

Where Is Your Focus?

by
James W. Farris

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Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to my faithful wife Priscilla, our two sons Andrew and Timothy and the one on the way.

May God give us many more years of happiness together.

Publisher's Statement

Let's face it! We are living in a very wicked world. It is a world where you seldom hear the word sin mentioned. The immoralities of man and woman, young and old alike, have become generally accepted. As long as the economy is going well, never mind what the top officials of the country do. Not only do we hear about all of these things, but we are shown them in living color on the TV and Movie screens.

Marriage and divorce have become common practice, even if marriage is entered into. Our news media is not only putting forth an all out effort to promote homosexuality in our country, but to force its acceptance on the public. At the same time, religion is played down, and especially Christianity. Even believers in Christ can be intimidated to the point where their voice is silenced lest they have to suffer the consequences.

The question is, how long can we go on like this? When a people, a country, the world becomes so wicked, how can it survive? There have been times in history that man got so far along in his corruptness, that the Lord could not tolerate him. Man and woman were originally put out of the Garden of Eden; when human beings became so bad that their every thought was evil continually, the Lord sent a flood; when Sodom and Gomorrah had so few people left that were righteous, and homosexuality was one of those sins, then God rained upon them fire and brimstone and they were destroyed. How close are we to a similar end? If we only knew, we might be surprised.

Thanks be to the Lord that there is still a remanant, the faithful few, those who travel on the narrow way, that have not bowed to Satan and his co-workers. In this book, Bro. James Farris stands up and speaks up for the Lord and the way of holiness. In this world, that is not the popular thing to do, but thanks be to

God, he is doing it. How wonderful to know that he is big enough to do that, and how we pray that those who read this book will stand with him.

No, the Lord's way is not popular. You will not find the majority on that way. But it is the right way, the only way, that leads to heaven. Thank you Bro. Farris for being a voice in the wilderness. May your voice be heard while there is still time to repent and turn to the Lord. It is for our sake, the sake of our families, the sake of our country, and the sake of the world, that these words are said.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
Winona, MS
Feb. 15, 2000

Introduction

Originally, the following chapters were lessons taught to the youth at the Salem church of Christ in Florence, Alabama. After listening to many legitimate questions from several teens, it was obvious that our young Christians are living in a difficult age and have some serious decisions to make. Without a doubt, the answer to our spiritual problems is in the word of God. The Psalmist wrote in Psalms 119:9, "*How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.*"

I would like to express a word of gratitude to those who helped me in writing this book. Whether directly or indirectly, I am indebted and grateful to all those who were so generous with their time and efforts. For the fine opinion of the book from the perspective of a Christian young lady, Kim Olive of Florence, Alabama, was a great help. For the years of mentoring and for answering so many questions, I am appreciative of Dr. Barry Anderson and his wife Novella. I cannot say enough words of thanks to Barbara Oliver for the extra hours of hard work in preparing this book for print. Finally, thanks to my parents and brothers for the positive encouragement and to my immediate family for enduring the times when I was up late at night trying to finish another chapter.

Now reader, I commend you for taking the time to read this book. I hope that these principles will be helpful as you serve God. If there is ever anything I can do to assist in your spiritual life, please do not hesitate to ask. It is my desire that more teens and young adults will have the courage to take a stand for the truth of the Bible. May God bless you in your Christian endeavors.

Sincerely in Christ,
James W. Farris
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Foreword

The author of the following treatise is a young man, but wise beyond his years.

James Farris has had a good upbringing, having parents who taught him to love the Lord and His word. He has obtained a Bachelor's degree from International Bible College and is currently working on a Master's from Southern Christian University.

I have know him for a number of years and have been able to closely observe his study habits, his personal integrity and righteous living; all of which assures me that he is well-qualified to present the following instruction and admonition to youth and age.

A perusal of the following pages will convince the reader that he is reading from a diligent student of God's word as well as one well-acquainted with the various moral and ethical problems facing the present generation.

Reading this book will strengthen your faith and fortify you to ward off the assaults of the hedonistic exponents of a sensual and materialistic lifestyle.

I commend it, unreservedly, to the reading public.

Barry L. Anderson, B.A., M.A., D.D.
Founding Dean International Bible College

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 “Who or What Is Your God?”	1
Chapter 2 “Introduction and Application of Christian Ethics”	21
Chapter 3 “Biblical Principles for Decision Making	37
Chapter 4 “Insufficient Standards are Not Sufficient” ..	43
Chapter 5 “How You Dress Reflects Who You Are!” ..	57
Chapter 6 “The Christian and the Dance”	73
Chapter 7 “The Sin of Premarital Sexual Activity”	90
Chapter 8 “Pornography Vs. God’s Plan for You”	109
Chapter 9 “Do You Suffer from Tobaccoitis?”	130
Chapter 10 “To Booze or Not to Booze?”	148
Chapter 11 “Abortion: Killing Babies Man’s Way.” ..	170
Chapter 12 “Euthanasia and the Bible.”	192
Chapter 13 “Being a Christian All the Way to the Finish Line!”	211
Bibliography	226
Afterword	230

Chapter 1

“Who or What Is Your God?”

I. Welcome to this Great Study

Where is your focus? Where do you devote your attention or to what things are you attracted? Look at your life now and think honestly about what you spend most of your time doing? Do you yearn for personal time with God or do you rarely visit Him on days besides Sunday? *Where is your focus?* This is not only the title of this book but also a question found in every chapter. One must be honest in asking where his/her focus is on a daily basis.

With the reading of this book you have become involved in both a serious and fascinating discussion of biblical morality. It will give some very basic and sensible truths that you can apply to your own life.

When looking in the Bible one can see many people who had their focus in the wrong place. All along the truth remains that man, from the very beginning, has been in outright rebellion to God. Paul says, *“Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened...who exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever, Amen”* (Romans 1:21,25). In looking at various examples of such activity, notice that Paul’s remarks are absolutely correct. As the following instances are cited, ask in each case where the focus or energies of each individual were placed.

In 1 Kings 18:20-40 the biblical record tells of Elijah’s confrontation with the Baal prophets. The scene is a fantastic display of good versus evil, one man versus hundreds, God versus man’s

own imagined deities. Elijah boldly declares at the outset of the battle, *“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him.”* Elijah was setting the stage for the Israelites to repent and turn again to the one true and living God. His intention was to have them look to themselves and ask whether their focus was on God or another god.

The Baal priests began crying out to their god, *“Oh Baal, hear us.”* Such cries fell upon deaf ears and soon they began leaping into the air. When this action brought no response they took out knives and began to cut their flesh with the hope that this would provoke their god to appear. How sad a scene this was, that people would rather serve a useless idol than God almighty. Such would have deeply saddened Elijah as well as God, and just to show the futility of their actions, Elijah mockingly declared to them, *“Perhaps your god is in prayer or busy or maybe he is taking a trip to some far away place.”* With that remark the stage was set to prove the only true God was near and supremely powerful.

In this story you find three separate groups of people, and each one had differing focal points. Elijah was a man focused entirely on God and doing His will. The Israelites had a focus that was never quite solid; it seemed to waiver from God to idols. The Baal prophets were focused entirely on a lie and followed that lie even to death. Which group best describes your life today? Are you entirely focused on God, do you turn to God only when things get bad, or are you living far from Him? The question again comes, *“Where is your focus?”*

Among other examples, notice in Acts 17 where Paul confronts the Athenian Greek Philosophers. The men Paul faced were the most educated people of that day. These were people who, *“...always wanted to hear something new”* (Acts 17:21).

Paul then began to declare to them the truth of Christ and the fact of a final resurrection of the dead. Paul said, "...because He (God) has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Luke further writes that when the people heard Paul preaching a resurrection from the dead some mocked him.

By looking at the context of Acts 17 you see a few more details about this sermon. When Paul came into Athens, he saw that the entire city was totally given to idols. Paul began to reason with the Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue, and when asked to expound on this "new doctrine", was accused of being called a "babbler." Using this opportunity, Paul stood and remarked about the people and their deep religious beliefs. So great were these beliefs that the people dared not desire to withhold worship of a single god. Paul said, "*I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.*" With that, Paul declared to them the one true and living God whom all men must follow.

Again, where was the focus of Paul and the philosophers? Paul was bold in proclaiming to them the truth of the matter. He saw a multitude of people who were lost and without hope in the world, and so he told them the truth. His focus was on the life he was living for Christ. The Athenians also had a focus. By and large most of the people did not listen to him. Their focus was on their own thoughts and reasoning. Although they sought to serve a higher power, they did so in ignorance by not giving their sole adoration to God and Him alone. Once more, where is *your* focus?

II. Three Things One Must Have

The greatest possible and most important question that mankind can ever ask is, "Does God exist?" If it can be proven

and understood that He does exist, then one would wonder, "Is it possible to know what God desires of us, if anything?" And finally, if both of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then the conclusion must be that, as His people, all must do everything that He desires and requires. Indeed you can know that God exists! It is not a thing that is either unthinkable or impossible to realize (Romans 1:20-22). Brother Thomas B. Warren debated two atheists in the 1970's¹ and in both debates, proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that God does exist, that God is our creator and therefore it is man's obligation to serve God or face the consequences.

All of those who are reading this book are no doubt members of the body of Christ. Seeing then that this book has been written for Christians, it therefore presupposes three truths.

1. Everyone who is reading this book believes in God.
2. Everyone who is reading this book understands the importance of doing God's will.
3. Everyone who is reading this book accepts that finding God's will is only attainable through the reading of the word of God.

It is the prayer of the author that this chapter will guide you into a proper understanding of the question, "Where is your focus?" If, by the time this chapter is completed and you see that your life has drifted away from the truth of God's word, then use the opportunities given and seek a proper relationship with God immediately.

III. Where Your Focus Cannot Be

1. Your Focus Cannot Be on Acceptance of Friends.

There is much talk about what is termed "peer pressure."

Peer pressure is when a member of ones own social grouping pressures someone into doing a thing known to be questionable or wrong. Because man has such a desire to be accepted and to please others, often people choose the wrong simply not to feel rejected. The fundamental question to be asked is, "Who are you trying to please?" Are you trying to please a girlfriend or boyfriend to such a point that you are willing to go too far in terms of a sexual relationship? Are you willing to please friends or acquaintances by going to the wrong kind of parties or take part in illegal or immoral actions? One may desire the acceptance of friends and even family, but such is not proper if, by gaining the popularity of friends, one loses the relationship he has with God.

Noah is a prime example of a person who denied being accepted by society. Noah very likely had friends who asked him to give up on his "foolish ploy" of building an ark. Yet, Noah knew that to deny God's will was to reap certain destruction. Noah followed God and was blessed beyond his wildest dreams. Today, do you have the necessary foresight to see the ultimate outcome of moral actions? Or would you rather have the acceptance of friends over acceptance of God?

2. Your Focus Cannot Be on the Pleasures of the World.

One of the most persuasive temptations that Satan uses is the temporal pleasure that all people desire. The Devil persuades man to look beyond the spiritual things and yearn longingly for the physical things this world has to offer. The Christian is not to look to those "*seen things but those things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). The world and all that it offers will soon pass away. In comparison to eternity, which one do you really desire to put your focus on? The

Christian must seek to weigh his options by looking at the positive and negative outcome of the choices he makes. When the case has been made for both the good and bad, ask which side is really worth more to your life?

The man called Moses is a prime example of one who chose to have God's blessings for eternity rather than the pleasures of this world for a time. Think of how grand Moses' life must have been. In terms of his physical life and welfare, Moses had everything that anyone could possibly desire. Moses had a marvelous education where he was taught the traditions of Egypt. He had the possibility of wealth and power at his fingertips, and perhaps he had the dream of one day being crowned King of Egypt. Yet in all this, the Hebrew writer says, "*By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked for the reward*" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Do you follow the example of this great man of faith? Do you have the spiritual maturity to deny the things of this world in order to obtain the eternal rewards of God's promise? As Moses focused on the life that never ends, so you must focus on God's will for your own life. If it means, like Moses, denying the ways of this world, then let it be said that you also look to the things which are unseen, for those things are eternal.

3. Ones Focus Cannot Be on the Self.

Selfish desires have been the spiritual downfall of many people. In the novel by Victor Hugo entitled, **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**, the story is told of a powerful arch-bishop who fell from grace when he lustfully desired a gypsy dancer. His entire existence became consumed with having this young lady as his

own. His personal desires and selfish lusts became the focal point of all his energies. His end came and with great despair you see a man who traded salvation and eternity for a few passing selfish desires. Your lusts and desires often stir and churn within you. If those feelings are not put into proper check, they can become the driving forces of your life.

The Bible calls for God's people to be "selfless." Christ said it best when he asserted, "*If anyone desires to come unto me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*" (Matthew 16:24). What a concept to apply in this selfish society today! If there has ever been a sacred truth for man to follow, surely this one has been ignored by a world of humanistic thought. In America, people are taught by commercials and trained by magazine ads never to deny themselves anything. If one can have it, then get it. In stark contrast, however, the Bible teaches that God's people are to literally deny themselves. Very simply, Christian, those things that may bring a division between Christ and you should be disposed of. In this is a denial of the world and willful acceptance of God's great spiritual blessings.

There are two major examples in the Bible that teach the importance of self-denial. There is the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" Jesus told him to keep the commandments of God and the young man's reply was that he had kept those commands since his childhood. Christ then told him to go and sell all that he had and give the money to the poor of the world. With that the young man went on his way sorrowful because he had great possessions. There was one thing this man loved more than God: possessions (Luke 18:18-23). The other story is quite similar in that it also deals with a rich man. In Luke 12:13-20 one reads of a man who was very blessed. So much, in fact, that his barns were unable to hold the harvest so he tore down the old barns to rebuild bigger ones. The sad case is obvious. God was not part

of the rich man's plans. The focus of this wealthy individual was on himself. One evening God visited this selfish man and said, "*Fool! This night your soul shall be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?*" Jesus ends this parable by stating, "*So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*"

III. Where Your Focus Must Be

1. Your Life Must Be Biblically Focused.

Whenever you are traveling from your hometown toward a place you have never been, chances are that you readily keep an eye focused on the map. The Bible acts as the spiritual guideline or map to that eternal place of Heaven. For this cause, Christians must live spirit-led lives on a daily basis by reading, studying and putting the Bible into daily practice. There is an old phrase that used to be an unofficial slogan for members of the church of Christ. It said, "The church of Christ is a Bible totin' and Bible quotin' people." The Bible teaches that such a slogan should always apply to God's people.

Paul commanded Timothy to, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God as workmen who need not be ashamed.*" In Acts 17:11 one reads of those Bereans who "*studied the scriptures daily to see that what the Apostles said was true.*" Hebrews 4:12 teaches that the word of God is, "*...quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword...*" Ephesians 6:17 tells Christians to "*...take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.*"

These verses teach the necessity of having the word of God close to you at all times. It is God's gift of the Bible that makes one able to withstand the mocking jeers of the skeptic. It is the Bible that makes one perfectly furnished unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). It is the Bible that is more powerful than

any of man's physical weapons. It is the Bible that Christians must use as their weapon against the offensive blows of sin. The Bible then must be in our hearts and remain there as we give testimony to the world about the saving power of Christ's sin-free blood. Is our focus centered on God's word?

2. Your Life Must Be Eternally Focused.

The plain and simple fact of the matter is that all people will be somewhere forever. It is the freedom of choice that allows mankind to turn from a life of sin to serve God or remain as sinners. The child of God realizes that the spiritual side of man, that is his soul, will remain forever and for this cause must always look to the time when he will hear those words, "*Well done thou good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:23).

The very word "eternity" should boggle the mind when one thinks of its implications. To take your life now and multiply those years by infinity truly causes us to be speechless. For this cause, the Bible gives many words to encourage a person to look beyond this life, to a future that never ends. Paul reminds Christians in Galatians 6:8, "*For he who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap life everlasting.*" Paul shows how that this physical life now being enjoyed must be understood in the proper perspective. Our temporal existence while on this earth is not eternal. For this cause, Christians should not treat this world as if it will last forever by doing whatever they desire.

There are some required conditions for those who would desire to have eternal life. 1) To be eternally focused means that you will not follow after the ways of this world. John said in I John 2:15, "*Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him.*" 2) You must also live your life with a deep faith in Christ. Again,

John writes in John 3:15, *“That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* And also, the Hebrew writer says in 11:6, *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”* 3) You must live a life of spiritual service and sacrifice. Jesus said in John 4:36, *“And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life.”* And Paul said in Romans 12:1 to, *“Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.”* How does your life rate in regard to denying the ways of this world? You must deeply desire to have an ever-growing faith in Christ and serve Him on a daily basis.

3. You Must Remember Who You Are.

John said it with emotional precision in 1 John 3:1, *“Behold what manner of love God hath bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God.”* According to John, God is One of great love clearly established by the fact that He gave the world a savior (John 3:16). If the blessings stopped right there, it would be fabulous! God loved man so much that He sent His son as a savior for the world! The idea staggers the imagination. John says that God did not stop with giving salvation, but went on to greater things for those who are obedient to His will. Not only did God send the Messiah, but even dared to call Christians His children. This action on the part of God is mentioned as a spiritual adoption that all people can have a part in. Listen to Paul in Ephesians 1:5, *“Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,”* To remember who you are means that you will walk among mankind unashamed of your name. You are a Christian, the chosen of God and part of His people.

Do you sometimes forget who you are? Do you often fail in your proclamation of Christ when surrounded by those friends

who are not Christians? Have you ever allowed yourself to forget that you are the saved of God's people? Never forget the precious truth of God's word and always remember that you are His child. As David said in Psalms 100:3, "*We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*"

IV. Who or What Is Your God Today?

Jesus Christ taught a great lesson in Matthew 4 when He was taken away to be tempted of the Devil. It was there that Jesus had to choose what was really important to Him. He had come to die and to die sin-free, and with that mission in mind, Satan used every possible trick to cause Jesus to fail. With joy you can declare today that Jesus successfully navigated His way through the battleground of satanic forces and landed without sin on the triumphant side of temptation. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus, "*...was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin.*"

Some people have claimed that this is not entirely the case. Some have said that Jesus never was tempted with drugs, stealing, adultery, lying and other sins. What some people fail to notice is the Bible does not say that Christ was tempted with every *specific situation* that people face today. The text does say that He was tempted in "*all points like as we are.*" The conclusion you must believe is that Christ was tempted in the same ways you are and never did succumb to the temptations. Although Christ did not necessarily face the temptation to smoke marijuana, He was tempted with the possibility of wrongdoing. John says there are only three temptations from which all sins stem. "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the father but of the world.*" (1 John 2:15) When you face the battle of sin, rest assured that Satan is using the same three temptations on you that he did on Christ. For this reason, the Bible can safely say that

Jesus was tempted just like you.

To further clarify the situation, please notice a parallel of Christ to Eve in Genesis chapter three. When the Devil came to Eve he used three angles to cause Eve to lust over the fruit. Satan took the things God had said, lied about them, and then made her to view the tree's fruit in a different manner than God intended. Satan cunningly said to Eve, "*If you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" Then Eve saw the tree that it was pleasing to the eye and good for food. With that, she bit and tasted the sweetness of that fruit and forever bore the bitterness of suffering for her sin.

In the very beginning, Satan used the same tactic of visual lust over a material object. John calls this "*the lust of the eyes.*" The old cunning serpent captured his first human by tricking her into believing that God's gifts were unsatisfactory. Surely all the trees in that paradise were hers to enjoy and she was simply not satisfied. John calls this "*the lust of the flesh.*" And alas, the Devil tempted her with the possibility of great wisdom. One can almost hear him tell her, "So anyway, would you like to be as smart and wise as God? Then I have just the thing for you, Eve. You see that fruit? It is yours! Go ahead, it will be okay." John calls this "*the pride of life.*"

Now please notice Christ Jesus during His temptation. In Matthew 4 beginning in verse 3, the Devil came and said, "*If you really are the Son of God, then command that these stones be made into bread.*" In verse 5 the Devil took Christ up into the holy city and set Him up on the pinnacle of the temple. Then he said, "*If you are the son of God throw yourself down so the angels can rescue you.*" And finally in verse 8 Satan took Jesus into a very high place and said, "*I will give you the entire world if you will bow down and worship me.*" Do you notice the temptations that Satan used on your Lord? They are the same three

that he successfully used on Eve and the same three that John talked about in 1 John 2:15. Yet even when Jesus was hungry and tired, He never gave in to those usually successful tactics. Thank God for His sin-free lamb.

Since it has already been determined that Satan uses these three attacks on everyone, and since it is undeniable that mankind sins daily, you must ask if these things are welcomed and allowed in your life without reservation? The Christian is not to walk in the paths of sin any longer. When you came up from the watery grave of baptism, you put to death the old man of sin. Paul says in Romans 6:1, *“What then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How can we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?”* Paul said further in Colossians 3:2, *“Set your mind on things above not on things on the earth. For you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”* These verses teach that it is essential to struggle through life with the mindset that although sin may win over you in times of weakness, you will always strive never to willfully enter into sin.

1. Is Your Focus on the Lust of the Flesh?

Billions of dollars each year are spent on pornographic material that harms people, marriages, and souls. On a daily basis millions of dollars are spent on lottery tickets with the greedy hope of becoming wealthy. There are thousands of alcoholics in America who cannot win over their addiction to that demon of alcohol. Each hour at any supermarket, hundreds of cigarettes are sold to people addicted to the poisons of nicotine and other toxins. Young people are experimenting with sex and losing their virginity because they are searching for the love and fellowship they do not get from their parents. Adults often deny ethical standards in hopes of bringing in extra income. Parents today are working two jobs, spending long hours at the office and rarely spending time with their children. Yet physical possessions are

paramount in their homes. The list could go on!

Do you allow the hope of money, possessions, men, women or wealth to drive your life? Have you allowed this trap of Satan to come in and have its way with you? If your focus is truly where it needs to be, then you will put your life into proper perspective and begin looking to those invisible things that Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 4:16.

2. Is Your Focus on the Lust of the Eyes?

Hundreds of people find themselves caught in adulterous affairs because they saw someone over a crowded room whom they desired. Perhaps it is the case that you so wanted an object that you would stop at nothing to have it. Indeed God has put many beautiful things in this world. But one must not seek that which does not belong to them nor what they have no right to. Recall the lesson learned from David's sin with Bathsheba. He saw and immediately desired another man's wife. This temptation was so great for David that he stopped at nothing until he had her.

Satan used this avenue of temptation on Jesus as they sat high atop the world overlooking its mighty kingdoms. What a magnificent view it must have been to behold all those beauties of the earth. It is the example of Christ that you should follow. When faced with the subtle seductions of Satan's fiery darts, you must deny your own lust of the flesh. With the help of Christ, the solid rock, you can be the spiritual stone built up as the spiritual house of God's people (1 Peter 2:4).

3. Is Your Focus on the Pride of Life?

People often fall into this trap when they desire the praise of men over honor by God. All people must fight against this temptation. People seek all kinds of vanities like the sense of power

involved in monetary substance. They long for the applause of men and enjoy the personal admiration of others and will not rest until their appetites are satisfied. This temptation is alive and well in the world today just as it was in the days of Christ. The Lord talked about the scribes and Pharisees who would not work but made others work hard. They would sit in the very best places of the synagogues and enjoy hearing others call them by the name "Rabbi." All the while Jesus said that the reason for their actions is, "...*all their works they do to be seen by men.*" This is a blatant example of "*pride of life*" in action (Matthew 23:1-7).

God does not want nor allow His people to partake in any of these three temptations on a willful basis. Certainly there are weaknesses that all people face, but to willfully accept and allow these things as a way of life is wrong. The child of God will desire to see to it that these lusts or appetites are subdued and utterly cleared away from his own life. Paul said in Colossians 3:5, "*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.*" His meaning is, clean yourself and leave those sins of the past life in the grave of baptism.

The major point to understand is that when anyone puts his entire focus on either the lust of the eyes, flesh or pride of life, he has become guilty of idolatry. By willfully putting your focus or trust in anything other than God, you are an idolater. When you hear that people are guilty of idolatry today it may sound a bit odd. After all, it is very rare that anyone you know has been guilty of bowing his head to a physical idol. Paul came into Athens and saw many idols erected to various gods. Today's idols are rarely seen in such a form. Yet the truth remains that for one to devote himself to anything other than God is to accept a form of idolatry. Paul wrote again in Colossians 3:5, "...*mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evils desires and covetousness, which is*

idolatry.” Obviously God equates an adherence to various sins as a form of idol worship. For this cause, use all the power you have to draw nearer to God while at the same time denying these tactics of Satan.

4. Is Your Focus on God?

Solomon said in the final verse of Ecclesiastes, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Solomon says that men must accept their duty and obligation of putting their focus on God and His will for their life. For God to be your everything means that you give Him your all in life. In Ephesians 6:6 Paul says, “*Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*” If your focus is truly on service to God, then you will desire to do His will rather than seek the praise and adoration of men. After all, the very fact remains that Christians are *servants* of Christ. A life of service is one of humility and meekness. For one to serve God only out of the desire to be seen of men is to contradict the very meaning of Christianity.

Only you know where your focus is. By looking inside your own heart you can tell to whom you give your devotion. Either you care more about yourself than serving God or else you are striving for the goal of perfection in Christ by dedicating your life to the Lord on a daily basis. Where is your focus now? You will have to answer this question for yourself.

