbelievers.

The Church was designed by God to be His family, that is, a community that cares for others. Although some have not received enough blessing in their homes, in the church we must learn to be brothers and friends who value each other and bless each other. In the church, we enjoy together and we cry together (1 Corinthians 12:26) and this is only possible when our fellowship and love is true. Better than any other human association, the church can supply the deficiencies of blessing that people may have suffered. When members of a church learn to share the five elements of how to bless, the ministry of the church and the life of its members will change completely.

These five elements of how to bless can also be a tremendous evangelistic tool in helping the church fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), making disciples and blessing a world in need with the free love of God that dwells in the Holy Spirit in our hearts.



.....○ **Have the group complete activity 4.**

End with a prayer for God's help for the specific needs your students have expressed.



Definition of Key Terms

- **Curse:** is every word that is pronounced with the desire to hurt or harm another (Job 31:30, Genesis 12:3). It is the opposite of blessing. He who lives in obedience to God has His blessing, and those who disobey and live in sin bring a curse/punishment on their lives, not because God wants to harm them, but because they have made the decision and have rejected the path of life and Salvation that God has provided in Christ (Deuteronomy 28:2, 15). Jesus Christ bore the curse/punishment of our sin upon himself by opening the door for us to receive the unfailing blessings of our Father God.



Summary

Today we often use the words “to bless” and “blessing” without understanding its real meaning. To bless in the Old Testament was a powerful tool for imparting security and love to children. Today we can also use these tools to build into the lives of our loved ones. In the New Testament Jesus Christ and the Early Church offer us models of how Christians can be a blessing to the lives of others. The words we speak are filled with power to change the lives of others when they are backed up by our actions of love. If we dispense with these, the spoken word becomes only a noise, void of meaning (1 Corinthians 13). The power of our words, as well as that of the Word of God, must be backed up by a corresponding testimony.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Read 1 John 1:1-4 and answer the following questions:

a. In what form or by what means were the apostles blessed to know the Word of Life first-hand?

b. How did they transmit that knowledge or blessing they received to others?

c. What does John expect to happen as a result of communicating this blessing to others?

ACTIVITY 2

Have you lived or are living now in a home like the following that deny blessing?

Home 1: When one son is blessed and the others are ignored (Read Genesis 37:3-4).

Jacob showed much affection and attention to his son Joseph, and to a much smaller extent to the rest of his other sons. These differences sowed emotions of anger, resentment, discouragement, depression and insecurity in the heart of the less favored brothers, and they grew to hate their brother. The favored child also suffers, feels guilty and acts defensively to his brothers and sisters. This occurs frequently in the case of children who have sports or academic abilities and stand out from the rest of their siblings, who because of their parents' favoritism towards them, are distanced from the companionship of their siblings and feel alone and rejected. To avoid this problem, parents should be careful to give equal blessings to all the people in their family, including their husband or wife.

Home 2: When the blessing cannot be achieved

Joseph was an engineer and a genius in his specialty; he was too demanding of himself and expected the same from his family. His son Charles tried to live up to the demands of his father but was never good enough to receive words of appreciation and recognition from him. When Charles brought home his grades, which was one of the best averages of his school, the only comment he received from his father was "you have not reached a perfect 100 in several subjects." This continuous rejection led Charles finally to want to end his life when, for the first time in college, he received a grade of 80 in a subject (which he considered low or insufficient). For Charles, the blessing of his father, no matter how hard he tried, was always beyond his reach.

Home 3: When you pay a very high price for the blessing

Some parents give blessings to their children, but at a terrible price. The blessing is given only in exchange for submitting to the selfish desires of their parents; like parents who cause their children to cry, or take revenge on their husband or wife, parents who abuse their children and threaten to abandon them or deprive them of care by forcing them to be accomplices on their actions. These children grow up with terrible fear and guilt. They come to believe that the happiness or well-being of their loved ones depends on them. Blessing children in order to manipulate them, or when children allow themselves to be manipulated to obtain blessing, is actually a blessing that is not

worth having because it is not sincere. The blessing of God is by grace, it is a gift, an undeserved favor given to a person to whom it is deeply valued.

Home 4: When the blessing is conditioned according to the traditions

Some parents deny the blessing to their children when they do not want to follow the rules of the game. These parents usually plan their children's future according to "the customs of their family". So they decide what their profession should be, to whom they must marry, where they have to live, how their wedding should be planned, where they will spend the holidays, etc. When a son or daughter does not meet these requirements, these parents deny them affection, keep them from their lives or eternally make them feel guilty for defrauding their parental desires.

