

Growing in the Image of Christ

***Our Commitment
in Response to
Christ's Eternal Sacrifice***

Betty Burton Choate

**World Evangelism Publications
P.O. Box 72
Winona, MS 38967**

© 2012, J. C. Choate Publications

First Printing, 1987
Second Printing, 2012

Layout by Betty Burton Choate
Cover design by Steven B. Choate

All quotations from the New King James Version
© 1988 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Order from:

World Evangelism Publications

P.O. Box 72

Winona, MS 38967

662-283-1192

Email: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

Web Site: WorldEvangelism.org

GospelGazette.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The Birth	1
2. Transformed into His Image	10
3. The Holy Guests	15
4. Partakers of Divine Nature	23
5. In His Image, Physically	31
6. In His Image, Mentally	36
7. In His Image, Emotionally	42
8. In His Image, Socially	49
9. In His Image, Spiritually	54
10. How the Rules Work, Physically and Emotionally, for Me	59
11. How the Rules Work, Socially, for Me	69
12. How the Rules Work, Spiritually, for Me	78
The King and His Bride	87
Review Questions and Invitation	92

THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

How often does one have the opportunity to make a statement about his wife's book? Not often, but with my wife the opportunities are growing! Betty is an in-depth student of God's word. She loves her Lord and she loves to write and to talk to people about Him. As a result, she has endeared herself to many who have genuine respect for her and confidence in her helping them with their problems.

Growing in the Image of Christ has been long in coming. Betty has spent many hours on it, in those in-between times of all of her activities and responsibilities. In the beginning it was intended as a ladies' class book, and we still hope that it will be used as such, but it has grown beyond the original plan. It is a motivational analysis of the message of Christianity, beneficial to those who want to delve *privately* into the richness of all that God has provided in this world for His children.

Almost as a sequel to Betty's study of Christ and the Godhead, **Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice**, this work exalts the Lord as the One into Whose image we are to be transformed. It shows what it means to become a Christian and to grow up in Christ, defining the workability and practicality of Christianity as the best way to live in this physical world. The study focuses on the value and blessings that come from such a life, and one's resulting worth to the Lord and to his fellowman. We can reach no higher peak in this body than to "grow in the Family image".

We publish this book with the genuine conviction that it will prove to be a blessing to you as you read it and apply it to your life. Betty and I can wish no greater achievement than that.

J.C. Choate
Winona MS
January 29, 1987

Chapter One
THE BIRTH
Outline

Introduction: Man was created as the focal point of God's love. Sin broke the relationship, but God devised a plan for reunion with His creation, through His Son.

I. Sin

- A. The separation
- B. Man's helplessness

II. The family relationship planned

- A. The firstborn (definition)
- B. The firstborn of creation
- C. The firstborn from the dead
- D. The firstborn among many brethren

III. The plan in actuality

- A. Spanning the Patriarchal Period
- B. Spanning the Mosaical period
- C. The coming of the Firstborn
 - 1. Redemption of the pledge of the past
 - 2. Redemption of the pledge of the future

IV. The quickening power

- A. The word
- B. Personal desire
- C. Conviction

V. The birth

- A. Putting off the old man
- B. New life
- C. Eternal commitment: the covenant relationship
 - 1. On God's part
 - 2. On man's part

VI. Added to the family

- A. Wear the family name
- B. Bear the family image
- C. Welfare of the family at heart
- D. Grow up in the family to maturity

VII. The family inheritance

- A. With the Firstborn
- B. Shall be like Him
- C. Share the glory of Firstborn's throne

Conclusion: In the human family, a closeknit relationship of love is precious. The unity, oneness, and love in God's Family are to exceed human ties.

THE BIRTH

Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

“God is love” (1 John 4:8). But in order for love to express itself, in order for it to be fulfilled, there must be a worthy object to whom the love can be given and from whom a like-love can be received.

This, then, was the reason for the creation. The world and all the things in it were prepared as the home, the furnishings, as the wonderful gift of love for the supreme creation and the object of God’s love: man, who was made in the image of his Father, made a living soul, ... *made a little lower than God* [elohim, in the original Hebrew, Psalm 8:4-6].

I. SIN

But in order for man’s love for God to be real, man had to be given the freedom of choice, the ability to *decide* whether or not he would love and obey God.

Sadly, when temptation came, man *chose* disobedience. (Genesis 3:1-24) Sin entered the world, and with it, grave consequences. All that is imperfect in nature, all that is harmful and wrong, all that stands opposed to God and man has developed because of the choice made by man to follow Satan instead of God.

A. The Separation

The most serious consequence of sin was the separation it caused between God and man. Habakkuk 1:13 says, *“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.”* Isaiah 59:1,2 says, *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”*

B. Man’s Helplessness

In order for man to be allowed again into God’s presence, his sin had to be removed. But man had nothing to offer of his own that would be complete payment to atone for the repeated sins he committed. If the course was continued, with man in his sins and separated from God, he could expect only one end: eventual physical death with eternal spiritual separation from God. He was utterly helpless to avert this tragedy.

Talking Points

- ✱ We know that God is Spirit, and that He is everywhere. How do you reconcile this realization with the statements concerning sin separating us from God?
- ✱ What is the only immortal part of man? What is most priceless about man? If that part of man was condemned because of the blight of sin, what could he have given to redeem himself?
- ✱ What motivated God to do for man what he could not do for himself?
- ✱ What was the redemption price paid for condemned human souls to be reconciled to God?

II. THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP PLANNED

A. The Firstborn (definition)

But God's love for His creation demanded that He do for man what man could not do for himself. In the course of time, the Word, One of the Godhead (John 1:1,2), would be born into the world as the Son of God (spirit) and as the Son of man (flesh). Partaking of both natures, He would bridge the gulf between God and man.

B. The Firstborn of Creation

Jesus would be the actual "firstborn" Son of God, through whose sonship all men could have access to God as sons.

Historically, the "firstborn" is just that: the first-fruits of a man, the child first-born to him. Exodus 13:1 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17 show that the firstborn was dedicated to God and that he was entitled to certain rights. The first born became the head of the family at the death of his father and received a double portion of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17). In return, he took the responsibilities of looking after the family, providing for its needs, and he also cared for his elderly parents.

The designation of firstborn was not simply a word showing a preference for one child over another. It was applied lawfully to the child who was actually born first to the parents. Thus, when Jesus is spoken of as the firstborn of creation (Colossians 1:15), the Scriptures are saying that no human prior to Jesus' birth was counted as a son of God.

C. The Firstborn from the Dead

Similarly, when Christ is called "*the firstborn from the dead*" (Colossians 1:18), the Scriptures are saying that no human before Him had ever conquered death. True, others had been restored to life through God's power (2 Kings 4:18-37; John 11:1-44), but they lived physically only to die again. Christ was the first to conquer death Himself (John 10:17,18), being raised never to die again.

This victory over death is man's assurance that those who love God and are born as sons into His family will, with their elder Brother, conquer death. 1 John 3:1,2 says, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him ...*" "*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

D. The Firstborn Among Many Brethren

"*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Romans 8:29).

The actual "Father-Son" relationship was begun when Jesus was born into the world as the Son of God. Humans become His brothers and, through this relationship with Him, they are also counted as sons of God (Galatians 4:6). But Christ is the firstborn. No other man was God's son before Him.

Talking Points

- ✱ Discuss the different ways in which the Word is "the firstborn", and their significance.

Hebrews 9:15 ("*And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the*

first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”) clearly shows that the blood of Christ, as the Firstborn Son of God, was the means of reaching back to those under the first covenant, to redeem them and to make them acceptable to God, even as it reaches forward to cleanse those born since His coming into the world.

III. THE PLAN IN ACTUALITY

In viewing the whole of the Bible, some mistakenly look at the Patriarchal period as one type of relationship God *tried* with man, which did not work. They think, then, that God gave “the Law of Moses” and *tried* that for a while. When that system didn’t work, He sent Christ, to begin what is known as “the Christian Age”.

A. Spanning the Patriarchal Period

This “trial and error” view of biblical history is far from the truth. From the beginning, God knew exactly what would be necessary and what He would do to save man. Revelation 13:8 speaks of “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” So, God’s view of His goal has always been the cross and the redemption it would bring. Any other law or system would have been only temporary, filling the needs of the particular time until, “*in the fullness of time*”, Jesus would be born.

Early in man’s history, God dealt directly with individual “patriarchs”, heads of households. As with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, He gave them instructions and work to do. He also made promises, saying that eventually the Savior would be born (Genesis 3:15; 18:18).

B. Spanning the Mosaical Period

Because of Abraham’s faithfulness, his family had been chosen as the line through which Jesus would be born. However, during 430 years of life as strangers and pilgrims in Canaan and Egypt, these people, the Israelites, even forgot the name of God. So when they came out of Egypt to take their place in the world as a nation, God gave them a set of laws. The moral laws were simply restatements of eternal truths — rights and wrongs. The ceremonial laws were regulatory measures to keep the nation faithful to God. “*What purpose does the law serve? It was added [to the promise God had made to Abraham] because of transgression till the Seed should come...*” (Galatians 3:19).

Talking Points

* Were the three different “ages” “trial and error” efforts on God’s part, to see what would work?

C. The Coming of the Firstborn

For approximately 2,500 years during the Patriarchal age and another 1,500 years under the Law of Moses, God had been working toward the focal point of history: the birth of His firstborn, Jesus Christ. At last the stage was set, the time was right, and the Son was born.

1. Redemption of the Pledge of the Past.

Now, through the Sonship established in Jesus, the family relationship was opened for all men of all time. As the blood of Christ reached backward to all who had lived and died prior to the cross, redeeming the salvation-pledge to the obedient (Hebrews 9:15), just so the

pledge of sonship reached backward to redeem the relationship with Abraham, Moses, and David so that now they were, in actuality, the sons they had formerly been only in promise.

2. Redemption of the Pledge of the Future

And as **the blood** would reach forward to cleanse all the obedient until the end of time, just so **the sonship** through the firstborn reaches forward, making it possible for all the obedient to be counted as sons of God. *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His son, ...to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (Galatians 4:4,5).

IV. THE QUICKENING POWER

With the coming of the Son and His sacrifice on the cross, the way of redemption for man had been completed. But man, separated from God by sin, could profit nothing by this plan of redemption unless he knew about it. So God made provisions for the spread of the news.

A. The Word

Jesus said to His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). Since the first century, part of the work of every Christian has been the teaching of this good news of Jesus to those around him.

The written form of the Gospel, the New Testament, was prepared under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that the message would be preserved, without error, for all men of all time. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

B. Personal Desire

But in order for the Word of God to penetrate the heart, there must be a personal desire to know God and to know the truth.

Those who have tried to teach others are strongly aware of the sad fact that no matter how much the teacher may love the one he is teaching, no matter how greatly the teacher may desire that the student see and understand those precious truths, unless the student also has the desire, the seed will not germinate and grow. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 speaks of *"...those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved."*

C. Conviction

The Holy Spirit, through His living message, brings conviction of sins to the heart that is open to Him. *"... He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8).

Talking Points

✳ The work of bringing the Gospel to the world was not given to angelic beings.

Why do you think the completion of God's entire work of the ages was entrusted in the hands of fallible humans?

✳ As a Christian prays and studies, in his efforts to teach others, who is the first beneficiary of his efforts?

✳ How is the Christian's spiritual focus affected by his involvement in teaching the Gospel? Would, and should, this permeate all parts of his life?

V. THE BIRTH.

The sincere heart, when convicted of the terribleness of sin and of the salvation possible through Jesus, willingly obeys the directions of the Word. Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

A. Putting off the Old Man

The sinner is spiritually dead before God. In order to live again, he must be *"born of water and the Spirit"* (John 3:5). *"... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts"* (Romans 6:6,11,12).

B. New Life

The sinner hears and believes the Gospel; he is convicted of the fact that he is a sinner and separated from God, but that through Jesus Christ his sins can be forgiven. Therefore, he determines to turn away from his old life of sin and to follow Jesus. He confesses his faith in Jesus as God's Son, and he is baptized in water, *"born of water and of the Spirit,"* for the forgiveness of sins. Romans 6:3,4 says, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

C. Eternal Commitment

A slave on an auction block is helpless. A wealthy man of mercy might buy him, and might even give him his freedom. He would leave with the slave's owners the purchase price.

Man in sin is called *a slave of sin*, and he needs to be "redeemed" or purchased — made free — just as the physical slave would long for freedom. Christ paid the purchase price for all men who want to be free from sin. The cost to Him was His life.

1. On God's Part

In order for men to be counted as children of God, the Word was born into the world as the Son of God and as the Son of man. In His fleshly body, being a brother to man, He died for the sins of all humans. *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

From eternity, the Word shared the glory of the Godhead. But in joining Himself to humans, *"He emptied Himself," "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men"* (Philippians 2:7). Part of the cost of man's salvation was this "emptying", this taking the human form, this humbling of Himself (Philippians 2:8).

Talking Points

- ✳ Coming into God's family is compared to a birth. Baptism is also a burial into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4). Discuss these parallels.

Talking Points

- ✳ How is man "a slave of sin"?
- ✳ The Word was born into the world as the _____ of _____, and as the _____ of man, in order that in our obedience, we might become the _____ of God _____.
- ✳ What does this mean: *"He emptied Himself..."*?

The final conclusion to sin is death and, by right, every man should die physically and spiritually because of his sins. But Jesus, who never sinned, died in the flesh as man, in our place, so that men could live spiritually.

Now, eternally, the Son of God, the son of man, the resurrected and triumphant Saviour, stands as a peacemaker between God and man. He returned to heaven to dwell in God's presence as the brother of man, speaking to God on our behalf and blotting out the sins of the obedient with the red covering of His blood. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus.**"

2. On Man's Part

Just as Christ's death is His eternal commitment to men — His "purchase price" paid for the redemption of the slaves of sin — so our birth into the family of God through "water and the Spirit" is also an eternal commitment.

Born into the family, we become the brothers of Christ (Hebrews 2:17) and the sons of God. "God sent forth His Son ... that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:4-7).

Once we have been born into the family, we will always be members of the family. We may grow up as faithful obedient children, bringing happiness and honor to our Father, or we may turn from Him in disobedience. We may one day be welcomed home to Him in glory or we may be disinherited, but we will be His children, in either case.

VI. ADDED TO THE FAMILY

Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church [which is God's Family] daily those who were being saved."

Talking Points

* Discuss some of our responsibilities after we have been born into the Family of God — the church — through baptism.

... who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God's shining through us brings to others the knowledge of Christ.

C. Welfare of the Family at Heart

As is true in earthly families, when we become children of God we are concerned about the welfare of the family. The apostle Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 11:26-28 of the

Talking Points

* From eternity, was the Word "Deity", equal in the Godhead?

* The present mediator between God and man is identified as _____, Christ Jesus.

Discuss the great change that has taken place in the Godhead in order for humans to become the children of God.

A. Wear the Family Name

Family members wear the family name and are honored by having that privilege. "... there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Colossians 3:17).

B. Bear the Family Image

We bear the family image, as the Spirit of Christ lives in us and radiates from us. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, "For it is the God

many dangers and physical sufferings he had endured, and he ended with, "... besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." In working among brethren of the Lord's family throughout Europe and Asia, the welfare of the congregations was a continual burden in his heart. Our concern should be the same today.

D. Grow up in the Family to Maturity

Physical children grow up, bearing the image of their parents, to become mature and responsible adults. Christians are urged to "... grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

VII. THE FAMILY INHERITANCE

Ultimately, the promised reward to the obedient children is the inheritance of eternal life. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). When we have enjoyed a lifetime of physical and spiritual blessings on the earth, we have experienced only the beginning. The unspeakable joy of life, eternally, in the presence of God is what we expect.

A. With the Firstborn

Jesus, our elder brother, will be "... bringing many sons to glory ... For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:10,11). "... we are children of God ... heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ ..." (Romans 8:16,17).

B. We Shall Be Like Him

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ... for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51,53). "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:49).

C. Share Glory of the Firstborn's Throne

The prayer of Christ just before His death was, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are One. ... Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You have loved Me before the foundation of the world ..." (John 17:22,24). In Revelation 3:21, He promised: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

CONCLUSION:

In Matthew 7:14, Jesus warned that **the way** (singular path) to life is narrow and difficult, and He added that there would be few to find it. If we have found this truth and have been born into His family, how blessed we are of all humans on the earth! How carefully we should guard the name and the reputation of that family, making sure that as members of it we bring only honor. And someday, in the fullness of time, we can rejoice at His return when "... the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Talking Points

✱ Discuss the promise that Christians will be "joint-heirs" with Christ. What do the words infer, concerning the relationship of Christ and God.

Chapter One

Questions

1. Why was man created?
2. Explain the significance of the references to Christ as “the firstborn”.
3. Do these statements mean only that He is the most important Son of God?
4. Did the Law of Christ replace the Law of Moses because time had proved that the Law of Moses didn’t work well?
5. How was salvation provided for man?
6. In order for God’s word to germinate and bear fruit, what must be in the hearer’s heart?
7. Describe the “new birth”.
8. What “purchase price” did Christ pay for sin?
9. Why is the “new birth” the focal point of our eternal commitment to God, of our salvation?
10. As members of God’s family, what privileges and responsibilities do we have?
11. Describe the inheritance promised.
12. How do humans bear the image of “the man of dust”?
13. We are promised that we will also bear the image of _____. _____.
14. What is this saying about our future immortal bodies? about the on-going relationship of Christ with humanity?
12. How many families does God have?

Chapter Two

TRANSFORMED INTO HIS IMAGE

Outline

Introduction: God has left us in this world to radiate Him, but He has not left us without guidance. He has given us protective laws so that our sojourn here will be in spiritual safety.

I. Inexperienced aliens

- A. Physically, in a foreign country
- B. Spiritually, in the world
- C. Reasons for laws
 - 1. Everything allowed is good
 - 2. Everything forbidden is bad

II. Reforming after new birth

- A. Directions given by laws
- B. Directions given by example

III. We are new creatures

- A. Were dead to God, created anew
- B. 2 Corinthians 5:15,17
- C. Colossians 3:3
- D. Galatians 2:20
- E. Romans 8:9

IV. Our minds are re-formed

- A. Philippians 2:5
- B. Romans 8:6

V. We imitate the pattern

- A. I Corinthians 11:1
- B. By practice, the pattern becomes our own make-up

VI. Christ formed in us

VII. We are changed into His image

VIII. We magnify Christ

Conclusion: This period of time in this world is our opportunity to mold ourselves in the Family image. Of all people in the world, we should realize continual thankfulness to have God's protective care and guidance.

TRANSFORMED INTO HIS IMAGE

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

Often people read the “do’s” and “don’ts” of the New Testament with the attitude of, “Oh, I can’t be that good!” or “Let me live a little first. Then when I am older, I’ll settle down to the restrictions of Christianity.”

Sadly, they have misunderstood the rules and the restrictions. God made His laws, not to raise obstacles over which we might stumble, and not to see if we would obey or disobey, but His laws are designed to *include in our lives all that is beneficial for us and to eliminate all that is harmful*. Christianity is the only religious system in the world of which it can be said, “Every point that is good for man is included; not one good thing was left out.

And not one thing is included that is bad or would be harmful when followed by one or by all to the fullest extent. It is the perfect guidance for living in this world.”

I. INEXPERIENCED ALIENS

A. Physically, in a Foreign Country

When our family first began living overseas, we were given a brochure of instructions by the American Embassy, outlining health precautions and safety measures in cases of outbreaks of violence. The officials realized that, as inexperienced aliens, we needed help in knowing how to live healthily and safely, day by day.

B. Spiritually, in the World

Christians are in a similar situation. From the moment of birth into God’s family, our citizenship has become a heavenly one and we actually belong in heaven, in God’s presence, in the company of all the righteous. We don’t belong in a world of obstacles and frustrations and sin.

C. Reasons for Laws

But we have a work to do. It is necessary that the world be taught of Christ if His precious sacrifice is to avail anything for mankind. So, even though Christians are heavenly citizens, we are living for a period of time as God’s emissaries in a foreign world. Being inexperienced aliens, we need some health and safety rules from the all-knowing Father so that we may pass our time here with the least possible danger.

1. Everything Allowed Is Good.

Therefore, not one command from God is put in His word simply to force

Talking Points

- ✱ Since becoming a Christian, do you feel “out of step” with the interests and concerns of many of the people around you?
- ✱ Are the “rules” in Scripture designed to test us, or to guide us?
- ✱ Christianity is the only religious system that does what?

Christians to do a thing. But a law is made, a command is given, only when we must have that in our lives for our own good and for the good of those around us.

2. Everything Forbidden Is Bad

In the same way, not one restriction is given, not one thing is forbidden, unless it would be harmful for us. God wants His children to be happy, but He knows that the sinful “fun” things of the world only appear to bring happiness. In the beginning, sin may seem appealing, but in the end it destroys. God would protect us from this self-destruction by telling us before we get involved, “Don’t do it.”

II. REFORMING AFTER BIRTH

Usually when one is baptized into God’s family, becoming a new-born Christian, his thinking and habits have already begun to be formed by the world. Now his attitudes, his speech, his thoughts, and his activities will be re-formed.