V. What God Wants of Your Life.

God’s love for you is fantastic. In your wildest imagination you would be unable to concoct such a wondrous story of love as God has shown to man. The love of God is plainly obvious in the fact that God’s word was given to mankind. In the Bible man is free to read about the loving gift of a sacrifice called Jesus.

Because the Bible has been given to the world, it becomes the responsibility of mankind to read and study it and come to understand what God would have him to do. What is it that God wants of His people today? The Bible teaches that the following things are necessary to be pleasing to the Father.

1. God Wants You To Be Devoted to Him.

Christians are people who grow closer to God each day. As His word teaches, God wants His children to be wholehearted and earnest in their dedication to Him. David said, *"Blessed are those who keep His testimonies. Who seek Him with their whole heart"* (Psalms 119:2). To be devoted to the extent that the Psalmist describes, requires daily devotional time with the Lord. It is here that personal spiritual growth is able to spread quickly and give a person a firm foundation for facing trials in life. Jesus gave a great example of personal devotion in Mark 1:35. *"Now in the morning having risen a long time before daylight, he went out and departed to a solitary place; and there prayed."* If Jesus Christ prayed privately, isn't that proof that you need to as well? Beyond this discussion of a time for personal study and prayer time with God, there is also the need for public devotion to God. Even when there are trials, recall that God remains strong and therefore as His child, do not surrender the flag of Christianity to those who mock your convictions.

2. God Wants You to Love the Souls of People.

Do you know one lost soul? Are you, as a Christian, able to point people in the right direction or even openly discuss the plan of salvation with them? Likely you do know of someone and assuredly you are able to tell him or her about the Lord Jesus. The question is, are you presently involved in doing this? The word of God is constant in telling that people must be saved and that it is God's people who are to help save them. Matthew

28:19,20 says, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul told Timothy the importance of, *“committing these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* These verses show the importance of loving mankind enough to tell them about Jesus. Furthermore, when one is taught, he will do his best to grow and be able to teach someone else. This blessed command enables the church to grow in every generation by way of the “self-perpetuating” commission given by Christ. Your love for people makes telling others about Jesus not nearly as frightening because they are in need of salvation. God uses His people to teach others the truth. As John said, *“Love one another for love is of God, he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love...Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 John 4:7-8,11).

3. God Wants You to Be a Positive Example.

A Christian who really cares what God did for them will also understand that God desires His example to be seen by everyone. Have you ever been guilty of thinking that since you were going to a strange place that you could sin? Perhaps you felt that since nobody knew who you were, then you would not be bringing reproach against the church by “having some fun.” This defeats the real purpose of being a light of the world. The entire purpose of the Christian example encompasses at least two purposes: 1) the Christian example was meant to encourage those of the church to continue the godly life even in times of persecution; 2) the Christian example was meant to show Christ to others in need of salvation, to point them in the right direction. For these reasons, when a child of God fails to exhibit the proper example, either around or away from those he knows, he has failed in lifting other Christians up and has not allowed his light to shine in the world.

God wants His people to shine brightly in this world of sinful darkness. God desires for His children to allow others to see Christ "*living in them*" (Galatians 2:20). It is a great blessing to be a Christian and with this blessing comes the responsibility of living properly in both public and private life. Paul said that you are "*...epistles known and read of all men*" (2 Corinthians 3:2). Do you show the example of Christ in your life now?

4. God Wants You to Deny the Wrongs of This World.

To deny the ways of this world requires a person of strict moral purity and integrity. You may be reminded of the charge of Paul in Ephesians 5:11 to, "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*" If you are trying to live the proper kind of life, you will also see the utter absurdity of doing the very thing that you are denying. Such is a blatant contradiction in the life of the Christian and is called hypocrisy. It is important that you are very careful about what types of positions you put yourself in. If you realize a party will bring you into fellowship with "*works of darkness*" and that you may be presented with personal temptations, then it would be best to stay away from such a party. Or if you are subjected to friends who may want to do something you know to be immoral or illegal, do your best to leave the scene as quickly as possible. By leaving such a scene, you declare your denial of those things that are against the Christian's system of belief.

V. Concluding Words.

There are many places in this world where you can put your devotion. The riches and power of this country have given worldly lusts more thrust. More people are falling into the traps of Satan as he continues to tempt people with fleshly and prideful desires. What is the Christian to do? He must weigh the fact

of eternity in the balances. Can this world offer anything worth more than what has already been promised to us by God? If so then why not accept what the world offers. However, if God can beat the world's best deal, then follow God with everything you have. As Joshua said in Joshua 24:15, "*Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods of your fathers on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" He was saying if you are going to serve yourselves, do so and if you are going to serve God then do that, but do either one exclusively.

Who is your God? Where do you put the bulk of your devotion in life? Rather than asking whom your God may be, perhaps it could be asked, "What is your God?" Do you put God first or have you allowed the pleasures and cares of this world to take the place of importance in your life? It is extremely important that you weigh the fact of eternity in the balances and ask whether the world and its temporal pleasures of sin are worth more than God's promise of eternal life. Are riches, for as long as this life exists, really able to outweigh the glorious blessings that are waiting on those faithful servants of Christ? The answer is obvious.

Who or what is your God? What will your decision be as you face tomorrow? All this falls to you and it is your decision. You must decide what you will do with your life. It is up to you.

Where Is Your Focus?

Chapter 2

“Introduction and Application of Christian Ethics”

I. Being Different Through Study

While living upon this earth, God has called for His people to be different from the ways of the world. In Romans 12:2, Paul encouraged the church at Rome to, “*Be not conformed to this world but transformed.*” In the days of Moses, God called for His children to “*Be Holy for I am holy*” (Leviticus 11:44). Being holy requires a distinct understanding of the obligation on the part of God’s child to remain separated from the ways of the society in which he lives. Christians must understand that they are part of the body, or church, of Jesus Christ. This must be noted as the highest calling man can ever achieve.

Paul writes in Ephesians 1:22,23, “*...and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body.*” Since Christians are part of the body, that is the church, then special emphasis should be placed on the meaning of the word church. The word church comes from the Greek word **ekklesia** and literally means, “Those who are called out.”

Christians should then understand the responsibility of being different. Christ taught that His followers were as “*A city set on a hill*” (Matthew 5:14). By the grace and love of God, He has called His people to be as shining lights in a world that is full of spiritual darkness. When the world around is falling deeper into sin, the lone Christian stands as a beacon of light upon the canvas of despair. This light burns brightly and finds strength in the knowledge that God’s will is being accomplished in his/her life (Colossians 1:11).

It is also necessary that God's people accept this great calling by making good decisions based on what the Bible teaches. For this reason the servant of Christ makes a habit of studying God's word on a regular basis. Brother Guy N. Woods has the following to say in regard to regularly studying God's word: "There are one hundred and four weeks in two years. Almost one half of the subject matter of the New Testament, about one hundred chapters, was written by Paul, apostle to the Gentiles. One with only an average intelligence and no more than a grammar school education, by following the simple system of inductive study *and by devoting fifteen minutes a day* to the effort, may become familiar with a chapter a week, in which case, half the New Testament will have been mastered in two years."² Only by being students of that great book can the child of God hope to be the type of person that he is called to be.

In regards to properly introducing this study on Christian Ethics, there of necessity needs to be a good working definition of certain words that are used in this book. Please notice and learn well several terms at the outset of this discussion.

II. Definition of Terms.

The word *Ethics* is defined as, "The discipline dealing with what is good and bad with moral duty and obligation."³ When dealing with ethics one understands that a sense of morality naturally exists within man and that he has the ability to accept the good while opposing the wrong.

The words *Christian Ethics* are then defined as, "What is morally acceptable for the Christian to take part in." In this practical discussion of Christian Ethics it is presupposed that those reading this profess Christianity and understand that Christ has definite established principles that His people must follow. When these principles become embedded in the conscience of the

Christian they cause him to ask in any given situation, "What would Christ have me to do in this case?" Recently, most people have witnessed the young people wearing bracelets with the letters WWJD on them. The letters are in the form of an acronym that asks, "What Would Jesus Do?" These pieces of braided jewelry are to help remind the child of God that his decisions should be in harmony with God's will. When the Christian is assured that his decision is right, he can proceed with that action fully confident that the activity or reasoning behind the action is not contradictory to God's will for him.

Christians are people who truly care about the souls of those around them. Christ has commissioned His followers to take the saving gospel to everyone of the world (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:19,20). Plainly, the teachings of Christ are for all men. Therefore, the Christian also abides by and believes in the concept that all men should follow God. For this to be done, all men must pattern their lives according to the Christian Ethical Ideal. The child of God should constantly remind himself that Christian Ethics, although an individual right and obligation to follow, are to be seen as the only foundation mankind can base himself upon if he seeks to lay hold on eternal salvation. Only by obedience to God's will can one be saved (Hebrews 5:9). Since God is "...not willing that any should perish..." (2 Peter 3:9), it must also be understood that God's will is for all of mankind to pursue, although many will not choose to accept it.

God's soldier continually presses on by preaching the truth to the world. With God's word, the Christian can stand and be noticed as one who professes the truth without ceasing. Paul declared that the word of God was able to make one "...perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

III. The Christian's Foundation.

While laying the foundation for this study of Christian Ethics, one basic concept to understand is that there must be a daily struggle to strive for moral purity. In Hebrews 6:1, the writer says, *"Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God."* The single verse above should act as the theme for this entire discussion on Christian Ethics.

Christians are to be in constant pursuit of the characteristics of Christ's life while He lived on the earth, those being perfection. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:21,22, *"For to this you were called that Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth."* Christ commanded His followers, *"For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done"* (John 13:15). In all the qualities of Jesus' life, His people ought to strive for that example of perfection.

A verse which should be used as a secondary theme for this discussion is James 1:22. God's children are exhorted to, *"Be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves."* Surely anyone who has been saved can readily give testimony to the power of the Bible. If people will not use that great gift of God's written word, how can they ever hope to be made better? James goes on to discuss those who reject the word after having read it. They are as foolish as a man who looks in a mirror and sees many mistakes yet does not bother to adjust his outer person (James 1:23,24). Such activities of mankind can only lead them to destruction because of a failure to be humble in God's sight and by the failure to accept God's word (Proverbs 3:34).

All Christians, regardless of their age or social standing,

whether at work, in school or going to a social engagement, are certain to maintain a proper physical appearance. If there were things that needed correcting with one's hair or attire, likely they would quickly be corrected. Certainly nobody of sound mind would see embarrassing problems and turn away from a mirror without making themselves right. In the same way, how much more emphasis should Christians be putting on the spiritual side of life? Suffice it to say, on the great Day of Judgment, one's physical appearance will not be the main priority. Instead, our spiritual maturity and willingness to serve will be in question (Matthew 10:42; Matthew 25:34-46).

What then is the standard by which a Christian can judge an action to be right or wrong? Thomas B. Warren defines a standard in the following way: "A standard is that which is set up and established by authority as the criterion or test or as a source. As pertains to matters that concern the soul, it means: the source of right (true) answers to spiritual questions."⁴ The Bible is not based on the whimsical notions of emotional man, but it alone is the only real objective standard that man can base his life on. Brother Coy Roper of the International Bible College has said, "The only thing we must believe about the Bible is what the Bible says of itself." In fact, this is true. God's people must seek after what the Bible teaches. Since the Bible is God's will for man, it remains the foundation or basis for the system of Christian beliefs.

The Bible calls itself the "moral standard" by which man can judge an action as either pleasing to God or in opposition to His will. Notice what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, "*For all scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for reproof for correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.*" Paul makes the following points clear:

1. The Bible is from God and is therefore not a fictitious story put together by the overworked imagination of mere man. The scripture in man's possession is from the very mind of God himself.
2. The Bible profits man when it is read and applied to His life.
3. The Bible teaches what God wants his creation to know.
4. The Bible gives man the authority to reprove and correct those who are not following God's will.
5. His word alone guides us into the proper state of fellowship with God.

This fantastic verse reassures those in His Son's body that if everyone will put their faith in what God's word teaches, then life will not be lived in vain or filled with absence and void. Mankind has in his possession and can readily accept the wonderful will of God (Romans 10:17). Simply by placing obedient trust in His will for your life, God's people are on the right path for the constant pursuit of perfection. When people put to death their old ways of sin by being buried with Christ by baptism into His death (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12), it is then that sins are forgiven and the old man is a new creation (Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:17). People who have experienced this great gift, by way of Christ's sacrifice for their sins, should stand firm with great joy to proclaim, "I am saved by the blood of the sin-free Lamb of God" (Colossians 1:14; Revelation 5:6). Because of this great act of love, you are able to have life and that more abundantly (John 3:16; 10:10).

The Christian has the hope of Heaven that will soon be realized. While God's people live upon this earth, their actions do matter. On the day when all man will be judged, people will give answer for all they did while they lived (2 Corinthians 5:10).

With this in mind one must take a serious view of his personal conduct while he is counted among the people of the world. There are at least two reasons that God's child should desire to make good decisions. They are:

1. God is watching and one day all will answer to Him for the deeds done in this life. The very love He has shown toward His children is reason enough to never willfully rebel against His will (Romans 6:1).
2. Christians are given an awesome responsibility to be examples to this world.

Paul says God's people are "...*epistles known and read of all men*" (2 Corinthians 3:2). This passage shows the opportunity that exists in making a difference in the lives of others as brought about by making the proper decisions in life. How wonderful to realize that you can lead a lost soul to Jesus by simply living as you should.

IV. How Can the Christian Know What to Do?

Both the Old and New Testaments have many ideas and principles from which a person can witness how God views a particular action. In Romans 15:4, Paul writes that "*Whatsoever things written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.*" Those things "*written aforetime*" are the things in the Old Testament. There are numerous lessons to be learned from the things written long before the New Testament took affect. One example of such teaching is found in 1 Kings 18:21. The people of the Old Testament were told to choose between worship to God or a false god (Baal). This has certain application for people who are alive today and the principle is in effect regardless of the age. One could apply the lesson taught here by asking, "Where do I put my trust?" Is it in the true God of the universe

or in riches, treasure, power or the self? God's people must look at biblical examples and find what they mean for their lives today.

The main priority in making proper decisions is asking oneself, "Does God approve or disapprove of this action?" When one seeks to answer this question he may turn to the examples of the Holy Scripture and make parallels from certain biblical events to his own situation. With the proper methods of scriptural interpretation and application, this practice is effective and most needed. However, the fact remains that not every single moral problem will have an exact parallel or may not be *specifically* addressed in the Bible. What then is one to do when facing questions about Birth Control, Euthanasia and Abortion? Such things and other subjects may not be found anywhere in the Bible. Thankfully, there are *eternal principles* in the Bible from which firm conclusions can be drawn.

Man learns from any piece of literature in several ways. Since the Bible is a holy piece of literature, these methods for proper interpretation apply to it as well.

1. Mankind learns from the Bible by way of **DIRECT COMMAND**. When the Bible puts forth a command it is your obligation to abide by that command. One example of a direct command is Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly.*" Withdrawing fellowship from one who walks in opposition to the truth is not optional for the Christian. It is a command. Furthermore, for a specific instance one notices in Acts 2:38 that Peter commanded the Jewish recipients of the first gospel message to be baptized. Christ had spoken this command to His disciples in Matthew 28:19,20 and they in turn preached it in obedience to their Lord. This direct command was accepted and 3000

souls were baptized to obtain the remission of sins. For those today who desire to be Christians as those in Acts 2, this direct command must also be accepted and heeded. **Direct Commands** are one way the Bible teaches.

2. Another way in which man learns from the scriptures is by an **APPROVED EXAMPLE**. When the Bible has shown that an action meets with God's approval, then that action is authorized for His people today. "Christians eat the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week because it is the only day authorized in the New Testament. Luke writes in Acts 20:7, *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."*⁵ **Approved Examples** are another way the Bible teaches man today.

3. There is also what has been termed **NECESSARY INFERENCE**. The word "inference" means the drawing of conclusions based on the material provided. Christians can know that they are authorized to build meeting houses because Hebrews 10:25 teaches that God's people are to assemble. The New Testament shows that early Christians assembled but were not given specific instructions about where to meet. It is necessary for us to infer that a place to meet must be provided whether it is in a home or a building owned by the church.⁶

4. The Bible also teaches by way of **IMPLICATION**. The Bible requires people to use basic logical reasoning. Although there is not a single verse in the New Testament that specifically says, "James Farris must believe and be baptized to be saved," the Bible implies that such a command is demanded for salvation. Mark 16:16 says, *"Whosoever believes and is baptized shall be saved."* This command has application for all people today. Although it does not explicitly state that you personally must believe and be baptized, the word "whosoever" directly applies to you. You can properly come to this conclusion because the Bible

teaches by way of **Implications**.

V. God's Purpose for Your Life

Eternity has yet to begin and anyone reading this book has been blessed with another day to live and another breath to enjoy. Every day is a gift from God and man has been given the great opportunity to choose what he will do with his gift. Such days are blessings from God and you should view each one as having some great purpose to be accomplished. In fact, the writer of Ecclesiastes says that everything is without purpose when God is not part of ones life. That great book ends by reminding people to, "*Fear God and keep his commandments. This is the whole duty of man*" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). What about life today? Can the Christian sincerely look at himself and be certain that he has the proper view of what life is about? There are at least six things that should be understood for the child of God to have true happiness and a full understanding that he is living his life for God.

1. Recall that the word of God has been given as a gift and it is according to the Bible that all will be judged (John 12:48). When members of the church deeply understand the horror in that they were once separated from fellowship with God by reason of their own sin (Colossians 1:21; Galatians 5:19-21), then they will be fervent in adhering to God's word personally. For the first point then, to have true happiness, all people must do their part in saving themselves. A loving God has made salvation possible for man. His love cannot be denied because there are too many gifts that teach otherwise. God loved man so much that He gave His only begotten son. Further, this great act of love has been recorded for mankind in the Holy Bible. Since the truth (His word) has been given and since all people are required to adhere to the conditions of the word of God, then it is understandable that by His word all of mankind will be judged. John records these words of Christ, "*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).

In the Bible one finds the conditions of salvation. In Acts 22:16, Paul was asked, “*Why do you wait? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.*” This question is good to ask today. Why would anyone wait to begin living a life that is pleasing to God? Living the Christian life is just the beginning point of the life that is to come. This life, although temporal, reminds Christians of the true joy that awaits God’s people in Heaven.

2. God’s people need to be happy enough about their own salvation that they tell others the Good News of Jesus. Paul wrote, “*So as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” (Romans 1:15,16). One of the ways you can glorify God is by teaching those who are lost. Saving others is one of the greatest responsibilities anyone has. It is the case that if you had some good news to share that you would not keep it to yourself. If you won one million dollars, you would probably be so happy that you would tell everyone about your good fortune. Why? Because winning money is good news. You could try to compare the good news of having won a million dollars to the good news of salvation. Obviously the news of salvation is worth more than gaining all the money of the world. Sadly, by looking at human nature and conduct, it is plainly obvious that the Gospel does not get the widespread publicity it so readily deserves. How much more ought those who have been saved by the love of God be zealous in spreading this eternally wonderful good news?

3. Christians will follow the teachings of the Bible and live in service to God. Paul states in Romans 12:1 that God’s people should, “*Present your bodies as living sacrifices unto the*

Lord...which is your reasonable service.” There is no other master for whom any should desire to labor. Joshua said in Joshua 24:15, “*Choose you this day whom you will serve...As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*” Joshua stands before thousands as a witness to the great miracles of the Lord. He was there in the beginning for the crossing of the Red Sea. He had eaten of the manna and quail and drank of the water provided by God. Now as the lush land of Canaan lay waiting for the Israelites’ entrance, Joshua reminds the people who it was that had given them so much. God had blessed far beyond what they deserved. Now as they lived in Canaan, they would have the choice to live a life of service for the true and living God or idols that had done nothing for them.

Because of the blessings given today, Christians will deeply desire to serve God. Always remember that for lifelong service, a crown of life will be given to those who are found faithfully watching. With each passing moment that crown and eternal life becomes all the more precious to those who desire it (Revelation 2:10;2 Timothy 4:6-8).

4. The Christian will constantly seek God’s Kingdom. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, “*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.*” For this cause, Christ’s saved are not to put their trust in the things of this world. Rather, those who have been called out from the ways of this world place their trust in God. When your faith is in him then your eyes will be affixed on God’s will and not your own. Although Christ says that you are required to desire God first, there is a promise attached. Of those who keep this philosophy of life, there is the guarantee that all physical necessities will be given from God above. How great to realize that not only will you be given temporal physical blessings, but also the eternal spiritual ones as well.

5. The Christian must do God's will. In John 4:34 Jesus stated, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent me.*" Christ gave Christians another example of obedience by seeking and accomplishing His Father's will. Just as Christ was chosen, so you have also have been chosen for a specific purpose. Your ongoing mission is to tell others about the immense love God has for His creation. Learning about God's will only comes by studying His word. As stated earlier, one cannot claim to follow the teachings of God unless he first knows what they are. The only way one can personally know those teachings is by being a diligent student of the Bible. Doing God's will is the summation and intention of the Christian's life.

6. The Christian is to pursue Christ-likeness. The marvelous aspect of this command is that regardless of personal wealth, educational level and social status, everyone who has become a Christian *can* conform to this calling. It makes no difference whether you are rich, poor, uneducated or possess several degrees, you can follow Christ no matter who or where you are. One does not have to leave his hometown to begin professing Jesus as one's Lord. The Christian life can be done in any place and such an attitude is required of God's people. Never is there a time when the eye of the Lord is blinded to man's ways. Solomon writes in Proverbs 15:3, "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.*" Because of this truth, those who are called out from the ways of this world must make proper decisions and be people of scrupulous integrity. In Philippians 3:13,14, Paul urges that God's people are to, "*press toward that goal that has been set before them.*" That matchless goal is Heaven and only those who are found living like Christ will be allowed there. Those found written in the Lamb's Book of Life will have lived lives of morality, decency, and most of all ever pursued a character of Christ-likeness (Revelation 21:27).

VI. Concluding Remarks.

Romans 12:2 tells those in the body of Christ to "*Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know what is that good and acceptable and holy will of God.*" From this verse alone one can rightly conclude God's will can be grasped and understood. Christ said "*The truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). He then said that the word of God was truth (John 17:17). This world is filled with those who scoff at the idea that anything is absolutely true. Since this is true, in their minds, there is no way to know for certain whether the Bible is right or wrong. It is a great blessing that you can stand upon the rock solid foundation of God's everlasting and indestructible Word. Indeed you can know God's word is truth.

It is the hope and prayer of this author that the things written in this volume will help Christians understand their purpose. You have been providentially placed upon this world with a distinct mission. God created you for a specific purpose and you are not the creation of blind evolution as so many profess. As the creation of God, you have been the recipient of the greatest love humanity has ever been shown. "*Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God*" (I John 3:1). God not only gave a way by which man can be saved (Ephesians 1:4), but further gave His word by which people can learn more about His will for their Christian life. Now the saved of the world can stand tall realizing their great purpose, and ever pursuing proper direction for the goal of Heaven.

In concluding this introduction to the study on Christian Ethics, understand that everything you do must be according to God's will or "*in the name of the Lord*" (Colossians 3:17). If a person dares to venture beyond the limitations of God's word or falls short of what God desires, then he is wrong. Right is right

and a thing cannot be both right and wrong. There is a way to know what holiness is and how you have to live. God has always urged His people to do the right thing and leave the wrong thing alone. Never are the children of God given any reason to do anything other than what is correct, moral and proper in the eyes of God.

Christian Ethics are absolute. There is no bypassing or detouring them by anyone who hopes to stand justified before God. In James 1:17 the word tells us that God the Father is unchanging. His will for man remains the same today as it did in the year 33 A.D. That will is found written in the pages of His book and since mankind is to stand before God one day, all people must conform to what that word declares. God's word is absolute.

Thank God for the chance to view life according to the matchless example of Jesus Christ. Since all people are fortunate to have Jesus Christ as their Lord, and since God has entrusted people with the Bible, then may God's children have a sense of renewed interest in taking that word to the lost people of the world. When taking part in God's great scheme for man's redemption, one never has to feel that his life is without purpose.

May the Christian always view the Bible as a giant map toward the destination of Heaven. With this great possession, doesn't it feel wonderful to know that such a thing can be shared? Isn't it a blessing to know that by one's example many can be led to Christ? Anything that can be done to further the cause of Christ ought to be done and ones life will be filled with joy.

Living morally is easier when you make your decisions based on God's will. The final requirement of this chapter is to read and meditate on this verse: "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God as workmen who needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). Are you living the proper

moral life now? It is your decision. You decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 3

“Biblical Principles for Decision Making”

I. From Where Do Sins Come?

With the dawning of each day the blessings God has given to man are innumerable. The Christian's life flows with joy because he understands the beauty of God's grace (John 3:16;2 Corinthians 8:9). He realizes the high calling of being God's child (1 John 3:1) and looks forward to that great day when God will say, *“Enter into the joys of thy Lord”* (Matthew 25:21). With every drawn breath endless possibilities for service to God are conceived, but with that will come great trials. At every turn one must be aware of the constant possibility of Satan's cunning ways. His sole desire is to pull God's people from the ranks of discipleship. What process does he use? How does he successfully navigate temptation toward so many different people? This old deceiver attacks his prey using the personal temptations that all men face. James 4:1-4 says that man's problems come when his own desires are allowed above and in opposition to God's will for their life. 1 John 2:14 reminds us that, *“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the father but of the world.”* Further, it is noted that by following the way of this world, one puts himself back into a position of being an enemy with God (James 4:4). The truth remains that when mankind partakes in wicked works, he is at enmity with God (Colossians 1:21). James clearly teaches that a Christian who denies the ways of God has once again fallen into the previous classification of being an enemy to God (James 4:4). These points show the possibility of falling from God's grace and the reality of Satan's work.