Home 5: When the blessing is received only in part

There are different types of homes that leave the child with a half or incomplete blessing. The most common situations are when the child's parents divorce and one of the parents moves away from their children, when a parent leaves the family or when the child is given up for adoption.

ACTIVITY 3

Work in pairs. Read Luke 6:27, Romans 12:14, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 1 Peter 3:9, Galatians 3:13 and answer the following:

1. How should Christ's disciples respond when we are persecuted, insulted, or despised?

2. Is there any occasion in which it is lawful for a Christian to use the law of revenge: "an eye for an eye"?

3. What should be the "natural" treatment of the Christian towards the enemies?

4. Is it valid for Christians to speak badly about someone or to curse them?

5. List some examples of ways to bless the children of the congregation or the community who do not have the blessing of their parents.

6. If the mission of the church is to bless, how can we be a blessing to our neighbors and unbelieving friends? Mention two or three ideas.

ACTIVITY 4

How are you transmitting the blessing to your loved ones? Circle the number according to your answer.

		Almost Never Frequently
1.	I have significant physical contact with them	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2.	I verbally express words of blessing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3.	I express a deep appreciation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4.	I have described a special future for their lives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5.	In general, ... How is my level of commitment to help them achieve that special future?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If your answers have been closer to “almost never” than “frequently,” start making plans to reverse this situation today. Depending on your experience, consider doing things like these:

1. Ask God and your children for forgiveness for denying them the blessing.
2. Forgive your parents or the people who have hurt you and think of ways to bless them.
3. Discard all past words or attitudes that can hurt your family.
4. Choose positive and appropriate words to say to your children and your spouse. Think of ways to make them feel valued. Our positive comments can help them overcome their insecurities.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Genesis 48 and 49
- Matthew 15:1-20
- Luke 6:27-42
- Ephesians 1:1-14
- Revelation 21:9 - 22:27



Measure Your Progress and Follow the Goal

Lesson 13



Lesson Objectives

That the students might...

- Get to know the three stages of the process in which the mind of Christ is formed in the life of the Christian.
- Identify the twelve spheres that enslave the believer's mind.
- Evaluate their values and goals in accordance with Christ's values and goals.
- Measure their progress and set new goals to grow in their spiritual life.



Resources

- Prepare a sheet of paper or write on the board the list of spheres that enslave the mind.
- You can distribute cards with the biblical quotations that will be studied in the lesson. Choose students with a strong voice who read and speak well to read them out loud.

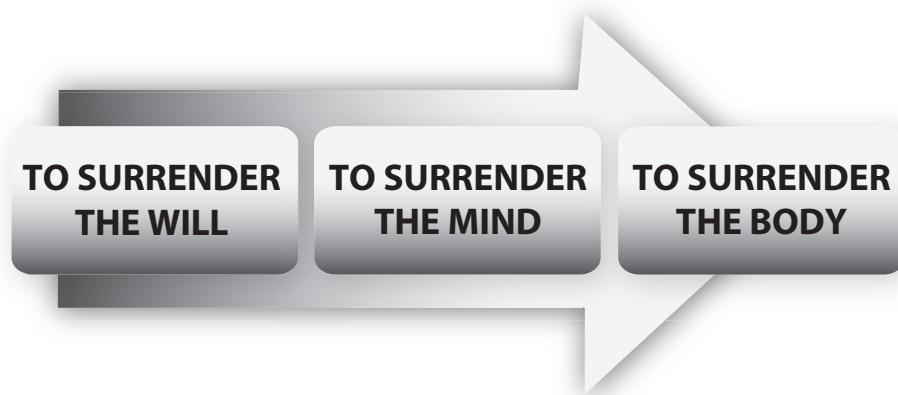
Introduction

The previous lessons of this quarter have helped us understand how different the life of the person who thinks like the world or who lives his life centered on his selfish desires is compared to the life of a Christian who thinks like Christ. For this, we have identified some of the harmful fruits produced in us through thinking like the world, and we have made decisions that have brought us closer to the holy life that Jesus wants for us.

In this last lesson, as a conclusion to the theme, we will study how to measure the process by which the Holy Spirit shapes the mind of Christ in us, and finally we will decide where we are in the process, identifying our weak areas and make new Goals for our spiritual growth.