A. Directions Given by Laws

One way to form a thing is by specific and involved directions. This, for the Christian, would necessitate even more intricate and detailed laws than were given in the law of Moses.

B. Directions Given by Example

But the easier way to learn is to see a *detailed pattern* of a thing to be formed. God chose this easy way for us by giving Christ as our example.

III. WE ARE NEW CREATURES.

The Christian has died to his old life and has been made a new creation in Christ. *“...and that you put on the new man, which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:24).

A. Were Dead to God, Created Anew

When we became sinners, we died to God, spiritually. But just as a baby being born physically is a new life, so when we were born into God’s family, a new spiritual man was “created” (the same word used to describe the Genesis creation, the act of God to form something from nothing). We, in a figure of speech, had ceased to exist spiritually, but through the life-giving quickening power of His Spirit in us, we became a new creation, righteous and holy before God.

B. 2 Corinthians 5:15-17

“He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.”

C. Colossians 3:3

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

D. Galatians 2:20

For the Christian, *“... It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”* Because we

Talking Points

- ✳ In your own life, do you find it easier to make changes by following examples or by having a set of rules? Why?
- ✳ How can it be that the Scriptures describe the new Christian as both “new-born” and “dead”?

have died to sin and to the allurements of this world, it is the Spirit of Christ in us that gives purpose and direction to our lives.

E. Romans 8:9

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. ..." So, we may be outwardly like all other humans, living in the world in a fleshly body, but actually we are living in the spirit; and the Spirit of God, of Christ, dwells in us.

IV. OUR MINDS RE-FORMED

A. Philippians 2:5

By giving us the example of Christ to follow in re-forming our life, God is able to instruct us: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."*

B. Romans 8:6

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Do we want a happy life? Do we want peace? Of course. That is the quest of every soul. God says that the way to have peace, the way to have life, is to form our minds by spiritual guidelines, to have the mind of Christ.

V. IMITATE THE PATTERN

A. I Corinthians 11:1

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." To imitate means to mimic, to follow, and, in this case, to form habits that become one's way of life.

B. Practice

Imitate can mean a pretense, a surface act, but Paul was not encouraging hypocrisy. Rather, he was describing a method of learning by practicing in our own lives what we see in Christ. But then as one learns Christ, that life becomes his own nature and thoughts, as he has gradually formed himself after Christ.

VI. CHRIST FORMED IN US

Of the Christians in Galatia, Paul said, *"My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you ..."* (Galatians 4:19). What a graphic description this is, of the growth and change that must take place in a Christian's life!

VII. CHANGED INTO HIS IMAGE

"But we all ... beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image ..." (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we see in the mirror of God's word the image of Christ, His thoughts, His words, His actions, His attitudes, His love, and as we absorb that knowledge, gradually we are re-made, shaped according to the image we see. We begin to think as He thinks, to value things according to His standards. Even our facial and body appearance will take on His characteristics as we learn His love for the

Talking Points

- ✱ Discuss meanings of the word "imitate".
- ✱ How is Christ formed in the new Christian?
- ✱ As we look into the mirror of God's word, seeing the example of Christ, what happens in our own lives?

world, His grief for the lost, His purity of mind and body. From our very physical appearance we will radiate the gentleness, the purity, and the love of Christ.

VIII. MAGNIFY CHRIST

For most people in the world, Christ is so far away that they will see Him only faintly, if at all. They are not familiar with His word, they have never felt His love. For them, there is only one way that He can be brought from seeming nonexistence or a far-distant heavenly existence, and this is through the Christian. "... so now also Christ will be magnified in my body ..." (Philippians 1:20).

A magnifying glass doesn't actually increase the size of anything, and it does not actually reduce the distance to the object. But it *appears* to make the object both nearer and larger, so that the intricate details can be seen and studied.

In the same manner, the Christian brings Christ into the homes of family, friends, and acquaintances, so that through his own personal life, they can see Christ close at hand. What a beautiful thought, that I can be the bridge for this gap between Jesus and mankind! What an exciting thing to be privileged to portray Jesus to the unknowing world!

But what a tragedy if the image of Him that they see magnified in me is distorted and blemished!

CONCLUSION:

The transition from being *dead in sin* to being born into God's family and thus becoming *alive in Christ*, learning to bear the image of Christ in our lives, is a tremendous one. How thankful we should be to know these truths and to be able to live by them.

Talking Points

- ✱ Discuss the meaning of Philippians 1:20. How can we magnify Christ in our bodies?
- ✱ Discuss the betrayal of Christ if one who calls himself a "Christian" lives in violation of all that Christ portrayed by His example. What lies are they telling about Him, when they wear His name but embrace sin in their daily life?

Chapter Two Questions

1. Why does God give "do's" and "don'ts"?
2. Is the Christian "at home" in the world?
3. What is uniquely true of the religion of Christ that is not true of any other religion?
4. In what two ways can a thing be re-formed?
5. What word is used to describe God's work in the new Christian? What earlier acts of God was this word used to describe?
6. What results can we expect from carnal (worldly) mindedness?
7. What will spiritual mindedness bring into our lives?
8. When we imitate a thing for a long time, how does it affect us?
9. As we see and imitate the image of Christ in God's word, what gradually happens to us?
10. How is it possible to magnify Christ in our bodies?

Chapter Three

THE HOLY GUESTS

Outline

Introduction: Romans 7 is a portrait of wretchedness, as man on his own, realizes the hopelessness of overcoming sin. Only through God could a solution be provided.

I. The solution to the problem

- A. In Christ
- B. Walking according to the Spirit

II. The indwelling

- A. The Spirit of God (Romans 8:9)
- B. The Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9)
- C. The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10, Acts 2:38, 5:32)

III. Sons of God

- A. Led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14)
- B. Know sonship (Romans 8:15)
- C. Strengthened by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16)
- D. Inner man renewed (2 Corinthians 4:16)
- E. Explained by Spirit (Romans 8:26)

IV. The temple of God (Naos)

- A. Meaning in Old Testament
- B. Meaning in New Testament
 - 1. The church (Ephesians 2:19-22)
 - 2. Personally (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19,20)

V. Relationship with the guests

- A. Happiness (Zephaniah 3:17)
- B. Grief (Ephesians 4:30, Hebrews 10:29)
- C. Quench (1 Thessalonians 5:19)
- D. Depart (Job 21:14)

VI. Behavior with guests

- A. Physically
- B. Spiritually

Conclusion: The beautiful contrast to man's hopelessness, as pictured in Romans 7, is the triumphant life he has when "... *the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead ...*" (Romans 8:11) dwells in us!

THE HOLY GUESTS

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

In Romans 7, Paul wrote of the hopeless struggle he had felt in his body between his desire to do good and the weakness of human flesh causing him to sin. His conclusion to the statement was, “*Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Romans 7:24).

Man will sin. Every day, he falls short of the righteousness he would desire to live, and his conscience condemns him before God. Feeling the weight of today’s sins added to yesterday’s, and those added to the accumulated sins of a lifetime, man must indeed feel a wretchedness and a hopelessness.

I. THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

On his own, man could not help himself, so God provided the solution to the problem through two gifts to His children.

The first gift was His Son, and our adoption as children through Jesus. Family members are of the same blood. When we become Christians, the scriptures teach that we are washed in Jesus’ blood and that our sins are covered by His blood. Therefore, when God looks at us, He sees us through the red veil of that family blood, and He sees us as perfected sons and daughters. Because of the continual cleansing of that covering (1 John 1:7) our sins of shortcoming and weakness are not even marked against our record (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The second gift was the new strength we have “in Christ”.

A. In Christ

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ...” (Romans 8:1).

How sad it is that Satan has deceived the multitudes with his lies of, “Surely God would not condemn so-and-so. She is such a good person,” or “You know God wouldn’t condemn those who have never heard the Gospel,” or “Is the church really that important? Surely the honest, sincere people in all churches will be saved.”

These lies were planned to ease our consciences and the consciences of the people of the world, to minimize the importance of God’s laws. But the fact remains that **the one plan God has provided is His family**, and we must be a part of that family to be saved from sin. We can become a child only by being born into the family according to God’s

Talking Points

- * Do you understand the wretchedness Paul described? Have you ever felt it?
- * What are the two gifts God has provided?
- * How do we become a part of God’s family?
- * How does God see His children?

instructions, through faith in His Son and baptism into His death, for the forgiveness of our sins. Then, *in Christ*, we are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17).

B. Walking According to the Spirit

"No condemnation in Christ" is conditional. We cannot live as we please after our birth. There is *"no condemnation"* to those *"who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* Some denominational doctrines falsely claim that once a person is counted as a child of God, he cannot so sin as to be lost. But the Scriptures are filled with encouragement for us to be faithful, and warnings that if we grow weak and fall, we will be lost eternally.

So, we must do our part in this war against sin. We must have the sincere desire to live for God, and we must put every effort into avoiding sin.

God has never done for man what man can do for himself. And in the Christian life, He won't do our part. We must work daily at being righteous and spiritual.

God's part is to take up where our human strength ends and to supply the added strength we don't have within ourselves. The word for that help is "grace".

II. INDWELLING

Some people deny that God's Spirit dwells within man. They say the "indwelling" is only through the Word, as we have His word in our hearts. But in reaching that conclusion, they overlook the solution which Paul says (Romans 8) that God has provided for the wretchedness he had felt before he was *"in Christ"*.

The Jews had God's word in the Old Testament period; Paul had been a devout student of God's word and a faithful Jew; the disciples of Christ had a knowledge of God's word in the Old Testament and also all the words that Christ had taught them of the new covenant. And in some sense, the Spirit was with the obedient during the years prior to Christ's coming (Judges 13:25; 1 Samuel 16:14). But Jesus promised that there would be a difference when He said to the disciples, *"... I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you"* (John 14:16,17).

A. The Spirit of God

Romans 8:9 says, *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you..."*

B. The Spirit of Christ

"... now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9). Jesus promised the disciples, after saying that the Spirit would be *in* them from some point in the future, *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ... Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you"* (John 14:18-20).

Talking Points

- * Does God do for us what we can do for ourselves?
- * What is our work, or responsibility, in the matter of remaining saved?
- * God's part is to finish out what we don't have the strength to do. What is this called?

C. The Holy Spirit

On the birthday of the church, when the hearers wanted to know what to do to be forgiven of their sins, Peter answered, "*Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

☆ Some say that this "gift" is the promise mentioned in verse 39, that is, the salvation that would come to the world through the call of the Gospel.

☆ Some believe that the gift is the quickening of spiritual life that takes place when the new birth occurs.

☆ Some believe that the gift is the Spirit Himself, taking up His dwelling in the newly-born child of God.

Actually, all three beliefs are in harmony with the Scriptures. All three occur as a result of the baptism of the penitent believer.

Acts 5:32 says, "*And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.*"

Romans 8:10,11 further explains, "*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*"

III. SONS OF GOD

Sadly, many are not aware of this indwelling. They have not been taught, so they do not have knowledge of this help God promised. True, they were baptized, but because this "indwelling" is not "miraculous", their feelings after baptism were no different than before. And because they did not know of the help available within them, they did not depend on the help or call upon it when they needed strength; they did not give God room to work in their lives. They are, therefore, able to see no difference; the struggle against sin is just as difficult as before, and they feel just as weak and helpless.

Truly, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6).

A. Led by the Spirit

Sons of God are "... *led by the Spirit,*" (Romans 8:14). This does not mean that we are guided miraculously or that God's Spirit speaks in an audible voice, telling us what to do. It simply means that:

☆ We willingly submit ourselves to the guidance of God's word, and we go to His word seeking formative instruction for our attitudes.

☆ We also ask God's help in our consideration of a decision or a direction in life. He can help by bringing to our attention the varied

Talking Points

* Discuss three different things that people believe fulfill the promise of God concerning the "gift of the Holy Spirit".

* Do the Scriptures state clearly and repeatedly that the Spirit dwells in the Christian?

* Do the Scriptures anywhere limit the "indwelling" by a definition of "how", as some would insist, through "the word" — Scriptures — only?

* Is the indwelling miraculous?

points to be weighed in making the decision and by helping us to think wisely and clearly regarding the points.

☆ Thus, prayerfully depending on God to supply wisdom (James 1:5), we can make our decisions with confidence that we have been led by His Spirit to make the right choice.

B. Know Sonship

Also, through the Spirit of His Son dwelling in us, we realize our own relationship as sons to God. By His Spirit we cry out, "*Abba, Father*" (Romans 8:15). Galatians 4:6,7 says, "*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*"

We, as a family, have lived in the sub-continent of India for many years. One of the prevalent features of that part of the world is a beggar child. Commonly, one is approached on the street by one of these pathetic children: filthy, in rags, unkempt hair, runny nose, and a sing-song whine of begging "baksheesh" over and over and over, trying by his persistence to wheedle what he fears he may not get.

In contrast, our son Shannon has "wants" too. He comes, with a coaxing smile and a hug or a kiss, and asks, "Mother, when you go out, would you buy me a book?" With what attitude do we approach God? Often I have been guilty of feeling the part of the beggar before Him. Yet, we are not beggars, and we do an injustice to Him when we approach Him with that attitude of insecurity and lack of confidence. How would we feel if our own children whined to us like beggars?

We are the sons and daughters of God! Our Father loves us and wants to take care of our needs. He wants us to trust Him and to have confidence in His promises. "... *let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (Hebrews 4:14).

C. Strengthened by His Spirit

At best, our human strength is a weakness. God knows that. He doesn't want us to feel defeated in our struggle to live righteous lives in the flesh. So He grants us, "... *according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*" (Ephesians 3:16).

<p style="text-align: center;">Talking Points</p> <p>★ The Scriptures define particular ways the Spirit helps us. List and discuss these points.</p>

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We as Christians are assured by these promises that God will do His part to protect us from falling. He will strengthen the inner man; and He will guard us from temptations too great for us, providing always a way of escape. If, in spite of all His help, we fall, it will be by our own choice, not because He failed us.

D. The Inner Man Renewed

It is a scriptural truth that we live in dying bodies. From the moment of birth, cells are dying by the millions, only to be replaced by other cells that will die in their turn. And as

we live and grow to adulthood, then to old age, we realize that our entire body is growing toward death, that we are no longer strong and young, able to work as we once did.

2 Corinthians 4:16 says, "... we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." The soul of man, strengthened by God's Spirit, grows stronger, wiser, and more mature, day by day.

E. Explained by the Spirit

Sometimes, in our worst fears or anxieties or hurts or longings, there are no words in the languages of humans to express, adequately, our needs to God. At such times, God's Spirit helps us. *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Romans 8:26).

IV. THE TEMPLE OF GOD

A. Meaning in the Old Testament

In the Greek language, there were two words used for "temple". "*Hieron*" had reference to the whole of the temple, including the courtyard. "*Naos*" always had reference to the shrine, the dwelling place of the god. In the scriptures, the common people had access to the "*hieron*", but only the High Priest could enter the "*naos*", the sanctuary of the temple which was the special dwelling place of the presence of God.

B. Meaning in the New Testament

The beautiful truth revealed in the New Testament is that the "*naos*" of God is no longer Mount Sinai or the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle or the Holy of Holies of the temple in Jerusalem. The "*naos*" of God, the dwelling place of the presence of God in the new covenant, is His Family.

1. The Church

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple (naos) in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

2. Personal

But it is not only the collective family or the entire church that is the temple of God. Individually, our bodies are also His dwelling place: *"Do you not know that you are the temple (naos) of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple (naos) of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Talking Points

- ✳ Where is the "naos" of God today?
- ✳ Because our bodies are also the temple of God, how are we to live in these bodies?
- ✳ To whom does the Christian's body belong?
- ✳ With what price did He purchase us?

For this reason, because of the Holy Guests dwelling with us in our bodies, we must be very careful what we do with our bodies, where we take them, and to what activities we subject them.

V. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GUESTS

If a friend of mine had the power to temporarily take my body and use it as his own, while my soul also dwelt as a silent occupant in it, how would I feel if he subjected me to behaviour foreign to my preference? If he used my tongue to curse God, if he used my hands to hurt others, if he poured liquor into my body, if he took me to places of evil and licentiousness, if he twisted my mind with anger and hatred, if he subjected me to moral sins, if he bowed my head in worship to idols? Would I not cringe and grieve over such abuses of myself?

God dwells in us. Whatever we do, we also do to Him, whether or not our behaviour is a violation to His nature. We should remember this and let it help us to be ever conscious of the need to keep our bodies as a fit dwelling place for Him. God reacts to our treatment of Himself as our Guest.

A. Happiness

In Zephaniah 3:17, God says, *"The Lord your God in your midst, the mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness."* How wonderful is the thought that we can bring gladness to God, and that His response to our righteousness is rejoicing!

"He will quiet you in His love," or the King James Version says, *"He will rest in His love."* Whether these words are saying that as a loving Father quiets and comforts a troubled child, or as a man rests and is at peace in the love he shares with his wife, they definitely speak of a beautiful relationship of love between God and man.

"He will rejoice over you with singing." Loving God as I do, it thrills my heart to realize that in response to my love and behavior, the very God of the universe breaks into a song of happiness, *over me!*

B. Grief

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:29,30).

Hebrews 10:29 says that by forsaking the assembly and counting the blood of Christ a common thing, we have *"...insulted the Spirit Of grace."*

C. Quench

"Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Psalm 78:41 says that by our disobedience or uncooperative behaviour it is possible for us to *"limit"* the Holy One of Israel. How many times, because of lack of faith and the resulting unwillingness to launch out into the deep, do we limit God in the great things He would perform in our lives! We should always remember that **He can work for us and with us only in the scope we allow for Him.** If our vision sees no more than would seem possible for us to do personally, if we undertake no work greater than we are able to do alone, we will be allowing very little room for God to move.

D. Depart from Us

It is possible, because of hardened attitudes and rebellious wills, for the disobedient

child to leave God or to cause His Spirit to leave the temple of his body. Job 21:14 says, "Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways.'"

VI. BEHAVIOUR WITH GUESTS

A. Physically

In our homes, when we have guests visiting us, we automatically put our better selves forward. We are pleasant, agreeable, hospitable, helpful, kind. We show every courtesy to the guests, catering to their wishes, desiring to please them. Toward our own family members, we show patience and sweetness that may not always be true of our nature when guests are not present.

But, regardless, we automatically know how to behave with guests, and we behave accordingly.

B. Spiritually

Spiritually, we have three Holy Guests present always with us. If we would keep this fact in mind, I think it would be much easier for us to behave in a way that would be pleasing to God. Automatically, we would know how we should behave, and how we should not behave, and the knowledge of Their presence would strengthen our will to do good.

CONCLUSION:

In this new life, we must live "unto God". Yet this is not possible except by His living in us. He is *the head*. We are *the body* (Colossians 1:18).

Chapter Three Questions

1. With what problem did Paul struggle?
2. What solution did he find?
3. Who are the Holy Guests?
4. How does the Spirit lead us?
5. Discuss other ways the Spirit helps the children of God.
6. What is "naos"?
7. Identify the "household" that is the temple of God.
8. What do 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19,20 say about our individual physical bodies?
9. Does our behaviour affect God?
10. Should the knowledge of the presence of our Holy Guests affect our behavior?

Talking Points

- * Imagine someone else controlling your body, mind and speech. How would you feel if they violated your ethics? How do we hurt God's Spirit when we violate His code of ethics?
- * How should we behave, knowing of the Spiritual Guests dwelling in us?
- * Who is our Head? Who [What] is His body?

Chapter Four

PARTAKERS OF DIVINE NATURE

Outline

Introduction: Because of genetic inheritances, members of a physical family usually bear some resemblances to each other. In the same way, spiritually, we grow in our resemblance to our heavenly Father.

I. There is a spiritual family

- A. God, our Father; Christ, our Brother
- B. Predestined (Romans 8:29)

II. The honor of being part of God's family

- A. Representing the family
- B. Wearing the name
- C. Speaking with family authority

III. The unity of the family

- A. Love among brethren
- B. Oneness in belief and purpose
- C. Concern for each other
- D. Imperfections
- E. Trust in the Father (Romans 8:31)

IV. Preparing for heavenly existence

- A. Pleasure in earthly things
- B. Must learn family interests
- C. If not compatible, cannot be happy eternally

V. Partakers of our Father's nature

- A. Human nature, reactions, poor control
- B. Learn to partake of family nature
 - 1. Escape corruptions
 - 2. Lust of world

VI. Nourished and cared for in the family

Conclusion: It is a wonderful and an awesome responsibility to be in God's family and to represent Him and His behaviour to the world.

PARTAKERS OF DIVINE NATURE

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

When our granddaughter was born and we had our first look at her, my comment was, “I can’t tell who she looks like.” Automatically, I was looking for family resemblances. Later, after she had grown a few months, I had to declare, “She looks just like her daddy!”

I. THERE IS A SPIRITUAL FAMILY

A. God, our Father; Christ, our Brother

Spiritually, too, we are members of a family. God is our Father, Christ is our elder Brother, and we share in His Sonship as children of God.

When we are first born, people looking at us might say in puzzlement, “I can’t tell who he/she looks like.” But as we grow in the family, if we are growing properly, we will begin to look “just like daddy!” It is not possible for us to be true children of God without having the family resemblance.