Satan is a master of his game. Peter says that the devil is as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). In trying to understand this imagery, picture a dense fog covering the ground and limiting your eyesight. Although you cannot see that enemy, you know he is near and ready to attack at any time. This reasoning causes the follower of God to ever be *“sober and vigilant...”* As a master of the game, Satan realizes the temptations of every individual he pursues. It is an obvious fact that not all people are tempted by the same desires as others. What causes you to lust and eventually sin may not cause your brother or sister to stumble whatsoever. For example, there are many who are tempted daily to purchase liquor, drink it and become drunk. However, this in particular, is not a temptation to everyone in the world.

Regardless of the temptation, always remember that although your battles are not the same as a brother's battle, you both have battles. In James 5:14 it is well taught that, *“...everyone is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.”*

One of the biggest questions to raise is, “How does one go about determining what is right or wrong in the eyes of God?” Admittedly, this is one of the most important questions to be asked of mankind. When a person is involved in an illicit activity on an ongoing basis, what causes that person to suddenly realize what he is doing is immoral and sinful? Surely it is a duty and obligation of mankind to be certain that whatever he does is pleasing in the sight of God.

The following list of principles was given to the author while in attendance at the International Bible College in Florence, Alabama. The class was entitled, “Christian Ethics”, and was taught by Brother Kippy Myers. The credit for the following

ideals goes to Brother William Woodson. It is the prayer of many men that the information following will prove helpful and be a constant reminder to Christians as they are faced with life's difficult decisions.

II. To Pursue Perfection: Our Goal.

The author of Hebrews wrote in 5:14, "*For when for the time you ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*" This example from the scriptures shows that as one matures in Christ and gains more experience in life, there is more ability to rightly decide what is acceptable in the sight of God. Therefore by thinking through an action before it's completion helps tremendously in making decisions worthy of the Christian calling.

As has already been noticed, there are some things not specifically addressed in the Bible. However, there are *general principles* in the scriptures that can apply to *specific situations*. Paul told the Thessalonians to "*prove all things*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). To prove a thing to be right or wrong requires that one use the capacity for mental reasoning that God has given to everyone. It is the Christian's job to sit down and literally ponder over a thing, weighing the good and bad effects of the action and then deciding if the activity is worth committing. Each day of life presents man with new decisions to be made and the path that man chooses will affect his eternal welfare. Always recall the words of Christ Jesus in Matthew 25:46 "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*" Those who are living according to

the will of God will be called to an eternal rest (Revelation 21:7), but those who have denied the wishes of the Father will suffer the full force of God's severity (Romans 11:22).

With the very sobering possibility and reality of Hell, it becomes a necessity to make proper decisions in everything that one does. To stand justified before God in the Day of Judgment requires that His child continue in the pursuit of perfection. To go into eternity unprepared is by far the most frightening thing that anyone could face. Thankfully, God has given mankind the way to escape being cast into eternity without him. Christ said of himself, "*I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me*" (John 14:6). Once anyone is in Christ (Galatians 3:27), there is a new standard to follow. No longer do the ways of the sinful world seem so beautiful, but steadfastness and faithfulness to God become the desired goal (Colossians 3:1-4). This perfection is obtained by following the ways of the Lord. He said, "*I have left you an example that you should do as I have done...*" (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21).

Only the fool leaps before looking. So the same is true of those who would blindly leap into any activity wherein their souls may be found in serious jeopardy. The author's prayer is that God's people, regardless of age, will begin asking some serious questions prior to "jumping in" to a situation which may prove to be spiritually devastating.

The following list of principles is complete with scriptural references to justify the biblical soundness of each point. Please take the time to look over each point, ponder the meaning and significance it has in your life. When some type of meditation has been accomplished, then make a further effort to memorize or at least become acquainted with each of the verses from God's word. May God bless all that desire to live according to His word.

Biblical Principles for Decision Making

- 1. Does this thing violate a plain Bible statement?**
Romans 13:9; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Galatians 5:19;
1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- 2. Is there a legitimate doubt of this thing's goodness?**
Romans 14:21-23; 1 Corinthians 8:13; James 4:17.
- 3. Will this thing possibly cause others to error?**
1 Corinthians 8:13; Matthew 18:5-7.
- 4. Will this thing destroy my Christian identity?**
Matthew 5:13-16. Could this thing be known by others and they not doubt my Christianity? Could this appear on a list of Christian qualities? Could you know this about someone and not think less of them?
- 5. Will this thing or action injure my body or mind?**
1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 7:1.
- 6. Would this be characteristic of Christ or the Apostles?**
1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1.
- 7. Would this thing be productive of anything good?**
Ecclesiastes 12:14.
- 8. Will this or could it possibly cause a bad habit?**
1 Corinthians 6:12; Romans 6:16.
- 9. Will it bring me under evil influence?**
1 Corinthians 15:33.
- 10. Will this thing bring about evil desires?**
James 1:13-15.
- 11. Could I pray about this and still do it in good conscience?**

Life is full of difficult choices. It is our decision to choose either good or bad. Today you must decide. What is your decision? **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 4

“Insufficient Standards Are Not Sufficient”

I. Have You Ever Given an Excuse?

Have you ever used a fake excuse? Maybe it was to a parent about why you came home so late or to a schoolteacher telling why you could not turn in your homework. Surely everyone has used an excuse in some shape, form or fashion. Understand that there is nothing wrong with excuses of themselves, but a problem does arise when one uses them, knowing that they are not true. Think back for a moment to some excuse you have used. Now then, was it a “real” excuse? Did you give it so people could know the truth about your own situation or was it only a “shallow excuse,” used to cover up your own mistakes? Too often people are guilty of stretching the truth to the point that their excuses are no longer true at all. Maybe some of the excuses you have were actually nothing more than lies.

Are all excuses lies? Are all excuses wrong? Really it depends on the circumstance. Sometimes unforeseen events will arise making a person unable to do what he had committed himself to. However, there are many times when, because of ones own personal irresponsibility, people cannot accomplish what they were bound to do. In many of these cases, rather than the person simply admitting being wrong, they offer an “excuse” to pass the blame on to someone or something else. Why? Why do people pervert the principles of truth and lie about their own inadequacies? Has the world so digressed that it is now more acceptable to spread a lie than to tell the truth? Do people so fear the consequences of their own actions?

This chapter is about excuses. People give them everyday and many times, deep in their hearts, they know their excuse is misleading, wrong, and even a boldfaced lie. Yet people continuously use them time after time. Why? Perhaps it is the fear of being wrong or the embarrassment that may ensue. It could be the fact that lifestyles would be forced to face radical change if the truth was known. So then, all along the road of life people continually offer their excuses as legitimate reasons for not doing what they know to be right. People allow those common excuses to become their own personal and accepted standard for life. Although incorrect, these so-called standards are granted total devotion.

Life in this century is a time of conflict that has arisen to a great extent from the idea that absolute truth is unattainable. There are many people today who suppose and would argue that there is nothing absolutely true; that is, there is nothing which two people can agree perfectly upon as an objective standard for life. The problems with this philosophy are obvious. When people no longer hold that anything is true, then opinion is the rule that shapes lives. Since in their minds, nothing is absolutely true, then the Bible cannot be viewed as the infallible word of God. So then, having no objective moral standard to base their activities upon, the result is an ethical graveyard where people are aimlessly floating in some abyss, searching for the answers to life's problems. Brother F. Lagard Smith says,

“For our generation, tolerance has become the highest virtue...If there is nothing that is either inherently good or inherently bad, then we must accept everything as equally valid. If nothing is “right” and nothing is “wrong” then tolerance is our only option.”

Indeed, in the world today people have become free to believe anything they choose and for this cause there is a domi-

nant attitude that seems to ask, "Who are you to tell me anything?" The Christian battles bitterly against this "doctrine of man" so obviously planted by Satan. When people truly believe themselves to be right and that nobody has the right to try and change their mind, then Satan has secured another battle. Yes, this time in history is a day when, if you listen closely, you can hear society haughtily claim, "You cannot tell me I am wrong because everyone is right." With such an attitude the church is in the throes of a very real and present spiritual danger.

II. Insufficient Standards Biblically Addressed.

1. "I Thought, I Think, I Feel..."

Everyone in the world has opinions and there is nothing wrong with having them. But, if a person truly desires to learn the truth, his opinions will be shaped and formed according to God's word. Sadly, the world today has indoctrinated mankind to think that his opinion is right even when the facts would prove otherwise. One must examine his own opinions to see if they are in accordance with the Bible.

The way one is brought up in society has great impact on what his belief system and opinions will be. For example, suppose there are two young men aged 25. Each of them is six feet tall and has brown hair with blue eyes. They both weigh one hundred and seventy-five pounds and are college graduates from some state university. On the physical surface, many things about them are obviously very similar, but their opinions about what is important in life may be in stark contrast. Notice each situation:

Boy A was raised in a very poor household with 4 other brothers and sisters. His father worked two jobs to keep food on the table while his mother stayed home and raised the children. This family was spiritually strong and always had deep respect

for God. Even while they had very little in terms of physical possessions their own family bond was very strong and comforting.

Boy B was born to a prominent family, lived in a wealthy community and was an only child. His parents were highly involved in the political community and were rarely home for long periods of time. Several people were hired to care for the boy's physical concerns, but attention was rarely given to meet his emotional needs. The entire family spent little time together and even being together for special holidays was rare. The boy grew never having known the joys of real family togetherness.

Now both men are college graduates and preparing to meet life with great ambition and desire. As children, their lives were molded and opinions were shaped. Indeed they are very similar to one another from a physical perspective, both will have differing points of interest. It may be the case that Boy A has a deep appreciation for the family-bond and will be closely drawn to a young lady who shares his spiritual conviction. On the opposite extreme, Boy B may be only interested in business, money and power. He may never marry or desire to have children of his own. If someone approached these young men and asked them how important family togetherness is to society, their opinions may greatly differ.

Everyone has opinions. But that is not to say that all opinions are right. Furthermore, in terms of the Christian life, opinions are dangerous when they are elevated to the point of law or equated with God's word. In Matthew 15:9 Christ said, "*In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.*" There were some of the Jews who had elevated their own teachings to being equal to God's word. When people declare their opinions today, many times they follow the opinion although it may be inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. This has always been dangerous.

Today, Christians must understand how foolish it is to use opinions, thoughts, and even personal feelings as standards by which they can judge an action to be right or wrong. Please notice that opinions and feelings can be good judges, but only when they have been properly formed and informed. Remember that the Apostle Paul had been guilty of following his own opinions prior to becoming a Christian. When he devastated families, persecuted Christians and harmed the church, he thought with every ounce of his being that his actions were pleasing to God. He said in Acts 23:1, "*I have lived in good conscience until this day.*" It was after Paul's conversion that he recognized his own wrongdoing. His opinions and thinking were changed radically. Now his opinions were informed with the truth and his thoughts were formed around God's will. This lesson teaches firmly the importance of "*speaking as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). Opinions should always be based on the Bible, so that what is said is not merely a personal opinion, but from the pages of God's word, the only infallible, objective moral standard.

There is a man in the Bible named Naaman who said the words, "I thought." He was a very influential commander of the Syrian Army. Naaman had wealth, was respected, and yet had a serious problem in his life. Naaman had leprosy. Providentially for Naaman, a certain young Hebrew girl told him about a prophet named Elisha who could certainly cure his disease. Upon arrival at Elisha's house, Naaman was simply told to dip in the Jordan River seven times to be healed. This command was unacceptable to the proud man Naaman. He had been expecting some speedy, miraculous cure or at least a personal healing from Elisha. Naaman said in a fitful rage, "*Indeed I thought to myself, He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and heal the leprosy*" (2 Kings 5:11). What Naaman thought was of little relevance in comparison to what God had in mind.

This story teaches the lesson that decisions must be based on the word of God and not what people think is better. What others think may not always be right even though people usually suppose themselves to have all the answers. Of course nobody can know everything all of the time. Until man reaches the level of omniscience, he cannot base his life on his mere opinion. God alone possesses the quality of “total knowledge” and so one must make his decisions based on what God’s desire for life is. Evidently, so long as Naaman followed his own path, the leprosy remained. Thankfully the story does not end there. After many people continually asked him to listen to the prophet, he eventually humbled himself before God’s will. Look at the account in 2 Kings 5:14: *“So he (Naaman) went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh was restored as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”*

The teaching is obvious. Personal opinions are not nor ever have been total standards for making life’s difficult decisions. Simply saying, “I think, I thought, or I feel” means very little unless it can be based upon or substantiated within the pages of God’s word. When making serious choices in life, remember that emotional feelings are not always right. Rather see to it that you think and feel something first because it is based on God’s teaching for you.

2. “Everybody Else Is Doing It.”

How many times have you heard these words from someone? Picture the scene where a father and mother are in the kitchen preparing dinner or washing dishes and a teenage boy or girl passes through the room. His or her hair is cut and styled in a bizarre fashion and is obviously an eyesore to the parents. The mother and father are nearly speechless and surprised at the new “hair statement” and say to their teen, “Why did you get your hair

cut that way?" The common reply is, "Well, Mom, everyone else is doing it." With that rebuttal the parents show their agility with a quick counterattack. They say, "Well, if your friends were all jumping off of a cliff would you do that also?" What follows is a mutual struggle to win the argument without ever grasping a real understanding of the other person's position.

One of the basic human necessities is to have fellowship with friends and feel a bond of love and attachment to ones peers. You may wonder why many people will go into a bar or nightclub, sit in a cloud of second hand smoke, and linger there for hours in search of another drink. In some way these people are showing the need for emotional attachment. They go to these places to find the love and fellowship they desire. It is our job as Christians to show that they can feel the sense of belonging in the family of God, away from the sins of this world.

There is nothing wrong with doing some things that "everyone else is doing." But the basic problem arises when you try to fit in no matter what is going on! Christians are to be people of conviction, who are able to stand up in opposition to sin and declare the truth of God's word boldly. Christians follow after righteousness and are soldiers for Christ against incredible odds.

Paul stated in Ephesians 5:11, "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them.*" If you hold high the banner that declares, "I can do it because everyone else is," you deny your solemn Christian duty of "reproving the works of darkness." It is utterly impossible to reprove the sinful works of mankind if you are involved in doing them. Any activity that goes against the grain of Christianity must not only be denied but also stood up against. No Christian can rightfully declare something as sin if he is involved in that sin himself. You know that when your friends go to a party and get drunk, are involved with drug experimentation or premarital sexual activity,

they are in danger of condemnation if they remain in their sin. How would it appear to other people if you, a Christian example, go to the same parties, get drunk just as often or experiment with drugs and engage in sexually immoral practices? Such action would render your Christian example marred but also deem you a hypocrite.

The excuse that, “Everyone else is doing it”, has been used for millennia. In the book of 1 Samuel 8:19,20 Israel rises up to demand something of Samuel. They say, “*No, but we will have a king over us that we may be like all the nations.*” In reality, this request caused their initial trust to be turned from God to an earthly king. Why did they ask for a king? Simply put, the Israelites admitted that they wanted to be like everybody else.

God does not view this excuse as an acceptable justification for sinning. When you make this claim, just remember that Israel did the same thing. It seems as though God foresaw the Israelites using this excuse and gave an answer to it hundreds of years before in Exodus 23:2. God said, “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*” Notice that God initiated a rule for His people and that rule is effective for as long as time continues. No matter how many people may be following after the sins of this world, God’s people must never “follow others into wrongdoing.” It does not matter how great or influential the multitude may be, sin is to be shunned from the lives of those who fear God. A prime example of this principle is seen in the life of Noah. There was Noah, preaching and building an ark for the saving of man’s race. Nobody heeded his words and all perished. Was it wise of Noah to continue preaching although he was plagued by mockery? Yes, indeed it was. Noah did not follow the entire world into sin and was saved from the great flood.

Today the excuses that “sin is not so bad” and that “we can follow sin so long as majorities of people are doing it” are falla-

cious. When the multitude in Mark 15:11-13 cried out, "*Crucify him, crucify him,*" the action to kill Christ did not somehow become moral because a major group of people thought it was fine. There is never a reason for mankind to take part in willful sin (James 4:17). Simply because there are many individuals involved in something wrong never has and never will make it right.

3. "Nobody Saw Me Do It."

Have you ever done something you knew was wrong? Yet you meticulously planned it out perfectly and got away with it? You may think that since nobody saw you do it and because your own Christian example was not hurt in any way, then perhaps it was all right. After all, nobody saw you, right? There are some Christians who feel if they can "sneak a sin" into their lives, then it is okay because it has gone by unnoticed. This ignores the reasoning behind maintaining a pure Christian example, no matter the audience.

There are some young people who have such a great relationship with their parents that when peer pressure arises tempting them to sin, they say, "I cannot do that because if my mother or dad ever found out it would hurt them." Certainly to honor and respect our parents is important and to be commended. Furthermore, think about how it must hurt God when His children willfully sin, even when it may be in private. Although your reputation is not tarnished and even though our parents do know know about your sin, you cannot justify sin simply because nobody saw you commit it. Christians are those who have "*put off the old man with his deeds*" (Colossians 3:9). They have made certain that the man of sin, that is the old man, is left in the grave. Paul told the Colossians in 3:1-4, "*If you then be risen with Christ seek the things which are above where Christ is setting at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above*

and not on things on the earth. Because you are dead and your life is hidden with God in Christ. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him in glory."

This excuse is also insufficient because God never says there is a difference between private sins and public sins. Sin is sin to God. In James 4:17 it is understood that, "*...lust when conceived bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.*" Sin is wrong whether it is in private or in public and both must be forgiven for salvation to be made possible. Paul further wrote in Romans 6:6, "*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.*"

Understand that regardless of who may see you do wrong, and although it may be the common consensus that you are "a great young person," God knows all you do. Proverbs 15:3 is quick to remind that, "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.*" Paul said on the Day of Judgment God will, "*bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart*" (1 Corinthians 4:5). These verses should help you to bear in mind that God sees everything you do. When you suppose that you have outsmarted everyone and completely gotten away with sin, remember to deal with the fact that God did see.

4. "It Is For a Good Cause."

Think of the absurdity in saying, "I am doing something wrong for a good reason." There are so many people today who feel there are times when a sinful action is justifiable in the eyes of God, because they feel it is for a good cause. American society has fallen prey to a philosophy called, "Situational Ethics." Simply defined, ethics deals with moral rightness or wrongness, and a situation deals with the state one finds himself in. So, the

proponents of situational ethics say that whether or not a thing is proper deals with the situation in which one finds himself. For example, some would say that getting drunk or committing adultery is sinful but is *not always* sinful. It could be wrong in one case but this would be utterly dependent on the situation the person is in.

What about lying? It is clearly established in the Law of Moses that *"Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor"* (Exodus 20:16). Furthermore notice that *"all liars will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Revelation 21:8). Seeing that lies are condemned in the Bible, some would admit that lies are wrong, while at the same time suggest this does not apply to all lies. For example, what if your friend did something very wrong and it was possible that he was going to be severely punished. Would it be permitted for you to lie for him or her with the hopes of getting them out of trouble? Is it acceptable for you to lie in this situation since you sincerely care about your friend? "It would certainly save them many troubles later," you think to yourself. Those who teach "situational ethics" would declare that this lie might not be wrong, since it is for a good cause. From a biblical standpoint, however, one would have to conclude that all lying is wrong and to lie is to sin.

In a well-known movie called "Liar, Liar" starring Jim Carrey, the story is told of a lawyer who lied about everything. He lied at work, to his associates and even to his family. He was what one might call a compulsive liar. The movie takes a comical turn when, as the story goes, his eight-year old son wishes that his dad could not lie for one day. The wish comes true, which leads to some extremely funny scenes. When the lawyer finds out that his son is the cause of the problems in his life, he makes a very memorable statement that teems with the glow of situational ethics. He said, "Everyone has to lie." If you look at the

context of what he was saying, you'll see he meant that when and if someone lies for a *good* cause, then it is really okay. Such movies teach our young children lessons that must be avoided and counteracted. To teach that it is acceptable to lie in certain circumstances is to deny God's teaching on the subject.

What does God really think about the excuse, "It is for a good cause?" Is He fooled for one minute by this foolish and vain philosophy of man? Is it possible that when God said in Exodus 20:16, "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,*" that He did not intend for that command to apply to every walk of life? Could it be that God has changed His mind about what a lie is? Is it remotely likely that God really did not mean to strike Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying to the Holy Spirit? Was He just being too difficult one day or did He mean what He said? Surely to God, a lie is a lie and sin is always sin.

In the Old Testament there is an excellent example of a man who did something for a good cause, yet was punished because it was in direct disobedience to God's command. The Ark of the Covenant was being returned to the Israelite nation when it began to fall from the cart it was on. In the words of Samuel 6:6,7 one reads, "*And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*" What a powerful story to teach the strict importance of obeying God.

Picture the scene if you will. The ark of God's covenant has been delivered back into the possession of the Israelites. As the ark is being carried, the cart, which oxen are carrying, stumbles and causes the ark to slide off the cart. In a moment of reflexive action Uzzah puts out his hand to catch the ark. This could be perceived as a noble gesture, right? From human perspective,

one might desire to give Uzzah a medal for his good intentions. Uzzah thought, “It is for a good cause.” Indeed it was for a good cause but God accepted his move as an act of rebellion.

God’s word is serious and to be heeded. When looking at the context of this story, more details are seen that offer reasons for God’s action. The people of God had already been told not to touch the Ark of the Covenant at all, for any reason and under any circumstance. They had also been given specific instructions on how to carry the ark, and an oxen driven cart was not the authorized way. There were already two strikes against Uzzah, and his notion to “*keep the ark from touching the ground*” was directly in opposition to God’s will. The lesson is, regardless of the reasoning behind any action man might think is good, when God’s word teaches one thing, the individual must not go beyond His will. All deeds must be within the allowances of God’s word and Christians must ever strive to allow others to see Christ living in them (Galatians 4:19).

III. Conclusion.

The points in this chapter are common expressions that are heard everyday. Whether you are at school, on the job and even around the house, you can hear someone, somewhere saying something like, “Everybody else is doing it”, or “It is for a good cause.” Sometimes these things may be spoken in jest, but all too often people use these as real excuses. When a person uses these as reasons to justify outright sins, there is a major problem. Next time you are put in a position where you are forced to make a serious decision, remember that there is never a reason to sin. Paul writes in I Corinthians 10:13, “*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.*” Even when things look bad and it seems

that all the doors of escape are closed just look for an open window. It is guaranteed to be there.

God's way is important and you are either living for God or self. Christ said in Matthew 6:24, "*No man can serve two masters, either he will love the one and hate the other...you cannot serve God and mammon.*" So who is it that you follow?

An individual's own ideas are not standards for establishing what is ultimately right or wrong. Paul declares in Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" Since all people have sinned then everyone is in need of the blood of Christ. Even if there were a man somewhere who had only committed one sin, then he still could not be a standard because he too is a sinner. The only standard that man can base himself upon is the Bible. The question is are you following it now? You have a decision to make. What will you decide? It is up to you.

Where Is Your Focus?

Chapter 5

“How You Dress Reflects Who You Are!”

I. Clothing in the Bible.

Clothing is mentioned in the Bible more times than may be realized. Jacob gave his son Joseph a coat of many colors that brought about great envy and hatred from the other sons (Genesis 37:3). Under the Law of Moses, priests were required to wear specific articles of clothing while in service to God. Moses was commanded to “...*make holy garments for Aaron your brother for the glory and for beauty*” (Exodus 28:2). In Esther 8:15 the Bible says that, “*Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white...*” Finally, the entire Bible has words of importance when dealing with the things people wear. The biblical principles pertaining to the way people dress are timeless and apply as well today as they did during antiquity.

In the Bible clothing was a mark of one’s riches and wealth. When a person was poor, they may have had only one change of clothes. If one were wealthy they would have had many articles of clothing. Recall that Samson gave a riddle to those at the feast in Judges 14:14. The wager was given that if someone could answer the puzzle correctly in seven days that they would receive 30 changes of garments. If they could not satisfactorily answer, he would receive the clothing. Either way the bet turned out, someone was going to receive new clothing, thereby they would have their possessions multiplied.

When Naaman was suffering from leprosy in 2 Kings 5:1-14, he sent ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten

changes of clothing to the King of Israel in hopes of finding a cure for his disease. Naaman used these material items to exhibit his wealth and power. Obviously then a person's clothing was a mark of prestige in biblical times.

In James 2:2, Christians are warned against personal favoritism towards those who come into the assembly. One was not to treat a person who had little or no earthly substance as an outcast. Likewise a person should not be nice to a rich person at the expense of hurting someone else's feelings, simply because they are rich. How could people of the first century know whether a person was poor or wealthy? James says the determining factor was the clothing they wore. *"For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings and fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, You sit here in a good place, and you say to the poor man, You stand there or sit here at my footstool"* (James 2:2,3).

II. Be Careful What You Wear.

In present society, when anyone is discussing apparel it seems there is an automatic tendency to emphasize the styles that are "In-Vogue." Everyone has heard of the ever-popular phrase, "The clothes make the man." Very possibly where you live if someone is not wearing the latest designer jeans or the coolest jacket, then they are not living up to the level of the "status quo." There is a great deal of emphasis put on styles in the world today.