Bible Study

Being conformed to the image of Christ is a process that lasts our entire life. It begins with the new birth, when we accept Christ and continues to develop through out our lives. In this process, we can identify three stages:



1. SURRENDER THE WILL OR FIX THE MIND ON THINGS ABOVE



.....○ **Have students read Colossians 3:2.**

We have seen in previous lessons that the deepest area of our lives that must yield to Christ is the will. The will is the part that makes the decisions, that guides our thoughts, governs our feelings, and directs our actions. We have instincts, but unlike animals, our will can rule over those instincts. The will is what allows us to do something or stop doing it instead of being dragged by feelings and instincts.

The only way we can be focused on what Christ wants for us is by giving our will to God. Jesus gave us the example in this. He was always aware that He had come into this world to do the will of God. Jesus was able to fulfill God's purpose for his life because from the beginning, he made the decision to surrender his will to God. As a result, in his life we can see a mind focused on the "things above".

2. SURRENDER OUR THOUGHTS OR "RENEW" OUR MINDS



.....◦ **Ask a student to read Romans 12:2.**

Paul tells us that the transformation of the mind is a process that is part of our spiritual growth. This renewal can only occur in the person who has surrendered his will to Christ.



.....◦ **Have students complete activity 1.**

The principle of growth in physical life and in the Christian life is renewal. When Christ comes to our life, he wants to do everything new: new thoughts, new feelings, new values, new desires, new ideas, new spiritual energy, new understanding of the Word, new appreciation of people and of ourselves, and new strength to resist temptations. All this is possible thanks to the renewing of our mind.

3. SURRENDER OUR BODY OR BE WILLING TO TAKE ACTION



.....◦ **Ask a student to read 1 Peter 1:13.**

As a result of this process of renewal of the mind, Christians have a new willingness to put their lives into the service of God. Peter illustrates this idea by comparing it to the custom of the people of his day who wore long dresses. These clothes were uncomfortable when doing some tasks or sports, and therefore had to be lifted and tied with the belt so it did not interfere with one's legs when they wanted to walk or run. When the person was ready to take action, he had to cling to his clothes and this was a sign that he was ready, prepared.

In the Christian life, we must prepare our minds for action. We see that Jesus was prepared to answer all sorts of questions that folk asked Him, even those who came to Him with evil intentions.



.....◦ **Ask a student to read Luke 20:20-40.**

Jesus was always prepared and mentally alert. His mind was fit for the ministry He had to perform.

||| Ask the class: "What does this teach us about the importance of training for Christian service?" |||

4. TRANSFORMED BY THE POWER OF GOD

After the experience of conversion, part of the growth process of the Christian is the struggle against established habits. We should not only think like Christ, but also follow His lifestyle. Is it possible that you and I can become like Christ? This seems like something impossible to accomplish.



.....◦ **Have a student read Hebrews 12:2.**

In this passage, there is great news. The person who is responsible for helping us be like Christ is God! This process does not depend only upon us.



.....◦ **Ask a student to read Philippians 2:13 and 1:6.**

In these passages, the apostle Paul says that God does two things for us. The first is to create in us the desire and ability to have the mind of Christ, and the second is that God is committed to finish this work in our life. God, who has called us to his family and has initiated us into this new life, is also committed to completing his work in us!

This process will not be easy. There will be moments of sacrifice, moments of discouragement, but we must not give up the fight or “throw in the towel,” because it is not only up to our endeavors to finish this work. Our responsibility is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, not on ourselves, nor on the circumstances that surround us. If we submit to Him and allow Him to work in our lives, we will witness the power of God transforming us to become like Christ.

5. TRULY FREE AS CHRIST IS

Another aspect in which our life must grow is in freedom from all forms of slavery. As we saw in this quarter’s lessons, there are many ways in which sin catches us, but God’s will is that we be completely free. This freedom has a purpose. God frees us from service to the world so we have freedom to serve Christ. We cannot serve Christ and serve the world at the same time. We must cut off all chains of bondage to sin in order to follow Jesus.

Jesus Christ was the freest person who ever walked on this earth. As his ministry unfolded, Jesus had to make decisions about what to say and when to say things, about where to go and when was the right time. Jesus made the right decisions, so His life was holy, and He could do it because He enjoyed the freedom to make the right spiritual decisions.

Unfortunately, not everyone who attends Christian churches makes these kinds of decisions. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:16. *“Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves.”*



.....◦ **Have a student read John 8:31-36.**

From the beginning of time, God’s purpose was to deliver us from all dominion of evil in our lives. That was His purpose in giving us the commandments, by giving us His Word and sending His Son. When we are saved, God frees us from all evil, but it is up to us to abandon it, to cut off the chains of the past that bind our lives.