B. Predestined

Romans 8:29 makes a profound statement to this effect. *“For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

This verse has been incorrectly used by denominational groups to teach that God decides who will be saved and who will be lost. But look closely at what the words actually say: that the thing that God has pre-destined or pre-determined is that all of Jesus’ brethren must be conformed to His image! In other words, we cannot be God’s children unless we look like our older Brother.

II. THE HONOR OF BEING A PART OF GOD’S FAMILY

In England, there is a very special family, the heir apparent to the throne. To be born into that family would be the most prestigious birth in England.

Talking Points

- ✱ What did God predestine?
- ✱ As Christians in the world, we stand in Christ’s _____.
- ✱ What does God risk, in letting sinful humans wear the Family name?
- ✱ As members of the Family, do we have the authority to change what is written in the sealed will of Christ, the New Testament?

In the whole world, there is a special Family. Membership in it is exclusive because the prophecy is made that only a few will find the Way (Matthew 7:14). Those who have learned the Gospel and have obeyed it have been honored above all other human beings in belonging to that Family.

A. Representing the Family

We have the honor of representing the Family of God in the world.

When our family moved to New Delhi, India, we were keenly aware that among those millions of people, we were the only New Testament Christians, to our knowledge. Those around us, those who came to know us, were seeing living representatives of God. It was of vital importance that our lives, our behaviour, our speech, truly reflect the Family image, because it was likely that those people would never meet another Christian in order to correct any false impressions we might leave.

Every Christian has this responsibility. In your neighborhood, you stand in Christ's stead, teaching by your own behaviour what His would be.

B. Wearing the Name

To each of us, our individual name is of particular importance. *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches"* (Proverbs 22:1).

Think of the name of God! Think of the perfection, the goodness, the purity it has represented from eternity! Never, through an act of God, had there been one blemish on His name, not one mark against it.

Think of the tremendous thing He did in taking that spotless name and allowing us — men, sinners, but new creatures, born as His children — to wear it as though it were inherently our right! How grateful we should be for this honor! How jealously we should guard the purity of the name "Christian", being unwilling for our actions to bring one blot of shame upon it.

C. Speaking With Family Authority

As we discussed in lesson two, we live in this world because we have work to do. We are responsible for bringing the good news of salvation to the world. In doing this, we act as the spokesmen of God. *"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Knowing that we are human, God has not given us the responsibility of creating in our own minds the message we are to teach. He wrote it out in words — the New Testament — and He has preserved it for our guidance.

Therefore, speaking for my Father, I must represent Him honestly. Whatever He says in His Word, I must also say. I have no right to add to His message or to omit part of it or to re-work it in any way.

Recently in studying with a man and talking about the oneness and the unity of God's Family, he commented, "I can see that your beliefs are too narrow."

Often this is the reaction the Christian receives when he speaks the clear message of His Father. It isn't my preference that I appear "narrow" or "picky" or "hard". No mat-

ter how I might personally wish the way was more all-inclusive, no matter how lenient I might desire to be, I have no authority to re-write God's instructions to please myself or anyone else.

So, the Christian must conscientiously teach the purity of God's word. And he teaches with confidence, knowing without doubt that whatever God has said, He will do. Jesus warned, *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). What people sometimes forget is that *even God* is bound by His own word! A will or covenant is "fixed" with the death of the testator, so that no one — neither the testator nor the beneficiary — can change a single word. Christ's death sealed the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:16), and Galatians 3:15 says, *"... Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it."* So we must teach our Father's word just as it is written, and we can teach with the confidence that He will do exactly what He has said.

III. THE UNITY OF THE FAMILY

God's desire for His family is that there be perfect unity. Jesus' memorable prayer before His death was, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (John 17:20,21).

A. Love Among Brethren

In other religions, there is the recognition of the same beliefs that draw people together in a kind of unity, but the unique thing about the religion of Christ is the similarity to the physical family relationship and the love that binds the family together.

God's approach to mankind is one of love. So, as we become like Him, we learn this attitude of love. In fact, Jesus said just shortly before His death, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34,35).

"...If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

A great part of love is an attitude of tolerance and forgiveness toward each other. Childish, petty people look for things in others by which to be offended. They are always being hurt, always feeling slighted or wronged. This is not the attitude of love that is characteristic of the sincere Christian. Ephesians 4:32 says, *"And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."*

Talking Points

- ✱ What was the new commandment Christ gave to His disciples?
- ✱ A great part of love is what?
- ✱ Christians are commanded to be tender-hearted to each other, _____ one another.

Christians approach each other, expecting to love and to be loved in return; they believe the best of each other and are reluctant to reach conclusions that would be condemnatory of each other.

B. Oneness in Belief and Purpose

There is one Gospel. All over the world, God's family worships according to one pattern each Lord's day (and I have often thought how happy God must feel when, as the earth turns, Christians in the East begin to worship and, with the movement west of the morning hours, the wave of worship travels westward all around the world!). Any Christian, any speaker, could be lifted from one congregation and put somewhere else and he would not feel a stranger. He would know what to expect in the worship period, and he would hear the same Gospel he heard in his own country. He would find the same love and fellowship, the same purpose among brethren wherever he might go. This is the family oneness God wants us to have.

C. Concern for Each Other

When there is love in God's family, concern for each other naturally follows. 1 John 3:18 says, "*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth ...*"

Sometimes, perhaps too often, even in God's family, we confuse politeness with love. We see brothers or sisters needing encouragement because they are falling short of what they should be, or maybe words of correction and instruction need to be said. But we fear offending them. We prefer their casual good will in preference to the possible negative attitude that might result from our words, and so we politely keep quiet. Do we really love them, are we really concerned when we politely watch them losing their souls and the souls of their families, and yet we say nothing?

Concern, out of love, must speak. It must be heard, whether the object of the concern is a brother or some person in the world who has not obeyed God. We cannot be complacent and uninvolved when we know the eternal consequences.

D. Imperfections

God's plan for the Family is perfect, in its goal of love, concern, and unity. But the Family is made up of humans, and humans are imperfect. Besides the imperfections that characterize even mature Christians, there are also imperfections that result from different stages of Christian growth. Naturally, the image of the Father will not be as strong in the new Christian as it should be in the one who has been in the Family for ten or fifteen years.

So we must learn to be tolerant of the humanness in each other, eager to overlook and forgive so that personal offenses are not the pattern in our relationships. But at the same time, our tolerance must be balanced with genuine concern so that we can offer guidance and advice to younger or weaker family members.

Sometimes, though, in a family, the behaviour is not "up to par". In God's family, sometimes a congregation may not have the depth of love it should have, or it may not express the concern that should be there, or it may seem blinded to the work it should be

Talking Points

- ✳ How does concern for fellow Christians express itself?
- ✳ How does tolerance toward imperfections express itself?
- ✳ Discuss the necessity to balance between the two.

doing. It may be right doctrinally but wrong spiritually. Jesus would say of such children, *"You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent"* (Revelation 2:4,5).

But God is not eager to punish and condemn His children. His desire is to be able to love and help and forgive us. It would be only where people leave God's will to the extent that His mercy cannot reach to them that they would finally be lost.

E. Trust in the Father

Often, Christians **doubt** God. They don't necessarily doubt His existence or His love for the world in general. They don't doubt His power. But they doubt their own importance to Him, and their hearts question whether He would really work in response to their prayers.

Sometimes, too, Christians **fear the judgment**. They realize that they are imperfect and they feel the guilt of their sins, even though they have penitent hearts and even though they are trying to walk in the light. They have left out of the picture the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ. They have discounted God's promises of mercy and grace. Mentally, they are trying to be good enough that they won't need a Saviour in the judgment. This is an impossible goal.

God knows our tendencies to judge ourselves and to be afraid. So He reassures us with these words in Romans 8:31-35: *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"*

God has already given us the most priceless gift: His Son. Anything else we would ask of Him or need of Him would be small — nothing — in comparison to what He has already given. So, can we doubt that He will freely give us all things with Christ?

God reasons further: In this judgment scene in which we are on trial, God has taken His place beside us as the One Who has justified us — made us as though we have no sins; and Christ stands beside us, too, as the One Who has paid the purchase price for our souls and also as the lawyer Who speaks now in our defense, interceding for us.

So, God asks the question: With such a line-up, who would dare to speak up and make some charge against God's child? Who would dare to reach a verdict of "guilty" and sentence God's child to condemnation?

Talking Points

- * What two attitudes challenge our ability to trust God?
- * How do the words in Romans 8:31-35 serve to reassure us?

With these assurances, as God's Family, we must trust His promise of help and care in this world, as well as those regarding the world to come. No true father lies to his children, and God will keep His word.

IV. PREPARING FOR HEAVENLY EXISTENCE

Living in this world, we have work to do, but also we are preparing ourselves for that eternal world.

A. Pleasures in Earthly Things

Naturally, concession will have to be made to our physical bodies. We must take care of them: clean, feed, cloth, house them. We must exercise them and rest them.

We have family relationships and friendships. These are natural and right, and a part of our time and attention must be given to these ties. But there must be a balance. If the Christian wants to spend all of his “spare” time watching television or attending games, if his foremost interest is in beautiful clothes and his personal appearance, if his choice in reading material is always for entertainment, if he enjoys food to the point of gluttony, then, obviously his life is not balanced spiritually. It would even be hypocritical if, while claiming to be a Christian, he has pleasure in taking part in the sinful things of the world.

By looking within our own hearts, asking some questions, and being honest in our answers, we can judge whether or not we are preparing ourselves to live in that heavenly world. If our pleasure, now, is in this world’s things, would we be happy there eternally?

B. Must Learn Family Interests

Do I look forward to worship? Do I look for ways to be involved in spiritual work during the week? Do I have a desire to teach others? To teach a class? To teach my own children at home?

Do I enjoy singing spiritual songs? Do I want to read God’s word? Do I enjoy being with other Christians? Is my foremost concern the welfare of God’s family and the spreading of His truth?

C. If Not Compatible

If I choose the company of a non-Christian, if I prefer worldly jokes to spiritual discussion, if I would attend a ball game in preference to Bible study, if I spend excessive money on indulgences instead of giving it to God, if my general attitude toward Christian activities is one of duty rather than excitement and sincere interest, how can I expect to be compatible with the host of heaven? If all of my mortal life I have preferred worldly things, how can I expect to be happy eternally in a world where the emphasis is always spiritual?

I think the reason many people will not go to heaven is because they don’t really *want* to go there.

Talking Points

- ✱ What questions can we ask, to know if we have the true family interests at heart?
- ✱ Before our birth into the Christian family, we were partakers of what nature? After baptism, we are to partake of Whose nature?

V. PARTAKERS OF DIVINE NATURE

This development into being a sound Christian is no superficial thing. It is not a Sunday change or a “skin-deep” change. We were, before our births into God’s family, partakers of human nature. Our attitudes, our values, our reactions were according to that nature.

But with our birth, we have taken on a new nature, the nature of our Father. This is not human but divine. True, at first we are babies and we don’t handle ourselves well. But as we learn and grow, we become mature in His nature.

2 Peter 1:4 says, "... that ... you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The beautiful thing about learning to partake of God's nature is that we are protected from so many of the dangers and pitfalls of this world. We "escape corruption" by avoiding the lusts that are prevalent around us. I have faults and weaknesses, still, but the really evil and harmful things of the world have no drawing power for me. It is no struggle to resist the temptation to commit those sins because, being re-formed as divine nature; I have escaped those lustful corruptions.

VI. NOURISHED AND CARED FOR IN THE FAMILY

Talking Points

- * How do we escape the world's corruptions?
- * Since God's help for us today is not through miraculous power, how does He come to our aid?

Besides the care that we give to each other in God's family, God Himself cares for us providentially, overruling in our lives so that He keeps His promise of "... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

In the realm of **providence**, all sorts of tools can be used by God: people, events, possessions, governments, and nature. In addition to these, God uses **angels** in caring for His children. "*Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation?*" (Hebrews 1:14).

CONCLUSION:

So when we are in God's family, we are in a position of love and security. There is strength in the unity we share as brothers and sisters in Christ. How blessed we are, above all others in the world!

Chapter Four Questions

1. Describe the relationship in our spiritual family.
2. Whose image must we bear?
3. Whom do we represent in the world?
4. What is the significance of wearing the Family name?
5. Do we have a choice about speaking God's message?
6. Can we change it to please ourselves or others?
7. What is the identifying characteristic of Christians?
8. In the Christian relationship, which is more important, spiritual concern or politeness?
9. How can we know whether or not we would be happy in heaven?
10. As we partake of divine nature, what do we escape?

Chapter Five

IN HIS IMAGE, PHYSICALLY

Outline

Introduction: The creation of man

I. Genesis 1:26

- A. The image of God?
- B. God is described as having:
 - 1. Eyes — Deuteronomy 11:12
 - 2. Ears — Numbers 11:18 (KJV)
 - 3. Mouth — Numbers 12:8
 - 4. Face — Exodus 33:20
 - 5. Hands — Exodus 13:3
 - 6. Arm — Deuteronomy 11:2
 - 7. Back — Exodus 33:23
 - 8. Feet — Matthew 5:34,35 (KJV)

II. Physical family image (husband, wife, children)

- A. Facial expressions
- B. Clothing
 - 1. General appearance
 - 2. Quality

III. Spiritual family Image

- A. Expression
- B. Clothing
- C. Possessions

Conclusion: Suppose I were not the family member in the role of “me”. Suppose Christ were filling it instead. Would He make drastic changes?

IN HIS IMAGE, PHYSICALLY

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

The crowning work of God's creation was man. In every way he is a marvel, a walking display of millions of "miracles". The formation of his different systems and the way they work so perfectly together year after year cannot be equaled in any of man's own "creations".

I. GENESIS 1:26,27:

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ...' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, male and female, He created them."

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7, KJV).

A. Image of God?

Man was formed of the dust of the earth and then when God breathed into him the breath of life, he became a living being. So in what way was he made "*in the image of God*"? Was it somehow physical as well as spiritual? The various features of man's physical body are also ascribed to God.

B. God Is Spoken of Having:

1. EYES

*"...a land for which the Lord your God cares; **the eyes** of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12).*

2. EARS

*"And say thou unto the people, sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in **the ears** of the Lord ..." (Numbers 11:18 KJV).*

3. MOUTH

*"My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak **mouth to mouth** ..." (Numbers 12:7,8 KJV).*

4. FACE

*"But He said, 'You cannot see **My face**: for no man shall see Me and live'" (Exodus 33:20).*

5. HANDS

*"And Moses said to the people: 'Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of **hand** the Lord brought you out of this place ...'" (Exodus 13:3).*

Talking Points

* Since God is Spirit, and not a fleshly Being, why do you think these physical attributes are ascribed to Him?

6. ARM

*"Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the Lord your God, His greatness and His mighty **hand** and His **outstretched arm**" (Deuteronomy 11:2).*

7. BACK

*"Then I will take away **My hand**, and you shall see **My back**; but **My face** shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:23).*

8. FEET

*"But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is **His footstool** ..." (Matthew 5:34,35).*

Of course, God is a Spirit and does not have a body of flesh, so we cannot say what His Spiritual appearance may be or how closely man's physical body is patterned according to God's spiritual being. Perhaps these physical attributes are given only to help us identify with what God says He is doing for us. But there are other ways that we can say with certainty that we are made like Him.

II. PHYSICAL FAMILY IMAGE

Besides the genetic resemblance in a family, as children bear the image of their parents, another kind of resemblance often develops through the years of living together.

Have you ever heard it said that a husband and wife resemble each other? Surprisingly, it often seems to be true, not necessarily because their facial structure is alike or their features are similar, but because of a deeper likeness.

A. Facial Expressions

To a person schooled in studying facial expressions, our faces are an open book telling what lies inside. Strength and resolution square our jaws and firm the lip line, while weakness and irresolution leave a laxness in those areas; pettishness, self-centeredness and self-pity add their own very distinct marks to the face. An inferiority complex shows up in the lips, eye contact, hand movements, the walk and general bearing of the body. And so many emotions — good and bad — can be read in the eyes.

As a husband and wife live together, often their personalities grow to be alike. Their attitudes influence each other to the point that their faces do begin to look alike, because of mirroring the likenesses in their hearts.

The same effect can be seen in children. One woman I know is always "sickly" and feeling sorry for herself. Where laugh lines should be, the creases around her mouth show her negative spirit even before she says a word. She has a young daughter. During the earlier years she didn't resemble her mother much, but as she has grown older and has developed the same petty complaints, she sounds and looks every inch her mother's daughter.

Talking Points

* Think of the most dedicated Christian you know; now think of someone you know who is not at all religious; in your mental picture of these two individuals, what differences do you note in their facial expressions? in their speech? in their clothing?

B. Clothing

A husband and wife will grow to reflect each other, also, in their clothing. In the beginning one may be of neater appearance than the other, one may look more all-around well dressed than the other. But as the years pass, the quality and general appearance of their dress will grow more and more alike.

That this growing likeness is a general rule is evidenced by our surprise when occasionally we feel forced to remark: "They just don't look like they belong together!" And usually when appearances say that, we do find great personal differences on closer examination.

III. SPIRITUAL FAMILY IMAGE

In our spiritual family, as we have already suggested, we grow in our likeness to our Father and our elder Brother. Again, the resemblance may not be in the physical features, themselves, but in the way the inner likeness shapes our physical features.

A. Expression

A good exercise for each Christian would be to stand in front of a mirror and put on various faces. How does a pure, overflowing love affect my features? What lines does anger create? How do my eyes look when they are filled with hate? With compassion? Where are my laugh lines? Are they well drawn from use, or hardly noticeable? Do I have worry creases, or is there a look of peace and security about my face?

It is of some importance that a man show care for his general appearance by shaving and combing his hair; a woman needs to reflect the same care in preparing her face for the day. But it is of much greater importance that we develop attitudes and desires that will "make up" our faces with the expressions God would wear.

B. Clothing

Our clothes, too, will reflect the fact that God is our Father, as we grow in the Family image. The Christian will learn to balance his spending so that "designer labels" and "latest styles" and "fads" are not of undue importance to him. He will buy good clothes, sensible clothes, but he will be more concerned about

using his extra money in God's work than in extravagant spending on himself.

We must remember, too, that our clothes themselves reflect God's influence. Does the latest style from Paris dictate how short my dress will be, how low the neckline is cut? Or does a conscience trained in modesty govern what I wear? Would I walk down the street in tight pants or shorts, or would I feel comfortable in a bikini on the beach? Would I feel just as comfortable dressed in those same clothes if I were suddenly brought physically before God's throne?

C. Possessions

The same balance should be exercised in the buying of other things. If we, as God's children,

Talking Points

- ✱ Can you name some expensive, and immodest fads, that you see being adopted by fellow-Christians?
- ✱ In analyzing our investments of time and money, in possessions and entertainment, what can we learn about our priorities? Are we displaying the image of our Father and elder Brother in these parts of our lives?

remember that “This World Is Not My Home”, we won’t be so prone to build up treasures on earth.

God knows that these physical bodies must be fed, clothed and housed, so He intends for us to do that. But the Christian should see his body, his home, his possessions, as tools he can use in God’s service. The problems in perspective develop when our “things” become the masters and we serve them. All too often this happens, robbing God of our time and concern for His work.

D. Activities

All day long, my physical appearance is felt somewhere. It may be a “plus” effect that I cause, or a “minus”, but some effect will be there, and if I am faithful to the name I wear, my presence will be a positive influence. I won’t take my body to questionable places, and I won’t take part in activities that would dishonor my Father.

CONCLUSION:

Sometimes, as Christians, we have difficulty sorting out the rights and wrongs of the physical world around us. Especially for those things that are a weakness to us, we find so many justifications. Most of our indecisiveness would be removed if we made this supposition: I’ll pretend I am not the family member living this role of “me”. I’ll pretend Christ is filling it instead. Would He make any drastic changes in my facial expressions, in my clothes, in my home, in my possessions, in my activities?

Talking Points

★ **Have you thought about this?**
The first consciousness that Adam and Eve had of their sin was the realization that they were naked. In order to cover what seemed to be causing a new feeling in their hearts — shame — they made “clothes” of fig leaves.

But their remedy did not satisfy God’s requirement for modesty. What did He do? It was such an important point to Him that He actually caused the first physical death — animals were killed and skinned, so that Adam and Eve could be modestly clothed!

Chapter Five

Questions

1. In the creation, how did God describe the making of man?
2. What three parts are mentioned in man’s make-up in Genesis 2:7?
3. Discuss the features God is said to have.
4. God is _____.
5. What may cause a husband and wife to resemble each other as they grow older?
6. As spiritual children of God, how will we grow to look like Him in our facial expressions?
7. In what two ways will He affect our choice of clothing?
8. How will He affect my possessions?
9. How will He affect my activities?
10. There is an easy way to end indecisiveness in the Christian life. What is it? Do you practice it?

Chapter Six
IN HIS IMAGE, MENTALLY
Outline

Introduction: Minds have been given to living beings; man is unique in his ability to read, speak, and to learn to follow his Creator's thoughts in His Revelation.