It is possible that many present day styles are morally acceptable in principle and can be worn publicly without compromising any Christian beliefs. There are, however, some serious words of exhortation and warning in the Bible pertaining to the attire of the Christian. The Bible plainly teaches that God's people are to dress modestly. Modesty has been defined as, "propriety in

speech, conduct and dress.” The specific application of modesty in the book of 1 Timothy applies to women. The understood principle however is universal in its application to both men and women. In 1 Timothy 2:9, *“In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation...”* Since man has been taught the necessity of modesty by God’s word, one can safely assume three things:

- 1. God wants man to dress according to some definition of modesty.**
- 2. There were some in New Testament times who were dressing immodestly.**
- 3. Modesty is possible. If it were not then God would be commanding the impossible of his creation.**

Modesty is possible and it is this author’s prayer that God’s people are ever desirous of doing His will. For this reason, the subject of modest apparel will be approached from a biblical standpoint. The Bible would have God’s people to examine themselves and ask why they do what they do. Why do you act certain ways? The pertinent question to this chapter is “When I dress, who am I trying to impress?” By the end of this discussion, hopefully everyone who reads and contemplates these things will have a better idea of how to conduct themselves as God’s people.

Now take a walk through time and witness the ever-changing styles of mankind’s clothing. In Genesis 3, after the fall of mankind by the sin of Adam and Eve, God gave them animal skins to wear. As time progresses you see that men would bind themselves with a coarse material called sackcloth as a sign of mourning and sorrow (1 Kings 20:32). Recall in the days prior to Jesus earthly ministry that John the Baptizer wore a coat of camel hair (Matthew 3:4). The Lord Jesus wore a long robe-like

garment that covered his entire body (John 19:23). In the days of Christ and the Apostles a pair of sandals were added to complete their outfits of traditional Jewish class (Matthew 3:11; 10:10). How many people would consider these styles from yesteryear to have any place among the styles of today? Surely, not many would readily rush to the shopping mall for a harsh pair of sackcloth pants or a camel hair shirt.

Time continued to pass bringing vast changes in style. In the days of Mozart and Beethoven, wealthy men wore tights and short britches matched by wigs and overcoats. By the late eighteenth hundreds there were beautiful dresses worn by "Southern Belles." Full dresses overlaid several petticoats and pantalets. In that day it would have been unladylike to show one's ankles, and to be considered beautiful or fair, skin had to remain free from blemishes and sunspots. This is certainly different from what surrounds us today, is it not?

Look now at the clothing that surrounds us in the late 1990's. Styles are everywhere you look. Every few months the latest styles come flooding in from various fashion capitals such as Milan, France and London. The clothing brought to us is sometimes flashy or even gaudy and likely you would never desire to wear some of those things. On occasion designers' catapult America back into some bygone era that would probably have been best left alone. Yet, there are those times when you may find that "just right" shirt or jacket that surpasses your expectations and is a pleasure to wear in public.

There are, however, some styles that should seriously disturb us. There are some things that the Christian should not wear when in the public's eye. In reality the world has changed dramatically over the centuries and although times always will change, God's word is unchanging and means blessings for those who will follow it today. What must one do to take advantage of

these matchless opportunities? Very simply, everyone reading this chapter must follow the words in the book called "the Bible." If ones style is in conflict with biblical teaching, he must deny himself and conform to the teachings of God.

III. Be Careful Who You Attract.

In Genesis 2:13 you are told that God looked upon creation and said, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" So God in His divine wisdom, power and understanding gave Adam a suitable helper named Eve. This divine union honorably established the first marriage. In various places throughout scripture one learns that marriages should follow the biblical plan or pattern. Two people, male and female become the husband and wife, loving one another and following after God who joined them together. What a beautiful world it would be if people followed this divine guideline for marriage.

There seems to be the present attitude in society that many men and women are not pleased or satisfied with doing things God's way. Some men or women feel they must attract a mate by way of fleshly appeal. You may personally know someone who feels that attraction is only possible by using their bodies, thereby they dress accordingly. This is both ungodly and extremely sad. The bodies God has given are beautiful and indeed to be enjoyed, but not by everyone who may happen by. There is a great call for purity among God's children. There is never wrong in searching for and even attracting a spouse, but one is foolish to do so solely based on physical attractiveness. Rather it is by the beauty that lies on the inside that should draw others together. Looking in 1 Peter 3:1-6 you can read of women who were apparently fearing the loss of their husbands. As their supposed strategy, they would try to make themselves appear more physically attractive by putting on gold and silver and wearing fine clothing. Peter's admonition is that they should not try to gain

anyone in this way because it is not of ultimate importance. This action would cause them to be noticed, but it would be based on physical attraction alone and not true love.

Although the previously mentioned passage is dealing with a married couple, the principle can certainly be applied to those who have yet to be married. It is your author's prayer that you never attempt to gain anyone based solely on your appearance. If any person truly cares about you, they will see the love you have for God and how devoted you are to His will. That is where the true beauty lies. In the heart is where the soul glows brightly, in love for God. Remember that one day the physical side will grow old but the love you have for God will ever shine until the day you are called home. If one gives his entire time to looking his best outwardly and forgets to care for the spiritual side, then the most important element of any relationship is lacking: God First.

A fashion show was recently aired on television in which the bodies of the models were scantily covered with mainly see-through fabrics! There is no denying that many fashion designers realize the power of the human body and are not ashamed to flaunt their youthful models. Many dress designers are very honest about the reasons behind their creations. Mary Quaint, the designer of the "mini-skirt" once said, "Mini clothes are symbolic of those girls who do not want to wait until dark to seduce a man into bed."⁸

Did you hear that? Young ladies when and if you are wearing the mini skirt, she is talking about you. If you choose to wear such things you are being called, by the very creator of the mini-skirt, one who wishes to seduce men into bed before dark. Never let it be said that a dedicated daughter of God would be desirous of such sinful activities. Why would Mary Quaint say such a thing about clothing and even more about girls? Because it is true and she, as well as other designers, realizes that the mini-

skirt works.

When women choose to dress in ways to attract, you can rest assured that they will attract. What a far cry from Genesis 2:13. It seems that this advanced world has forgotten that many things given by God were to remain sacred. You are special and sacred in the eyes of God. If you choose to appeal to others by means of skimpy clothing, you will not attract anyone who is worth keeping. If you seek to attract anyone by the physical side alone, you will attract someone who is interested in the flesh alone. Relationships of tomorrow must be wholesome and your future spouse needs to be a person who seeks to please God above all else.

Young ladies, certainly you want a man who will love and care for you as God intends. One who will honor and appreciate your contribution to the marital relationship. You need a man who will truly care and be by your side through the good and trying times. You desire a good husband who will always treat you right and respect you as his wife. Likewise, young men, it is obvious that you will want a wife who will deeply yearn to help you through hard times; one whose love will be unconditional and will be there through life's difficult decisions. She is a woman whom you hope will honor you and your contribution to the marriage and who will respect you as a husband.

This has been a description of the ideal situation. However, it is not outside the grasp of anyone so long as both parties desire to put one hundred percent trust in God's guidelines for marriage. This is impossible to find when you are busy chasing after those who are only interested in fulfilling their selfish physical desires. Be careful how you dress and make certain that the one you attract is of "like precious faith." Search for the kind of person God would desire you to have as a mate.

Hopefully it will never be said that a child of God has little

or no self-respect for his or herself. God would never have you disrespect yourself because He has a plan for you, a special and eternal plan. Personal appearance is very important, especially when you are in the public's eye. There is nothing wrong with looking your best and never forget that God's plans are always taking shape in the lives of His people. In the remainder of this chapter, notice several biblical points that will help you better understand how to dress appropriately. Please take these things seriously and truthfully consider what you wear and strive not to dress in questionable clothing in the future.

IV. How You Dress and the Bible.

1. The Body Is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

All of mankind has been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). For this cause the vessel or body you have been given is one location wherein the Spirit of God resides. In 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 Paul writes, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" Have you ever stopped and carefully considered what a tremendous teaching is given in this passage? You, all Christians, are filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter said in Acts 2:38 that at the point of baptism one had the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Because of this truth Paul tells that when one of God's children commits sexual immorality, he is guilty of sin against his own body, and therefore God. Paul again reminds in verse 20 that all of God's people have been purchased with a price. The blood of Christ compels His disciples not to sin at any time, but rather glorify God in their bodies, since their bodies belong to God anyway! Would you dare to dress God's body in skimpy, provocative clothing? But that is precisely what you do when you dress in a way unbecoming of

the Christian. It is impossible to rightly deny the extreme absurdity in bringing immoral attention to your body by dressing inappropriately.

Further, Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:20, *“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”* An ambassador by title is a lofty position where one speaks for another person and conveys their wishes. Paul affirms that you are the ambassadors to the lost of the world. You must be convinced that God alone can save man from sin by way of Jesus and because of that, you will devote yourself to preaching and teaching this Gospel to a world of sinners. A true ambassador of Christ would dress only in ways that show others a powerful example of Christian purity. The way you dress as a child of God speaks great things to those who associate you with Christianity. It is a serious duty to be an *“epistle known and read of all men”* (2 Corinthians 3:2). One must take this obligation seriously. Can you live up to the lofty expectation of the title of “Christian” by denying basic morality? Can one very well glorify God by doing anything that He may disapprove of? Can one be a great ambassador of Christ when he or she denies the Lord in his or her own life? The answer to all these questions is, “No”. By the way you are dressing now, you should be making a statement that, as a responsible Christian, you will not willfully allow your body to become an instrument of intentional sin of any kind. Is this the case?

2. Lust Is a Very Real and Present Problem.

In the Old Testament God’s people were told they could not commit adultery (Deuteronomy 5:18). When Jesus presented the Sermon on the Mount, He expounded on this law. In Matthew 5:28 He said, *“But I say unto you that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already*

in his heart.” Notice that Christ went beyond the literal action of adultery and prohibited lusting over members of the opposite sex. Therefore lust is now to be considered a sin. For this reason, you must never willfully lust or arouse lustful passions in someone else. Lust is a very real problem and can easily be remedied to a great extent when people recognize the power of their bodies and dress appropriately; that is, according to the proper standard of godliness (1 Timothy 2:10; 4:7).

3. Mankind Is to Have a Pure Mind about Sexuality.

Regardless of what everyone else in the world believes about morals and sexuality, your life must be different and stay true to God’s word. God is the creator of man and sexuality, hence He has the authority to give guidelines for when and how sex is to be enjoyed. When one desires to create or stir unlawful sexual feelings in the mind of another person, he or she has become guilty of a sin called lasciviousness. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul says that anyone involved in the sins of the flesh will not be allowed entrance into Heaven. Do you understand what Paul is trying to communicate? Your eternal soul is at stake! It is not convenient or biblical to approach life with an attitude that says, “What I do really does not matter.”

There have been some who mistakenly profess that they were at liberty to wear anything they chose regardless of how little that is. The Christian indeed is at liberty in Christ, as Paul says in Galatians 5:1. However, liberty in Christ has never been a license to do what is not authorized in the Bible. Some mistakenly believe that wearing anything is fine for them and God will overlook their sin. What they are really saying is, “If someone lusts over me it is the other person’s problem.” Would you say this is an irresponsible and non-biblical idea? The bottom line is that whatever you wear must be moral and decent for the sake of

your Christian example in the community. How can anyone be a good steward and ambassador while wearing clothing that professes ungodliness? It is impossible. Further, Paul instructs that people ought to wear their clothing with the other person in mind. In 1 Timothy 2:9, Paul said that women are to dress with “propriety and with shamefacedness.” The word for shamefacedness, when applied to clothing, means that however one dresses, he or she does so with consideration of how their apparel could bring about unlawful desires. Young ladies, never underestimate the power of the human form. When you walk into a room full of teenage boys wearing a mini-skirt that comes to the middle of your thigh, do not wonder why everyone cannot take their eyes off of you. From now on ask yourself an easy question prior to dressing for some social occasion, “Will this purposely or could this possibly cause anyone to think some impure thought about me?” Such is your obligation to God, yourself and those around you. Dress with the other person in mind.

4. Some People Will Lust Regardless of What You Wear.

In a world of sinful mankind, there are numerous lusts that one must accept as reality. Although your friends may not share your particular desires, it is the case that everyone *has* desires (James 1:14). Peter writes about those who have “*eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin*” (1 Peter 2:14) However, this does not give license or offer justification for anyone to knowingly wear skimpy clothing. As has already been mentioned, some offer the incipient excuse, “Well since people are going to lust no matter what I wear, then I can wear whatever I want to and it is their problem.” How shallow can a person be? To seek to justify an immoral action in one’s own mind simply because they want to fit in with the crowd is terribly sad. Man has never been authorized to rationalize a sinful action as “Okay

for me to take part in.” A thing either is or is not sinful in God’s eyes. When you tell yourself otherwise, you are deceiving yourself to believe a lie. The son or daughter of God will never dress in any way as to entice lust in the mind of another person. Everyone should show their love and appreciation to God for His matchless blessings. One way is by dressing appropriately and modestly while living on this earth.

V. Clothing and You

1. Clothing Typically Expresses a Feeling of Who or What Is Important to a Person.

Be it understood that such a statement is made with generalities in mind. There are exceptions to this rule, but usually clothing shows ones attitude. For instance, assume you were stranded in the back alley of some metropolitan city. Walking towards you are three men each wearing leather jackets with the insignia that says, “Devil’s Child.” More than likely you would think of these men as nothing but trouble. You may begin to frantically search for help. In the same respect, a reporter for the Nashville Banner was remarking about a certain section of Nashville, Tennessee and stated, “You can get anything you want there — drugs, booze and broads.” Of the prostitutes he said, “They are easily recognizable; heavy make-up, skin-tight pants and revealing mini-skirts.”⁹ By the clothing these ladies wear, you can conclude they are involved in ungodly activities. It is the clothing you notice that gives that indication. Another example would be if you were in a hospital for some illness. You see a man wearing a white overcoat, holding a clipboard with patients’ names on it. Safely you can assume that the person is a doctor.

So then clothing tells quite a bit about who or what is important in your life. It shows occupation, it shows interests or hobbies that a person may have, and it can show priorities of life. To

the Christian, there is nothing more glorious and pleasing than to praise God and live a life of consecrated devotion to Him. Christians do not exist in a vacuum. People do see your actions and view the things you wear — this gives them an unconscious depiction of what is the Christian's main objective in life. The world obviously will make its judgments based on what qualities or characteristics you exemplify. Let it be said that Christians do everything in their power to tell the world, "We love God." To state this motto with clearly understood efficacy, one needs to dress appropriately as Christians who profess godliness.

2. The Clothing You Wear Can Stimulate Actions Depending or Not Depending on the Intent.

Each day there is a unique opportunity to either glorify God or denounce devotion to Him by pleasing the cause of Satan. Anytime a person who declares allegiance to God dresses in a way unbecoming of the Christian, he is not coming up to the high level of expectation that God has laid down for him. By "missing the mark" the child of God has fallen into sin. The question then must be raised, "Does man ever have a reason to knowingly rebel against the teaching of God?" Many have done just that. Some will lose the respect of God only to gain the acceptance and respect of mankind. Will this be the result of your life?

When a young lady decidedly succumbs to wearing a tight, form-fitting dress, the reasons for doing this may be numerous. Perhaps it is to appear as part of the "in-crowd" or it is being done as a rebellious act against parents, or further still it may simply be to gain the attention of the male audience. Rest assured that if the sole intention of this young woman is to gain notice of young men, her idea would work perfectly. However, understand that rather than being noticed because of your personal character, mental intellect and spiritual maturity, you will be noticed on the sole basis of physical attraction alone. The power of the body to

attract is very real. Your clothing can easily provoke someone to notice you based on your external features. God does not wish for you to have a spouse based on these physical aspects alone because these things will pass with time. But when you are involved in works that are pleasing to God, you will be appealing to one of *“like precious faith”* (2 Peter 1:1). This will help ensure that you secure a spouse who is concerned with the spiritual things as his/her first priority in life. This kind of godly young man or woman is worthy of God’s marital plan.

For this cause your clothing must not be worn in an attempt to “latch on” to a man or woman. How sad it is that people think they must arouse sinful thoughts in the minds of others to be appreciated and loved. If only people would dress in accordance with the only thing they must have in this world: devotion to God. Apparel has the power to glorify God, or the other possible extreme is to stimulate illicit feelings. What will your choice be?

3. The Clothing You Wear Either Honors or Dishonors God.

People have many choices to make every day. Seeing that clothing is given special attention in the Bible, then one must be very careful when making choices pertaining to what he or she will wear. Solomon writes in Proverbs 7:10 that the woman who is a harlot is clearly seen from a distance. Notice the words used to describe who she is: *“And behold there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.”* Once again, how do you know the person is a prostitute? The one who clearly proves it by her attire. Solomon is trying to show that the woman who does not dress modestly is not pleasing to God at all.

Paul remarked how that women should use their clothing as marks of purity. Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:9,10, *“...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel,*

with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." Obviously then, Paul thought the articles of clothing that one wears have something to say about the life people lead.

Are you going to dress in a way that tells the world, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that you are a Christian? Or have you become ashamed of your Lord and try to cover or disguise your body to reflect this world? Are you trying with every ounce of power to show that Heaven means more to you than anything else? The choice is yours to make and you are making it now.

VI. Questions to Ask and Answer.

From now on before dressing for any public occasion, whether school, work, worship or just a night on the town, there are two simple questions that the Christian ought to ask. You must base your decision on the principles of the word of God. Once this has been done, it will be an assured reality that what you wear will not be opposed to God's teachings. The two questions are as follows:

1. Is this clothing becoming of a follower of Jesus Christ?

Could this article of clothing be worn in the presence of Jesus without any question as to whether it is appropriate? Do you really think a person wearing a skimpy bikini is striving to maintain moral purity? The answer is not at all. Further, some things that you decide to wear may not give the right impression as one who follows Christ Jesus. So then, will your clothing mark a disciple of Jesus?

2. Will this intentionally cause someone to lust?

When you put this particular piece of clothing on, are you

doing so with the sole conscious intention of attracting a person by physical appearance? Is the Lord shaping your attitude or are you seeking to follow the crowd for the sake of earthly popularity? Look deep inside yourself and make certain that your heart and actions are being guided by God's word.

Satan desires you to fall into his pattern of thought. He wants everyone to be led by their own personal craving for the appetites of the flesh. By so doing people can gain "*the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Hebrews 11:25), but lose the eternal reward for faithfulness to God's commands.

VII. Conclusion.

From an objective viewpoint, the exchange Satan is willing to barter for is not comparable in the least to the eternal joys God promises. Peter reminds that Heaven is a place, "*...incorruptible and undefiled which does not fade away reserved in Heaven for you.*" Read from Revelation 22:1-5 and see how John symbolizes the beauty of Heaven. As you read and contemplate the beauties untold, remind yourself how badly you want to go there.

Clothing really does reflect who and what is important to you. You need to put God first in everything you do. Pray to God that He will give you the proper direction and do not allow yourself to forget His plan for your life. In everything you do ask the question, "Who am I trying to please?" It is your decision. You must decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 6

“The Christian and the Dance”

I. “A Queen Who Would Not Dance at the Ball.”

In a recently published bulletin article, Brother Bob Murray writes about a young Christian’s example of moral integrity. Allow his writing to serve as the introduction for this discussion of dancing.

“To be selected queen at a high school basketball homecoming and to lead the group in the first dance at the royal ball is the dream of many high school girls. But not so with Olivia Wolfe, a senior at Neosho High School and member of the Hillcrest church of Christ. When Olivia was nominated to be queen, she had some misgivings because she knew that it was traditional for the queen to participate in the dance that followed the basketball game. She talked with the sponsor of the activity and told the sponsor that she had religious convictions that would not allow her to participate in the dance and that if dancing were a requirement of being elected queen, she would need to refuse the nomination. The sponsor assured Olivia that if she were elected queen, she would not be required to participate in the dance in any way.

“However, word soon spread that Olivia would not participate in the dance if elected queen. When a fellow student told Olivia that her parents thought it was terrible that Olivia’s parents would not allow her to attend the dance, Olivia made it clear that the decision not to dance was based upon her own convictions and not upon orders from her parents. Other students discussed whether they should vote for a queen candidate who could not be at the dance. When the ballots were cast and counted, Olivia was the successful candidate. On February 23, 1998, Olivia Wolfe

was crowned the Neosho High School 1998 Homecoming Queen, and true to her conviction, she did not attend the dance.

“Olivia is an outstanding example for others to follow — both young and old. She is willing to give up the honor of being queen if it required her to violate her personal convictions. And her experience demonstrates that it is not necessary for a person to compromise convictions and go along with the crowd in order to be popular with the crowd. She was elected queen because of the respect her peers had for her and, no doubt, one reason her peers had respect for her was the fact that she was a young lady of conviction, someone they could admire and be proud to claim as their homecoming queen. We salute you, Olivia, for having the courage to stand by your convictions and being an exceptional example for us all.”

II. What Can Dancing Do for You?

Surely if one title can be given in association with being a Christian it is “truth seeker.” Being ever in pursuit of the truth is a goal that all of God’s children should possess. Anything that can be done to help perpetuate the teachings of God, as manifested in the pages of His word, should be done. Be aware that this chapter hopes to impact your decision-making process by providing you with an easily understood foundation from the Holy Scriptures, pertaining to the question of whether dancing is right or wrong.

The story is told of one young man who walked into the office of a preacher to inquire about dancing. When the preacher listened to the boy’s questions, he was touched by the boy’s sincerity as he asked, “I just want to do what it right.” Hopefully, all people will accept what the Bible teaches about dancing. Never being led by selfish desires Christians should rather pursue the truth to whatever location it may take them. It has already

been established in the previous chapters that some things may not appear, on the surface, to be wrong. For this reason there is a great place for asking good questions in life. "What is the impact of this action on my life? What will it mean to my Christian example? Will this lead to other problems later?" These and several other pertinent questions should be asked to help one make the proper decisions concerning dancing.

As this discussion begins, please be aware that the discussion of this chapter deals with dancing between two unmarried people, male and female. If you are presently in a marriage, then you are, in the privacy of your own home, doing no wrong by engaging in physical dancing with one another. However, if you are an unmarried man or woman, it is safest to conclude that to dance for any reason can lead to sin and is not recommended.

If dancing is in reality morally acceptable while many preachers and teachers profess it to be wrong, then you may be robbed of some fun and excitement. But, if some teach that dancing is morally acceptable while in reality it is actually sinful, then you could be deceived and face eternal punishment. For this reason one should proceed with extreme caution. It is your obligation to come to the correct conclusion about this practice and stand firmly for your convictions.

This chapter will seek to show that dancing can:

- 1. Degrade the reputation of the Christian.**
- 2. Degrade the character of the Christian.**
- 3. Endanger the soul of the Christian.**

Through dancing, the Christian can be put into positions that may cause him/her to compromise the limitations that God intended in terms of physical intimacy. All of these are very serious points and should be viewed with a sober mind. One must

intently consider each possibility about dancing, so as to reach a logical, biblical and proper conclusion about dancing.

III. Definitions of Terms.

Again, nothing inherently resides within dancing to make it sinful of itself. The word “dancing” is defined by Webster to mean, “A series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually to music.” It is necessary for Christians to look beyond the secular definition of dancing and see how the Bible uses the word. In God’s word it seems that biblical dancing is a generic term for two specific types of dance.

The first definition can simply mean to jump up and down as when one is excited. This can easily be explained by imagining that you are at the Superbowl. Your favorite team is well ahead with only minutes to go in the final quarter and they have just scored another touchdown. With another example suppose that you have been chosen to win the grand prize in a sweepstakes of over a million dollars. A natural expression would be to jump up and down in happiness or surprise. These are two ways the word dancing is used in the Bible.

In 2 Samuel 6:14-16 one can read of King David dancing in the streets. Without noticing the context one could suppose that dancing is perfectly acceptable to God. What was really going on there? If you notice the basis for David’s action you will see that the Ark of the Covenant had been under the possession of the Philistines. At long last it was returned to the Lord’s people. David was so happy that he began to leap and dance in the streets. What one sees then is not a lewd, suggestive, sinful display but rather an outburst of emotion from Israel’s king.

Another use for the word “dance” in the Bible is in the sense of a male and female dancing together, with the intention or possibility of sexual arousal and physical pleasure for one another.

Within the framework of this kind of dancing, physical desires are promoted and are impossible to be honorably fulfilled. Two passages can be noted where this type of dancing is mentioned.

In Exodus 32:7,19,25 the Israelites are at the foot of Mount Sinai. It was at the top of this mountain that Moses was receiving the law of God for the Hebrew nation. During Moses' separation, the Israelites began supposing that Moses was dead and quickly fell to worshipping the golden calf Aaron helped to form. The Bible tells that when Moses returned and saw the people, they were without any moral restraints. They were found dancing rebelliously and likely naked before their newly formed god.

Another place where this lewd form of dancing is used in the Bible is recorded in Matthew 14:6. In this instance the daughter of Herodias, named Salome, was dancing for King Herod. One can only imagine how pleased Herod was as he gazed upon this young woman. With her suggestive style she continued to provoke his lustful thoughts and eventually led him to make a very foolish promise. In Mark 6:22,23 the gospel account proclaims that Herod declared, *"Ask me whatever you wish, and I will give it to you, up to half my kingdom."* What was this young lady's decision? Being undecided, her mother was glad to offer a bit of advice, *"Ask for the head of John the Baptizer on a platter"* (Mark 6:24,25). Although John lost his physical life, it was the king who really lost his head over a young girl who lustfully carried him away into sinfulness.