Christians who continue to serve sin cannot grow in the image of Christ, and will not become the efficient servants that God wants them to be.

6. THE SPHERES OR AREAS THAT ENSLAVE US



.....◦ **Have a student read Galatians 5:1.**

To be free from mental slavery, we must identify the spheres or areas in which sin enslaves us. When the believer has his mind enslaved, his attention is focused on his passions, ambitions, grudges, loyalties and other things that bind him to this world and prevent him from being attentive to God, his Word and prayer.

T. W. Hunt and Claude V. King in their book “The Mind of Christ” explain that these spheres can be neutral or harmful.

Neutral Spheres

(These need to be transformed or restored)

Passions
Habits
Loyalties
Relationships
Prejudices
Debts
Possessions
Responsibilities
Ambitions

Harmful Spheres

(Must be eradicated)

Fears
Weaknesses
Offenses and Resentment

a) Neutral Spheres

We will begin by studying the neutral spheres because they are the easiest to solve.

Habits are those things that we do frequently. The Gospels tell us that Jesus had certain habits, such as teaching or going to the temple on the Lord’s Day (Luke 4:16); going to the Mount of Olives when he was in Jerusalem (Luke 22:39); praying (Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12). All these habits were good and so should ours be. If not, then we must take steps to make the necessary changes.



.....◦ **Have students give examples of bad habits that Christians have in their context.**

Many of these bad habits occur because we are careless, that is, we do not pay attention or we do not put enough effort to stop doing what we know is not of benefit. For example, there are people who are disorganized to the point that they lose their keys, lose documents, and even lose children! Some say as an excuse: “I am like this and I will not change,” but this is not true. What they really mean is “I am not willing to make any effort to change this habit.”

||| Ask the class: “According to the Christian life that Jesus shows us, is it correct to maintain a habit when it causes discomfort or suffering to other people’s lives?” |||

Passions and loyalties are those things that we defend. If I choose to stay at home on Sunday watching the football game instead of going to church, I am showing that following my favorite team is more important to me than going to church. If I make excuses to avoid helping with the Summer Holiday Camp because I like to watch TV shows, I am showing what my priority is regarding the use of my time.

||| Ask the class: “What were Jesus’ loyalties?” |||

Jesus was loyal to his Heavenly Father, loyal to his disciples whom he protected when they were accused and when he was arrested, loyal to his mother in worrying about her well-being. Our loyalties reflect our values. God wants our values and loyalties to be refocused on Him and His work.



Have students complete activity 2.

Relationships represent a sphere that many find difficult to give up to God. God wants to be the first in our life, our most important relationship. He also wants to be the most important person in the life of our wife, our children, and our friends. Sometimes people have problems in their relationships because they want to feel that they are the most important person in the other’s life. It is for this reason that there are husbands or boyfriends who feel jealous when their partner devotes a lot of time to serve the Lord. So instead of being a support for their ministry, they become a hindrance. Giving up our loved ones to God does not mean abandoning them, but recognizing that God occupies a more important place in their lives than we do. The Word of God teaches us that true love does not enslave, but makes the other person free; when we put our love relationships in correct order, our whole life changes.

||| Ask the class: “Is it okay to pray that my spouse, children, grandchildren and friends love God more than they love me?” |||

Yes, if I pray in this way, it means that I will also give my support when someone in my family needs time or help to serve the Lord, even if that means, for example, that God takes my children or grandchildren as missionaries to a country far away. Relationships in the Christian life are not for our own benefit, but through them to serve the Lord.

Prejudices are present in the lives of all people. Two Christian sisters who were looking for a place to congregate came to a certain church. They spoke to the pastor after the service about their desire to continue attending. The pastor, seeing that they were clothed humbly, asked them, “What do you do?” They responded that they were domestic servants and served in a neighborhood house. The pastor told them that he was very sorry to say that board members did not accept members of a “low” social class as members because this was an upper-class neighborhood and they believed that if they allowed poor people to attend, they would be alienating the rich people who might become interested in coming to church.

We may not have racial or social prejudices as extreme as this, but ... do we have any ideas about how to worship, or how God should act in a person’s life? The problem with our prejudices is that they are not actually based on the teachings of the Word, but rather on our preferences, our good or bad experiences, or what others have said. Prejudices are bad when they put limits on what God can or wants to do.