I. Communication

- A. "Seeing into" another's mind
- B. Thoughts
- C. Words

II. We can know God through what He has revealed of His mind:

- A. His greatness
- B. His power
- C. His love of order
- D. His love of color
- E. His love of sound
- F. His love of smell
- G. His love of taste
- H. His love of neatness
- I. His love of texture
- J. His love of design
- K. His love of beauty
- L. His love of peace
- M. His love of variety
- N. His love of surprises

III. Man alone can share the thoughts of God (Psalm 139:17).

- A. Can recognize, analyze, and comprehend these things
- B. Like-mindedness helps us understand the facets of God

IV. God has also revealed His mind in words:

- A. Ability to read words, given to man by God
- B. Can comprehend the concepts behind words
- C. Can think and reason in response to words
- D. Can recognize good and evil
- E. Has the imprint of God in his conscience
- F. Can conform his will to God's, voluntarily
- G. Can form his mind in the image of the Father

Conclusion: This unique gift was reserved only for man. It is too great a treasure to squander, as most do. How many turn their minds to God?

IN HIS IMAGE, MENTALLY

Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

How can the physical cells of the brain, made of the same substances as the cells of the rest of the body, think and feel and make decisions? The mind has an elusive quality that defies analysis.

Animals have minds. Do they function, though, only by instinct? Can animals think and feel to some degree? Many would say so. Others would say they seem to think only because of learned behavior patterns. Regardless of the animals' degree of intelligence and gifts from God, they do not compare with the mental capabilities of man. With man, we don't have to guess and wonder what his mind is capable of doing. We need only to look at the world and the great changes he has brought about to realize that our minds are a wondrous and unique gift of creation.

I. COMMUNICATION

Communication of the mind can take several forms. Body movements and hand gestures can reveal much about a person. Facial expressions reveal even more. A mother can communicate corrections, warnings, and praise to her child across the room simply through the messages in her eyes.

We can know much of a person's mind by studying the things around him, what he does, what he makes, what he owns. We can know more, though, by being allowed to "see into" his thoughts.

Thoughts are revealed through words. Adam's first word, man's earliest language, was taught to him by God.

II. KNOWING GOD THROUGH CREATION

In our efforts to grow in the image of God, if our minds are to be molded after His, we must learn what God's mind is like. We can understand much about God by the works of His hands that are all around us.

Who could look into the endlessness of space and fail to realize **the greatness of God**? He made all that is here, all that stretches beyond our vision, all that man understands

Talking Points

- * Discuss the inexplicable wonder of the brain, that physical cells can think, can feel emotions!
- * What are some ways that you feel humans are made in God's image?

about the universe, and all that remains yet a mystery to us. He planned the existence of the millions of bodies in space and the path that each one would travel, all ceaselessly moving at break-neck speed, yet according to His pre-ordained plan.

We feel **God's power** when we stand at the ocean's edge and watch the waves pounding against the rocks. In Job 38, God challenged Job to answer: *"Who shut in the sea with doors ... I fixed my limit for it and set bars and doors; when I said, This far you may come but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop."* Think of the power that holds the earth in place, because as God described in Job 26: *"He hangs the earth on nothing."* It stays exactly where He placed it, revolving yearly around the sun, rotating daily on an invisible axis, because of the mighty power of God. Can you imagine that the earth is spinning at a speed of 1000 miles per hour, while traveling in its orbit around the sun at 67,000 miles per hour? (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth>) Why are we not flung off into space?

What a marvel of design is all that God has made!

Talking Points

- * Does observation of the creation around us help us to understand the mind of God?
- * Discuss some of the facets of creation that show God's love of order. What factual reason causes us to categorize this orderliness as "laws"?
- * The senses of taste and smell are connected. Why are these two things important for our well-being?

God's love of order can be seen in the laws and systems He has set in motion. The laws of nature work according to a pattern. Man has studied and learned those patterns and has found them to be so resolutely followed by nature that he has called the patterns "laws". The functioning systems in every living thing also show God's love of order. Our circulatory systems, respiratory systems, digestive systems work perfectly, as a rule, year after year without repairs or adjustments.

Think of the order and power exemplified in such a common thing as a tree. Water and nutrients are drawn from the ground through the root system and these have to travel sixty to one hundred feet up the trunk of the tree and out to the tips of every branch, feeding the entire tree. Think of the powerful pumping systems that work silently, flawlessly, in every tree, in every living plant!

We can see **God's love of color** everywhere. He could have chosen to make the world in black and white, but He didn't. He used literally thousands of hues of color, combining, harmonizing, contrasting them in patterns without end. Look at the colors of birds in a zoo. Try to match, with man's pigment, the brilliance of a sunset. Imagine the sky brown and the earth purple. Didn't God choose perfect colors for restfulness and harmony when He made the earth predominantly green and the sky predominantly blue?

I am sure a person who has lost his hearing can appreciate better than most of us **God's love of sound**. We hear the purity and clarity of the notes in a bird's song. We hear the sweetness of love in a child's calling to its mother. We hear the sigh of the wind, the singing of a river, the rolling thunder of a storm. Every animal, every bird has its own particular sound. How varied they are, yet how beautiful as they blend together to speak praises to God!

Do you think God has **an appreciation for smells**? Surely only such an appreciation could have been responsible for the sweet fragrance of a rose, for the heady perfume of a gardenia, or for the tantalizing smell of a peach that sets one's mouth to watering!

Close kin to the sense of smell is our ability to **taste**. For forty years God fed the children of Israel one food in the wilderness, and they grew bored with the monotony of it. They complained, remembering the leeks and onions they had enjoyed in Egypt. The endless array of flavors is as varied as the number of colors, the individuality of the sounds.

Have you considered **God's neatness, His cleanness, His conservation**? Left all to itself, the world would be a much neater place than we humans usually make it. We generate all kinds of trash and abuse of the natural resources. But in God's system, when a plant or an animal dies, its body deteriorates and is recycled in the form of organic food. Nothing actually is wasted, because God has balanced nature so that all parts are interdependent. Even the scavengers play a vital role in God's recycling plan. The ocean, left to itself, will either recycle whatever is in its waters or will wash the refuse ashore. A river, without man's continual pollution, will purify its waters in the course of a mile.

Talking Points

- ✱ Who is our first and best teacher in the art of re-cycling?
- ✱ Take the time to consider the varied "packages" God has used for wrapping and preserving our food.
- ✱ Even in miniscule things that the human eye cannot see, there is _____.

There is another type of neatness and cleanness in God's world. Isn't it wonderful how ingeniously He planned the packaging for all the various foods, and how well the wrappings keep out germs, preserving the food and keeping it fresh and safe for eating? And how prettily He packaged everything! Think of a smooth, shiny apple, a fleshy-skinned banana, a ramadan with its prickles all around! What a variety of shapes, colors, textures, smells, even in the throwaway wrappings which, incidentally, are far superior to our plastics. After God's wrappings have served their first purpose, they return to the earth to enrich it!

Consider **God's love of texture**. Feel the bark of a tree, the velvet of a rose petal, the silkiness of the mink's fur, the cold hard smoothness of a slab of marble. Could the same mind have planned all of them?

One of God's great loves is **design**. In a winter's storm we can look at a dozen snowflakes and we will see a dozen different but perfectly symmetrical designs. Why didn't God just make little blobs of snow? Why, even in such tiny and totally unimportant things as the shape of snowflakes, did God squander loving attention and intricate design? Why, indeed, is absolutely every cell, every atom of everything of creation made according to minute design? The answer could only be because God is an absolutely orderly Being, and He appreciates the beauty and the functional use of the myriad designs He has made.

Do you think God loves **beauty**? Truly there is no place we could look that we wouldn't see some object of beauty, formed by the hands of God. In fact, He is so lavish with His use of beauty that we often fail to see it or we count it as "common-place": a forest of masterpieces — trees; a field of wild flowers — weeds.

God, too, must appreciate **peace**. This is one of the great needs of every soul, and God's recognition of that need and of the preciousness of peace when it is realized must have been responsible for the creation of twilight — that sweet, short time between the end of the day and the beginning of night when the birds sing a quiet, restful song and the night insects begin their soothing sounds.

Could we look at creation and fail to see **God's love of variety**? True, there are strong similarities in God's handiwork, but also what endless variety! Even among humans, no two faces are alike; no two sets of fingerprints are the same. So, even though all of us have eyes, ears, noses, mouths, ten fingers, ten toes, all of us are distinctly individual. But visit ten zoos and see how many different kinds of birds you find. How many varieties of monkeys are there? Walk along the seashore and pick up shells. How many thousands of totally different kinds would be there? And what varied and intricate markings they have!

God loves **surprises** too! Did you ever look closely at the center of a cosmos flower to see the many little stars hidden away there? Did you find the medicine inside the fleshy leaves of the aloe vera? Who, but God, would have planned such a thing as a caterpillar spinning a cocoon for a bedroom and then eventually emerging, splendidly dressed as a butterfly?

III. MAN ALONE CAN SHARE THE THOUGHTS OF GOD.

So, as we see and taste and smell and hear and feel all the works of creation around us, we can feel a great closeness with God. Of all of His creatures, only man was crowned with this like-mindedness, enabling him to analyze and comprehend these masterpieces, so that he can share with God in these things.

I can envision a suit of clothes, working out in my mind each minute detail. Then if I am good at sewing, I can turn those thoughts into physical substance in the form of a suit, exactly like the image in my mind. So it is with these works of God's hands. Each thing represents a thought of God that has been made into physical substance (Psalm 139:17,18). If I hurry through this world, preoccupied and paying little attention to all that is around me, I may not gain much from my experiences. But if I am observant, learning to see the wonders and learning to look closely to understand the details of the handiwork of God, then my mind will feel a companionship with His, a sharing of thoughts.

IV. GOD'S THOUGHTS REVEALED IN WORDS

The beauty of our relationship with God, though, is that He has not left us entirely dependent on observation to learn about Him. He has revealed His mind as explicitly and as fully as man can comprehend in written words.

A. Gave Man the Ability to Read Words

How unique man is in this area, too! Animals can learn to obey certain word commands. They may connect certain words with learned behaviour. But they cannot understand a vocabulary or concepts behind words as man can do.

Only man can see written characters and connect them to sounds that have meaning. Only man can understand the deeper concepts being taught as words are grouped together to make a message. Only man can think and reason and make a response to written words. What a tremendous gift God has given, that He would form our minds in the pattern of His, to the extent that He can reveal His thoughts to us and that we can understand them!

B. Can Recognize Good and Evil

When man was created, he had no knowledge of evil. He was perfect; his thoughts were absolutely pure. His love for God was also pure.

But in order for the love to be real, it had to be voluntarily given, not just the result of

the way God formed man. So God gave him a choice, to obey or to disobey Him. Of course, we know that man chose disobedience, bringing sin into the world.

So all men are aware of good and evil, and all sin. But God did not leave Himself without witness in our deeper selves. From the beginning, each man's conscience bears an imprint of the moral uprightness of God and also a consciousness of His existence. This is why all men of all time have reached up to a higher power, regardless of whether their efforts were made in ignorance or truth. Even those who deny God spend much of their time, preoccupied with trying to disprove His existence. This deep imprint of God in the soul of man is also why the general understanding of moral rights and wrongs has been the same the world over, all down through history.

C. Can Conform His Will to God's

Man alone, of all the creation, has a will of his own, to decide what he wants to do. He can choose to look at nature and see God. He can choose to go even further and read God's Book in order to understand the thoughts of his Creator. Then, whatever those thoughts are, man can bend his own will to be in submission to God. He can even choose, by becoming a child in God's Family, to put aside his "human" nature and to learn to partake of "divine" nature, forming his mind in the image of his Father.

CONCLUSION:

This unique gift of like-mindedness was reserved only for man. It must be one of the saddest things that so many thanklessly accept such a priceless gift and then fail to develop it.

Chapter Six Questions

1. How is man's mind superior to that of animals?
2. Discuss some methods of communication.
3. What can we know of God from nature?
4. Discuss the fact that each facet of creation is a thought of God made into physical substance.
5. In what more explicit way can we know the thoughts of God?
6. Only man can understand the _____ being taught as _____ are grouped together to make a _____.
7. What imprint is in the conscience of man?
8. What can man choose to do?

Talking Points

- * What are some ways that humans can share the thoughts of God?
- * Why did God give man "free will", to choose to obey or disobey Him?
- * Humanists teach that man is the product of evolution, that he is no different from animals. How does this study expose that error?

Chapter Seven

IN HIS IMAGE, EMOTIONALLY

Outline

Introduction: Finite minds cannot adequately understand or picture the person and personality of God. We do have ideas, though. Some are based on revelation, some on misconception.

I. Some imagine God as an “onlooker”.

- A. His work is finished.
- B. He is waiting until the judgment.

II. However, the Scriptures portray God as working, involved, emotional.

III. We are made in God’s image emotionally.

- A. God’s emotions are pure, right in their expression.
- B. Man’s are often distorted by sin and selfishness.

IV. God is portrayed as feeling:

- A. Anger Jeremiah 21:5
- B. Laughter Psalm 37:13
- C. Pleasure Psalm 35:27, 1 John 3:22
- D. Weariness Isaiah 43:24
- E. Jealousy Deuteronomy 32:21, 1 Corinthians 10:22
- F. Hatred Zechariah 8:17
- G. Delight Psalm 37:23,24
- H. Love 1 John 3:
- I. Compassion Jeremiah 12:15
- J. Gentleness Isaiah 40:11
- K. Mercy Psalm 103:8
- L. Pity Psalm 103:13
- M. Rejoicing Zephaniah 3:17
- N. Rest in His love Zephaniah 3:17
- O. Joy with singing Zephaniah 3:17

V. God reacts to man’s behaviour.

- A. Emotional response
 - 1. Anger.
 - 2. Joy.
 - 3. Love.

- B. Action, positive
- C. We can limit God's actions (Psalm 78:41)

VI. God reacts to man's prayers.

- A. Prayer is for a purpose
- B. God's love insists that He respond

VII. Understanding the mind of God

- A. Through reading His word
- B. Through living with His response to our actions
- C. Through recognizing, and identifying with, this emotional likeness God becomes more real to us, we can feel Him better, and anticipate His responses.

Conclusion: As with the other ways that man is made in the image of God, in sharing His emotions (human-sized copies, and subject to distortion by sin), man is unique in creation.

IN HIS IMAGE, EMOTIONALLY

Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

In Acts 17, as Paul was walking along the streets of Athens, he saw an unusual memorial. In the midst of the many temples and idolatrous statues, he saw a monument "To The Unknown God".

Sometimes, today, it seems that people know just as little about God as the Athenians did.

Of course, human, finite minds cannot fully comprehend God. We cannot adequately picture the person or the personality of God. But in every mind there are ideas of what He is like, some based on revelation, some on misconceptions.

I. AN ONLOOKER

In visiting various ladies' classes I have often asked the question, "When you think of God, do you imagine Him working, or do you think of His work as being completed and that, now, He is only waiting until time for Jesus to return?"

A surprising number think that, with the death and resurrection of Christ, the plan of redemption was completed, and so now God is simply waiting and watching all that happens in the world.

But this cannot be a true picture of God. Pagan gods are portrayed as uninvolved with man's activities, meditating instead on their own inner goodness and purity. But how could God keep all of His promises concerning answering our prayers if He held Himself aloof and uninvolved?

II. GOD IS AT WORK.

Jesus said, "*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*" (John 5:17). But the work didn't end with His life on earth. In John 17:15, Jesus asked His Father, "... *that you should keep them from the evil one ...*" How could God answer that request without working? And His work will continue as long as the battle between sin and righteousness continues.

A close reading of the Scriptures will convince us that God continues to work, that He is involved, that He is motivated in His work by His emotions.

Talking Points

- * What has been your perception of God's activity or inactivity during this age?
- * Is the idea that God's work was finished at the cross incompatible with the promises made in Scripture?
- * Some mistakenly label any work of God as being "miraculous". They understand that the age of miracles has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-13), so they believe God's work has ceased. How do you define "providence"?

III. IN HIS IMAGE — EMOTIONALLY

Yes, even emotionally we humans are formed in the image of God! Far from being aloof, detached, and unmoved, He is defined as, “*God is love.*” (John 4:8) In those three words, much of the nature of God is described and explained.

There are characteristics inherent within love. First, it must have a **recipient**. That requirement was met through the creation of man. Second, **love must be able to give and do**. And, third, **love will respond** to the object that is loved. This response involves emotions. Happiness, compassion, and gentleness are responses to a love that is accepted and returned. Anger, weariness, and jealousy are negative responses when love has not been properly received and returned.

The Scriptures do portray God as an emotional Being, with the full range of emotions that He has given to man. The difference is that God’s emotions and their expressions are always pure and right, while often ours are warped and distorted by sin or selfishness.

IV. GOD’S EMOTIONS

Let’s let His word identify for us the emotions God feels:

A. Anger

Jeremiah 21:5: “*I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in **anger** and fury and great wrath.*”

B. Laughter

Psalms 37:13: “*The Lord **laughs** at him, for He sees that his day is coming.*”

C. Pleasure

Psalms 35:27: “*Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, ‘Let the Lord be magnified, Who has **pleasure** in the prosperity of His servant.’”* John 3:22: “*And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are **pleasing** in His sight.*”

D. Weariness

Isaiah 43:24: “*... you have burdened Me with your sins, you have **wearied** Me with your iniquities.*”

E. Jealousy

Deuteronomy 32:21: “*They have provoked Me to **jealousy** with what is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.*” I Corinthians 10:22: “*Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?*”

F. Hatred

Zechariah 8:17: “*... Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I **hate**, says the Lord.*”

G. Delight

Psalms 37:23,24: “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He **delights** in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand.*”

Talking Points

- ✱ What are characteristics inherent within love?
- ✱ Is it astounding to you that the great creator God cares so much for individual humans that we can affect Him with anger or joy or jealousy?

H. Love

I John 3:1: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!"*

I. Compassion

Jeremiah 12:15: *"Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have **compassion** on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land."*

J. Gentleness

Isaiah 40:11: *"He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and **gently** lead those who are with young."*

K. Mercy

Psalms 103:8: *"The Lord is **merciful** and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in **mercy**."*

L. Pity

Psalms 103:13,14: *"As a father pities his children, so the Lord **pities** those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."*

M. Rejoices

Zephaniah 3:17

N. Rests in His Love

Zephaniah 3:17

O. Joys with Singing

Zephaniah 3:17: *"The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will **rejoice** over you with gladness, He will quiet you in His love [... He will **rest in His love** ... KJV]. "He will **rejoice over you with singing**."*

V GOD'S REACTIONS

The scriptures are filled with statements concerning God's reactions to man's behaviour. In fact, since the creation and the placing of man in the Garden to give him the choice between good and evil, all of biblical history has been an accounting of man's reactions to God and of God's response to man.

Talking Points

- * Have you ever broken out in a song because of sheer happiness? Does that memory help you to better identify with God's feelings for humans?
- * If God does not work through miracles today, how can He "uphold us with His hand"?

Do we really stop to consider the power placed in our hands, because of God's love for us? Do we realize that we — insignificant humans — can cause the very God of heaven to feel anger because of our actions? Do we consider whether our actions will bring joy to Him, whether we will be recipients worthy of His love?

It is a wonderful thing when our attitudes and actions toward God are good — when He can be "proud" of us, as a father is proud of his children

— and when He can respond to us in a positive way. During these times, we can work together, accomplishing things and reaching goals far beyond our dreams.

But there are other times when we are a disappointment to God, when our vision is small or our faith is weak. How sad it must be to Him when He sees all He *could* do through us, and yet we don't allow ourselves to be freely used in His hands. In my own longing for the welfare of His Family, I have often shed hot tears because of the unconcern and half-conversion among brethren. I have wanted to do so much, yet it was work that couldn't be done *alone*; and much of it *couldn't be done at all* because not enough Christians shared my concern. I think, "If I feel grieved, even with my limited love and vision, what must God feel when *we tie His hands* and won't give ourselves to Him as willing tools?"

If there are tears in heaven, I think they must be God's tears when He says, "*Yes, again and again they tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel*" (Psalm 78:41). One of the saddest pictures in the scriptures is found in Romans 10:21: "*All day long I have stretched out My hand to a disobedient and contrary people.*"

VI. REACTS TO PRAYERS

But when we will allow it, God's reaction to us is positive. Repeatedly, He instructs us to talk to Him, to pray, making requests of Him. Prayer is not, as some would suggest, just a psychological therapy for the weak. It is a real communication between a child and his Father, and it has a purpose. God says, "*Ask, and it will be given to you ...*" (Matthew 7:7). In response to weak faith, Jesus chided, "*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matthew 7:11). We have no cause to doubt God's love. Throughout history, He has proven the strength of His love and the fact that it does not die. So, now, when we who are His children pray, we can ask in confidence because His love will move Him to make a response. How wonderful it is that we can have this trust in Him!

VII. UNDERSTANDING GOD

There is no justification for the attitude of many, that they can't really know God because He is far away in Heaven and He is so superior to humans. God has made us in His image. He has revealed Himself in nature, in our own emotions, and in His word. If, in spite of all His efforts to communicate with us, we continue to remain in ignorance of Him, it must be by our own choice.

But if we want to know God, we can study nature, we can study His image within our own make-up, and we can learn much. Then as we study His written word, the revelation of actual thoughts of God, we can know His mind.