In the three situations just described one should notice the outcome of each case. When did the Lord God become angry with those who had danced? At what point in the Bible do you recognize any kind of condemnation against the activity of dancing? It was certainly not in the case of David as he danced before God in joy. But what became of the cases where the dance was provocative and sexually alluring? Were these two instances

condemned by the written word of God? Yes, indeed they were. The Bible tells that 3000 Israelites who were involved in dancing met with their own demise. The Bible called this entire activity an act of rebellion. As for the case of Herodias, there is no debating the fact that the sexually appealing dance and suggestive gestures tempted the king. When his weaknesses could not be denied, he was forced to abide by his bargain and give Salome anything she wanted. The result of this scene brought the death of the Lord's forerunner. Had both of these occasions never taken place, then lives would have been spared and many tears would never have been shed. What do you suppose God, who does not change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), thinks about such forms of dancing today?

Person?	Circumstances?	With/For Whom?	Condemned?	End Result?
Miriam Exodus 15:20	Had just been delivered from the Egyptians.	For God, to show joy.	Not condemned and spoken of as an act of worship.	Nothing negative given.
David 2 Samuel 6:14-16	Ark of the Covenant had just been returned to them.	Before God and for God.	Not condemned and spoken of as an act of worship.	Nothing negative given.
Israelites Exodus 32:6,9,25,28	Supposing Moses to be dead, they erected golden idol.	For each other. For carnal pleasures to coincide with their rebellious nature.	Yes. Seen as a carnal sin and spoken of in a negative way.	3000 died and are examples to us even now.
Herodias' Daughter (Salome)	For the pleasure of Herod on his birthday.	For Herod in the presence of others.	Yes.	Foolish promise made and John the Baptist's death was a result.

IV. Three Questions About Dancing.

1. What Are the Fruits of Dancing?

By asking this question one seeks to describe what types of things are associated with dancing. It is by answering this question that one can begin to understand and decide whether it is morally acceptable to involve himself in such a practice. When one ponders over the question, he should strive to make a list of things which dancing can bring about. When one is taking the positive position, namely the position which states that dancing is perfectly acceptable, then he needs to name all the good things, that is those morally pure things, that come from dancing. After having made the list, now look to each "fruit" of dancing. Name those morally pure things that are found in dancing which can not be found in other less questionable activities. By doing this you see the list begins to become smaller and smaller. In fact, in all probability, the list quickly may not remain a list at all.

Some have sought to substantiate their dancing by using the following excuses:

"Well, I get my exercise by going to the Friday night dance." To that one could reply, "Is it not possible to get exercise by doing something else on Friday night?" Some announce that, "We all come to see each other and dance. It is purely a social event." In reply, "Can you not visit at the local pizza restaurant without being surrounded by the presence of dancing?" Then some say, "We just like to dance. It is just our way to have fun." In response to that, at least the person is being honest, yet the reply would be, "Can you not find other ways to more productively use your time and bring glory to God?"

Each rebuttal carries with it honest returns and each reply should be honestly considered. What kind of fruit is there in dancing? In Matthew 7:19,20 Jesus said, "*Every good tree bears*

good fruit...a good tree cannot bear bad fruit...Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." The simple understanding is that God's word depicts Christians as trees that must ever be branching out and bearing new fruits. For this cause the Christian continues on, desiring to bring good fruits to the glory of God. There should never be a time when God's children fail to reach out in religious devotion to their Father. There is never a reason to trade an eternity of joy for a few years of temporal pleasures.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:20, "*By their fruits you shall know them.*" This simple yet utterly profound statement shows that good or bad actions will prove what is of prime importance in your life. There is no denying that by the life someone is living, you can tell what is important to him or her. When the average person of the world involves himself in drugs, alcohol abuse, worldly dancing, or even crimes against this nation's laws, one can see what type of life this person is content to have. If you are a person who is ever in pursuit of finding a way to serve God, then you are rightly known and seen by others as one who loves the Father.

Paul says in Ephesians 5:11 to, "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them.*" Once again, what are the fruits of dancing? It would be very wise to go ahead and make a list of things you feel are both positive and negative about dancing. See which side outweighs the other. This question is left to your own mature discretion.

2. What About the Lust that Can Be Brought About Through the Practice of Dancing.

Reading in 1 John 2:15-17 one sees that man is not to love the world or the things of the world. Listen to the exact words of that beloved apostle John: "*Love not the things of the world...for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes*

and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." When anyone deals with the issue of dancing from a scriptural basis, the major issue to face is the one of lust. When a Christian comes into a place where sin may be unashamedly displayed, then lust is very possible. Far be it from any Christian to willingly walk into a place where lust may have easy access to his heart.

Allow this simple syllogism to prove that to take any part in dancing involves great spiritual danger.

1. A Christian should abstain from anything that may bring about physical lust.
2. Dancing may bring about physical lust.
3. Therefore, a Christian should abstain from dancing.

When any syllogism is given one must make certain that both the premises are true. When the premises are true and the conclusion logically follows from them, then the conclusion has to be true. Now briefly examine each portion of this argument. It is agreed that a Christian should never willfully engage in any activity where there is the chance that physical lust may be manifested. One may seek to argue that lust can be present while walking down the street. To this it must be agreed. However, there is a great difference between going into a place where you know the possibility will be present than accidentally walking into a situation. The major issue dealt with in this discussion is a person who intentionally welcomes lust versus the non-intentional chance that it may or may not be made known.

Dancing can bring about lust. This fact is undeniable and without question. Since one is unable to guarantee that lust will not be present while dancing, one must admit that lust is possible. For these two causes, dancing should be put far from the Christian's life. Since all Christians should keep from anything that may bring about lust and since dancing can bring about lust,

then all Christians should abstain from taking part in dancing. Since the two premises are true and since the conclusion follows from the premises, then the conclusion has to be true. For this reason, dancing is not an acceptable activity for the child of God to take part in.

Young people, please do not be deceived into thinking that you are beyond lusting or being lusted over. There are some today who feel they can dance supposing that it is impossible that anyone could ever lust over them. It has already been suggested in this book that all Christians have the solemn obligation and responsibility not to intentionally cause anyone to lust over them. In the case of Herod, there is a man who fell to the enticing moves of a young lady and a serious mistake resulted. As for those who would excuse dancing as acceptable because "nobody could ever lust over me," the bottom line is that lust can come either by watching or taking part in dancing. There are no people in the world immune from this ploy of Satan.

When boys and girls are on the dance floor, displaying themselves for everyone to see, the night progresses and so also comes bodily gyrating, shaking and suggestive movements. The only assured result from dancing is the stirring of impure feelings within members of the opposite sex. A famous instructor of the New York Dancing School said, "The only difference between wrestling and dancing is that in dancing no holds are barred." There is definitely more than the movement to music involved in dancing. There is the constant churning of illicit ungodly feelings.

If some people seriously believe that they cannot conceive of lusting on the dance floor or of arousing impure thoughts in anyone's mind, let this be a statement of caution for them. There is no person alive who can decisively declare to know all people's thoughts. How many people do you suppose have had impure

thoughts and been driven to sexual immorality because of someone whom they have never even met? In all likelihood the number is alarming and countless.

3. What About the Temptation Which May Be Brought About Through Dancing?

Anyone who is old enough to understand temptation will also realize that man faces temptations on a daily basis. Furthermore, what may tempt you may not tempt others in the slightest way. What remains is that temptation is alive and universal with mankind. When Jesus was about to be taken by the Roman Government for the trial He said, "*Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak*" (Matthew 26:41). These words of wisdom come from the very Son of God. Christ realized that man might desire to serve God but fail in many ways and on various occasions. There is something more required of you than the indifferent, give-or-take attitude of people today! Christians have been called to go beyond the norm of sinful man and be ever in pursuit of perfection (Hebrews 6:1). The words of Christ, although they were spoken in regard to a specific situation, can be applied to any temptation one may face in life. So certainly the temptations man faces with respect to sexuality would be included.

When a young man and woman are involved in close bodily contact, the natural result is a sinful "*work of the flesh*" discussed in Galatians 5:19-21. In verse 19 Paul uses the word lasciviousness, which means, "*the unchaste handling of males and females.*"¹⁰ It is obvious that dancing involves a work of the flesh that Paul says Christians ought to shun. Ask this question to yourself, "What is the best way to avoid personal temptations that may be manifested by dancing?" Would you, if tempted to lust over a member of the opposite sex during a dance, be wise by continually going to or remaining at the place where your

temptation begins? The answer that must be agreed to is, "No!" The Christian is commanded to abstain from every appearance of evil in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. If one finds the influences of evil in any place then he ought to flee. It should be a prayer of God's people each night to ask for the courage to flee from the things which can pull them down. As Christ said, "*The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*" It is very possible that in times past you felt strong enough to overcome a temptation, but failed when the fleshly side gave in to sin. By far the best plan for avoiding lust and temptation associated with dancing is the Bible's plan. "*Flee from every appearance of evil.*"

V. Reasons Not to Dance.

1. Can This Action Ever Lead to Sin?

The answer to the question has already been discussed adequately and is a resounding YES! Many times there have been feelings stirred within you and the temptation came bringing the result of sin. Never should people think that simply because they are "extremely careful" they cannot be touched by the ways of Satan. He is the master of his game and is ready in every respect to take advantage of any situation. Peter graphically describes Satan. Notice 1 Peter 5:8 where Peter writes, "*Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour.*" The word devour should really call your attention to the fact that Satan is ever striving to do you harm. Dancing can lead a person to sin and is best left alone by the Christian.

2. Can Dancing Cause Others to Lust Either by Watching or Dancing with You?

There was an interesting poll taken among some forty-four people who had been dancing. Out of the entire group, forty-one

of the participants admitted to having impure thoughts. Notice that number is nearly one hundred percent of the whole group. If you think that nobody could or would lust over you, then you are contradicting the probability that of those people who were polled at the dance, none of them could have ever noticed you.

Assuredly dancing would not be such a popular pastime were it not for the mingling of the sexes. Think about it and come to grips with reality, Christians! Men come to dances to “check out” the women who are scantily dressed and to watch their bodies move in ways that bring about impure thoughts. At least two stories prove such a point.

It was said that on an American Naval Base there was a dance scheduled where only men were invited. The point was well established and undeniable when only men showed up. When all the males saw that there were no females involved, everyone went home. Why? Why did the men go home? Would this not have been a prime time for bodily fitness for these men? Certainly it would have been a great time for physical exercise, but these men were not interested in watching one another move to the musical groove.

Brother Hugo McCord tells another story where an elder of the church shocked a congregation by inviting the boys and girls of the youth group over to his house for a dance. When the excited guests arrived, he escorted the boys into one room and the girls into another and had music in each room. When each group were separated he said to each, “Dance.” The dance party never got started and soon both rooms were empty. You see that dancing is dependent upon the mixing of males and females. Without both, there is no appeal.

3. Can This Become a Stumbling block for You or Others?

The answer that must be agreed upon is yes. None of God's people should ever take part in any practice which can prove to be spiritually harmful, even devastating to himself or another person. One may be unaware of his or her own appeal and thereby unknowingly cause a young man or woman to lust. One should be aware that his or her body is a very powerful tool and can be used either to his own detriment or to God's glory. So then, all Christians should be cautious never to consciously raise or arouse feelings in another person which cannot be honorably fulfilled in God's sight.

4. Will This Action Glorify God?

It has been proven in this writing that when two unmarried people engage in dancing, where the bodies are in close contact, moving under soft lights to rhythmic music, lustful feelings are the result. When one succumbs to dancing, it is his own wishes and not God's will that has been given the main priority. God has been forced to take the second place position to selfish personal desires. This should not be so in any professing Christian's life. All should seek to give their best to the creator and be ever prepared to sacrifice personal fleshly desires and honor God above all else. Further, if dancing, as defined in this discussion, was really such a great thing and able to give glory to the Father, it would be the case that God would not only allow dancing, but also demand that His people practice it! You will notice that His word is absent of any such command or allowance.

When one lady asked the late H. Leo Boles if there was anything wrong in her daughter going to a dance, she was surprised with his reply: "No, tell her to go right ahead, but be sure to tie a banner around her waist with the words, 'I am the light of the

world.””¹¹ Surely the light of the world shines brightly in a world of sinful darkness. How is your light shining? Or is it that your light has gone out and you have been conformed (Romans 12:2) to the world rather than changing the world for the better?¹²

VI. Conclusion.

A Christian is always to follow the word that God has entrusted to him. In reading the Bible there are various examples to learn from (Romans 15:4). When any person has to make a personal decision in life, he/she is responsible for making moral decisions without compromising God’s will in their life. With every ounce of strength one should ever seek to glorify the maker in every possible way. To do this, follow the commands of God. You are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22 to “*Abstain from every appearance of evil.*” Does it appear that dancing contains even a hint of immorality? You decide.

Dancing falls under the warning of Galatians 5:19-21 where Paul mentions lasciviousness as a work of the flesh. Is there anything about dancing that may remotely appear to be lascivious? You decide. Dancing can and often does produce feelings of physical arousal, which are only to be fulfilled in the bonds of matrimony. This of itself should be enough to bring about abstinence from dancing, since it goes beyond the principle of one man and one woman together until time is no more

For all of these reasons you will agree that dancing is a risky practice. Such an activity makes the Christian life much harder and not easier. By allowing Satan any kind of welcomed entrance into life, he slowly begins to weaken and eventually tears down ones moral foundation. Dancing can be used as a tool of Satan. It can be destructive to Christianity and God’s people should put dancing far away from their lives for these causes.

You must make a decision about dancing based on these and

other facts given. It is your choice. You decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 7

“The Sin of Premarital Sexual Activity”

I. Biblical Examples of Sexuality.

A young man named Joseph was given great blessings because of his trust in the Lord. However, his road to prosperity was paved with many negative incidents. Thankfully, throughout all the trials and temptations, the faith of God’s servant Joseph continually grew. You can recall that because of his brothers’ jealousy Joseph was sold to a band of Ishmaelites. Upon arrival in Egypt this young man was purchased as a slave for the household of Potiphar, Captain of the Egyptian Guard. Over time, Joseph continually held to the Divine Presence of God and was eventually promoted to overseer of Potiphar’s entire house.

One can see the cunning devices of Potiphar’s wife as she begins to long for the sexual companionship of this morally pure individual. The Bible tells us that she, “...cast longing eyes on Joseph” (Genesis 39:7). It was her full intention to go beyond the boundaries of her marital union and come to know Joseph in a sexually immoral way. Just imagine the reaction of Joseph when he heard these words from the mouth of his boss’s wife, “Come to bed with me” (Genesis 39:12, NIV).

Think about the scene so far. Everything that Potiphar possessed had been given to the control and leadership of God’s youthful servant Joseph. When everything was quiet, when there was no husband around to catch his cheating wife, when there was no way that anyone could ever find out about an extramarital sexual relationship, the wife of Potiphar made her move. What Joseph says in response to this woman’s proposal is worth mentioning. “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” In the world today, one may wonder why Joseph did not

take part in a “great opportunity” for a good time. Surely many young people today would have readily given in to her advances. But Joseph’s reasoning was, “It would be sin.” What a great example Joseph left for God’s young people today.

Picture now two men who were supposed to be looked upon as the spiritual leaders of Israel. Their purpose was to act as mediators between God and man, to offer various sacrifices on behalf of the people and lead the Israelites to confess their sins. You would expect such men to be of the highest integrity and moral purity. Their names were Hophni and Phinehas. The two men were sons of Eli, the well-beloved High Priest of Israel. On the outside one might have seen a family that was dedicated to God, but in looking closer you see two men who denied their own profession by giving themselves over to sexual immorality.

Eli entered the presence of his sons and declared, “*Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people*” (1 Samuel 2:23). What had these sons done that made their father react in such a way? 1 Samuel 2:22 tells that they had been guilty of “...*laying with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*” The very men who were to carry the sins of the people to God were guilty of committing the sin of fornication with many women. They even went so far as to commit this great sin within the very place of worship. Because of these activities, the Lord pronounced that the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were to die. When Eli heard of his sons’ deaths he fell back and died himself. Sin will always lead to a sad end. The wages of sin are never what one hopes they will be.

Now think about a young man, a son of the King of Israel. His name is Amnon. This was a man who seemingly had everything he could have ever wanted. His life was lived in the palace and he was the son of King David. But there was something that

he began to desire and his personal desire lead him from purity into sinfulness. Amnon, son of David, had a half-sister named Tamar. She was obviously a very beautiful young lady and this beauty became an obsession with Amnon.

One day Amnon's friend, who was named Jonadab, came and asked Amnon why he was so ill. Then Amnon told his secret, how that he had fallen into lust with Tamar. After listening to this problem, Jonadab and Amnon decided on a way that Amnon could have his half-sister. Amnon was told to lie in bed and pretend to be sick. He would call for Tamar to nurse him to health and when everything was right, he would finally take her and have his sexual relationship.

Such a scene did come to pass. When the young lady was within the bedroom, he made his move. Tamar did her best to talk to Amnon about the sin he was about to commit, but his lust was far too heavy. She resisted his physical advances with all that she had, but because of his overpowering strength, Amnon had his way with her.

Tamar's purity had been ruined by the lustful desire of a man who cared only for himself. How did such a terrible story end? Absalom, one of Tamar's other brothers, heard of this hideous sin and declared to take vengeance on Amnon. After two full years had passed, Absalom's plan was nearly complete. One evening, when Amnon was drunk with wine, the servants of Absalom did as they had been commanded to do. They killed Amnon (2 Samuel 13:23-29). This passage from scripture shows what great results come from the selfish desires of mankind. Amnon's lust for Tamar burned within his heart to such an extent that he could not rest until his hunger for a sexual relationship had been appeased.

What does one learn from these biblical examples? With each case that has been discussed, the final results shown in the

Bible were based on the choices that had been made. The example of Joseph shows that denying sinful relationships is pleasing to God. The examples of Hophni and Phinehas show the great displeasure that God has with the sins that are willfully committed. And the sad end of Amnon shows how sin can consume and blind people to God's will.

Throughout the Bible there are many such examples of illicit or unlawful sexual relationships. You should do further study and notice the negative outcome from the accounts of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-11), the daughters of Lot (Genesis 19:30), Israel's harlotry in Moab (Numbers 25:6), Samson (Judges 16:1), and others. As one looks into each case, the result is obvious: sexual lust is very real and can be hard to control. It can consume a person to such an extent that the result is anything but holy.

II. Defining the Terms.

This particular chapter is written with the hope that more and more people will turn their attention to what the Word of God teaches. It is the author's intention to show that when dealing with sexuality, the Bible defines the sexual relationship as a thing not to be entered into lightly. It is the case of this book that when dealing with sexuality, the discussion must not be centered on full sexual intercourse alone. Rather as the title of this chapter implies, the content of this study deals with premarital or extramarital sexual activity. Sexual activity can include, but is not confined to, sexual intercourse alone.

To begin this discussion, the following biblical words are in need of definition. The word **fornication** is defined as "consensual sexual intercourse between two persons not married to each other."¹³ Further it has been defined as, "Illicit sexual intercourse, to give oneself up to fornication, implying excessive

indulgence.”¹⁴ Understand that every form of unchastity is included in the term “fornication.”¹⁵

Next is the word **lasciviousness**. This word has been defined by Webster’s as, “unbridled lust, lewd or lustful.”¹⁶ Further it is defined in the following way, “To have the absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness or shameless conduct.”¹⁷ When reading in Galatians 5:19-21, the word lasciviousness is found. Paul is telling those in Galatia that God does not take pleasure in those who would entice a person to succumb to the desires of the flesh.

III. Your Sexual Knowledge.

After reading the examples from the Old Testament and having the above words defined, the following question should be asked and answered, “Are such sexually immoral activities present in the world today?” The answer is a resounding **YES!**

God created the sexual union between husband and wife as a beautiful relationship. Perhaps the society of today has blinded human eyes to the truth about God’s plan for human sexuality. Rather than a special and revered blessing that is to be shared between husband and wife alone, sex has rather been belittled, portrayed as lewd and has had its purity mocked. This chapter is written prayerfully that any young person who is reading this book will pay special attention to God’s purpose and place for their own special sexuality.

It seems that in present society, sexual education can come from several different sources. Friends, school, television and parents all have some information to offer young people about how they view sex. Whether or not this instruction is worthy of God will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Sexual Knowledge and Your Friends.

It seems a dangerous thing to gain ones sexual knowledge

from peers for the following reasons: Most people have heard the proud talk of a young person who has made a recent “conquest” over a member of the opposite sex. It is then to be recognized that premarital sex has become simply an action or something to do for the sake of popularity. All people need to understand that sexual activity must be within the proper time frame and with the correct reasoning and motivation. Committing fornication for reason of earthly popularity is both self-centered and sinful. Mankind should seek to do God’s will in all areas of life.

Speaking to acquaintances about sexuality can also bring about great pressure.

Many times the threat of “peer pressure” can seemingly force a person into committing an action for the very sake of remaining “cool, popular or part of the in-crowd.” The possibility of being ignored, made fun of or being an outcast can lead one to conduct himself improperly.

Finally, look at young people objectively for a moment. When one talks to people their own age, they should realize that the very one who is gone to for advice may be in the same predicament as the one who is seeking the advice. More than likely they are experiencing the same problems or at least have the same questions about life in general. You have heard the old adage, “It is like the blind leading the blind.” Why would anyone want to be instructed in an area as important as the sexual relationship by someone who is in a sense blind? Rather, a young person should pose their sexual questions to a mature Christian who can give godly advice. Friends, as knowledgeable as they may appear to be at the time, are being taught just like everyone else is. People should be very careful about who they seek for advice about sexual activity.

2. Sexual Knowledge from Your School.

A second area that could have some impact on one's knowledge of sexuality is school. It is the view of the author that such a place could be effective if its teachings are based upon a few proper principles. If people who are firmly based on God's word teach the curriculum, they will likely possess a strong moral belief in the meaning of the marital union of man and woman. Such teachers would stress the importance of chastity as the only real protection against sin, disease and future heartaches. Many reading this chapter may personally know about someone who has had a sexually transmitted disease. The biological problems that arise from sexual activities are various. The school could be a primary place to teach about the dangers of physical disease.

Sadly, the scenario just given as an ideal situation is not the usual case. Many schools are run by secular humanists that feel that mankind is the highest power in the universe. With these kind of teachers in public school systems, there can be more harm done than good. The results are obvious. America and the world at large is in need of parents who can do all in their power to teach children the truth in this time of incorrect doctrines.

In any event, the biological aspect of reproduction can be taught and there can be good from that. As David said in Psalms 139:14, *"I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Truly the design of the human body is a marvelous sight to behold. Anyone could take a course on Human Biology and have their faith increased by noticing the awesome creation of mankind. Surely, as you look at the human body, God's awesome power is clearly seen. For this reason, it is the opinion of the writer that schools can be of some limited service in teaching young people on the subject of human sexuality. However, the responsible parent will monitor what is being taught.

3. Sexual Knowledge and Television.

Every night across America, millions of families are bombarded by popular sitcoms that totally exploit or else ignore the beauty of God's divine plan. It is not beyond anyone's ability to see the glorified showcasing of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, suggestive dancing and many other lascivious activities. America has been desensitized to the true meaning of sexual purity. Man has done everything in his power to dirty what God has sanctioned. America needs to wake up, repent and begin to walk on the path of God's will. To do this, each person must make a conscious effort to put sin far from his own life.

Before she passed from this life, my great-grandmother told about being a child. According to her, you never spoke openly about sexuality in any negative way. It was not proper to make jokes about or laugh at things of a sexual nature. Those who did such were of the lowest moral class. Yet today, many have heard or even laughed at jokes pertaining to sex. The television is happy to surround us with programs that put sexual relations on a pedestal and slowly one begins thinking that perhaps there is not any harm in laughing at or watching sexual situations. This type of thinking is the result of the slow disease that Satan spreads to mankind. Do you dare allow such thinking to invade your home? Television programs are doing just as their name implies, they are programming young minds to accept a teaching that is not from God.

Those who run the television shows are not concerned with your eternal welfare. Rather the real interest behind all the filthy programs is the mighty dollar. By the Christian watching such immoral shows, the ratings begin to creep up and thus it is the child of God who has helped to perpetuate the ongoing lewdness. How then can there be an end to this? How can the perversion be put to a stop? Begin by writing letters to the local television sta-

tion manager, make phone calls to an area governmental representative, turn off those television sets and visit with the family when a questionable program comes on. Boycott the companies who support the so-called entertainment. These and many other ways will send a message that God's people are alive and want to do His will.

4. Sexual Knowledge and Your Parents.

Usually there is some amount of access to sexual education through parents.

Sadly, it is the parents who often leave the questions unanswered and the child is forced to gain his answers from other sources. Various reasons may be accounted for this. Perhaps many parents are often too embarrassed to talk openly with their child about such an "adult" topic. Most everyone has seen shows where a child comes to an unsuspecting mother and father and asks, "Where do babies come from?" The parents, who are usually cool, calm and collected in any given situation are found squirming and looking for the proper words. Many answers given by parents are short and simple such as, "You better not do that." Or "Well just don't do it." These answers are a far cry from what should be the case.