Ambitions include purposes, hopes and dreams. They are important because they lead us to fulfillment. Ambitions give us hope, lead us to a better future, encourage us to work hard and strive for what we want. The bad thing about some of our ambitions lies in the motivation that drives them. When motivation is selfish, it tends to trap us and make us its slaves. Many of our ambitions seek to bring honor to ourselves, which reveals a sin of pride. That is why it is so difficult to admit to it. The Spirit of God wants to guide us to die to these selfish ambitions and cultivate the ambitions that honor the Lord and seek to extend His kingdom. How then can we distinguish between good and bad ambitions?



.....○ **Have students complete activity 3 where they will find a guide to assess their ambitions.**

The **responsibilities and debts** we assume in life can also enslave us. The Holy Spirit wants to work in us by producing a sense of responsibility regarding our fundamental Christian tasks. Sometimes He helps us see if we are spending time on activities for which we are not trained or for which He has not called us. This is a difficult aspect, especially for those responsible people who do not want to say no when they ask for help. But in reality, we must make sure that we are investing our lives in what God has called us to and for which He has given us gifts.



.....○ **Have several students read Matthew 16:21, 16:23, and Mark 10:32.**

Jesus repeatedly expressed urgency for the task He had to do. He said: “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). Jesus had a sense of duty that guided him from the beginning of his ministry and never changed course. Jesus was always steadfast in fulfilling his responsibilities and was adamant in this. We can know the will of God for our lives through the commandments of His Word, through prayer, through the leaders that God puts over us, and the counsel of good Christians. We must rid ourselves of superfluous duties that are based on compulsion and bind our hands from serving God in eternal affairs.

In Lesson 5 we talked about the bondage of debts and the accumulation of assets and how being good stewards helps us to keep our goods and money in their rightful place. Jesus had nothing but the clothes he wore. This is a lifestyle difficult for us to understand, but we must still make the decision not to cling to our possessions so that they are not an impediment to serving the Lord, or can even be given to His work when He requests it.

b. Harmful Spheres

Finally, let’s see the harmful spheres of the mind enslaved by pride. All of the above spheres (which we call neutral) can be good when they are transformed and restored according to the mind of Christ, but the ones we will see below must be eradicated.

The first area of danger is our **fears**. Fears usually stem from our desire to protect ourselves. Fear of losing work, fear for the family, fear of the future, fear of aging, among others, all reveal a lack of trust in God, that is, a lack of faith. Fears are one of the most difficult areas to overcome, especially for those who have suffered acts of violence, abuse, or neglect. However, God’s will is that we live a life without fear.

**Read Philippians 1:20-21 and ask the class:
“At what point in his life did Paul achieved full security?”**

Paul had attained this confidence at the end of his life. Not even the fear of torture and death made him doubt that all the events of his life were under the control of the hand of God. Faced with the possibility of death, he showed courage that did not come from his own strength, but was imparted by the Holy Spirit who dwelt within him. But this courage and trust are not only for Paul but also for all the children of God: *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

When we surrender our lives completely into the hands of the Lord, we begin to experience an extraordinary sense of security. The Christian is gradually being transformed to feel more and more secure in Christ.

Weaknesses represent another harmful sphere of slavery. Sometimes we excuse ourselves by saying that they have inherited characteristics of our parents or our culture. A weakness may be for example shyness, or speaking too fast, or being afraid to speak in public, or avoiding people’s eyes, or being too sensitive, or being too indifferent. Satan uses our weaknesses to discourage us and restrain our service to the Lord.



.....○ **Have a student read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Ask the class: “How does God view our weaknesses ... as an obstacle ... or an opportunity to show His power?”**

Weaknesses are not considered obstacles for God; on the contrary, He turns them into opportunities to show His power.

Finally, let us look at **offenses and resentment**, another harmful sphere that needs to be resolved in our lives. As we saw in previous lessons, there is no place for hatred and bitterness in the lives of God’s children.



.....○ **Have a student read Matthew 5:43-44.**

To forgive, and to love those who have hurt us, is certainly the most difficult sphere in the life of any Christian. In fact, many fail to give up these negative thoughts until they have spent some time growing in the other spheres. All people are offended at some point in life, but the power of God can make our enemies into our friends. Prayer for those who have hurt us prepares us and them for reconciliation.