As His spiritual children, we learn of God through one other major source: through the cumulative experiences of living in His Family. At the time of our spiritual birth, naturally, we knew little of what to expect of Him. But through the years of being His children, we should learn much from seeing His hand in our lives. These evidences and helps gradually replace a green and immature faith with knowledge.

CONCLUSION:

Many times, in reaching out to others with spiritual love, or in the parent-child relationship within my own family, as I have struggled and overflowed with some strong emotional response, I have thought, “God must feel

Talking Points

* Discuss the different ways God has used to reveal Himself to humans, so that to the degree of which our minds are capable, we can understand the God who created us?

this, too — only His measure would be as much stronger than mine as He is greater than humans.” And in feeling those emotions, and realizing that God must feel them too, I have grown in sweet closeness to Him.

In this ability, too, man is unique in the creation. How wonderful are his special gifts!

Chapter Seven Questions

1. What did the Athenians know of God?
2. What do some people imagine God is doing today?
3. Is it possible for God to keep His promises without being at work today?
4. Discuss the various emotions the scriptures ascribe to God.
5. All of Biblical history is actually an account of what?
6. Discuss Psalm 78:41 and Romans 10:21.
7. What are prayers?
8. Do they have real purpose?
9. What motivates God to respond to our prayers?
10. As we live in God’s family, how does our faith grow into knowledge?

Chapter Eight

IN HIS IMAGE, SOCIALLY

Outline

Introduction: Perhaps we don't think of God in a "social" setting. But the very word implies interaction with others. From the conception of the plan to create beings in His own image, we see God's intention to have a relationship with the objects of His creation.

I. God *could* have been content with only the Word and the Holy Spirit as His associates.

- A. The Hebrew word used for "God" in Genesis 1:26 and Deuteronomy 6:4 is "achid", which means "a united one"; the Hebrew word "yachid" means "absolute one or only one".
- B. Our finite minds cannot understand the Godhead — the united Oneness, yet the plurality of Persons. We accept this truth by faith, until we can understand.

11. God *could* have been content with only the created occupants of the spirit world as His associates.

- A. The angelic host — created spirit beings — live in God's presence, worshiping and glorifying Him.
- B. According to Hebrews 1:14, "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*"

111. With the creation of humans, God instituted an entirely new social order, one in which He would be deeply involved.

- A. Before sin entered the world, God communed face-to-face with Adam.
- B. Sin broke the relationship, and only God could provide the means to restore it.

IV. In the life of Jesus, we see the image of what God would have us to be in this world.

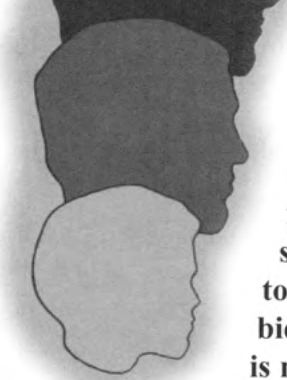
- A. Though He was Heaven's Perfection, He did not elevate Himself above humans.
- B. He loved the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the respected and the despised.
- C. He served those around Him.
- D. He sought the lost and taught them God's message of Truth.
- E. He died in order to bring into existence His church, a new society of people who are identified as God's children, the bride of Christ.
- F. This spiritual kingdom will make up the new social order in that perfect, eternal world we call Heaven.

Conclusion: As we emulate Christ in our relationships with those around us, we establish the spiritual social order that God wants humans to have in this current world, preparatory for the world to come.

IN HIS IMAGE, SOCIALY

Lesson

INTRODUCTION:



Truth be told, we as humans cannot begin to imagine a world without the presence and influence of God. But let's listen to the philosophy of humanists for a minute: their belief is that there is no God, no order, no good or evil, no right or wrong, no basis for judgment of behaviour. If those beliefs held full sway in any society or culture, it would be impossible to legislate acceptable behaviour. Nothing could be forbidden. In the animal world, one animal killing another is not "murder"; it is simply "the law of nature". If we are nothing more than evolved animals, no human has the right or authority to legislate what any other human can or cannot do.

How would you like to live in that kind of world? Surely, if we are thinking at all, we will completely reject atheism and humanism, as the horrible lies that they are.

I. ACHID, OUR UNITED GOD

While our minds cannot truly comprehend the spirit world, we can accept the portrayal in God's word of Himself. According to Genesis 1:26, 27: "*Then **God** said, "Let Us make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; ... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* The Hebrew word for "God" in this passage means "**united**" one, not "only one".

Though this "Godhead" is not as clearly defined in the Old Testament as in the New, we do read of "Jehovah", the "Spirit of God", and "The Angel of God" (Psalm 83:18; Genesis 1:2; Exodus 14:19 with 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 1-3,14). In the New Testament, the identification of the three Persons is made in Matthew 3:16,17: "*When He had been baptized, **Jesus** came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is **My beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased."* Again, in Matthew 28:19, we read the instructions: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**...."*

The entire portrayal of God throughout the Scriptures is of unity in work and purpose — a relationship of perfection.

II. THE SPIRIT WORLD

A. There is a population and a social order that we cannot see. We read in Revelation 5:11-13: "*I heard the voice of **many angels** round about the throne and the*

beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

From these, and other passages, we understand that the angelic host worships and praises its Creator. But Hebrews 13:2, along with 1:14, informs us that angels are sent out into the world to serve those who shall be heirs of salvation — individual Christians!

We also read in Daniel 7:13,14 "*...one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him....*" Throughout the prophetic books, particularly in Revelation, we see the working of the angelic host, under the rule of our risen Lord (Matthew 24:31).

B. But there was rebellion in Heaven, and the one who came to be called "Satan" led many of the angels in an uprising against God. "*...there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon [Satan]; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*" Satan was cast out of Heaven to the earth, where he works day and night to deceive those who will listen to him. He, with all of his lies, wars against the social order originally created by God. The "dragon" — a powerful fallen angel who evidently was once "the anointed cherub in the Garden of God" (Ezekiel 28:12-15) — is the father of the anti-social elements that continually wreak havoc among humanity.

111. THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER: GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MAN

A. The introduction to the initial relationship between God and man is given in Genesis 3:8,9: "*...they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*" We cannot begin to imagine what it must have been like for Adam and Eve, newly formed by the hands of God, placed in the perfect Garden, and blessed to associate freely with their loving Creator and with the angelic host! But it would have been... well, Heavenly! Yes, it *was* Paradise, free of sin, untainted by death, perfect in every way.

Talking Points

✱ Though the passage in Ezekiel 28 initially addresses "the king of Tyre", it seems obvious that the central part of the passage is not describing a human: since Adam, humans are *born*, not *created*; this 'being' was in Eden, the garden of God; he was called the anointed cherub; he was 'perfect' until evil was found in him.... To me, it seems that God was describing the fall of Satan, and showing the king of Tyre the parallels to his own fall into woeful sin.

B. We don't know when Satan rebelled against God, or how long Adam and Eve might have lived in the Garden before they listened to the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit; but we do know that with the entrance of sin into the world, everything in the original social order came crashing down. Death became a part of life. Jealousy and anger broke the bonds of brotherhood. Murder separated families. Sin formed a wall of separation between the sinners and their God.

C. What was the remedy? What could be done to restore the relationship? Man, cut off from God by his sin, and doomed to eternal death, could do nothing to restore himself to his lost position. But God was not willing to lose the relationship with the creation He had made in His own image, endowing humanity with an immortal soul. So, the Word became flesh (John 1:1-3,14) — Jesus the Christ, the Son of God — and through His life and death and resurrection, the penalty was paid for sin.

Talking Points

- * Discuss some of the things that came into the world as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve.
- * Having given His creation the supreme gift of a soul — of immortality — what was God willing to do to redeem man from spiritual destruction?
- * Discuss some of the many aspects of the example and life of Christ that help us to understand how God wants us to interact with those around us.
- * Was Jesus criticized for keeping company with sinners?

IV. IN CHRIST, WE SEE THE SOCIAL IMAGE GOD WANTS US TO EXPERIENCE IN THIS WORLD.

A. Though He was Heaven's Perfection, He did not elevate Himself above humans. *"And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head'"* (Matthew 8:20).

B. He loved the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the respected and the despised. *"Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are*

sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance'" (Matthew 9:10-13).

C. He served those around Him. *"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (Matthew 9:35,36).

D. He sought the lost and taught them God's message of Truth. *"... go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'"* (Matthew 10:6,7).

E. He died in order to bring into existence His church, a new society of people who are identified as God's children, the bride of Christ. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock ... to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ... This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning **Christ and the church**” (Ephesians 5:25-32).*

F. This spiritual kingdom will make up the new social order in that perfect, eternal world we call Heaven. *“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: ...And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life” (Revelation 21:10,11; 22-27)*

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:1-7).

Conclusion: Humility and compassion would be choice words to describe Jesus' attitude in life and His behaviour toward the humans around Him. We must learn to emulate Him in all things.

Chapter Eight

Questions

1. Describe some aspects of human relationships that refute atheism.
2. What does the Hebrew word “achid” say, in reference to God?
3. How were humans made in the image of God, concerning the soul?
4. How did Satan come into existence? Discuss Ezekiel 28:12-15.
5. How did Jesus teach God's concept of social relationships?
6. How was the atonement made for the sin that separated humanity from its Creator?
7. Jesus died to sanctify and cleanse what people?
8. He is coming back to receive unto Himself _____ (Eph. 5:27).
9. What promises and warnings are given in Revelation 2:10?
10. What kind of social order is described in the passages in Revelation?

Chapter Nine

IN HIS IMAGE, SPIRITUALLY

Outline

Introduction: Man, unlike the rest of creation, is a dual being, composed of body and spirit.

I. The soul, the spiritual part of man, has close connections with:

- A. Life (The body without the spirit — the soul — is dead.) James 2:26
- B. The mind (because the mind directs and molds the soul)
- C. Yet the soul is neither the breath of life in the body nor the physical brain cells in the head

II. The soul is spiritual in nature.

- A. Partakes of God's image
- B. Cannot be destroyed along with the physical body (Matthew 10:28)
- C. It is immortal

III. The soul bears the imprint of God. In conjunction with the mind, it:

- A. Has a conscience
- B. Realizes good and evil
- C. Responds to good and evil appeals
- D. Has the ability to understand values
- E. Develops goals
- F. Recognizes standards.
- G. Can envision the future, with rewards and punishments

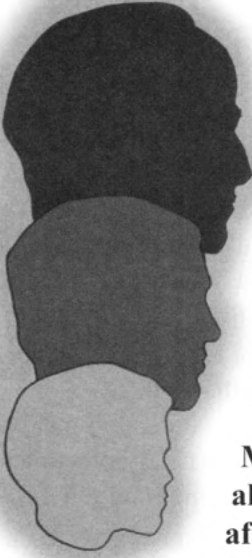
IV. The soul longs after God.

- A. Why all worship
- B. Why general moral rights and wrongs are the same everywhere

Conclusion: God's love is expressed in His desire that the objects of His love live eternally.

IN HIS IMAGE, SPIRITUALLY

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. ... And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being’ [a living soul, KJV] (Genesis 1:26,2:7).

Man is formed in God’s image, mentally and emotionally, but especially is the spiritual part of man formed after the likeness of God. Unlike all other living beings of creation, man is not only a living body, but he is a dual being: a living soul, housed in mortal flesh.

I. THE SOUL

How can the soul be defined or described? Being spiritual in nature, it is almost as much beyond our comprehension as is the Godhead. But we know that the soul is an immortal part of man, beginning with the beginning of his existence, and living on in the Hadean world after the death of the body, until judgment brings the promised eternal rewards for the way we have lived.

The soul has a close connection with life, because James 2:26 says, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”

The soul is also closely connected to the mind, because it is the mind that directs and molds the soul. The mind chooses and plans, accepts or rejects, obeys or disobeys.

Yet, the soul is not the breath of life within the body because we know that animals do not have souls as man has, even though they are living, breathing beings. Neither is the soul the physical cells of the brain. No, it is both more definite and more elusive than either of these. When the lungs cease to function and no more breath stirs the body, the soul is not stilled. It has already “*returned to God who gave it*” (Ecclesiastes 12:7), and lives as surely and as literally as it lived while housed in the physical body. In fact, one day when

Talking Points

- ✱ How were humans created in the image of God?
- ✱ Unlike all other living beings, man is a _____ being; a living _____, housed in mortal flesh.
- ✱ What happens to the soul when the body dies?
- ✱ The soul is neither the physical _____ of the _____, nor the _____ of life within the _____.

Christ returns and heralds the resurrection, according to 1 Corinthians 15, the body will be raised, transformed into immortal substance and will live again, reunited with the soul, eternally. So the soul is far more than the breath of the body.

Brain cells can be studied, dissected, analyzed, destroyed. Yet, who can trace the thoughts and intentions of the mind? It is this elusive part that shapes a man, that determines where he will live eternally, because it is this part that controls a man's behavior.

II. THE SOUL IS SPIRITUAL.

God is eternal, having had no beginning and knowing no end. Man is not *eternal* but *immortal*. He had a beginning, with the beginning of his life as a human. But he is made in God's image, which means that once that life was begun, it will have no end.

Jesus said, "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matthew 10:28). So, man is immortal, at once both a thrilling and a frightening realization. The one thing that can be said of every relationship of this physical world is, "This, too, shall pass." Sometimes it is with regret that we see a thing come to an end; sometimes it is with profound relief.

But no such statement can be made of the soul. It will never pass. So, if we choose a life with God, preparing for eternity with Him, what a thrilling thought immortality is! But if we ignore God or defy Him and die in disobedience, immortality will be an unending curse from which there can be no release.

III. THE IMPRINT

The mind, the soul, and the body are co-participants in most human actions. The soul bears the imprint of the image of God and, in conjunction with the mind, it has a conscience. Early in life that conscience has a realization of what is right and what is wrong, and it learns to feel guilt when it takes part in doing wrong. The conscience, further, is trainable, being able to learn the finer dividing lines between good and evil.

The soul, also, responds to appeals. There are thoughts, actions, goals that are good and lift man up. There are others that are degrading and destructive. The soul sees these appeals and makes a response to them.

Talking Points

- * Define the difference between "eternal" and "immortal".
- * What fact about the existence of the soul is both thrilling and frightening? Why?
- * What can be said of every relationship in this physical world?
- * What abilities within the soul are unique to man?

The soul also has the ability to understand values, to recognize standards, to develop goals. It can envision the future, with rewards and punishments. Only man has this ability to sift through the good and bad, and to make his choices according to what has value. Only man can think and plan and work toward eternal blessings. Only man can believe and envision and hope. How wonderful are these blessings "in His image"!

IV. THE SOUL LONGS AFTER GOD.

Sometimes, with so much sin and ungodliness in the world, we would be inclined to say, "God has been forgotten." But if we look again we will

see that the evidence of remembrance of God is there everyday, everywhere. Even when people want to deny God, He is on their minds enough that their frequent topic of conversation is why they do not believe in Him! How often is God's name used as profanity by those who have no respect for Him — yet they make constant reminders of His existence! In songs, literature, art, and films, the subject of God, quotations from His word, references to Him, are interwoven with all of the other topics. And everywhere, in truth or in error, as a spirit or as an idol, God is worshiped. Yes, God has made His indelible imprint in the soul and, whether men speak to acknowledge Him or to deny Him, still they all speak of God.

Throughout history man has worshiped. Since no one has seen God and few have heard Him speak, universal historical belief in His existence would be an impossible phenomenon except for one thing: God has placed within each individual soul the inborn awareness of His existence. For this reason, in man's exultant happiness, his soul overflows with a reaching up to God. And in the midst of crushing anguish or tragedy, the soul again invariably reaches up to God, pleading for help from Him Whom the eyes cannot see but Whom the soul knows is there.

In the same way, along with the freedom to choose his own path, God has imprinted on each soul His standard of moral right and wrong. Yes, sometimes in extremely perverted societies there have been exceptions to the rule, but generally throughout the world and throughout time, nine of the "Ten Commandments" have served as the written or unwritten laws for all men, whether obeyed or disobeyed. This, too, would have been an impossible phenomenon except for one explanation: God.

CONCLUSION:

In the course of a lifetime, a family may have a series of pets. Each, in its own turn, is special and "loved", but then it dies and is eventually replaced by another pet.

God could have satisfied His need for objects to love in the same way. He could have reasoned: I will make this creature in My image. I will give him a mind fashioned after Mine, emotions in likeness to Me, the freedom to choose whether or not he will love and obey Me. In these ways, there can be genuine love between us, and understanding and communication. But if I give the gift of immortality — if I make him after My image *as a living soul* — he may not properly treasure that greatest gift. Instead of caring for it, he may be negligent and disobedient. Then he would be lost eternally.....

But "pets" were not what God wanted. He wanted a love-relationship with a like-minded being that would never end. And so, crowning all of His other gifts to man, He gave the supreme gift: Immortality! The gift is entrusted in our hands. What will we do with it?

Talking Points

- * If God is no more than a "myth" that should have vanished in this age of "science and reason", why does every human being still deal with the question?
- * Are people usually secretive about lying, cheating, stealing, committing adultery, etc.? Why are shame and guilt usually associated with these acts?
- * What was God's ultimate and greatest gift to humans? Why did He risk entrusting such a priceless treasure in human hands?

Chapter Nine

Questions

1. When did man become a living soul?
2. In what way is man a dual being?
3. How is the soul related to life?
4. How is the soul connected to the mind?
5. Is the soul the breath of life or the brain?
6. Is man truly an eternal being?
7. What is the difference between “eternal” and “immortal”?
8. What ability does the soul have?
9. How do men show their continual awareness of God?
10. Why did God give the gift of immortality?

Chapter Ten

HOW THE RULES WORK, PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, FOR ME

Outline

Introduction: It is a truth that the book that gives perfect guidance for living in this world would also be the reliable guide for preparing for the world to come.

I. The Bible commands us to do certain things and to leave off certain things.

- A. The things we are to do are beneficial and bring peace.
- B. The things we are to avoid are harmful.
- C. Galatians 5:24.

II. The works of the flesh are self-indulgences, self-centeredness.

- A. Sins of the flesh: adultery, fornication, and homosexuality; resulting in disease and disaster. (Romans 1:24-32)
 - 1. Venereal diseases.
 - 2. AIDS.
 - 3. Guilt.
 - 4. Broken homes.
 - 5. Abortions.
 - 6. Abused, neglected children.
- B. Drunkenness.
 - 1. Destroys brain cells.
 - 2. Cirrhosis of the liver.
 - 3. Murder by drunken driving.
 - 4. Crimes.
 - 5. Mental problems, insanity.
 - 6. Abuse in the family.
 - 7. Wastage of money.
 - 8. Genetic damage to unborn.
 - 9. Social expense.
 - 10. Guilt when sober.
- C. Jealousies, envy, selfish ambitions

1. Worry.
 2. Fear.
 3. Frustration.
 4. Over-sensitivity.
 5. Self-centeredness.
 6. Resentment.
 7. Hatred.
- D. Contentions, dissension, outbursts of wrath, hatred.
1. Anger.
 2. Physical danger.
 3. Poor personal relationships.
 4. Guilt.
 5. Loneliness.

III. These emotional problems result in physical problems.

- A. Damage done to:
1. Emotions, nerves.
 2. Heart.
 3. Liver.
 4. Stomach.
 5. Colon.
 6. Intestines.
 7. Joints.
- B. Physical illnesses caused or worsened by stress and emotions:
1. Ulcers in stomach and intestines.
 2. Mental and emotional disorders.
 3. Headaches.
 4. High blood pressure.
 5. Strokes.
 6. Heart attacks.
 7. Arthritis.
 8. Colitis.

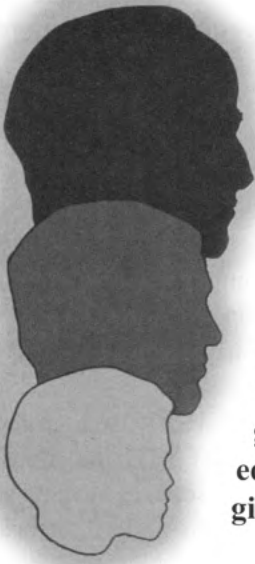
IV. Life free of physical and emotional abuse would be a healthier one.

V. Freedom from worries resulting from self-centeredness would bring happiness.

Conclusion: The instructions God gives are the best guidance for living in the present world. (Galatians 5:22-23)

HOW THE RULES WORK, PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, FOR ME

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

None of us have died and passed into that eternal world, only to be allowed to return and tell the living what “after death” is like and which spiritual guidebook is the truth. So I can’t speak with “knowledge” about the truths or the speculations in any religious book on the subject of life after death.

But if the rules of one religious system, taken as they are — 100% — provide the correct guidance to steer us successfully through this present life in this physical world, then we can have confidence that the writer must also be speaking the truth, from His own knowledge concerning life after death.

I. THE BIBLE COMMANDS US TO DO CERTAIN THINGS AND TO LEAVE OFF CERTAIN THINGS.

We believe that the Bible provides the only reliable guide for living in this world and coping with life’s problems. It tells very specifically what we must do, and it is also very specific in the instructions of what we must not do. The New Testament is the only spiritual law that is perfect. Of all that it asks us to do, not one thing will prove to be bad or harmful when followed fully by one person in a society or by all. No good thing is overlooked in what it instructs us to do. At the same time, no harmful thing is included; all are forbidden, and to leave them off will only improve man’s life in this world. What better guide could we want?

Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

II. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

The works of the flesh are self-indulgence, self-centeredness. If these are forbidden, it must be because they are harmful to those who engage in them.

A. Sins of the Flesh

What are some of these sins of the flesh, as listed by Paul? Adultery, fornication,

homosexuality (Romans 1:24-32). Millions upon millions of people throughout the world indulge in these sins. Obviously, they feel some sense of pleasure and satisfaction, which is generally true of sin: it deceives people into thinking it is a good thing, only to prove destructive in the end.

During the last few years there has been a widespread growth in immorality of all kinds, as "humanism" has gained acceptance. What is "humanism"? It is the culture that has resulted from atheism. In the atheists' desire to erase all Christian belief and influence from the lives of people, all-out war has been waged by the "liberal elites" through our educational systems and the passing of permissive laws (such as "pro-choice", allowing the murder of more than one million unborn babies in this country each year; no-fault divorce, resulting in half of the marriages ending in the courts; in the attitude, "I'm OK, you're OK", meaning that no one is allowed to be judgmental toward the behaviour of another person.)

The results of these changes in our culture have been a multiplied increase in immorality and venereal diseases, with the development of a new type of STD that does not respond to any of the known medicines. Though many people today seem to have no sense of shame and no restraining moral principles, the horrors of syphilis and gonorrhea are causing second thoughts about promiscuity. Syphilis is called "the social leprosy" because of the fear and ostracism in peoples' reactions to those who have it. It can lie seemingly

dormant in a person for years, yet its attacks on the brain, the heart, various spinal and cranial nerves, and the emotions are deadly. It is the cause of countless stillbirths each year and also of many irremediable birth defects.

Who would want to marry a man or woman with a venereal disease? Those who have "enjoyed" sexual "freedom" and have contracted a venereal disease suddenly find that the "fun" has gone out of the sin. Now they suffer great pain from attacks of the disease, and they suffer the emotional pain of feeling rejected and ostracized from society. Many end their lives in mental institutions and suicide.

Homosexuality is a perversion of nature, engaged in by many. "Gay marriage", "gay rights", "gay pride parades" are flaunted in the faces of those who still adhere to God's warnings about such deviant behaviour. Acceptance in the military, adoption approvals for "gay parents", even the teaching of that lifestyle as simply an alternate choice is being sanctioned for

introduction at the kindergarten level in some of our public schools!

What has God said? *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the*

Talking Points

* What percentage of couples in the US are "live in"? **about 25%**
"...about half of all women aged 15 to 44 had lived unmarried with a partner."

* What percentage of marriages end in divorce? **about 34%** (George Barna) — **one reason this number is down somewhat is because many today are not getting married; they're cohabiting!**

* What percentage of pre-teens engage in sexual activity? **about 12%**

* What percentage of teens engage in sexual activity? **about 50%**

* What percentage of people are still pure, morally, when they marry? **some reports say 5%; some say perhaps 20%**

men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Look at what God says will be the result of choosing to live in such diametrical opposition to nature: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them”* (Romans 1:26-32).

Homosexuals and their supporters have tried to insist that there is nothing wrong with man-to-man or woman-to-woman sexual relationships — trying in vain to find a genetic excuse for their choice to sin. They ignore God’s declaration that such deviant behaviour is worthy of death. But a deadly disease has developed among homosexuals — AIDS — which destroys the body’s immune system. Is this *“the penalty of their error which was due”*, that Paul warned would come to those who practiced such violation of nature as God created it? The lives of people with AIDS are drastically shortened and are consumed with taking medications to hold the scourge under some semblance of control. Up to this time no cure or prevention has been found for the disease which is contagious and is spread through intimate contact and blood transfusions. Fear may cause a complacent society to look more harshly on such immoral lifestyles.

Besides these and other horrible physical diseases, immorality causes many additional problems. Unadmitted and perhaps unrecognized feelings of shame and guilt blight the conscience so that all kinds of psychological hang-ups develop. A large percentage of those who engage in such sins eventually have to seek help, and many are never able to straighten out their thinking. Guilt also affects the ability to have normal relationships with other people. For the sins of a moment, millions are crippling themselves emotionally and socially for life. Because of the guilty conscience resulting from pre-marital sexual relationships, sound marriages cannot be developed. Trust is destroyed.

On the other hand, humanism’s new religious code which says that there is no such thing as sin, and no moral rights or wrongs, is successfully training humans to have no conscience at all. “Live in” relationships and promiscuity are destroying the ability of many in the younger generation to love deeply, to give fully of oneself to a marriage partner, to develop a lasting relationship with another human. They become crippled and

Talking Points

- ✱ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says of homosexuals, *“such were some of you,”* showing that the sin is the result of choice, not faulty genetics.
- ✱ Compare the end results of an immoral lifestyle with the results of the pure life God asks His children to live.
- ✱ Which life brings happiness and fulfillment?
- ✱ Which life is filled with danger that usually results in disease and tragedy?

warped. Growth in the number of broken homes has increased, along with sexual abuses. The two invariably go together and are destructive to society in general.

Yes, there are cases of divorce for reasons that God would sanction; Jesus said, "*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery*" (Matthew 19:9). But with the advent of "No Fault" divorces, the floodgates to evil with-

Talking Points

✱ Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 that divorce is permissible only when the mate has been _____.

✱ This is a very strict rule. Was godly intolerance the basis, or did God pronounce such stringent measures because of the great need to protect the home and the family?

✱ Because of laxness in regard to divorce and sexual immorality, what is happening to the security in the home?

in the home were opened. Listen closely to almost any horror story on the news, concerning families, and the usual red flags are the mention of divorce, live-in situations, or some similar immoral relationship. Child abuse, incest, and murder often become the news items, as is true of the current case of a missing baby. The mother is not divorced from her husband, who is the father of her older son. She is living with a man, who is not her husband, but who is evidently the father of the missing baby. It's a terrible, immoral mess! Statistically, in 78% of the cases of such missing children, family members are involved. What does this tell us about why God made strict rules to protect the home from the destructive blows of divorce?

Undoubtedly, divorce and all the resulting problems are responsible for the rise in emotional problems, drug abuse, and suicides among our youth. Many have grown up without the security of love

and a normal family relationship, so they have no base on which to build their own lives. They are the greatest tragedy of all, because they did not choose the path of problems as their parents did; they are the victims.

Children are the victims of immorality in two other ways: unwanted pregnancies develop and the "escape" of abortion grows increasingly popular. Why pay for one's indulgences by going through with the pregnancy and confronting the attitudes of censure from the moral segment of society? Why give birth to an unwanted child and then have the trouble and expense of rearing it? The answer becomes abortion — murder of the helpless unborn. So, sin begets sin, and guilt begets greater guilt.

On the other hand, the children who are born illegitimately and the children who grow up in homes broken apart by immorality are frequently the victims of physical abuse and neglect. If we asked them, not one of them would say that such a life of sin brings happiness.

So, from every standpoint, these works of the flesh, these self-centerednesses and self-indulgencies are harmful. God forbade them in His word because He wanted to shield His children from all the terrible consequences that would follow such a life.

I Thessalonians 4:3-8 (Phillip's translation) says this about the bodies of Christians: "*God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality. Every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never regarding it as an instrument for self-gratification, as do*

pagans with no knowledge of God. You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellowmen. And you must remember that God will punish all who do offend in this manner, and we have warned you how we have seen this work out in our experience of life. The calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity, and anyone who makes light of the matter is not making light of a man's ruling but of God's commandment. It is not for nothing that the Spirit God gives us is called the HOLY SPIRIT."

B. Drunkenness and Addiction

Why would drunkenness (and intoxication of the mind through the use of drugs would also come under this heading) be forbidden in God's word? As with other sins of the flesh, millions drink liquor and take drugs. They think they gain pleasure from such indulgences. But what are the proven worldwide results of drinking?

Scientists have learned that every drink of alcohol destroys brain cells. During years of drinking, a heavy toll is taken, permanently slowing the capacity to think, damaging the ability to reason clearly and logically. Severe mental problems and insanity can be the terrible consequences of alcoholism.

Or the drunkard may develop cirrhosis of the liver and die from that disease. Many other physical ills can be caused by alcohol. But the damage doesn't stop there. Countless crimes — in fact, most violent crimes — are committed while the perpetrator is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. How could anyone judge these to be "good" and "pleasurable" when they are the cause of so much of the evil in the world?

Talking Points

- ✱ **Why is addiction a very real form of slavery?**
- ✱ **What are some of the tragic physical, mental, and emotional consequences of addiction?**
- ✱ **Do you have friends or relatives who were victims of drunkenness in the home? What were some of the problems they had to deal with?**
- ✱ **What overwhelming monetary costs can be involved in addictions?**

Besides the robberies committed because of the influence of alcohol and drugs, and in order to obtain money for these addictions, think of the loss of lives and money through road accidents caused by drunkenness. 60 to 80% of all accidents on the highways involve people who are drinking. Thousands are killed each year, most of them by people who take a deadly weapon — the wheel of a vehicle — in their hands and aim it at all on-coming traffic. Because they are intoxicated, the penalty for what they have done may be very light, if there is any personal punishment at all. But the cost to the public, in general, through vehicular damage, heavy insurance premiums, hospital and doctor bills, loss of work hours, permanently crippled bodies, loss of life, and the emotional and economic damage in affected families cannot be measured.

Within the personal family of the drunkard there is also great cost. Money that should have been spent for food and clothes and shelter is wasted on liquor, while the family may live in deprivation of the necessities of life. In addition, it is all too common for drunken fathers or mothers to physically abuse their children, adding emotional hurt to the other hurts inflicted. No home can be a happy one where drunkenness is practiced.

It is a scientific fact, also, that alcohol is genetically damaging, causing many birth

defects. Irremediable damage is done to all personally involved, but society pays the price also: every year huge sums of money are collected to aid those with birth defects. Sadly, many of those defects were deliberately caused by the use of alcohol and could have been avoided if this "pleasure" had not been engaged in by the expectant mother.

Surely, the final private cost of drunkenness would be the weight of guilt that must be felt during sober times when the alcoholic stops to consider all the hurt he causes by his sins.

After one has become a drunkard, there are numerous ways to try to free oneself of the enslavement. **But the one absolutely certain way not to be an alcoholic is never to take the first drink.**

Can we doubt God's wisdom in listing such a deadly thing among the forbidden works of the flesh?

C. Jealousies, Envies, etc.

Talking Points

- * Why might jealousy and envy be called intoxicants of the soul?
- * List some related mental attitudes usually suffered by people who are prone to jealousy.
- * Jealousy is the outgrowth of unhealthy _____.
- * _____ and _____ are often the hardened forms of jealousy.
- * A contentious spirit results in what actions?

As liquor and drugs are physical intoxicants of the body, jealousy and envy could be called intoxicants of the soul because of the personality-changing effects they have on the individual. A person whose life has all the potential of being happy and a blessing to others can live miserably as a result of the poisonous effects of jealousy. It eats away at the insides, causing attitudes of competitiveness and resentment, alienating one from friends and family. Who can develop a deep relationship with a jealous person? The pettishness and self-centeredness can flare up at any time, for little or no reason, so people soon learn to keep a safe distance.

A person who is jealous, one who nurses envy and selfish ambitions, is usually a victim of related mental attitudes. He will tend to worry because he realizes that many of his relationships are not good. The worry brings insecurity, fear, and frustration.

Jealousy is the outgrowth of unhealthy self-love. Most of all, the jealous person is thinking of himself and is willing to hurt anyone in misguided efforts to protect himself. This self-centeredness brings over-sensitivity and resentful reactions that are out of proportion. How often does a friend or family member stand in stunned disbelief as he sees the explosive reaction he has unwittingly caused in a jealous, envious heart?

Resentment and hatred are often the hardened forms of jealousy. These attitudes become a way of life, automatic negative responses to life. Once a person has begun to form his thinking in this mold, it is very difficult for others to help him see his mistakes or for him to be able to help himself.

D. Contentions, Dissentions

Close kin to jealousy is the contentious spirit. Quarrels and anger, outbursts of ugliness are not conducive to peace of mind, good health, or good personal relationships. It is

not uncommon for uncontrolled temper to result in physical abuse and even murder. A large percentage of the murders in the United States are committed by an angry acquaintance or family member.

But even if such ugly attitudes are not allowed to lead to these extremes, they often eat away at the insides of the contentious person, affecting his relationships with others. He may have enough conscience that he is plagued with feelings of guilt over not being able to “get along with” others. Certainly, for such a person, loneliness would be a sad way of life.

III. EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS RESULT IN PHYSICAL PROBLEMS.

Do our emotions really affect us physically? Does anger or happiness form any direct links with the way my body works? Undoubtedly so!

A. Physical Damage

All of these “forbidden” things, these sins that God expressly bans, thread their way throughout the body, damaging and often destroying emotions and nerves, the heart, liver, stomach, colon, intestines, joints. Every part of the body can literally be “made sick” through engaging in these things God warns us not to do.

B. Resulting Physical Sickness

When I get really upset emotionally, the outstanding effect is that for the next several hours my legs feel tired to the point of exhaustion. But such minor temporary discomfort is nothing compared to the devastating effects of these sins as they develop actual physical illnesses that often result in death.

Ulcers in the stomach and intestines can be caused by worry and stress. Mental and emotional breakdowns from which many never fully recover are often caused by worry, jealousies, and anger. Many headaches are the result of tension, anxiety, stress. High blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks are murderous diseases that often begin with practicing these forbidden sins of attitude. Even arthritis can be caused or worsened by fear and anxiety. And living under continual stress is known to result often in colitis.

Talking Points

- ✱ What long-term effects can emotional problems cause?
- ✱ Every part of the body can literally be _____ through engaging in those things God warns us not to do.
- ✱ List some specific physical diseases that are often caused by worry, jealousy, and anger.
- ✱ If we practice the kind of mental and emotional purity God wants, and if we avoid engaging in a sinful life, how will this affect our general state of health?

IV. HEALTHIER LIVES FREE OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Surely everyone wants a healthy body, and God wants His people to have healthy bodies. He has built into His system the guidelines to enable us to be as free as possible from physical and emotional sickness. If we listen to Him, not abusing our bodies by participating in forbidden actions and attitudes, we can look forward to the long life of good health that we desire.

V. HAPPIER LIVES, FREE OF WORRIES

Surely if we would stop to take a good look at a self-centered, contentious, spiteful person, we would recognize that those attitudes always breed unhappiness. The fact would seem obvious; yet, a large percentage of the people in the world are plagued with these sins and the ruinous effects in their lives and bodies. Why? Can they not see? Maybe this world is often blinded to the truth, but Christians should not be. God's way is the one way that offers real happiness.

CONCLUSION:

After listing and forbidding "the works of the flesh", Galatians 5:22,23 promises: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*"

If we remember that we are in God's family and that we house Holy Guests in our bodies, this knowledge should help us to yield our minds and attitudes to His Spirit. And in yielding, we will grow to bear the fruit of the Spirit, shaping our lives with gentleness, goodness, and self-control.

Chapter Ten Questions

1. How can we judge about the authenticity of any writing as being from the mind of God?
2. Does God forbid some things simply to see if we will obey Him or to deny us some of the pleasures of life?
3. What over-all consequences is society in general suffering because of the tolerant attitudes toward immorality?
4. Why should a Christian not indulge in social drinking?
5. Why could jealousy and envy be called intoxicants of the soul?
6. Why is it difficult to have a deep relationship with a self-centered person?
7. How do emotional problems become physical problems?
8. How do attitudes and emotions govern our physical health?
9. How do they govern our happiness?
10. Instead of having harmful attitudes, children in God's family are taught to bear with-in themselves the fruit of the Spirit. How is this fruit beneficial?

Chapter Eleven

HOW THE RULES WORK, SOCIALY, FOR ME

Introduction: From nations, to neighbors, to family members, the world is not at peace with itself. Is there a system, a set of directions, that will bring about this longed for peace, if it is followed?

I. The world is filled with all kinds of people. Some:

- A. live somewhat by God's eternal moral laws, though they may not know the laws' origins (Romans 2:14)
- B. place emphasis on the physical (Romans 6:19)
- C. render only what is due (Colossians 3:23)
- D. have consideration only for equals (Luke 14:12-14)
- E. render evil for evil (Matthew 5:38,39)
- F. curse persecutors (Matthew 5:44)
- G. avenge wrongs (Romans 12:19)
- H. give love for love (Matthew 5:16)
- I. practice deceit (Romans 1:29)
- J. lie (Proverbs 26:28)
- K. use bad language (Ephesians 4:29)
- L. use compulsion (Matthew 5:41,42)
- M. are covetous (Romans 1:29)
- N. are malicious (Romans 1:29)
- O. are proud, boastful (Romans 1:30)
- P. are untrustworthy (Romans 1:31)
- Q. are unforgiving (Romans 1:31)
- R. are unmerciful (Romans 1:31)
- S. have evil communication. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, I Corinthians 15:33, KJV)

II. Mistakenly, people feel that they are strong if they "stand their ground"

- A. "Don't give an inch."
- B. "I'll get even."
- C. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."
- D. "I'll never forgive him."

III. People feel that they are weak if they practice principles of love and consideration.

IV. God's word gives specific guidelines for the changes that are to take

place in the behaviour patterns of those who are in His family and are being conformed to His image.

- A. Colossians 3:8,9
- B. Romans 1:28-31
- C. Colossians 3:23

V. How His laws work, socially:

- A. History has proven the benefit of following moral laws.
- B. When too much attention is paid to the physical, people become self-centered, petty, greedy, obsessed with the possession of “things”, and the need to impress.
- C. Going “the second mile” to counteract compulsion removes tendencies to begrudge.
- D. God’s laws teach the true value of *people*, not status or possessions
- E. “Evil for evil,” “curse persecutors,” “avenge wrongs,” “hate enemies,” only increases enmity.
- F. “Love for love” is man’s rule; God’s kind of love is to give where none is due; a regenerative, healing love, uplifting.
- G. Maliciousness, deceit, lying, and untrustworthiness destroy confidence, create guilt and stress, cause problems and enmity.
- H. Bad language, unpleasant attitude: like attracts like
- I. Covetous, proud, boastful attitudes cause a person to be unlikable.
- J. Unforgiving, unmerciful attitudes will not allow barriers to be removed.

Conclusion: If the world were filled with people formed by God’s laws, there would be no hatred, no wars.

HOW THE RULES WORK, SOCIALLY, FOR ME

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

Man is a social being and if he is to live happily and successfully in this world of five billion souls, he must learn to follow rules that guarantee peaceful coexistence.

Just before leaving His disciples, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you....” (John 14:27) There is a marked difference between the average “person of the world” and the member of God’s family who is conforming himself to the image of His Father.

I. ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

The world is filled with all kinds of people, with all degrees of badness and goodness. To the extent that men, knowingly or unknowingly, incorporate God’s direction into their lives they are socially acceptable. We must always remember that God’s guidelines include everything that is good and forbid whatever is harmful for us and for society.

Sometimes people point to “The Ten Commandments” as the origination of God’s moral law, and they feel that obedience to it is all that is really required. But God’s moral law didn’t begin with Moses; it began with the creation of man when God implanted a consciousness of it in Adam, a consciousness shared by humanity.

Romans 2:14 says of the people of that day, “*For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having a law, are a law to themselves.*” So some, by nature, are obedient to God’s moral laws in a general sense and, thus, in a general sense their lives are blessed by those laws.

But people need more than the “built-in” law to guide them. Without the unique and wise social laws God’s word gives, His children would be no different from the rest of the world. Their emphasis would be on the physical, on self, on material gain, on progression toward worldly achievements, according to man’s standards. Often, these emphases on self lead to an attitude of running roughshod over whatever might be in the way.

Those of the world may be content, in any relationship, **to do only what is required.** This creates a hard, unbending attitude that makes it difficult for people to get along well together.

Why bother about the poor, the uninfluential, those who are not in position to return favors or to be of any help in one’s climb to success? Too often, the world has no time or feeling for those of “low esteem”.

When people of the world have been wronged, they feel they have every legitimate right to treat the wrong-doer as they have been treated. Matthew 5:43 says that men teach "... *you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*" But this attitude doesn't solve problems or dissipate hatred; it only multiplies the heartaches.

Is the world right to advocate "...**love only those who love you?**" If such a rule prevailed, would there be much growth of love or tolerance or compassion among people?

Deceit is such a common thing that, in many cultures, it is the expected rule in relationships. It is used to "cover-up" and to help one get ahead in work as well as in social relationships.

Lying is a close cousin to deceit, one mark worse. Sometimes, as in ancient Crete, whole societies are known as liars ("*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*" Titus 1:12.) Living in Pakistan as missionaries, we were told by local people, "Never trust a Pakistani." The root of this problem is the teaching in Islam's Koran that lying is permissible if it benefits the situation of the one who is lying. But we found that where there can be no trust, the progress of society in general is retarded.

The world seems hardly able to express itself except by the use of **curses and oaths**. This is so sad. What real information is imparted by the use of vulgar and profane words? Nothing cheapens a person more than curse words coming from the mouth instead of words of grace and charm and honesty.