Parents should not fall short of their obligation to children no matter what the topic might be. Sexual education is best taught to children by two caring parents who have the fuller and deeper understanding of God's plan between two people (Genesis 1-2). There is a real need for the proper knowledge in the life of our teens. It is noticed that those of grades 6-12 having less problems in school, making better grades and having more interest in the work of the church, all had well-rounded relationships with their parents. This is said as a reminder that there should be a certain degree of openness between parent and child. When a young per-

son encounters a problem, he or she will hopefully be comfortable and confident to ask for advice from their parents. The mother and father will then be prepared to advise and help lead this precious soul down the proper path.

Sex and its place in the lives of people today is one of the great problems that is being faced and must be properly dealt with as young America grows. Regardless of where sex is taught, the bottom line is that it must be biblically based. Where would be a better place to experience true answers about the sexual relationship than by parents who share love for God and one another?

A question parents may frequently hear is, "Well, how far is too far?" In this lesson such a question will be answered. Hopefully, there will be a more thorough discussion than what one boy said he learned about sexual education. He tells: "The preacher came and told us not to do it. The doctor came and told us how to do it. The principal came and told us where not to do it."

VII. Sex and You.

1. Sex Is a Natural, Emotional and Physical Expression.

God made man with marvelous qualities and characteristics. Mankind is able to love and care for the needs of another. He can feel emotion and pain. Man has also been given desires. It is very important to understand this very basic principle. However, one must also come to realize that just because a thing is natural or within a man, does not give him the right to fulfill his desire within his own frame of time. First, even natural expressions can be sinful in God's eyes. Paul tells that anger is a natural emotion and not necessarily sinful, yet if this emotion is uncontrolled, it

can lead one into sin (Ephesians 4:26). It is the obligation of God's people to learn and control their feelings the way God wants them to. Second, God tells His creation *when* sex is permissible to enjoy. God has never told anyone that they could not enjoy sexual relations. He does however say that one can enjoy the gift of sex when a person is married. Anything other than this, regardless of how one may try to justify it, is sinful and should not be within the Christian's life.

Listen very carefully, the subject for this chapter is about being sexually active. In a bit more detail, the discussion at hand is premarital sexual *activity*, not necessarily premarital sexual intercourse — there is a difference. People can produce sexual feelings and satisfy sexual urges without ever “going all the way.” In this chapter, how to keep ones body free from sexual immorality will be discussed. For this reason, it is necessary to notice how the Christian should view his body, respect the bodies of others and understand the marital relationship.

2. How Should One Handle His/Her Body?

To look at the practice of premarital sexual activity this fundamental question must be answered. The Bible teaches that your body has been given to you and is to be maintained as a possession of honor. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 Paul requires that Christians “honor themselves.” To honor means to have respect for who you are and to see yourself as God does, precious in His eyes. It is not possible to say, “I honor my body” while harming it with drugs or other immoral activities. One cannot truly say that he cares for spiritual purity when he is willfully found committing sins against his own body and God. Surely if you are presently involved in a sexual relationship outside the marital bond, then there is a serious need for repentance and a constant walk towards subjection to God's will.

In Romans 6:13, Paul writes that one is not to allow the body to become an instrument of sin. By doing so, one is putting himself far from God's original intentions.

Sin in any form is enough to cause God to become hidden from our presence. There is then a division between man and God that denies proper fellowship with Him (Isaiah 59:1,2). Nobody who is serious about living for God could ever want to be separated from him. Therefore every possible step must be taken to draw closer to the eternal Father.

One's body should be viewed as a loan from God. When placed on this earth, mankind is told to be a good steward over his possessions. This means that a responsible attitude should accompany his use of money, natural resources, time and yes even his own body. Would anyone dare borrow a priceless possession from a king and intentionally harm it? The answer is an emphatic **no!** How then can anyone, having had loaned to them a body made in the very image of God, intentionally sin by harming or using the body for anything other than to praise and glorify Him?

3. How Should One View His/Her Body?

A proper understanding of how to view your body is only answered by noticing the biblical view of how sacred the human body is and it's natural beauty. It is the consensus of the Bible that the human body is to be seen as a beautiful gift from God. This was briefly alluded to in the last section. In Romans 12:1 Paul writes that God's people are to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God. The Bible declares that when God made man and breathed into him the breath of life, He did so in His own image (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). For a moment, meditate upon the glorious gift of actually being created in the very image of **GOD!** He said that all was good. For this reason, realize that in creat-

ing man, He gave a great blessing to everyone who lives, they can say with bold truthfulness, "I have been created in the image of God above." Each person today is living proof of God's existence and ever-present love.

No matter the size, height, weight, hair color or hat size, all people can and should consider themselves as great monuments of beauty. How many people wake up every morning and look in disgust at their images reflected back at them in the mirror? And why such a reaction? There seems to be an unwritten law in America that governs people's self-confidence. It is the doctrine that this author pens as "The Doctrine of Worldly Beauty." How many thousands of people believe that unless they are "model material" there can be no real self-worth? That is a sad lie that society has concocted. Please never think this to be the case. The Bible never tells anywhere that for one to get to Heaven, they must have appeared in the leading fashion magazines. Again, what is temporarily important to society is not of ultimate concern. The words David used to express his view of the human body were "*wonderful and marvelous*" (Psalm 139:14). David realized even before the present day of medical and biological advances in science, just how wonderful each human body truly was.

Everyone reading the words of this writing is a beautiful creation in the eyes of God. You are very special to God. For this reason, never allow anyone to tell you words that may belittle your place in life. Many times people seek the acceptance of another because they lack the proper respect for themselves. What a sad reason indeed to commit sexual sins before the loving Father. All who desire to live for God need to look to Him for their place in life and see their bodies as gifts from Him that possess matchless and unique beauty.

4. You Are a Gift to a Husband or Wife.

Most everyone has been to a wedding procession. During the ceremony a bride enters the assembly wearing a beautiful white gown and walks down a narrow aisle to be presented to an awaiting groom. There is coming a day when you will probably meet a very special person and fall in love, either propose or receive a marriage proposal and begin a special union with a husband or wife. On that very special night of your honeymoon, the very first time together you will be able to share lawful sexual fulfillment with the knowledge that you and your spouse remained pure for that moment. There is nothing to compare to the sexual union as God intended for it to be. For this reason, do not dare give up this sacred moment for a few fleeting moments of physical pleasure. There are several reasons that it is worth the wait:

1. You will be part of God's plan for marital purity.
2. You will be an example of premarital sexual abstinence to your own children. What type of example are you wanting to be for your children? When the day comes that they are faced with the question of fornication, and your own child comes to you and asks, "Did you and dad have sex before you were married?" How will you be able to answer? You will want to speak the truth and teach a great lesson as well. For this reason, be sure to consider the outcome of your actions now.

5. Your Bodies Are a Loan From God.

God's child should always strive to maintain or handle himself in a way that is becoming of Christ. In addition to that, you will also want to understand the reason why you should not partake in sexual activity outside of marriage. One day everyone who has ever lived will be going back to God. You will face God one day. Paul tells Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that Christ

purchased His people with His own blood. Understand that you have been purchased and you are not your own. God and Christ own you now. For this reason, His people will strive all the more to make the type of decisions wherein God will be glorified. If the Bible teaches that man does not have total possession of himself, then extra care should be taken in providing care for this physical body. One day the body will be returned to the owner and when this happens, the rewards that are to be received will far surpass one's wildest expectation.

The union of man and woman in the boundaries of marriage is an awesome way to complete the oneness that God desired for the husband and wife to share. When the question is raised, "How should I view sex?" the answer is, "As a gift from God." Who created sex in the first place? God did. Who made man and woman to enjoy a physical, emotional and spiritual union with one another? Did man do that? No! God created the sexual union and in that the physical feelings can be satisfied. The only place that sexual feelings can be satisfied is within the confines of marriage. In the first union of man and woman, Adam and Eve show the basis for God's will to be understood. There is seen a single man and woman, united in a holy way before God, willing to share life with one another until their lives are over.

In Matthew 19, Jesus spoke of the purity that the marriage was to possess. The two should remain as one body or team until their death. God has joined them together and the only thing that can honorably untie this relationship is death. However, if one of the two adults breaks the marital vows by engaging in sexual relations with another person, then the bond that God gave has become voided out, it has been destroyed. Since God wished for one man to share with one woman a sexual relationship within the marital union, then can you see how wrong it is to fulfill our fleshly desires outside of God's approved plan?

6. How Should You Speak of Sex?

Everyone who bows to the wishes of God should understand the seriousness of following the example of Jesus in every facet of life (1 Peter 2:21,22). For this cause, God's people ought to speak about sex as Jesus Christ would have. Don't you have a problem seeing Jesus setting along the roadside passing along the latest "dirty joke?" The Messiah was never found to be lewd, suggestive or immoral and for this cause should His followers. When you are with friends at school, are you one who listens attentively to the joke that they are telling? Are you guilty of laughing at God's gift of human sexuality? In James 4:8 all are told to "*cleanse your hands and purify your hearts.*" May God's people never be those who take part in activities that are unbecoming of Jesus and the perfect life He lived.

A. One should speak seriously about sex.

In this country, thousands of young girls are forced out of school to give birth and care for a child that was conceived out of wedlock. Every year there are hundreds of babies given up by those who feel it is impossible to give up their free time or social lives. Finally, beyond the expression of words, hundreds of thousands of babies are killed, literally murdered by abortion when a scared young female finds herself pregnant and has nobody to turn to.

Sex is a serious topic. There are lives at stake and eternity in the balances. Sex can either be abused and the consequences can be paid or people can wait until the proper time for sexual satisfaction and be pleasing to God. Begin looking at sex as a serious thing.

B. One should view sex in a reverent way.

Christians are told in Ephesians 5:4 that speaking is not to be

full of foolishness or jesting. Sex, as has already been established, is a very serious activity. Surely, as God looks down on this world and sees His creation engaging in ungodly practices, He is certainly displeased. How can one who follows after God in a reverent way view the sexual relationship in any way which is irreverent?

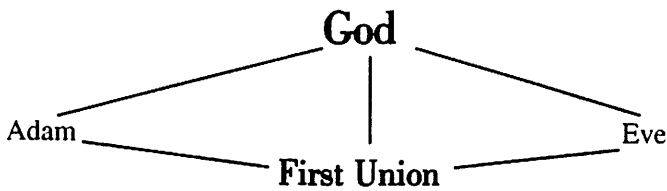
C. One should see sex as a beautiful gift from God.

People should see the sexual union as beautiful and nothing less. There are not enough pages in this book to list all the times someone has joyfully told a joke which degraded and belittled the true meaning of sex. Anyone who sees sex as anything other than the way God intended is sadly mistaken and needs proper instruction. Yes, sex is a natural and beautiful expression, not to be made trashy by vulgar lips.

V. Conclusion.

Hopefully the following things have been impressed upon your mind. One ought to better understand the way to: **1. Handle His/Her Body. 2. View His/Her Body. 3. View Sex. 4. Speak of Sexual Relations.** Sexual feelings are natural and from God yet must be kept within the boundaries of marriage to be “legal” in God’s sight. When one intentionally arouses and fulfills sexual feelings in a member of the opposite sex, then one has infiltrated an area that is clearly a spiritual and physical trespass. Those who do such things become sinful by:

1. Not staying within the confines of God’s plan.
2. Dishonoring the bodies God has given to man.
3. Sharing what is intended for one man and one woman to enjoy.
4. Young people, be aware that just because you do not “go



Old Testament

Leviticus 18:20, 29-30
 Genesis 20:3

Fornication
 (Death as a result.)

Deuteronomy 22:17-24
 Virginity is a positive.

New Testament

Galatians 5:19
 Romans 1:28-32

Fornication
 (Separation is deserved.)
 No inheritance

2 Corinthians 11:2
 Virginity is a positive.

Marriage (New Testament)

Bed undefiled Hebrews 13:4

Which is right?

Sex...

Before Marriage
 Galatians 5:19-21

Inside Marriage
 Hebrews 13:4

Where Is Your Focus?

all the way” does not mean that you are sexually pure in God’s eyes.

Wait for the blessing of sexual satisfaction until you are ready to make the lifelong commitment of marriage. After you have vowed before God and one another, you will be free to enjoy all the blessings of marriage. Anything beyond this is not what God has intended for His people. All these things are left in your hands. It is now your choice to make and you must decide. Who are you trying to please, your own self or God?

Where Is Your Focus?

Chapter 8

“Pornography Vs. God’s Plan for You”

I. Pornography: It Is Everywhere You Look!

Take the time to look around and you can see many sinful things that the world guiltlessly teaches. Perhaps you have been surrounded by the filth of this world for so long that your senses are dulled and your attention is lax concerning the gross immorality that is sweeping the entire nation. A casual study of ones own community would be sufficient to show how disturbing the problem of immorality really is.

Traveling from Alabama to Nashville, Tennessee as usual I was enjoying the trip by taking part in good conversation with my wife, Priscilla. Shockingly, as we neared a particular exit we were bombarded with the unwanted presence of a huge billboard in plain view. The sign colorfully displayed the following caption, “NUDE WOMEN AHEAD.” One should be not only disgusted by such illicit activity but also very disturbed that such a thing is unashamedly advertised in this great land. Once again, where was this sign? It was in plain view for anyone who may have happened by. There was no regard to age, race or gender and never was a slightest concern expressed for those who wish to keep their minds free from such immoral clutter. I could not begin to tell of the countless times while living in Nashville, Tennessee that I passed by so called “Adult bookstores, video rental shops and showgirl bars.”

The point in this matter is to show that the world today is pornographic. One must agree that sexually immoral things are either openly discussed or publicly displayed. This highly developed system of sin has numbed American moral senses to such an extent that God’s people can pass such establishments every

day, forgetting the wages of these sins (Romans 6:23). It is time for God's people to focus on this problem and stand firmly against the devices of Satan. So, as this discussion progresses notice that by definition, pornography obviously surrounds God's people at every turn. It is therefore obligatory that Christians prepare themselves to stand and fight against this evil. Indeed, pornography is at every turn.

II. The Bible and Sexual Impurity

Among the pages of God's inspired word one can clearly see how God views those who would give their lives over to immorality. If it can be proven that an activity is sinful and that by taking part in such sin one can be kept from the reward of Heaven, would you then desire to take part in that sinful thing? The obvious answer you should arrive at is, "No." Allow the word of God to guide you in the decision-making process and then make your judgment based on what God would have you do.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:9 that those who are God's people should not keep company with those who are sexually immoral. God's word is the basis for all human sexuality. If you are not prepared to follow God's guidelines then you are not ready for the blessing of the sexual relationship. Begin now building your life on what He has said is appropriate behavior concerning the sexual relationship. When two people are joined together in marriage they are free to partake in the sexual union without it being sinful (Hebrews 13:4). Therefore, God classifies those who partake in extramarital or premarital sexual activities as immoral people. In Ephesians 5:5 Paul says "*...no fornicator...has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*" One who would use his life to indulge in the sins of sexual immorality is listed as being far from God's eternal reward. In verse 7, Paul continues by saying that Christians should not be partakers with those people that do such things.

In Jude 7, there is a reference made to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. What was the reason that these two cities were destroyed? God's word says because of their sexual immorality. The outcome of their destruction gives a great example to mankind today. Because of their sexual impurity, they are suffering the "*vengeance of eternal fire.*" Finally, Revelation 22:15 tells of those who could not gain entrance into the eternal home of Heaven. John pictures sinners as beggars lying outside the heavenly gates. They cannot come in to the presence of God, but are forced to remain cast in outer darkness. When one does further investigation into who these wretched souls are he sees that they are, "*...dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral...*"

The preceding verses should be a sharp warning to anyone. This should verify the stand that God takes against sexual immorality and show the Christian today what view he must also take towards sexual sin. If you are to be found faithful in God's eyes then the sin of pornography should be shunned and opposed. When you live a life of purity, God has promised a home in Heaven in that eternal day.

III. The Word Plainly Defined.

Perhaps society has conditioned people to think of pornography as a certain type of book or movie. Truthfully, the entire concept of pornography goes beyond that. The **Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** defined pornography in the following way: "The depiction of erotic behavior, as in pictures or writing, intended to cause sexual excitement." Another definition given is: "Material, for example books or photographs, which depict erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement."

With these definitions alone you can conclude that perhaps you have been surrounded by or exposed to pornography in some way. Although you may not be guilty of looking at a filthy mag-

azine or watching an X-rated movie, chances are there are some forms of pornography that have bombarded you, perhaps even daily.

Notice now the meaning of the word from a biblical perspective. Although the entire word “pornography” is not found written in the Bible, both portions of the word are found there. Pornography comes from two words from the Greek Language. They are as follows: *Porneia*: “Fornication or illicit sexual activity.” In other words, any type of sexual activity that does not fall within the parameters of God’s plan for human sexuality. Such would include premarital sex, adultery, lust over a member of the opposite sex or anything which would promote and/or fulfill sexual desires. The second word is *Graphe*: “To write or to draw.” One may better understand this word when used in terms of “graphics” or “autograph.” When one puts both words together he comes up with the following meaning for pornography, “A picture or writing which either describes or depicts any type of sexually immoral action.” In strictest reality of the word, pornography is clearly seen in homes on television every night. Even those so-called “Romance Novels” are full of pornographic garbage.

Now turning attention to the Bible, please refer to Ephesians 4:29 and 5:3-4. When one can see what the Bible teaches about sexual purity he can have a better view of what God teaches about the role of sex in his life. (See also chapter 5 where premarital sexual activity is dealt with.) Paul writes, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.*” Plainly Paul says that God’s people are not to be using their mouths to spread ungodliness. The principle stated here would not allow God’s children to spread any filth that is unbecoming of the Christian’s lifestyle. It is also God’s will that man actively deny sin. One must cut it from his life and not give it the chance to flourish (Colossians 2:11). For this reason, those who write, print or oral-

ly speak offensive and perverted material are far from following God's teaching.

Paul also writes in Ephesians 5:3,4, "*But fornication and uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness or foolish talking, or jesting which are not convenient, but rather of giving thanks.*" God's inspired word tells all Christians to put away things that are not becoming of His "*Holy nation*" of people (1 Peter 2:9). What does Paul begin with? **Fornication!** The word fornication, as has already been established, is a specific word that applies to a large range of sexual actions. This means that it is a sin to take part in any type of sexual misconduct. This would include those sins you commit or even when you draw pleasure from the ones others have committed (Romans 1:32). By viewing the glorified showcasing of another person's sexual indiscretion, you are "missing the mark" of purity that God wishes for you, his child, to obtain. In the Letter to the Ephesians, the inspired apostle Paul says that the church is not to have such a problem even named among them. The final conclusion is that Christians are not to take part in things that are not conducive to spiritual development. My mother was always quick to tell the family that the brain is like a "big computer...you can only get out what you put in." Instead of enjoying the sinful things, you should replace inappropriate actions with spiritual things by "giving thanks to God."

The more sin tries to force it's way into the hearts of God's people, the more fervently they need to prepare themselves by putting on God's armor (Ephesians 6:11). Then the victory over Satan can be accomplished and given to the glory of God. The problem of pornography is serious today. One needs to be informed and ever ready to stand against its attack on lives and souls today.

IV. Statistics of Pornography in American Society.

The following statistics are ample evidence of the widespread influence that pornography has in the world today. God's plan for sexual purity has not only been tainted and marred but there are countless people who finance this behavior thereby allowing it to remain.

As of 1990 in America alone the industry of hard-core pornographic material made over 9 billion dollars. Can you even conceive of such a number? Think of the good that could be done with such a large amount of money towards the problem of world hunger. What about the rooms that could be built for those who are homeless? What about training and sending missionaries into the nations of the world who are spiritually lost? Instead the money goes towards those who care nothing for others and who would rather choose to indulge in excessive sensual pleasures of this life (James 5:1-6). Indeed 9 billion dollars is a staggering amount of money. Recall that figure is only including the "hard-core" pornography. You can only imagine what the amount might be if money collected from every area of pornography were included. Surely it ought to sicken and sadden the Christian that people are giving up their souls for a few moments of fleeting physical pleasure while in turn making sinful men very wealthy.

You may have seen commercials that invite you to call and talk to a man or woman for a "per-minute price." Alas, the pornography business has cashed in on this avenue of income as well. The telephone lines around the world buzz with sexually explicit conversations being sent from one person to another. In fact, "Dial-A-Porn" is bringing in substantial amounts of money. It is estimated that such services are making an income of \$20,000 daily. When one multiplies this number by the 365 days in a year the sum total totals \$7,300,000. Indeed this "branch" of

pornography is a money making market.

While preparing for this chapter, Internet research was of particular importance. One should be very concerned that there are so many young people who have easy access to the Internet. While preparing this chapter for publication the original statistics, which were obtained during research, changed over a period of about 6 months. The following should show how rapidly pornographic material is spreading across the World Wide Web (WWW).

Originally there were 932,592 sources on the WWW for the "Playboy Magazine." This number saw quite a dramatic increase from only 29,519 only a short time ago. There were 37,729 sources for "pornography." This is also an increase from 31,519.¹⁸ One of the largest increases was for "XXX Pictures" which was originally 125,427 and had come to be 844,933. There were 23,296 places one could view "Nudity" which was up from only 12,000. An alarming 482,452 sources were possible for the keyword "Sex" which was up from 465,814. And last of all, there were numerous places for a person to send a picture of ones spouse or girlfriend/boyfriend for money. Obviously the Internet has given the pornographic world an entirely new area to conquer. A whole new set of ethical problems is born and it is our job to learn about and fight against this problem.

What makes people want to perpetuate this kind of lewdness? Plainly and obviously the problem is what Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 6:10, "*The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.*" People are becoming rich because of other people's misplaced desires. There are so many who are worried about pleasing themselves with the goods of this world that they do not care what they must do to obtain more and more. In their minds, if one must degrade the body of a young man or woman by exhibiting them in their most private and sacred state then so be it! If it

means destroying a person's proper concept about the marital union and holiness of the sexual bond in matrimony, then who cares? People are living every day with the idea that "Sex" is their opportunity to fame, fortune, fun and excitement. Not so says the Bible. All their riches and pleasure will not present them with a passage through the gates of Heaven when this life is over (Matthew 19:16-24; Galatians 5:19-21).

V. What Does Pornography Offer Anyway?

There are some things that pornography will use to lure people into condoning its polluting message. What types of things would be the basis for man's temptation? How can pornography lure you into acceptance?

1. Pornography Is Based Entirely on the "Pleasure Principle."

This idea is called "Hedonism." The word hedonism means, "The philosophy which teaches that the entire purpose for man is to pursue pleasure." When looking at the word "pleasure" you find its meaning is, "a state of gratifying." One man who has perhaps done more to counteract God's plan for marital purity and who also has established the "Playboy Empire" is Hugh Hefner. He has made the word "Playboy" very popular. You will not be surprised when noting the meaning of that word. Playboy: "A man who lives a life devoted chiefly to the pursuit of pleasure."

By the very admission of using the word "playboy" it is obvious that anyone who follows the teachings of pornography is striving for the pursuit of earthly pleasure. When you take part in such a thing you are not "...*keeping your hearts set on things above*" (Colossians 3:1,2). Those who would look upon pornography are interested in satisfying their own physical lusts in ways

not sanctioned by God. Of course all along Satan is very pleased to deceive people into thinking that pornography is “not really wrong” or “not that bad.” In reality, pornography seeks to put the temporary pleasures of man over the responsibilities and obligations of this present life, which lead to the eternal joys of life to come. For this reason, one should deny and reject pornography in any form.

2. Pornography Fails to Teach the True Meaning of the Sexual Relationship.

What does one see when he views a picture wherein the objects are two unmarried people engaged in a sexual act? The very idea of pornography is blasphemous to the will of God! How can a person who has any respect for the authority of scriptures dare say that pornography is not immoral? As already stated, God created people as sexual creatures and with this come basic needs and desires. However, God has commanded that those feelings be controlled until two people engage in the marital relationship.

A study from the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) in 1970 concluded that pornography, “...helped marriages, relieved sexual tensions and was cathartic for society.” Those who would enjoy pornography immediately held to this study as being conclusive proof that there was no real harm in it. Such ideas show the biases of sinful man. One must look further at the activities that surround pornography to see that there truly is harm in it. Consequently, the study that was proposed by the ACLU in 1970 was immediately rejected by Congress. In 1984, Ronald Reagan and a commission of 11 members concluded that pornography was “detrimental and degrading to society.”

Who are Christians to trust? Who can God’s people listen to? First, Christians must do everything to deny sin even when the

entire world is relishing in it. God told the Israelites in Exodus 23:2, "*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*" Satan is more than pleased to help the people of this world forget the ways of God. When anyone constantly fills his/her mind with images of nakedness or pictures of two involved in immoral activities, he/she cannot keep a pure and unadulterated view of God's plan for sexual fulfillment.

3. A Reason to Push God Aside and Follow Selfish Lusts.

Of those who rally to keep pornography flourishing in this society, there is a common thread that binds them together. These people look to the human side as the higher power. When God is taken away, then humanity has been elevated to the place of supremacy. Certain people of the world cry out to fulfill their desires regardless of the outcome. In their mind there is no final judgment and so there is no reason to be concerned about any of man's actions.