.....○ **Ask students to complete activity 4 and then gather them into groups of 3 or 4 to share testimonies and ideas on how to grow in these areas and to pray for each other.**



Definition of Key Terms

- **Instinct:** the way people or animals naturally react or behave, without having to think or learn, such as an instinct for survival, or for reproduction.
- **Prejudice:** preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.



Summary

Our goal in the Christian life is to become like Christ. The will of God for our lives is that we cultivate the mind of Christ. It is God who makes it possible for us to desire to be like Jesus, and it is He who makes it possible for us to carry it out. Our role in the process is to surrender our will, to learn to think and to live as Christ, studying all aspects of His life and following His example.



Activity Sheets

ACTIVITY 1

Read John 7:38 and choose from the following options what the life of the Christian should be like?

- ___ a puddle of standing water
- ___ a clean river
- ___ a well to keep water
- ___ a swamp
- ___ a spring

ACTIVITY 2

“What are your values?” Mark with an X on the 10 words in the following list that represent those things that are most valuable to you. Then indicate with number 1 which of the ten is most important.

Affection (love, caring for others or by others).	Helping Others	Fame (to become well known).	Personal Achievements (feeling of having achieved something important).	Health (mental and physical).	Order (tranquility, stability).
Friendships (close relationships with others).	Economic Ability (having money, things of value).	Family	Pleasure (fun, entertainment, enjoyment of life).	Social Security	Inner Peace (being at peace with oneself).
Self-love (pride for achievement, personal fulfillment).	Originality (development of new ideas).	Integrity (honesty, sincerity).	Power (control, influence).	Sense of Acceptance (feeling loved and accepted by others).	Spiritual Life (relationship with God).
Work Advancement (Promotions, added responsibilities).	Personal Development (reaching your potential as a person).	Loyalty (obedience, duty).	Social Position (status, respect of others).	Competition (win, take risks).	Couple (boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse).
Adventures (challenging new experiences).	Economic Stability	Freedom (independence, autonomy).	Personal Responsibility	Cooperation (working with a team).	Other:

Adapted from <http://www.moww.org/HSPrep/lessons/7.val/bvall.html>

Based on your choices, reflect: Are these the same values that Jesus had? If your answer is no, What should you start doing this week to refocus your values on God?

ACTIVITY 3

Respond to the following questions: What are the goals for your life for the future? What would you like to have achieved by the end of your life? It is important that you be honest in your answers so that you can then evaluate your goals.

My goals for this year and future years are...

The achievements that I hope to achieve by the end of my life are...

Evaluate your goals according to this scale by author Keith Drury. To do this, place the letter A, B, C, D or E as appropriate beside each of the goals you have written above using the following guide.

A. Holy Ambition is that which obeys the call of God for your life. What you are sure God wants you to achieve and whose success will bring glory to God and help to extend His kingdom.

B. Human Aspiration is one that reveals aspirations for your life and shows your desire to do something good, something that is a positive contribution in this world, something that leaves something noble and valuable to the next generation. God has given us all the potential to develop and it is good for us to invest and multiply our talents. These aspirations are not bad or sinful.

C. Selfish Ambition is one whose goal is to satisfy selfish desires, such as desire for power, fame, recognition or success. This kind of ambition is bad because we will do anything to achieve it; it passes over friendship, is above ethics and uses people.

D. Mixed Motivation is one in which good intentions are mixed with a dose of selfish interests.

E. Degenerative Motivation is one that may have started out as a holy or human motivation, but which over time was carried away by selfish motivation.

ACTIVITY 4.

Evaluate yourself as to how you have grown in the neutral or harmful areas of your life. Place a number from 1 to 5 by each item, with 1 being the lowest (not growing) and five being the highest (already achieved). Then highlight the areas where you should put more attention and care in your life. Then join the group to share ideas and testimonies of how to overcome these bonds and to pray for each other.

Neutral Spheres

- ___ Passions
- ___ Habits
- ___ Loyalties
- ___ Relationships
- ___ Debts
- ___ Possessions
- ___ Responsibilities
- ___ Ambitions
- ___ Prejudices

Harmful Spheres

- ___ Fears
- ___ Weaknesses
- ___ Offenses and Resentment

RECOMMENDED READING

Mark 14:32-42

John 12:27-28

Romans 8:28-39

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Philippians 4:1-9

1 Peter 2:11-25

The books of the series **Filled with the Spirit** present the study of the doctrine and practice of the holy life in simple and practical language, and at the same time connects with the ideas of the contemporary world. The holy life is studied, emphasizing:

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