Often, in any society, circumstances seem to **demand that a person do more in a given situation than he freely wants to do**. This can cause an attitude of grudging, harmful

both to the individual and to those he feels are responsible for the compulsion. Great strains on relationships are caused by such problems, and the end result is usually a separation of ways.

How many wars have been caused by **covetous eyes**? How many problems have been created by the proverbial desire of people to "keep up with the Joneses?" God lists covetousness along with wickedness and murder (Romans 1:29) because He knows how often the end results are those very deeds.

Maliciousness is another trait that is common in the world. People say, "You don't know how rough it is out there," and they talk of "dog-eat-dog" attitudes. This desire to hurt, to gossip, to back-bite, to create problems, to climb to "success" on the backs of others is totally foreign to the teachings of Christ.

Many humans have problems with **proud, boastful attitudes**. They are haughty, looking down in harsh judgment on others, and therefore they cannot be peace-creating elements in the social structure of humanity.

Those who are **untrustworthy** are in much the same category as deceivers and liars (Romans 1:28-31). How can any society make progress without trust? How can contracts

Talking Points

- * Humanism has been working for many years to erase the Christian ethic from the American scene. Success for their efforts will do what to honesty and trust?
- * Will these losses affect the strength of the nation, the economy, and personal relationships?
- * Do you know people who have marked traits of covetousness, maliciousness, pride, and boastfulness? Are they an asset to themselves or to their country?

be made, goods be bought and sold, investments be made, human relationships be developed, without trusting to some degree in the words of those around us?

Being **unforgiving** may seem one's own payment for a wrong done. "If he has offended me, I can have the satisfaction of holding a grudge. I won't forgive him." When hurt is harboured in one's heart, both he and his "enemy" are hurt because the gap between them cannot be bridged. But in reality, the one having the unforgiving spirit is hurt most by his own attitude because it is a constant thing within his own body and mind, eating away and destroying peace, while the one who has offended may not even be aware of the growing estrangement and bitterness.

Being **unmerciful** is another forbidden sin, listed along with murder (Romans 1:3). The very word suggests a situation in which the individual has the choice of showing hardness or tenderness toward one who is helpless in protecting or defending himself. The choice of hardness is destructive to the well-being of any society.

How many are guilty of "**evil communications**?" How many enjoy telling some bad thing they have heard about a person, rather than something good? How many enjoy being in the company of those who have impure minds? How many are encouraged in sinful speech and behaviour by the speech and behaviour of those around them?

II. "STAND YOUR GROUND."

Mistakenly, people of the world often feel strong if they firmly stand their ground. Statements like, "Don't give an inch", "I'll get even", "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," and "I'll never forgive him," have become permanent figures of speech because they are so widely spoken and practiced.

III. LOVE AND CONSIDERATION

Love and consideration for others are also looked on by many as weaknesses. Surprisingly, though, those who have tried exercising these attitudes have learned what strength is required to put others before self. Real love is not a weakness; it is the greatest strength any man has.

IV. GOD'S GUIDELINES

God knew what the general attitudes of the world would be and the hardship that would be brought on mankind through practicing the negative way of life we have already talked about. In order to protect His own family from such tendencies, He gave specific guidelines in His word:

Colossians 3: 9,10: "*Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.*"

Talking Points

- * Who is hurt most by a person's unwillingness to forgive?
- * Because of the influence of Christianity in our culture, we expect concern and mercy to be shown to the weak and helpless.

Throughout history, tyrants have slaughtered millions of people who could not defend themselves, with no sign of mercy.

Humanism — atheism — has achieved legal **abortions** in much of the world. A goal on the horizon is **euthanasia**, then the "mercy killing" of the old, the debilitated, the retarded, and the disabled. How will Christians respond to pressure to enact such merciless laws?

Isn't it a beautiful thought that our renewal — our strengthening, our "new hold on life" — comes through the knowledge God has shared with us of what His own image is really like? As we learn to live by this knowledge, we will be a force of renewal for those around us.

Romans 1:28-31, as we have already seen through frequent reference, teaches us the righteous judgment of God, listing many of the hurtful sins that none in God's family should practice. Again, it is the knowledge of what God's image is really like (Romans 1:28) that shields us from these hurtful things.

Romans 12:21 makes a profound statement: "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" There cannot be a neutral place between good and evil. One of them will triumph over the other. Jesus promised, "*... be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). Revelation 12:11 speaks of the evil that Christians have overcome "*... by the blood of the lamb.*" Through Him, through being formed after His image, we can overcome the evil forces around us.

Talking Points

- ✱ How has God protected the church from practicing the hardness so common in the world?
- ✱ At first glance, God's laws of mercy, selflessness, and concern for the welfare of others would seem to be self-defeating; in reality, when practiced, they bring the greatest fullness and happiness to life. How would you explain this seeming contradiction?
- ✱ The _____ are actually _____.

V. HOW HIS LAWS WORK, SOCIALLY

History has proven the benefit of following God's moral laws. The closer any society stays to those rules in developing its own laws, the better off that society is. The further away it grows, the more decadent it becomes, until finally it brings about its own end. Ancient Rome is a classic example of the destruction that comes when God's laws of inherent right and wrong are ignored.

A. Humanists would tell us that these laws are merely "Judeo-Christian ethics", teachings that evolved out of religions that are no more than the product of men's minds. Therefore, they advocate that these restrictive rules should not be bound on society in general. But a study of facts would prove

them wrong. The laws are not right because some men or some legal system pronounced them right; they are inherent truth, and no group of people can prosper, having a sense of satisfaction and well being, without following these laws. Our own country is being torn at its very heart fibers because of the growing numbers of people who rebel against God's rules.

B. As we saw in the previous lesson, society is also hurt when the general populace becomes indulgent, self-centered, petty, greedy, caring more for the accumulation of "things" than for the good of those around them. God's instructions that we are to "*bear one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2), that we are to "*... in lowliness of mind ... esteem others better than himself ...*" and "*... look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Philippians 2:3,4) are safeguards for the welfare of society in general. Romans 6:19 makes a contrast between the Christian and the world: "*... For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more*

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness." A total change for the better takes place when one submits himself to God.

C. An attitude of doing no more than is demanded restricts good will and growth. When circumstances force one to do unwilling service, resentment is the result. God's preventive cure for His children is the directive that we are to "go the second mile" in our relationships with others. Not only do we reap the beneficial effects but, by example, we help to teach others that God's system works in the middle of adversity. Colossians 3:23 also urges: "Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men." Halfway, begrudged service toward God is not acceptable; neither does God want His people to serve their fellowman with resentment and unwillingness.

D. God's emphasis in His word on the value of people, not of status or possessions, is a key factor in our building of a successful social structure. Unless men care about their fellow men, unless they can look for worthwhile qualities, and unless they can value others regardless of what they have or don't have, no society can make sound progress. Real progress is not built on an accumulation of "things". In our age of plenty this is one of our greatest threats, because in our race for possessions and position, we may even fail to develop anything of real value in our own selves. Luke 14:13-14 says that we are to consider "... the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you" Would not this attitude enrich society?

E. A social structure built on attitudes of enmity (evil for evil, curse persecutors, hate enemies, avenge wrongs) can only grow more deeply entrenched in enmity. Matthew 5:39 teaches that, in the Family image, we are "... not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." God's answers are the only way that personal enmity can be reversed and relationships can be improved. Forgiveness, love, and understanding are not weaknesses; they are medicines powerful enough to heal the world's ills if they will be used. "... love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-46).

F. The greatest hunger man feels is the hunger for love. And, often, when all other needs have been met, this is the one that remains unsatisfied. God's own solution to the problem was to love and bless all men, even the most unworthy. Then He directed His Family to mold themselves in that image, thus creating an up-lifting element in the world. As we shed abroad the light of His kind of love, those who feel it must be bettered by it. "... Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." How? By loving those who don't love us, as God loved us "... in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Talking Points

- ✱ In the Christian's relationships and behaviour toward others, what does Colossians 3:23 teach us to do?
- ✱ If you take food to the sick, or give clothes to the needy, do you give of your best, or things that are ready to be discarded? As Christians, we must remember that whatever we give to others, we are actually giving to God. Would I offer Him a worn out rag?
- ✱ How can we work to eliminate enmity?
- ✱ What is man's greatest hunger?

G. Attitudes of evil, deceit, lying and untrustworthiness destroy confidence and create feelings of guilt and stress. As we rid our lives of these practices, growing in His image, we help those around us to see the workability of God's system. Romans 1:29 lists deceit along with murder. It is a destructive element in society and those who practice it eventually become known as deceivers and undependable people. Proverbs 26:28 testifies: "*A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it.*" The Christian's honesty weaves stability and strength into the fabric of society.

H. "...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). When the overflow of the heart is foul language, taking God's name in vain, telling vulgar stories and jokes, what good influence can such a man have in the world? Purity of speech reflects a pure mind, a beneficial influence.

Talking Points

- * All spiritual questions aside, even in a secular world, which system works best: "dog eat dog" or "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"?
- * Our culture has accepted foul language, vulgarity, immorality, lewdness in dress and relationships, and dishonesty as a way of life. Looking back to fifty years ago, are things better or worse in our world?
- * As Christians, we must be willing to _____.

I. It is almost impossible for the covetous, the proud, the boastful, to develop close social ties. Those who are forming themselves in God's image will not be covetous spirits among their associates (Romans 1:29-32), nor will they be malicious and proud, with boastful attitudes. God's warnings against these things would protect His children from bringing harm to their own lives and the lives of others.

J. Matthew 6:15 states: "... if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." A society bonded together in oneness can never be developed without an attitude of continual forgiveness and mercy. God knew man's weaknesses and his needs when He insisted that those who would be made in His image must also develop these vital traits.

CONCLUSION:

We go back again to the thought that we can judge the eternal rightness of a system by its effective working in this world. Left to himself, man would soon degenerate into a hateful, backbiting, vengeful mass, intent on destruction. God's laws of right have filtered down through customs, cultures, governmental laws, and consciences, shedding rays of lights of goodness. The more any group of people will allow themselves to be molded by His directions, the better they will be. God's system is the one that answers all of man's needs, socially, directing him away from pitfalls and to a complete life.

Chapter Eleven

Questions

1. In the world in general, do you see harmful consequences resulting from cases of God's social laws being ignored?
2. Among those with whom you associate, do you see examples of people breaking God's social laws and of the consequences of their actions?
3. What are some individual cases?
4. What consequences have you seen?
5. In your own life, do you see areas that have been hurt by your failure to live by God's standard?
6. How can we have real peace?
7. How does "*going the second mile*" protect us and help others, socially?
8. God lists covetousness along with what two sins?
9. How does our renewal as Christians come about?
10. Can social structures be successfully developed and maintained without some adherence to God's laws of inherent right?

Chapter Twelve

HOW THE RULES WORK, SPIRITUALLY, FOR ME

Outline

Introduction: Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10) This promise answers man’s greatest longing.

I. Desire for peace and security in human relationships

II. Need for peace with God

III. God’s rules bring fulfillment in this life.

- A. Better physical health
- B. Better social relationships

IV. God’s rules offer spiritual guidance.

- A. Portray a God worthy of worship
- B. Teach uplifting spiritual attitudes
- C. Seeming paradoxes that work, spiritually.
 - 1. Deny self, follow Jesus
 - 2. Die to self
 - 3. Lay up treasures in heaven
 - 4. Be perfect as God is perfect

V. God’s rules teach a pattern of spiritual life.

- A. Man’s need to worship
 - 1. Song
 - 2. Prayer
 - 3. God’s word
 - 4. Memorial
 - 5. Gifts
- B. Personal spiritual development
- C. Concern for others
 - 1. Spiritual: Teach others
 - 2. Physical: Help those in need

Conclusion: Human life is empty and vain without this abundant spiritual life. With it, man is whole in every way. If God supplies the perfect guidance for this world, *His guidance for the future world is also reliable.*

HOW THE RULES WORK, SPIRITUALLY, FOR ME

Lesson



INTRODUCTION:

Admitted or not, man's preoccupation is with life, its preservation, its quality, its procreation, and its continuation past inevitable death. On a day-to-day basis, most of man's efforts and his investment of life itself are in the quest for a better physical life and a longer one. Medicine, aimed at eradicating sickness and postponing physical death, is one of the biggest businesses in the world. And when death does come, as it must, some of the most elaborate of man's monuments have been the tombs he has built because of his faith in life after death.

This tenacious holding to life was implanted in man by his Creator, as protection for that precious gift, and it is only when man's thinking becomes warped by sin that he can go out and wantonly destroy other human life or his own.

Jesus, realizing this deep love of life, made the appeal to man, "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). He assures us all that the answer we are seeking may be found in Him.

I. ALL WANT PEACE.

Even a life of insecurity and turmoil is usually preferred over death. Some areas of the world have been war zones for fifteen or twenty years, so that an entire generation has grown up without knowing what it is to look forward to a new day in peace. But, as nations and as individuals, men want peace. They want to feel that they are safe and that the sweetness of today's life will also be true of tomorrow and the next day and the next.

In order to assure this peace, laws are made to protect individual rights, and people basically abide by those laws. Also, people try to be considerate and helpful to their associates because they want good, lasting human relationships. Many personal sacrifices have been made repeatedly for the sake of this longed-for peace and security. To the degree that men ignore God's laws, evil and anarchy rule the world. In more recent years, this dominance of evil has grown with the growing influence of humanism in the secular world, and with the growth of radical fundamentalism and intolerance in some religions.

II. PEACE WITH GOD

No matter how good things may seem to be, secularly, unless there is spiritual peace and security, man's soul cannot be truly satisfied. He may be rich in this world's goods, he may have the security of family and friends, but with the passing of time he will real-

ize that there is an emptiness in his life. He may try to fill it by running from one goal to another and he, himself, may not even realize why his satisfaction is not complete but, ultimately, only peace with God brings lasting happiness and security.

In fact, even when there is no physical or secular peace, a man can rest in a relationship of trust in God. In the first century, Christians faced martyrdom with a sense of total security because they had given themselves to God. Today, a man in a war zone may sleep in peace because he has faced death and has learned that no man can take from him what God holds in His own hands.

III. GOD’S RULES BRING FULFILLMENT.

As we learned in earlier lessons, God’s word gives us clear directions for living in this world. He knows that, having been born into His family, we are actually aliens in a land dominated by sin. So in order to guide our steps as we walk uncharted roads, He has written careful and detailed directions: The Bible. As we follow it, we avoid the habits, the stresses, and the pitfalls that are injurious to our physical and mental health.

<p style="text-align: center;">Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ For true security and peace of mind, what must humans have?✱ As we follow God’s word, we avoid what problems that are injurious to our physical and mental health?✱ Describe the two types of “gods” humans have created for themselves.

His word also provides guidance to ensure healthier human relationships, both individually and in collective society. A nation whose laws are built around God’s “do’s” and “don’ts” must prosper for two reasons:

1. Because the building blocks of success are incorporated in those rules.
2. Because God is freed to bless those people and nations that listen to Him.

IV. GOD’S RULES OFFER SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE.

In every period of time and in every culture, part of man’s life has been devoted to spiritual things. In the absence of knowledge of the true God, man has written his own “holy” books, devised his own rules of worship and formed his own “gods”, often with his own hands.

These humanly conceived gods have usually been of two types:

1. They were “super” humans who were subject to all of the weaknesses and sins of men, while at the same time being endowed with magical powers.
2. They were portrayed as gods so far removed from humans that they meditated on their own inner bliss while being oblivious to anything taking place in the world of humans.

The natural reason for developing of these two types of “gods” in the imagination of men’s minds is that, in the first case, people wanted to feel that the gods were involved in their own lives. So they imagined themselves, magnified to godlike proportions, and then they prayed to their creations and worshiped them.

In the second case, as men looked at their own needs for God’s help, they concluded that the sun which warmed them and nurtured their crops must be a god; the rain that

helped them to have food must be a god; even the earth must be a god; and so they worshiped these “helpful” parts of nature as personifications of God. But, not hearing God speak and not seeing direct answers to their prayers, they concluded that the great God Himself was too holy and too preoccupied with His own holiness to bother with the small needs of men. Most of the major religions of the world portray God in this way: existing, but primarily unaware, unconcerned, uninvolved with man. How sad it would be if God were, in truth, all powerful, yet He held Himself above man’s needs and deliberately turned a deaf, uncaring ear to his cries for help.

A. God Is Worthy of Worship.

The God of the Scriptures is not a product of men’s minds. His portrait of Himself is far above anything that man’s thoughts could conceive, and when we see Him as He reveals Himself, we realize that truly He is worthy of our worship.

Whereas, Greek and Roman gods were “magnified men,” the reverse is true of the God of the Bible. God has existed from eternity and He made man in His image, *miniatures* of His own nature. Even perfection and immortality were not withheld from God’s creation, and we would have remained in that perfect state if man had not chosen to sin.

God is perfection, yet He does not hold Himself aloof from His children or from world affairs that affect His children. Contrary to the pagan idea, God’s portrayal of Himself is one of continual working in behalf of those who call Him Father.

We can adore and worship God without reserve, confident of the fact that in no way will He ever fail or fall short or behave contrary to His nature.

B. His Teachings Are Uplifting to Man.

Just as the true God is the epitome of righteousness, His teachings are also uplifting to man, spiritually. Left to his own thoughts, man would not reach to heights. But any association with God, and to whatever degree man does associate with Him, brings a refining and an uplifting of the soul.

A man, crowded all day with other humans, will usually grow worn and exasperated. But give him a few minutes absolutely alone in a meadow or beside a mountain stream, on the ocean’s edge, listening to a mocking bird, or stargazing on a clear night, and his soul will begin to heal. Even more uplifting is time spent in direct communion with God through speaking to Him in prayer and listening to His voice in His Scriptures.

C. Seeming Paradoxes Work

The guidance for life that is given in the Scriptures is as far above man’s wisdom as God’s mind is above man’s. In fact, His wisdom is so superior to ours that His teachings often seem paradoxical.

1. Deny Self, Follow Me.

Jesus, after boldly declaring that He had come to bring abundant life to man, said just

Talking Points

- ✱ Greek and Roman gods were “magnified men”. In contrast, what is man in relation to God?
- ✱ Is God involved with humanity, and is He concerned about our challenges and needs?
- ✱ Discuss some of the ways that our souls are uplifted.
- ✱ God’s wisdom is so far above man’s that His _____ often seem _____.

as emphatically: "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

How can this denial of self bring abundant life? Mark 8:35 promises: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

2. Die to Self.

How do we really live? By dying to self. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God ..."

So, by dying to the lusts of the flesh, by being created anew in the Family image, by

bearing the likeness of God, our living bodies become continual sacrifices to Him. Daily, we "... present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service."

Paradoxically, too, this denial of self and this living sacrificially by God's rules develops a life that is whole and complete. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 promises, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

3. Lay Up Treasures in Heaven.

In contrast to the world's values, where men will work devotedly for a lifetime and some will even resort to criminal means to accumulate physical possessions, God's guidelines help us to get our priorities straight. We are taught the futility of allowing

physical things to be of paramount importance to us, because they are not lasting. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

4. Be Perfect.

In Matthew 5, verse 48, Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." This statement seems a great paradox when we think of the many ways that man falls short of God's perfection. The world abounds not only with imperfections but with deliberate evil. How can any human be "perfect"?

The statement is true of God's children in two ways. In this earthly life, when we are baptized into God's family, we may know very little about how we are to behave. But through studying His word, we learn how to think and live. At first our efforts to practice what we learn may seem unsuccessful, as we fall to temptations or as we respond to the wrongdoings of others with anger, impatience, and even hatred. But we will grow in wisdom and in strength, so that with the passing of time, we will reach spiritual maturity. No,

Talking Points

- ✱ How can denial of self bring the abundant life Jesus promised? Is it only in the eternal world that Christians experience that abundance of life, or is it also in this world?
- ✱ How does dying to self enable us to really live?
- ✱ Is it wrong to have earthly possessions? Do we sin when those possessions become our focus in life?
- ✱ Discuss the four paradoxes listed in this part of the lesson.

it will not be possible to live in this world without sinning, but we can learn to put aside willful sin and to look toward an eternity free of any sin.

But in another sense, Jesus' promise is fulfilled now, in this earthly life, for each member of God's family. It is a truth that sin separates us from God. "... *Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*" (Isaiah 59:2). Those in the world who have never been born into God's Family — through acknowledging His Son as Lord and obeying Him in baptism — are separated from God by their sins. Those who have been "... *buried with Him (Christ) through baptism into death*" (Romans 6:4), and have been raised as newly born people in His Family, now have access to a continual cleansing from their sins. 1 John 1:7 says, "*But if we walk in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*"

So, even though the Christian cannot live a life totally free of sin, his sins are not marked against his record ("... *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ...*" 2 Corinthians 5:19). It is as though the red film of Christ's blood covers him, dissolving away every sin that comes into his life, making him "perfect" before God every minute of every day.

So, is 1 John 1:7 promising that once a person becomes a Christian, his eternal salvation is guaranteed? that no matter how he lives, no matter how far from truth he may stray, it is impossible for him to be finally lost? Some religious groups teach this. But in the very next verse, John continues with the statement that we *do* sin and then he says that we must confess our sins if God is to forgive us. But what about the "*continual cleansing*" of verse 7? No confession is mentioned there.