In the world of pornography, there is a constant yet silent plea to keep God far from your mind. God's word says that you are not to look upon those things that are done of them in secret (Ephesians 5:12). To accept pornography there are several things that you will have to do:

1. You will have to deny the fact that these two people are exhibiting their bodies in a sinful way.
2. You will have to push aside your beliefs of when and where sexuality is permitted to take place.
3. You will have to forget God or "*not retain God in your knowledge*" (Romans 1:28).

Satan is pleased to send God's people a "*strong delusion so that they can believe a lie*" (2 Thessalonians 2:11). His gift

toward mankind is the ability to conveniently rationalize a way of making sin appear to be acceptable in some circumstances. Where Satan will fail is when he attacks the dedicated child of God. God's people know that sin is sin and will never change into righteousness. Satan wants you to follow your own ways and strives to pierce you through with fiery darts (Ephesians 6:11,16). For this reason, you can see the importance of studying the word of God and remembering to listen to that little voice inside your head. Be ever ready and in constant watch for the trap or snare of the devil, whether it comes in the form of alcohol, dancing or pornography.

People today have made themselves the standard by which others can judge an action right or wrong. In other words, if the self wants to do a thing, even if it is contradictory to God's eternal truth, then the self should be allowed to do it. One of the most frightening teachings in the world today is the idea that all opinions are correct, even if both opinions are in direct contradiction to one another. Some people say, "You should not view pornography." At the same time another will say, "You should be allowed to view pornography." Whose opinion is right? What ought moral questions to be based on? The opinions of man must be based upon the divine moral standard that is the word of God. It is the Bible that claims to be the foundation for judging ethical topics. In 2 Timothy 3:16,17 Paul writes, "*For all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto every good work.*" According to the pattern of righteousness the principles of pornography are in opposition to God's will.

When man rejects the word of God he then has no objective standard by which to judge actions to be right or wrong. Notice the words in Isaiah 55:7-9, "*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord and*

he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God must be living in every facet of life for the Christian. He is to hold a special place within your heart since He created you. It is for this reason that wicked people must come to him and those who are saved continually hold fast to him. While weak mankind is able to make a sinful action *seem* OK in their own minds, one must recall that for God, sin is sin. His ways are not your ways and you must follow His ways. When people cast God away from the decision making process, then they may as well proclaim atheism because they are living as atheists. By their actions they say, “There is no God to worry about, I can do what I want.”

It has been said that with God out of the picture, people can do whatever they are big enough to do. From a human standpoint this is a true saying. If there were no God then whatever a military power or group of people declared as law, would be forced upon the world. Man would be free to take part in any sin that was allowed by his own law. In man’s eyes there would be no fear of the eternal outcome because there would be no judgment according to the eternal law. In reality however, man lives in a world where God does exist and has laid down a set of moral principles to follow. It is then absurd to follow man’s ideas when God’s word has the power to save the eternal soul. In the words of the inspired writer James, “*Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrained word which is able to save your souls*” (James 1:21).

4. Addiction and Progression.

Many consider that experimentation with pornography leads to full-blown addiction. It has been noted that many young peo-

ple begin by “toying” with soft-core pornography and soon grow tired of the “same old thing.” Later they move on to experimenting with those more revealing areas known as “hard-core” pornography.

There are many criminals in American prisons for “sex related crimes” who have admitted their downfall had it’s beginning point by looking at pornography and soon acting out what they had seen. One of the most well-known murderers in recent American history was Ted Bundy. He was a man who raped and killed several women across America. In 1989 he was executed in the state of Florida for his crimes. Prior to his death he mentioned the place that pornography had in influencing his alarming and sadistic lifestyle. Others, as well as Bundy, have also admitted their lives of sexual addiction began in looking at pornographic magazines. Why? Because when people tamper with God’s rules for marital and sexual intimacy, they begin losing the original sense of purity that marriage is to contain. Pornography can be destructive to lives in more ways than one.

V. Pornography Is Wrong: A Biblical Perspective

The entire chapter has been dealing with this issue in some respect. The following section will look at the area of biblical authority. An action cannot be morally proper if it either, 1) goes against a direct command of scripture; 2) violates a biblical moral principle.

1. Lust Is a Definite Issue.

Are people able to pick and choose which portions of the Bible they want to apply? There are some today who believe that they can follow the word of God only so far as they want to. Such an idea is futile and vain (Colossians 2:8). Look at the words of the “Master Teacher” in Matthew 5:27,28: *“And you have heard that it was said of them of old, ‘You shall not commit*

adultery.’ But I say unto you that whosoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

What do you learn from the Lord’s words? First, under the old law, the physical action of adultery was a sin. Second, Christ acts as the authority to change or at least modify this commandment. Third, now when one looks upon the physical beauty of a woman and wishes to have some kind of sexual relationship with her, he has committed adultery with her in God’s eyes. Fourth, there is sin involved in thinking things that are not becoming of God’s child. It does not necessarily have to be “physical fornication” to be considered by God as a sin.

Why then do men and women look to the pages of pornographic magazines? This writer guarantees that it is not to “keep up with the latest styles” or to “read the articles.” Rather, it is to fulfill personal sexual desires. It is to see and gaze upon the young man or woman posing in the nude. Lust comes for anyone. What would be the best way not to lust in this situation? Do not look at the picture.

People who operate the pornographic businesses are not concerned with your soul. They do not understand or accept the fact that sexuality is a thing of sacredness and beauty. When they publish such pictures, they do so with no remorse or feelings of guilt. They deny the idea that their business is sinful and mock Christians who say that pornography causes further sin in many lives and eventually leads people into Hell.

You may recall King David. There is the great Israelite leader high atop the city gazing across the rooftops. In the area was a beautiful woman bathing in clear view. When David saw her, he desired and knew immediately that he wanted to have her. Although God had blessed him in many ways, Satan had caught him in the trap entitled, “LUST.” His sin with this woman led to

many more problems which you can read about in 2 Samuel 11:1; 12:23. The lesson from the text is that lust can cause many troubles as well. The results can be devastating and even eternal.

2. Laws of Sexual Morality.

In the Old Testament there was a strict code for God's people to follow. Although people today do not live under the Law of Moses, one can learn from the law how God viewed certain circumstances. In the book of Leviticus, the main point of chapter eighteen shows that one was not permitted to look upon the nakedness of others. Those, whether related or not, were never to uncover or cast their eyes upon the nakedness of anyone else. The Israelites were to follow a strict guideline for sexual activity. Nobody was permitted to take part in bestiality, homosexuality and of course fornication and adultery.

As stated earlier, Christians today are not under the same "law-code" as the Israelites were (Galatians 3:22-28). However, Romans 15:4 teaches, "*The things written aforetime were written for our learning.*" Which means the things which were viewed as immoral in the day of Moses, give one a good idea of how God views an action in the twentieth century. If doing a thing in the book of Leviticus was a morally impure action then, simply because of the distance of time or advanced technological superiority, does not mean that God's view is altered. God does not change. He is immutable and has declared that He will never change (Malachi 3:6). Therefore, it can be safely concluded that to uncover the nakedness of any other person (than that of your mate or yourself), is considered by God as unfit for His child.

One may weakly offer as a rebuttal to this argument the fact that there is no literal uncovering of nakedness with pornography because the model is already naked. In response to that, one must notice God's purpose for making such regulations. It was to

show the purity in nakedness. It is sacred and not to be seen, recognized or enjoyed by anyone other than ones spouse. Secondly, there is a sense in which one would be guilty of *“uncovering ones nakedness”* when the pages of a magazine are opened. Until the page is opened the model within the book is hidden to the physical eyes. When one pulls back the page, the thing which has been covering him/her is pulled away. Any logical person will see what God says about the sacredness of nakedness and conclude that God does not allow anyone to view pornography.

3. Do Not Take Pleasure in Them That Do Sin.

A person who is serious about living the Christian life will have to face and answer this Christian responsibility. You are never to willingly take part in any sinful action regardless of what it is. Notice the solemn verse in Romans 1:32 when Paul writes, *“Who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but take pleasure in them that do them.”* Who could honestly suppose that a person could pose in the nude without there being some measure of sin committed? Who thinks it would be permitted by God to become an object of desire? Anyone who ever wishes to look at pictures of another person naked must affirm the two previous questions. Who really thinks that posing in the nude is fine? Who believes that there is never an element of lust in looking at pornography? Hopefully you do not believe this lie. Notice the following argument against looking at pornography.

1. It is wrong for anyone to pose naked in magazines where people can readily view them.
2. If one looks upon the pictures of those in the nude, it could bring about improper feelings and possibly inordinate physical pleasure, thereby one would be taking pleasure in the wrong-doing of the model.

3. Therefore one would be disobedient to the verse in Romans 1:32 because of taking personal pleasure in the sin of another.

The person who poses for such pictures is not acting in accordance with the will of God. She or he is missing the mark that God wishes for them to come to. They rather become part of the world and allow their lives to be covered with the sins of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Instead of becoming part of the problem, the Christian is to "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*" (Ephesians 5:11). God's people are also told that their duty is to "*Prove all things*" (2 Thessalonians 5:21). This does not mean it is allowed to sit idly by and permit sin to go on unchallenged. Christianity is a life of action against the ways of the wicked one. It is a very real battle that requires the soldier of Christ to put on his armor (Ephesians 6:11). Pornography is of the Devil and should not be tolerated in the least by those who follow Christ.

4. One Marries to Avoid Fornication.

It is again necessary to recall the meaning of fornication. It is a word that covers many different acts of sexual misconduct. The word adultery usually means sexual relations with one other than his/her spouse. The word is specific whereas fornication is a more general term for a broad range of sexual immorality. Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 7:2, "*Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband.*" Again the original word for fornication is *Porneia*. This means any type of sexual association that is not within the confines of the marital relationship. Here Paul is saying if you wish to avoid the sin of fornication, then you must begin making the necessary steps to getting married. This will put sexuality in the proper framework where two adults are committed to one another for a lifetime. One of the many pur-

poses of marriage is for that reason. As to the original intention, sex is not a filthy and disgusting practice. God created sex to be loved and cherished by His creation. However, any relationship outside of the marital union is sinful.

What is one to do who is not old enough to marry? You should do what God wants you to do. Learn to control the feelings that may bring about sin later. You have been raised in the midst of conflicting philosophies. Those who serve God have told you not to take part in illegitimate sexual practices. On the other side of that coin, the world tells you to take whatever you want. The decision is now yours. Do you want to follow the ways of this world to Hell or the way of God into Heaven? Your desire should be to follow the Bible and deny yourself the pleasures of sin for a short time. Look at the bigger picture where you can see the end from the beginning. In the distance you can see a heavenly home waiting for those who are faithful to God's will. This place is so glorious that it beckons you to do all you can to enter there one day. Christ spoke the words in Matthew 16:24, "*If any man will follow me let him take up his cross and follow me.*" Today an outright rejection of that verse is clearly evident. It seems that many think the words "bodily control" are evil and to are to be ridiculed. Society teaches to do whatever feels good and if you want something then take it. Imagine the laughter people would exhibit were you to say, "I will deny myself the temporary earthly pleasures because they are not helpful to my eternal soul." Control is what Jesus Christ wishes for Christians to incorporate into their everyday lives. This is pleasing to Him.

Look at the passage in 1 Corinthians 6:13. Paul writes, "*Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord.*" The purpose in life is not to spend every moment in the senseless pursuit of pleasure. Those who would follow the "playboy philosophy" must deny God's word. Of course in so doing they deny God. Your body, as well as the body of the models who pose in the

nude, are not for invoking and satisfying sinful pleasures, but for the work of the Lord. The only place a person can avoid the problem of sexual sins is within the bonds of holy matrimony. When one marries and enjoys sexual relations with a spouse, what he/she enjoys is a holy and sacred union that God has bestowed on His creation as a gift.

5. Models Misunderstand the Purpose of Their Own Sexuality.

When models are subjected to being photographed and having their most private moments pictured, printed and sent over the entire world, somewhere within the life of that young lady, there was a failure to teach her the purpose of her own sexuality. The models are certainly not learning about God's plan for them nor are they being taught that their bodies are only to be shared with one spouse. Hugh Hefner has claimed to treat his models with the utmost respect. Certainly this may be true in terms of ravishing them with expensive clothing and lavish gifts. However, the sad fact remains that those who look upon the young lady in a book or on television are not thinking of how special she was being treated. To those on the receiving side, this person is seen as nothing more than a sexual object.

It pains me to hear about those who would shamelessly pose for or become involved in pornography. The models have souls like everyone else in the world and have been created in the image of God. They in ignorance, or perhaps in outright rebellion, tell the world that they are only "objects" and are to be used in satisfying sexual urges for anyone who cares to take notice. The fact of the matter remains and is as old as life itself. God has created all the people of this world. God loved the people of the world so much that He gave His son as a sacrifice for their sins (John 3:16). For this reason regardless of size, height or weight all people are special in the eyes of God. Anyone who takes part

in being used for pornography is not living up to the title that God declares all people wear: "God's image." Surely the models are missing the point of their own sexuality.

VI. Conclusion.

It is a simple biblical truth that Satan is very cunning. He can use the innermost desire to cause you to yield to sin. He has and always will continue to use your personal temptations as a foot in the door to your heart and is bent on slowly destroying your godly life. It is so important never to start down the road that may lead you to compromise your Christian convictions.

Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). Have you ever really thought about that? What is the purpose of the head? It reasons and it controls bodily movement towards the proper way to go. With Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, as your head you cannot ever go into the wrong place; it is against your nature since you are part of His body. It is impossible to ignore the head of your own body. How much more then ought you to be unwilling to ignore the head of the church, the Son of God? "*Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God*" (1 John 3:1). Since you are part of His body, you should never desire to do anything that could cause Him pain and agony. Anything that appears to be even remotely sinful should be shunned, therefore pornography has no place in your life.

Darkness and light do not mix. There is no way to mingle the light and dark in such a way as to remain pure. If you try to put just a little sin into your pure life, there is an immediate darkness to cloud your mind. What category would pornography fall under? Could anyone who serves God honestly say there are any good attributes about pornography? The answer that one must come to is, "No." Pornography brings nothing to man which is

decent or helpful for leading him into eternal life with God. Continue to see pornography as a tool of Satan. It is one that he uses often and through it gains many followers daily. Pray for those models who are caught in the web of pornography and do all you can to help your friends not to get involved in this sinful pastime.

Is it possible for the truly loyal Christian to take part in pornography? What is it worth to you? It is your decision. You decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 9

“Do You Suffer from Tobaccoitis?”

I. Does One Ever Have an Excuse to Do Wrong?

Since the very beginning of time Satan has done his very best to deceitfully indoctrinate mankind. Satan used a blatant lie to destroy the perfection that God had created for humanity when he cunningly approached Eve in Genesis 3:1. With Eve in a state of confusion, she took of the tree and by her action, brought the first act of disobedience into the world. Even Christ was confronted with the subtle trickery of that old serpent in Matthew 4. During a time when Christ was emotionally and physically exhausted, Satan approached Him with three offensive attacks. First, he declared that if Jesus really was the Son of God, then He ought to command stones be made to bread (Matthew 4:3). Second, Satan asked Christ to prove His power by casting Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, that the angels of heaven could save Him (Matthew 4:6). Third, Christ was tempted to bow down and worship the Devil. Satan promised that he would give to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8,9). With each of His counter-attacks, Christ responded with the same shattering phrase, “*It is written.*” Every Christian should remember this when faced with temptation or any decision to make. When one does only things that are authorized by the word of God, then there is never any question as to whether or not his action is legitimate.

It seems that Christians have also fallen prey to the clutches of the evil tempter. Although there is always clear evidence that an action is against the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, people continuously offer excuses for their activities. The following is a brief list of some phrases that people use to justify their actions.

“This is none of your business.”

“It feels so good and I like it.”

“I want to and it is my decision.”

“I am not hurting anyone, so leave me alone.”

“Who are you to judge me?”

Do any of these sound even remotely familiar? It may be the case that such phrases have been heard within your own household. Perhaps you even have been guilty of using these excuses yourself. Looking at them in an objective manner, none of these are reasons to use tobacco products. In fact, excuses have never had the ability to make an immoral action acceptable. In reality, these excuses are empty, worthless lies that people have told themselves so often that they are believed.

Satan has always tried to bring similar ideas into the church. The crafty deceiver is graciously pleased to offer man a way to overlook the truth of an issue and lead them beyond logical, biblical answers. The matter of this chapter deals with one such area. The Lord’s church, being made of the people who have “put him on” (Galatians 3:27) are those who have “*put off the old man and his deeds*” (Colossians 3:9). Namely, a Christian is one who talks, lives and follows in the footsteps and pattern of our Lord Jesus (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21). Once more, the battle is raging between God’s people and the “*...roaring lion, who is walking about seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). The Devil has blinded many to the dangers of following after the things of this world. When any action is after the course of this world, it does not carry with it divine sanction. Notice Paul in Ephesians 2:2, “*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.*” According to his statement, Christians are to stay clear of any-

thing that appears to be worldly in nature. The “old man” is dead to sin and the new man lives for Christ (Galatians 2:20). In this chapter, the focus will be on the dangers of tobacco use.

II. Definitions and Dangers.

Whether chewing, smoking or dipping, there are real physical dangers in using tobacco. This chapter looks at both the spiritual and physical dangers of tobacco use. Plainly stated, when one chooses to consume tobacco he is willfully flooding his body with a great variety of poisons. Perhaps the most well known poison that tobacco products possess is nicotine. According to the *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Nicotine is defined as the following, “A poisonous alkaloid that is also the chief component in insecticides.” It is extremely eye-opening that the very poison farmers use to exterminate insects from crops has led millions of people to addiction? From this one instance of proof alone one can ask, “What is the outcome of smoking or chewing tobacco?” The answer is that smoking is a willful flooding of the human body with poisons.

For the new tobacco user, the body slowly learns to want to replenish itself with the toxins. Time and again, as the bloodstream becomes accustomed to the presence of this addictive poison, it literally begins to need that very thing. If the body cannot fulfill its desire then the symptoms of withdrawal follow. Many in the world today cannot overcome their body's great lust for tobacco and literally become addicted for life. Why is this? The answer is simple: nicotine is an addictive drug. It should be considered as both addictive and dangerous by everyone.

In the news recently there has been much talk about the impact of tobacco on the body's system. Be aware that nicotine is not the only toxin or poison in tobacco products. In a somewhat dated study, Dr. D. H. Kress found that there were nineteen

addictive poisons in the cigarette. An even more recent study found forty-two poisons contained in cigarettes. Furthermore, as if forty-two toxins were not bad enough, each of these poisons is known to cause cancer. Yet again, an even more drastic fact to understand about tobacco is that of the forty-two cancer causing agents, thirty-nine of those are present in second-hand smoke alone. What conclusion does this lead to?

1. Smoking is harmful to ones body.
2. Smoking is not only harmful to the self, but is also harmful to those who are near the smoker.

What are people thinking today? Either they are ignorant of the facts about using tobacco or perhaps they simply do not care. There really is no excuse. Can one smoke and knowingly strew cancer-causing agents in the air for others to breathe in good conscience? Brother Barry Anderson has this to say, "There are enough pollutants in the atmosphere already without a person deliberately creating more right under his nose. We do not have control over the foul fumes that have been poured into God's good atmosphere by our mechanized society, but we can certainly keep from becoming a walking smokestack and fouling up the air around us. There is enough danger of lung cancer without smoking. Smoking only compounds the danger."¹⁹

The drug of nicotine has been mentioned as the chief poison in the cigarette. Likely this is the most widely accepted and prevalently discussed ingredient within tobacco. Time will not be paid to expound on the other poisons in great detail. Rather the following list will serve as ample evidence for the plurality of toxins contained in tobacco.²⁰

Carbon Monoxide: A colorless odorless very toxic gas.

Ammonia: A pungent colorless gaseous alkaline compound.

Cyanide: A compound of cyanogen with a more electropositive element. (Cyanogen is defined as a colorless, flammable poisonous gas.)

Acetone: A volatile fragrant flammable liquid ketone C_3H_6O used chiefly as a solvent and in organic synthesis.

Benzene: A colorless volatile flammable toxic liquid aromatic hydrocarbon C_6H_6 used in organic synthesis, as a motor fuel and solvent.

Phenol: A corrosive poisonous crystalline acidic compound C_6H_5OH in coal tar and wood tar that in dilute solution is used in disinfectant.

DDT: A colorless, odorless water-insoluble crystalline insecticide $C_{14}H_9Cl_5$ that tends to accumulate in ecosystems and has toxic effect on many vertebrates.

Methyl Alcohol: Methanol: A light flammable volatile poisonous liquid alcohol CH_3OH used especially as a solvent, antifreeze, or denaturant for ethyl alcohol and the synthesis of other chemicals.

Arsenic: A trivalent and pentavalent solid poisonous element. A poisonous trioxide used as an insecticide or weed-killer.

Formaldehyde: A colorless pungent irritating gas CH_2O used chiefly as a disinfectant and preservative and in chemical synthesis.

Nitrobenzene: A poisonous yellow insoluble oil $C_6H_5NO_2$ with an almond odor that is used especially as a solvent and as a mild oxidizing agent.

Polonium-210: A radioactive metallic element.

The above listing was only partial. This list was given sim-

ply to convey information. Tobacco may not look as bad on the outside, but when one is shown all the poisons and dangerous gases that it possesses, obviously the smoker is using his body as a toxic waste dump. The major question for the Christian to ask is, "Would my body be better without such toxins?" The answer is also obvious: of course it would.

Over the years there have been many discussions about the harms of using tobacco. The United States Surgeon General has always had something to say regarding tobacco usage. In 1979, the Surgeon General warned people about smoking by stating that smokers were particularly susceptible to Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, Lung Diseases and Gastrointestinal Diseases. Dr. Marshall Hall said that using tobacco in any form automatically brings poison into ones body. To both prove and clarify this point, how many people would be willing to volunteer as testing agents by drinking a glass of ammonia or formaldehyde? Likely, there would not be anyone to accept this challenge. Yet people use tobacco products and flood their bodies with such poisons everyday. Dr. W. M. Stone says that, "Tobacco weakens the blood vessels. The chance of the tobacco user recovering from a malignant disease such as typhoid, pneumonia and influenza are lessened by 50%." One who smokes must willfully admit and accept the responsibility of weakening their body's resistance to illness. How can one rightfully chance weakening their bodies by allowing harmful chemicals into their temples?

Dr. J. H. Kellogg said that all authorities recognize that tobacco is a heart poison. According to him, "A very small dosage of tobacco's numerous toxins increase the work of the heart by contracting it and raising the blood-pressure." This serious charge is given more credence as the final stages of serious tobacco addiction are noticed.

"Smoking also increases the stickiness of certain blood cells,

thus the smoker's blood is more likely to clot within the already narrowed coronary arteries. When the blood vessel is finally clogged up, the smoker is at a distinct disadvantage. The nicotine from the tobacco begins to stimulate the heart, causing it to work harder than normal, so the heart is in need of more oxygen to support the higher workload. However, carbon monoxide from the cigarette binds very tightly to the hemoglobin, the oxygen carrying molecule, thereby lowering its capacity to transport oxygen. Thus the blood that gets through or around the clogged artery carries less oxygen to the heart that requires more oxygen due to the increased workload. Heart attacks are the ending result unless instant death comes first."²¹ Barry Anderson explains that, "According to Dr. Louis H. Nahum, writing in the Journal of the Connecticut Medical Society, you are driving another nail in your coffin lid every time you light up. He said, 'Strike a match, inhale and relax, and say goodbye to 14 ½ minutes of your life. Do it 20 times a day and you can expect to die 8 years earlier than you should. Smoke two packs a day and move your date with the undertaker forward by 16 years.'"²²

Finally, the poisons in tobacco touch every organ of the human body. The poison is filtered through the lungs and the oxygen carries the toxin to every place that the blood travels. As the elements are dispersed, they are absorbed into the lungs, arteries, bladder, heart and intestinal wall to mention a few. Thank God that one is able to keep his body pure from such filth.

Nobody would seek for their lives to be plagued by the diseases that tobacco use can bring about. There is never a reason to begin using tobacco. Beyond the physical problems that are commonly associated with using tobacco, there are also other reasons that the child of God should not follow the world in using tobacco in any of its various forms.

IV. Reasons Not to Use Tobacco.

Just because tobacco use is not specifically condemned in the Bible does not mean a person has justification for using it. As was mentioned in the first chapter of this work, there are several things that one should consider before making any decision. Simply because a thing is not mentioned by name does not negate the fact that there are eternal principles which are applicable today and must be followed. (For a list of those principles, please notice the second chapter entitled, "Biblical Principle for Decision Making.")

1. Should One Poison His Own Body?

There is ample evidence from the Bible that people are to care for the bodies entrusted to them. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul writes, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own.*" The teachings of this verse show that:

- 1). The body is the temple that God has given you as a gift.
- 2). Man is not the owner of his body as is often thought to be the case. When a person does not have sole ownership over an item, certain rules must be followed in properly maintaining the possession to the specification of the original owner. A person who rents a home has to conform to the rules imposed by the landlord. In the same manner, David writes in Psalms 100:3 that, "*...it is He who has made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*" Again, the ownership of man belongs to God. Further in 2 Corinthians 5:15 Paul says, "*...and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*" Your life has the possibility of eternal rest because Christ died for you. Since He offered the greatest sacrifice of all, His people no longer are concerned about fulfilling their own desires, but are

interested in the constant pursuit of “*seeking the things which are above*” (Colossians 3:1).

Although the physical changes brought about by tobacco use are not clearly externally evident, there are immediate harmful effects brought about by just one cigarette. To use tobacco is to poison oneself and to do such is wrong regardless of the amount.