If we are to understand these verses, we must distinguish first between two categories of sin: *willful sin* and sin that is *unintentionally committed*. The second type was under consideration when John said, "*If we walk in the light*" Our thoughts and intentions must be pure if we are truly to "*walk in the light.*"

In committing willful, deliberate sin, we have momentarily left the light and have moved away from the cleansing fountain of His blood. In order to have forgiveness of those sins, we must stop doing them and ask forgiveness of God.

Talking Points

- ✱ In this world, is it possible for humans to reach perfection?
- ✱ Those who have been born into the Family (church), are continually cleansed by the _____ of _____.
- ✱ What do the Scriptures mean when they say that Christ is "*not imputing their trespasses to them ...*"?
- ✱ Does this mean that a saved person cannot be lost?
- ✱ Discuss the difference between willful sin and sin that is unintentionally committed.

V. GOD'S RULES TEACH A SPIRITUAL PATTERN THAT SATISFIES MAN'S NEEDS

A. His Need to Worship

A man deprived of God to worship, and of the freedom to worship Him, is deprived indeed, and few can find internal peace when life is dominated by such a void. Man's nature demands that he worship.

Sadly, by his own devisings, man has worshiped practically everything under the sun, and even including the sun. The lowliest things of creation have been exalted to the status of "god". The basest tendencies of man have often formulated "worship". From the useless outpouring of gifts to idols, to the lewdness of sensual gratification, and even including the sacrificing of human life, nothing has been withheld from the "gods".

Worship devised by men may deprive men of their wealth, their honor, or even of life, but it cannot fill the needs of the soul as does the worship planned by God.

What is worship? It is an action performed by man that reaches out in three directions.

(1) Worship is an outpouring of love to God, honoring Him. It is an avowal of submission, an exaltation of God as the Supreme Being.

(2) Worship is an uplifting of the soul, cleansing in its effect on the worshippers. Through the closeness we develop with God in prayer and praise, we are strengthened in our *desire* to be like Him. Through lessons learned from His word in periods of worship, we receive instruction in how to *become* like Him.

(3) Worship is a means of teaching each other, and it generates a heightened awareness of the needs of brothers and sisters in our spiritual family.

What are the parts of worship, according to the scriptures?

(1) **We praise God through song.** Happiness and exaltation have always

expressed themselves in outbursts of songs. In the same way, grief, trust, and need are beautifully and poignantly expressed as we raise our voices collectively or singly in songs to God. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16).

(2) **Prayer is one of the special privileges** of the Christian's worship. Unlike so many religions in which the worshipper prays only through a priest, the Christian, approaching God through His Son, can speak directly to his Father, pouring out his heart's needs. Jesus promised, *"And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"* (John 14:13).

(3) **God speaks to worshippers through His word.** Whether simply by a reading of the

Scriptures or through a lesson from the Bible, we worship in allowing His truths to enter our hearts and mold us in our thoughts and behaviour. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV).

(4) **Worship cannot be complete without a remembrance of the gift** that made possible our privilege of worship: the sacrifice of Christ. Before His death, Jesus "... took

Talking Points

- * Through worship, man reaches out in what three directions?
- * What are the songs, in our worship, supposed to do?
- * How do we talk to God? How does He talk to us?
- * Historically, most people have had to approach their "god" through _____.
- * What do Christians memorialize each first day of the week?
- * How are monetary gifts to be used by the church?

bread, gave it to them [the disciples], saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19, 20). In the first century "... on the first day of the week ... the disciples came together to break bread ..." (Acts 20:7).

Of all the memorials honoring men, probably none are as seemingly impermanent and unimpressive as grape juice and unleavened bread. Yet, while many massive memorials made of stone have decayed, this one remains as a living thing after almost two thousand years. Each Lord's day, Christians have the vivid reminder of the price paid for their salvation; and they look within themselves, examining their hearts as they eat of the emblems of His body, renewing their strength by His life after death.

(5) Sacrifices have always been a part of worship, whether worship of God or of idols. Flowers, food, animals, hair, money, and sometimes humans, have been offered as sacrifices. In many religions, money gifts are used solely to build and adorn lavish temples and to support the priests. In God's family, the emphasis is not to be on physical structures. God's money is authorized to be spent for the support of workers (1 Corinthians 9:7-14), for the preaching of the Gospel in all the world (Philippians 4:15,16), and for the aid of those in dire need (2 Corinthians 9:5-12; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

These acts of worship, when done sincerely and with love, will answer the needs of the soul reaching up to God.

B. Personal Spiritual Development

But we have other spiritual needs also, and God has not overlooked these. A life that is affected only during hours of worship is not truly touched by God. There must be personal spiritual development, involving every day of life and every attitude and act of the individual. God supplies that guidance through His word and His careful oversight of our lives as He helps us to grow in His image. Making us over, changing us from carnal worldly people to spiritual people, is one of the greatest gifts we receive from God.

C. Concern for Others

But just as love reaches out from God to us, even so, as we grow in His image, love must overflow from our hearts to reach out to our fellowman. This, too, is a point of weakness in religions created by men. A distinctive trait, peculiar to God's system, is this "caring factor". Pagan religions concentrate attention on the "god" and his service, not on service to mankind.

(1) Spiritually — Teach Others

God instructs His children, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). He is concerned about the spiritual needs of those around us and He wants us to feel a responsibility to teach them.

(2) Physically — Help Those in Need

Jesus also taught strongly, "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve

Talking Points

- ✱ Christianity is not real unless it permeates one's entire _____.
- ✱ We must be changed from _____ worldly people into _____ people.
- ✱ What is a distinctive trait of Christians, peculiar to God's system?
- ✱ In what two ways do we serve mankind?

..." (Matthew 20: 28) and "... *I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you...*" (John 13:15).

Religion that does not teach this love for one another cannot be of God, for God's reasoning in answer to those who would look with indifference on the needs of others is, "*If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also*" (1 John 4:20,21).

CONCLUSION:

Spiritually, when we are uplifted by our worship of God, when we are developing personally in His image, and when His love in us reaches out to our family, friends, and to strangers, we are full and satisfied. In this type of complete life we can find peace and security that nothing else offers. Only the mind of God could supply such perfect guidelines for security in this world, so we know that we can also trust His directions for preparing for life in the world to come. *That* is our security!

Chapter Twelve

Questions

1. How does history tell us of man's preoccupation with the question of life, and life after death?
2. Why is there such a universal clinging to life?
3. Why did Jesus come?
4. Discuss the two types of peace for which man searches.
5. Discuss the two reasons why God's laws of "do's" and "don'ts" work.
6. Discuss the two types of "gods" that men have developed. Why are they portrayed like this?
7. How does God's portrayal of Himself differ from men's imaginary gods?
8. Discuss teachings that seem paradoxical.
9. In what three directions does true worship reach out?
10. What do we do in worship to God?
11. What is unique about the memorial for Christ?
12. Discuss the three needs that must be filled if one is to be spiritually satisfied.

THE KING AND HIS BRIDE: A LOVE STORY

Once there was a young prince. He was a special person with good, manly features and a body-strength that said he could take care of himself in any situation that might develop.

But his specialness was not so much from his physical appearance as from his kind and gentle personality. What consideration he showed for the elderly, the young, for anyone who was helpless, no matter how unimportant they might seem as individuals! Genuine concern shone from his eyes. He knew how to talk to people, to listen, and to feel with others so that any who came to him went away feeling that the prince really cared.

The time came for marriage. Of course, being the prince, the finest young ladies in the land were brought before him for consideration. At dinners and social functions, he could observe their finesse in social graces. He saw their physical beauty, adorned with costly clothing and jewelry that spoke of the family wealth. He observed their training and their smooth speech that indicated the education they had received. He saw their varied talents. But he saw, also, their vanity and pride, and nowhere did he find the one special person who could fill the emptiness in his heart.

And there *was* an emptiness. Even though everything around him was his by right of inheritance, still there was an empty longing that nothing seemed to fill. In his heart was a great love, so strong it could not be ignored. From somewhere he must find that one to whom he could give his love, that one who would be worthy of all the sweet thoughtfulness ready to pour from his heart. He must give and do for her, and he must feel the magnitude of her love in return.

One day as the prince was walking along a crowded street, he heard cries and the sounds of a scuffle. He ran in the direction of the noise and saw someone being beaten by a gang of ruffians. Without any concern for his own safety, he ran into the melee of violence, giving and taking blows.

Of course, the danger would have melted away if it had been known that he was the prince, but no one recognized him in the common street clothes he was wearing. So the milling passers-by did not come to his aid, and the ruffians fought as though he were no better than they.

The odds were not good, with one against so many, but the crying and helplessness of the little form being attacked filled the prince's mind so that he fought on in spite of the terrible beating he was receiving. Finally, when he was ready to fall from exhaustion and loss of blood, the last of the gang, seeing how many of their number lay scattered around the fracas site, broke and ran.

The prince stumbled over to the huddled form that he had fought to save. Kneeling down, he closed his arms around the trembling little body, heedless of the unstaunched flow of blood from the deep wounds he had received.

"Don't be afraid," he murmured. "I'll take you to a home where you'll be safe." With what seemed to be the last of his strength, he lifted the thin bundle of dirty rags and stumbled forward, step after agonizing step, until he fell in exhaustion against the gate of his

friend's house. Running feet and shouts of alarm brought help. Gentle hands carried the prince inside and laid him on a bed.

"Where is the one...?" he wanted to know, opening his eyes against the weariness that swept in waves over his body.

"Here..." was the almost inaudible answer from trembling lips that hovered above him. What was it about the piquant face that stirred his heart? There was nothing of social grace or charm in it, and he could see little of the features because of dirt and blood, his own blood covering the waif's dirt. Yet, his attention was held by the pathetic child. In her eyes was emptiness and a longing that cried out to his own soul.

"Stay here," he said, lifting his hand to rub away a tear that was tracing a path down the thin cheek. "Stay here..."

Passing days brought healing and strength for the prince, and a new sweetness. His hours were filled with the lonely girl who seemed to belong to no one. Washed and clean now, her rags replaced with warm clothes, she would come shyly into his presence. Though her speech was unpolished and her words would have been lacking in expressing her feelings, her eyes told eloquently of her worshipful love for him. Regardless of what he might be to the rest of the world, he was her hero, her saviour. The prince read her eyes and understood her heart because his own soul had reached out to her from the beginning when she was dirty and helpless and empty of love.

"I must go to my father," he told her with sadness, as they walked quietly in the garden after the return of his strength. The startled look of fear in her eyes wrenched his heart. "But don't be afraid. Of all the women in the world, I want you for my wife, to belong to me, to wear my name. I want to protect you, to take care of you, to do all the things for you that no one has ever done. I can't take you with me now, but I'll come back for you soon. If you want it, too, tomorrow we will have a ceremony of commitment — like a marriage — and then I'll leave you here so that my friends can take care of you until I return. And when I come back, I'll take you to the palace where my father is and where you will live always as my bride!"

"Oh, yes," she answered with all her heart. True to his word, the next day, before his friends, the prince pledged his life, his name, and his inheritance to the street urchin and she, in return, pledged herself to him. He took his own ring and placed it on her finger. Then, in sadness, he held her to himself for a long time and kissed her, both in seal of his commitment and in goodbye to her. "Believe in me," he said, holding her face between his hands and looking deeply into her eyes. "Believe in me, and be patient. I know the waiting won't be easy, but I promise to come back for you." When, at last, he released her and turned to go, she was blinded by the tears that filled her eyes.

Life was different now. She was no longer an unwanted orphan. She was the promised bride of the prince of the whole land! Waking in the mornings to such a thought was almost more than she could believe. Yet, when she would open her eyes and look around her, she knew it was no dream. She was warm and clean and well fed. The prince's friends who had become like a loving family to her were always nearby to supply any need. Clothes of the finest materials were designed and fitted for her, at the prince's command. Her hair and face were groomed with care, and exquisite jewels completed her wardrobe. Dressed in the stately robes, she looked the part of a beautiful bride-queen.

But, though her physical appearance was important, far more of the attentive grooming was of her mind and behavior. She knew how little she had to offer as a wife to such a man as the prince, so she determined to learn to love the things that were precious to him. She questioned his friends, learning all they knew of his thinking and values. She worked at practicing his gentleness and consideration, being patient and loving toward those around her. She learned to listen to others and to care about the things that concerned them, sharing their hurts and anxieties, as well as their happiness, because she knew that the prince had a tender, caring heart. She emulated his poise, his grace and charm, and her facial expressions began to radiate the peace and security she felt in him. Being ashamed of her inability to express her thoughts, she studied to improve her mind, and she worked every day to develop talents she hadn't realized were hers.

The days and weeks passed happily for her. In spite of the longing for the prince's return, this time of readying herself for him was sweet. Always his gentle love was in her heart, and in her mind she carried the image of his face, remembering the longing for her that she had seen in his eyes. His presence was like a living thing within her, an over-layer of himself that became stronger than her consciousness of her own self. Whatever she did was for him. "How would he like this dress?" she wondered, or "Would he think this arrangement of flowers is pretty?" or "Have I painted this mountain so that he could feel the crispness of the air and hear the wind in the pines of this little valley?" or "Do these words I've written express thoughts worthy of his wife?" "If he could see me now, would he be happy with me, with the way I think and speak and feel, with the way I show to others the love I've learned from him? More than anything else I want to please him. I want him to be proud that he chose me to be his wife."

Sometimes, realizing her imperfections in spite of all her desire to please, she cried in disappointment. "I don't want to fail him," she would whisper to the unhearing wind and trees and grass around her. "I was nothing until he came. I had nothing, I knew nothing, my life was worse than wasted, and there was nothing about me worthy of anyone's attention. He loved me even then, and I cannot fail him. How can I bear it if I bring shame to him as his wife? It isn't *my* name that I wear now — it's *his* — and he's kept it clean and beautiful. I can't bear the thought of doing anything that would lessen him in the hearts of his people. How sweet it is to be his wife, but I can't forget the responsibility I've accepted; I must reflect him always so that I can be a wife worthy of his love."

The prince was away but she knew that he had not forgotten her because he wrote to her, sweet letters that told of his love. He made promises that would have seemed empty, boasting words, impossible for a lesser man to keep. Yet, he wasn't just "any" man. He was the heir to the throne and if he said, "Ask what you want and I will do it," she knew the words were true. When he said, "I can do for you far, far more than you can ever ask or even think," she laughed in the sweet assurance that truly nothing was beyond his powers — and yet he was repeatedly placing those powers at her disposal! How could he love her so much? But he *did*, and she knew that he was sincere when he said she meant more to him than his own life, that he would gladly die for her.

Over and over she read his letters, imprinting his thinking in her mind, treasuring his words in her heart. Sometimes the world of his letters seemed more real than the physical world around her, and she left it with reluctance to take up again the challenge of these

days of preparation. But even in the real world, his advice and instructions, his encouragement, filled her thoughts so that always she felt his presence with her.

And how sweet were the hours she spent talking to him in her own letters! She poured out her gratitude, her continual wonder at being his chosen one. She told him of her efforts to develop herself for him, of her struggles and disappointments, and she asked for his guidance. She wrote also of the opportunities she had found to be of help to those around her, of her desire to share with him in service and love to his people. And she searched for the words to tell him of the depth of her love for him, though she knew that none were adequate. Thoughts of him swelled her heart with such happiness that she could hardly contain it. How unspeakably wonderful it would be when he returned!

And someday he *would* return, when she was groomed and ready. There was no doubt. Even now, at any moment, at any time, he could come and he would never leave her again. He had promised that he would take her and present her to his father, the king, and then they would live with him in the palace where never again would she have fears, or know loneliness, or feel any lack of anything. He had promised, and he would keep his word.

So she waited, looking to tomorrow, but also looking back to that beginning of what was life to her. How strange it seemed that — then — all that had been in her heart was the tiny and undeveloped desire to be loved. Yet the prince had seen that desire, and his own love had answered it. Now she had grown to maturity in her love for him, in her knowledge of him as a person, in what behaviour she could expect of him, and in her own development to be like him. At that early time they had shared only the longing to love and to be loved. Now they were so alike emotionally, mentally, spiritually — in every way — that “oneness” was the only word to describe what she felt with him. And a lifetime would not be long enough to belong to him. She hugged the sweetness of it to her soul as she waited for his return.

The story is a true one, an allegory: We are the bride of Christ, learning to bear His image in ourselves, waiting for His return.

“... Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: ‘Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor swathed in swaddling clothes. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.

“ ‘And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your own blood, “Live!” Yes, I said to you in your blood, “Live!” I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time

of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,' says the Lord God.

" 'Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty for it was perfect through My splendour which I had bestowed on you,' says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:3-14)

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

"...that you may be married to another, even to Him Who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4b)

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.... He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.... I speak concerning **Christ and the church**"* (Ephesians 5:25-32).

Chapter Thirteen

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you explain the reason for man's creation and God's continued tolerance of life on the earth in spite of sin?
2. What is the significance of the references to Christ as "the first born"?
3. Describe our birth as children of God.
4. Why is the "new birth" so important in God's plan of redemption?
5. As members of God's Family, describe our privileges and responsibilities?
6. Does God make rules for us in order to test our obedience?
7. Whose image do we bear?
8. What is uniquely true of Christianity?
9. What effect does carnal-mindedness have? spiritual-mindedness?
10. How can we be changed into His image?
11. Discuss the problem Paul described in Romans 7 and the solution in Romans 8.
12. Who are the Holy Guests?
13. Discuss ways the Holy Spirit helps us as children in the Family.
14. What is "naos"?
15. Discuss some ways our behavior affects God.
16. Whom do we represent in the world?
17. What is the significance of wearing the Family name?
18. Do we have a choice about speaking God's message?
19. Can we modify it to please ourselves or those we are teaching? Can God modify it?
20. By partaking of the divine nature, what do we escape?
21. What three parts are mentioned in man's make-up in Genesis 2:7?
22. As spiritual children, how do our facial expressions reflect "His image"?
23. How will the image affect our clothing? our possessions? our activities?
24. In what ways can man communicate?
25. What are some things we can know of God from nature?
26. How can we know more of the thoughts of God?
27. What imprint is in the conscience of all men?
28. What can man choose to do?
29. Describe God's activity or inactivity, as you understand it today.
30. Has God made promises that necessitate His intervention in the affairs of men? What are some of them?

31. What purpose is there in praying?
32. Why does God respond to prayer?
33. We say we “live by faith”. How do we also live by knowledge?
34. In what way is man a dual being?
35. Discuss the relationship between the soul and life; the mind; the breath of life; the brain.
36. What is the difference between “eternal” and “immortal”?
37. Why did God give man the gift of immortality?
38. How can we know whether or not particular religious writings are actually from God?
39. Why does God command some things and forbid others?
40. Does disobedience to God affect the over-all quality of physical life?
41. How do tolerant attitudes toward sin affect society?
42. How is physical health affected by attitudes?
43. Discuss the effects of the works of the flesh; the fruit of the Spirit.
44. Do God’s laws safeguard His children socially?
45. Are “going the second mile”, “turning the other cheek”, etc. simply “goody-goody” rules to see if we can be godly, or are they designed to help us live in the best way in an adverse world?
46. Are our moral laws simply an outgrowth of “Judeo-Christian” thought or are they statements of inherent truth?
47. Discuss instances of these laws being ignored and the resulting consequences.
48. Discuss the beneficial effects of obeying particular laws.
49. How does “going the second mile” help us to live more happily in this world?
50. What is man’s greatest hunger?
51. How do lying and cheating inhibit good growth in a society?
52. How do forgiveness and mercy affect the development of any people?
53. Man needs peace in which two areas of life?
54. Give two reasons God’s rules work.
55. How do humans portray “god”?
56. Describe your concept of God, from a biblical standpoint.
57. Contrast the “human” and “inspired” concepts of God.
58. How are Christ’s seemingly paradoxical teachings beneficial to man?
59. Discuss scriptural worship.
60. In what three areas does God satisfy man’s spiritual needs?

Sometimes Christians look at the zeal of others, even those who are doctrinally unsound, and they are moved to defensiveness for them because, "...at least *they* are doing something." How sad, to compromise truth because of the industry of others!

There is a better solution. This great Family, born of Truth and energetically at work with God, can again turn the world upside-down, whenever we choose to do so. We don't have to be content to watch, with a guilty conscience, while others work. We can, individually and collectively, get up and get busy! No one is holding us back — except ourselves.

Can you send a preacher to some place where the church doesn't exist? Probably not; the cost would be too great for you or for your class or perhaps even for the congregation to bear alone. But you could send "Printed Page" preachers. Do you know how much teaching just **one book** can do, in the hands of someone who wants to learn?

Our aim is to provide literature for the people in an increasing number of countries. We need your help to reach this goal. Will you say, "I'm going to do *something!*" and write to us for full information? We are available also for Sunday appointments, ladies' days, and mission emphasis workshops.

May God strengthen you hands and ours to do His work.

The World Evangelism Team

P.O. Box 72

Winona, MS 38967

www.WorldEvangelism.org

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

662-283-1192