2. Tobacco Is an Unnatural Lust of the Flesh.

The intention trying to be conveyed here is that since God never commanded people to use tobacco and since it violates a principle of properly maintaining ones body, then such is an unnatural human lust. God has created man with certain needs that are required for proper living. Man must have food, clothing and shelter to live. These are the basic needs of humanity and without these things one will die. The Bible authorizes man to partake of proper foods, wear appropriate clothing and live in acceptable housing. By doing these things there is no violation of any ethical law, so long as they are done in accordance with God’s will. Anything beyond what the body must have to exist should be carefully considered in light of God’s word. Seeing that tobacco is full of poisons, contains known drugs and can alter the composition of the body by unnatural stimulation, one must conclude that tobacco use is an ungodly practice.

To use tobacco is not sanctioned by God and only fulfills the lust and desire that man has. Since God’s teaching condemns selfish thinking, then one who follows God must not use tobacco in any form.

3. Tobacco Can Harm the Good Health of the Innocent.

The facts have already been noticed about the presence of cancer causing agents in second-hand smoke. When one exhales

smoke littered with toxins, although he may be exercising his “smoker’s privilege,” he has voided the clean air of others. If someone is happy to stand in a poison cloud and carry on conversation, he is obviously ignorant to the pollutants within second-hand smoke. Recently, a pediatrician declared a very important fact to this author. A single parent who smokes inside the home is more dangerous to a young child’s health than all the tree, grass and pollen spores combined during a child’s normal outside playtime. Parents with children who experience terrible bouts with hay fever and other allergies are only worsening their child’s condition by smoking within the same house with the child. Surely any parent who cares about their children’s health will keep their precious children free from such filth.

4. Tobacco Use Can Become a Stumbling block.

Remember who you are. The Christian acts as an ambassador for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2 that God’s people are “*epistles...known and read of all men.*” The meaning for Christians is that one is to only do those things that make a good impression on others as to lead them closer to the truth. When a person witnesses you taking part in an improper action, his view is that you are giving approval to that deed. Followers of Jesus are closely noticed by society. Christians are saying to the world that their actions meet with God’s approval. So then, would Jesus offer His blessing towards the act of chewing, dipping or smoking tobacco? The answer that has been shown by way of biblical principles is “No, He would not.” So then, when the child of God takes part in using tobacco, it is as though he says to the world, “What I am doing is acceptable in God’s sight.” The final word on this issue is, when God’s word does not authorize an action as permissible, while the Christian continues rebelliously in the activity, then he not only denies God’s word, but also misleads others from God’s will on the issue.

5. Tobacco Use Hurts the Influence of the Church.

The major priority or mission in life is to abide by the word of God, thereby glorifying Him. In the final words of the Lord Jesus Christ, a self-perpetuating command was given to His followers. In Matthew 28:19,20, Christ told His disciples to, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* Those who did carry on this “Great Commission” received new converts to the Christian way of life who matured to the point where they could soon teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). This chain of teaching has come down to those who have done God’s will in the present world. All of God’s children, that is those people who have been obedient to His will, should seek to bring the lost of the world to Jesus. How can man accomplish the proper glorification of God when he continues to hold fast to the ways of the world?

In the opinion of the author, one of the most deplorable sights one can ever witness is seeing a man of the Lord’s Body, after the Bible Class portion of the service has been dismissed, smoke a cigarette prior to entering the presence of God to worship. Worship is a time that has been ordained by God himself. Worship is a time that should have a reserved place of utmost reverence in ones mind, and finally it is a time when man should be able to *“lift up holy hands”* before God (1 Timothy 2:8). This sacred occasion has been trampled on and belittled by those who enter the Lord’s presence with a breath of nicotine and a body filled with poison. Paul cries out to God’s people, *“Be filled with the spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

How is tobacco use and Christian influence compatible in the least? They are mutually exclusive or opposites that have nothing in common. What message is being sent to those who drive by the church building as they witness God’s people bringing the

ways of the world into the assembly? May it be our constant prayer to always uphold the church of our Lord. Let the community never doubt the sincerity of the Lord's people as good stewards over their bodies.

IV. Some Excuses Answered.

The Christian should strive to keep his body free from the impurities of this society that makes living the Christian life harder. For this reason, the follower of Christ should stand firmly opposed to a personal use of tobacco products. Rather than following the ways of the world around him, the child of God will make conscious strides towards serving the God of all creation.

All good soldiers of Christ have an obligation to protect the purity and uphold the sanctity of the Lord's body. The Devil is doing his best to infiltrate the minds of God's people. As Peter said, we are to be "*...sober and vigilant because our adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). Recall that Paul told the Ephesians to put on the armor of Christ so that they could withstand the trickery of the Devil (Ephesians 6:11). Satan is a master of his game and will use anything to get close to his prey, be it alcohol, impure sexual relations or even tobacco. Yet with God's help all people can stand strong.

Below are a few excuses that have been personally posed to the author when talking to others about their tobacco habit. The sayings are very familiar to each one and so the intention of this portion is to look at and offer a brief rebuttal for each so-called excuse. By the end, the obvious truth will shine clearly. Any excuse that man can offer is only a weak attempt to offer justification for man's sinful actions.

1. “My Parents Say It Is OK.”

If this is the case then it is a sad commentary to the extent that parents have shirked their responsibility as guardians. If parents allow their children to sin, there is a very serious negative message that has been taught to the next generation. Parents are never given the authority or obligation to allow their own opinions to be held over God’s word on a particular subject. The Bible is explicit in commanding that a person care for his body. Simply because a parent allows their children to continue in an inappropriate action, in no way makes their conduct morally acceptable.

Young people, even if your parents give you the permission to do a thing that is highly questionable or even obviously wrong, never forget that you are to stand before God one day. There is no way to stand justified before God on that final day after having intentionally rebelled against God’s will. Such an excuse is empty.

2. “It Is Not Really Harmful.”

Recently a person approached me and said that scientists and doctors are not really certain as to whether or not tobacco is harmful. Such an ignorant statement is quickly answered by expressing the outcomes of documented studies. The presence of 42 cancer causing agents in second-hand smoke alone is conclusive proof that tobacco is dangerous. If one truly desires to gain the truth about this habit, he can easily do so.

3. “I Just Want To.”

The person who uses the above excuse should at least be given credit for his honesty. Perhaps this is the only true reason that people use tobacco products. In fact, many of society’s ills are conceived by these ideas of selfishness. The reply would be

that mankind has never been given liberty to do whatever he wants. There are many things that man may *want to do*, which he *never can do* because those things may violate God's will. Equally, there is a multitude of actions that a person can involve himself in that does not violate any principle of God's word. There are things that are not wasteful of money, harmful to the body and have substantial influence over the people of the world. It is not man's option to choose the sin he enjoys committing, rather God's child puts any sin far from his life. Simply because one wants to smoke or chew does not adequately answer the violations involved in using tobacco.

4. "The Bible Does Not Specifically Condemn It."

Without a great amount of detail to this point, the entire book has sought to give an answer to this kind of attitude. Since the Bible was written that Christians might know how to live in the world, they must not do anything, specifically mentioned or not, which goes against the eternal principles that Christian Ethics are based upon (See chapter three).

The thing to do would be to calmly talk over the reasons that one cannot approve of tobacco use. It harms the body, it is a habit that brings reproach against the church and the follower of Christ is to pursue Christ-likeness. A tobacco user breaks all three principles listed above. Although the Bible does not specifically condemn tobacco use, one cannot deny that the principles of God's word are broken.

V. Concluding Questions Regarding Tobacco Use.

1. Does Using Tobacco Make One a Better Christian?

One could carry the above query a level higher by asking whether or not using tobacco even makes one a better person. It

is a fact that many tend to sugarcoat the habit of smoking. The advertising that is commonly seen on billboards and magazine ads make the uses of tobacco look appealing and desirable. The executives who propel millions of users into full-fledged addiction stress the lies that one will miraculously be flooded with friends, money and power if he will but puff the weed in public. All the marketing strategies of the American Medical Association, American Cancer Society and the U. S. Public Health Services do little good to turn the tide. Hundreds of people each day use tobacco with many adverse health effects and yet there are no positive outcomes as were promised to him. Ask the hopeless addict who gasps for air while affixed to an oxygen machine whether the cigarette made him a better person.

2. Does Using Tobacco Really Help in Making Decisions?

No, it certainly does not. People who experience “Nicotine Fits” feel it is impossible to make a decision until they smoke to “clear their mind.” The irony is to make a *good* decision, one must make a *bad* decision by lighting up. In essence the further addition of poison in oneself only clutters the body with more garbage and fills the lungs with toxins. The body of the smoker has been so accustomed to consuming foreign chemicals that the experience of withdrawals do not allow a person to think clearly. Until they are greeted with the presence of the habitual drug once again, they will continue being “nervous wrecks.” The cigarette is not a brain stick and has no mentality-increasing stimuli. Yet, when the cigarette is allowed to become part of ones lifestyle, it becomes physically desired to such a degree that all else becomes unimportant until the drug is replenished.

3. Does Tobacco Help One More Effectively Proclaim God's Word?

There is no way that one could actually be helped in teaching God's word by the use of tobacco. Any preacher who would stand before large assemblies of people while puffing on a cigarette would do little good among those who viewed smoking as an obvious violation of God's will. Such a person who is blinded to the effects of tobacco would have a very small following by the truly devoted child of God.

4. Does Tobacco Make One More Spiritual?

All who desire to follow God desire a greater faith in Him. Romans 10:17 tells us that "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" If one seeks to get closer to God, he should follow the principles of His word. When one uses His word, he will draw closer to the Father by learning God's will for his own life.

5. Can One Use Tobacco Without Ever Becoming Addicted?

When one is a beginning user of tobacco, the possibility of stopping without addiction is obviously high. However, with progressive use, the possibility of stopping without addiction is low. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance. When one smokes, he is flooding his body with chemicals that must be replenished. When one smokes for an extended period of time, the symptoms of withdrawal are more obvious and intense. Over a period of years, the drug becomes so accepted by the body that it has soon begun to control his life. Physically, quitting can be quite difficult. Mentally, the time used in smoking will need to be filled with another activity. Never starting to use tobacco is the best way to save oneself heartaches and possible addiction.

6. Could You Use Tobacco in the Presence of Jesus?

People sometimes declare that they would not have a problem in so doing. However, one must consciously consider coming into the presence of Jesus Christ. While standing face to face with the one who died on the cross for their sins, anyone would be brought to such a level of humility that he would immediately spit the diseased filth from his mouth and beg the Lord's forgiveness. Think upon the Savior and understand that there is never a time when you are away from His presence. In Proverbs 15:3 Solomon wrote, "*For the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*" God sees all that is done by those on this earth. Next time the thought to willfully sin enters the mind, remember that He sees.

VI. Concluding Words.

There are an enormous amount of verses that could be noted which discuss the Christian being different from the ways of this world. Study the verses and make your determination based on the truth of God's word. Notice in particular the following verses: 1 John 2:15-17; James 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:17; Romans 12:1,2; 1 Peter 2:11,12; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Colossians 3:2; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:15; Titus 2:11-15; Romans 12:9 and Ephesians 5:11.

It should sadden God's child deeply that the world's teachings have entered the glorious body of Christ. Somewhere along the way, people failed to stand guard against the ways of the evil one. Tobacco use is alive and well in the church today. Although the Bible never specifically condemns tobacco use as being a sin, God has granted us with certain eternal principles and the minds to discern right and wrong. Ample evidence has been given to show that tobacco is harmful. One must accept the truth. Is

smoking or chewing really worth the risks? There is risk to your body. There is risk to your soul and its eternal welfare. Will you become or continue to be a tobacco user? The Decision is yours to make. You decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 10

“To Booze Or Not To Booze?”

Brother Brian Jarrett presented a lesson on chemical substance addiction during a Gospel Meeting at the Salem church of Christ in Florence, Alabama. The following story is used to show the absurdity and indignity of using alcoholic beverages.

I. You Need Some ZOOB!

What if someone came up to you and said, “I have a wonderful compound I would like to interest you in, it is called ZOOB. And you need some ZOOB.”

And you say, “Okay, tell me about it. How much is it, I mean compared to a soft drink?”

The reply is, “Well, it is about twice as much as a soft drink.”

And you say, “Okay, I have a little bit of money here, I will buy one. Tell me about the effects of ZOOB.”

And they say, “Well, it kind of relaxes you. You will find it really relaxing.”

And you say, “Hey, that is kind of nice. I like to be relaxed from time to time. But what if I take a lot of ZOOB?”

Immediately they reply, “Oh no! Now wait a minute! No you don’t want to take a lot of ZOOB, because if you do, it will relax you too much.”

And you say, “Well, what do you mean?”

“Well,” they begin, “you start losing your inhibitions. You start losing control over your body. That is what happens if you take too much.”

“That is a bad thing! I don’t think I want any ZOOB!”

“Now wait a minute, don’t you really want some? I mean, you need some.”

And so you ask, “What are the other long term effects?”

“I hate that you asked me that, but it really isn’t that good for your body. It kind of kills off brain cells every time you partake of it and it is kind of hard on your liver, and it can do a lot of things that we may not even know about yet. It does have a few medicinal purposes if taken in lighter doses but...”

And you say, “I don’t really think I need any ZOOB today. Socially, what will it do for me?”

Reluctantly they add, “Well, it kind of chases away your friends and you do some things that you regret and it makes a lot of people not really want to come around you that much.”

And you finally say, “And you are selling this? You mean I am supposed to pay you money for this? You are not paying me to take it?”

“No.”

“And it is addictive? And many people get hooked on it and can never break that addiction?”

“Yes.”

And you ask the question, “Why would anyone want to take this?”

They simply say, “Well hey, a lot of the folks are doing it. And they think it makes them feel popular, suave and part of the “in” crowd!”

I wonder what you would say? Do you know what ZOOB is?

It is BOOZE spelled backwards. Why in the world would anyone be duped into thinking that alcohol use is anything good? This is something that you pay good money, hard-earned money, for and it is not going to help you one bit, but simply tear you down. Other ways as well as spiritually.”

Alcohol is perhaps the most abused chemical or drug in America. As is the case with so many other forms of chemical dependency, alcohol consumption has its beginning in man’s life when he forgets or at least is ignorant to the plan that God has for man. People are either ignorant as to the blessings that God can give or else they push aside God’s teaching willfully. Essentially, by the drinking of alcoholic beverages, people have parted from God’s ways to follow their own path. In the book of Judges 17:6 we read, *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* When has following our own lusts and desires ever brought about anything good? Can rebellion ever bring about some positive result? It is impossible to go through a life of spiritual darkness without the light that is so badly needed. Let all Christians use the Bible as their guide and light. His word will lead to the proper reward. David said in Psalms 119:105, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”*

V. Men Who Drank and the Results.

The Bible has several examples of men and women who drank, grew drunk, and attained some negative results. To begin this discussion, please notice three of those men in the Old Testament who either drank or offered some intoxicating beverage to another person. With each case, observe the ramifications involved with drinking and drunkenness.

All who are reading this are well acquainted with a man named Noah. Noah is known as a faithful man. He is best remembered for his obedience to God regarding the building of

the ark. It was Noah and his wife, their sons and their wives who were saved from the destructive power of that global deluge. As time progressed, Noah became a farmer of land and possessed a vineyard. It seems that Noah made a great mistake when he drank intoxicating wine. In a fitful stupor, Noah passed out naked on the floor of his tent. The Bible tells that Ham happened to see that his father was naked and went out to tell his brothers. Both Shem and Japheth walked into the tent backwards and laid a covering over Noah, so that they never saw his nakedness. When Noah found out about this incident, he proceeded to curse his own son. Genesis 9:21 says, "*Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*"

What exactly Ham did or said about his father is conjecture. The Bible tells that he saw his father naked and told his brothers. It must be agreed that whatever was done caused a great deal of embarrassment for Noah, seeing that the curse was so harsh. Josephus, a Jewish historian, remarks about what he supposes happened. Josephus writes, "*(Noah) being drunk, he fell asleep; and lay naked in an unseemly manner. When his youngest son saw this, he came laughing and showed him to his brethren.*"²³ Whether he laughed at his father is a matter of possibility, and does seem to fit well with the penalty exacted of him. Yet, the main point to be understood is that as wrong as it was to look upon his father's nakedness, and as wrong as it was to laugh about his father's state of shame, none of this would have occurred had Noah not been drinking and gotten drunk.

Second, you can recall a man named Lot, the nephew of Abraham. You remember that Lot was a man who lived in the city of Sodom with his daughters. In the book of Genesis 13:13 we are told that, "*The men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.*" Later the Lord tells Abraham that all of Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be destroyed because of their wickedness (Genesis 18:16-33). So the fiery destruction

of Sodom and Gomorrah took place as God had said. Only Lot and his family were saved from this destruction. As time passed, Lot and his daughters went away and established their home in a cave of the mountains. On one occasion the oldest daughter had a conversation with her sister about carrying on the family name. She said, "*Our father is old and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth.*" It seems from this statement that the daughters felt the destruction of Sodom was widespread, even to the point that every man in the world had been destroyed. They wondered how the family would survive and how man could continue. Their plan to remedy the situation was to get their father drunk and conceive and bear children by him. The daughters made their father to drink wine and that night, when he was too drunk to properly reason, the oldest daughter conceived a child by him and the following night so did the younger daughter. Lot was the father of two sons named Moab and Ben-Ammi.²⁴ This incestuous plan could only have been accomplished by the use of some intoxicating substance. Notice that Lot was so inebriated that he never even knew what was going on. The Bible tells us, "*...and he did not know when she had laid down or when she had arose*" (Genesis 19:33). Surely the things man is capable of doing while under the influence of alcoholic beverages is shocking.

Finally, notice the case of Uriah the Hittite, one of King David's mighty warriors of valor (2 Samuel 11:1-27). Recall that David was on the rooftop looking over the city when his eyes fell to meet a beautiful lady bathing in his view. When he saw this woman he knew that he wanted to have her in an immoral sexual way. David sent for Bathsheba and it happened that she became pregnant with his child. David quickly sought to cover up the sin with a well-designed plan. To make it look as though Uriah was the father of the baby, David called for Uriah to come back from the war for some relaxation. The king sent a nice sup-

ply of food to the home of the Hittite in hopes that he would go in, enjoy his time away from the battle and see his wife. The plan was foiled when Uriah remained true to his "soldier spirit." Rather than going home at all, he slept outside the door of David's house with the servants.

Now it seemed that David would have to take more desperate measures. David was then forced to use intoxicating wine on Uriah. David supposed that perhaps he would be able to muddle the senses of Uriah just enough to soften his solid convictions. David called Uriah in and offered him the wine, furthermore Uriah grew drunk and went out to go to bed. But David was not clear of troubles yet. The problem came when Uriah never made it to his own home. Again, he fell asleep at the doorway of the king's home. With this David grew impatient and sent a letter to have Uriah placed on the front of the lines of battle. David betrayed his own friend and eventually Uriah faced death on the lines of battle defending his king and God's people.

The sin of physical lust captured David and resulted in his trying to hide the sin from those around him. When the Israelite king saw that Uriah was committed as a soldier, he was forced to get Uriah drunk. In David's mind this would be the only way Uriah would neglect his duty of service. In most cases, the intoxicating beverage would have worked, but even then David's plan was halted when Uriah fell asleep before getting home. Now that David was at the "end of his rope" he moved to have this great soldier murdered.

These three stories of individuals using wine shows the usual result and problems associated with partaking of alcoholic beverages. This chapter will seek to show that the use of alcoholic beverages is condemned in the Bible and should not be used by the Christian. Such examples as Noah, Lot, David and Uriah show that using alcoholic beverages only brings negative results.

III. Alcohol in America.

In 1987 the U.S. News and World Report Magazine reported that 117 billion dollars were spent on alcoholic beverages in this country alone. In the same report over 100,000 people died by drinking or by accidents associated with alcohol. It could be that you or someone you know was a victim of such an accident. Thousands of families are devastated every year because this "Land of the Free" gives anybody easy access to the demon called "alcohol."

When there was a comparison made between alcohol related deaths and those deaths where illegal drugs were used, the conclusion was that there were 25% fewer deaths from all illegal drug use combined than from alcohol alone. This, as well as many other statistics shows how large numbers of Americans are facing the disease called alcoholism. Some studies have said that a full 25% of all families are in some way troubled by alcohol. The effects of alcohol could trouble one in a wide range of ways. Such would include: births of mentally retarded or deformed babies, divorce from an abusive or addicted spouse, street or in-home violence, crimes associated with alcohol abuse, sickness of all types and even the death of those who suffered from alcohol related death.

Of 18 million alcoholics in this country, a large number have to ask themselves the questions of "How? Why? Why me?" Most all of them began the same way as anyone would have, with just one drink, and thinking to be in control of the controlling substance called alcohol. Soon they realized that it was beyond their ability to control and were soon driven to continually use the substance. One may ask, "What happened to them?" This is a legitimate question and one to be understood in simple terms. Plainly, alcohol is a drug, a narcotic. And just as in the case of tobacco, the blood seeks to replenish the poisons that alcohol

brings. Those poisons flow through the body causing the loss of self-control and the body feels the need to replenish itself of this visitor. Finally with the trap set, the bait is taken and there is another loser to add to the statistics of alcoholism.

IV. What Is The Christian's Duty?

What is the responsibility of the Christian when it comes to alcohol's use and abuse? It must always be understood that Christ called for his followers to be the "Light of the World" and the "Salt of the Earth" (Matthew 5:13,14). When Christ said this, He was giving His followers a duty to bear in this world. While living in this world Paul says that Christians are "*...epistles known and read of all men*" (2 Corinthians 3:2). So then people of this age notice Christians as a body of people who stand out as different. Society perceives Christians as a people who stand up for what God desires, and rightly so. The people of God must never sit idly by and watch the terrible plague of alcoholism to continue destroying lives. It is your Christian obligation to help lay this American tragedy to rest.

There is a powerful story to tell of this nations religious heritage in the early 1900's. In 1919, religious organizations rallied together in a common effort to sway the American Government from allowing alcoholic beverages being made available. The fact is these moral activists won the battle. In the 18th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, entered in January 16, 1919, one reads the following, "After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverages is hereby prohibited."

In language easy to understand, the making, selling and

transporting of all alcoholic beverages was outlawed! This should show the power people have when they desire to stand up for their convictions. There is however a sad end to this story, an end which is obvious. In 1933, the world met with such corruption that the decision was repealed. Section One of Amendment 19 says, "The eighteenth article of amendment to the constitution of the United States is repealed."

Why did this happen? Perhaps the church failed in doing all they could or else did not take seriously enough their command to "*reprove the works of darkness*" (Ephesians 5:11). There are other possibilities that exist. Regardless of what happened over 60 years ago, God's people must ever stay as strong as possible without regard for the power or size of the enemy! Paul said it best, "*If God is for us who can be against us?*" (Romans 8:31).

V. Is There a Biblical Contradiction?

Many people say that the Bible both seems to allow and deny justification for people to drink. A misunderstanding of what the Bible says has caused many to believe that there is some kind of contradiction in the word of God regarding this topic. There is no indication in the Bible that would even suggest a contradiction. A person needs to look at both sides of the issue rather than picking which side of the argument he will stand for. There is a correct conclusion that all people can come to. Rather than being made stubborn and remaining close minded, one must look objectively at this discussion and make his decision based on biblical principles. When both sides have been properly studied, one should conclude only the things that the Bible teaches.

1. The Bible Seems To Demand that Men Not Use Alcohol.

A casual reading of the Bible shows that God seems to dis-

approve of drinking alcohol in any form. From the Old Testament there are several stories which teach the great transgression involved in drinking. One can read of the priests in Leviticus 10:8-11 where Aaron and his sons were told not to drink wine or intoxicating drink. God gave this command to the priestly tribe of Israel so they would be able to distinguish between holy and unholy things. Had Aaron and his sons been drinkers, they would have been unable to discern between the good and bad sacrifices being offered to God.

In Judges 13:3,4, God's messenger told Samson's mother not to allow her son wine or strong drink. Once he consumed any alcoholic beverage, his miraculous powers would be revoked.

In the book of Proverbs 31:4,5 it says, "*It is not for kings O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine. Nor for princes intoxicating drink...*" Kings and other rulers were not permitted to take part in this lavish delicacy. The question is why not? Surely people who were wealthy and well respected would be able to indulge in some wine, right? The reason why God does not allow such is obvious in verse 5: "*Lest they forget the law and pervert justice.*" There seems to be something about liquor that causes one to forget things of importance and damages a person's sense of moral purity.

Habakkuk 2:5 reads, "*Indeed because he transgresses with wine, he is a proud man.*" By drinking wine people sin and their sin leads to more problems because it stirs in them feelings of pride. The Bible teaches that among those things that God hates, one of those is a proud look (Proverbs 6:17). Further, David writes in Psalms 101:5, "*The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure.*" Certainly wine brings about pride which is most hated by God.

Ephesians 5:18 tells Christians to, "*...not be filled with wine, but filled with the spirit.*" What better thing to be filled with than

the spirit of holiness (Romans 8:9,10)? When one truly seeks after heaven, he will desire to be filled, not with wine or intoxicating drink, but with the spirit that helps us reach that eternal home.

Finally, the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:2,3 gives a stipulation that the shepherds of Christ's flock are not to be "*given to wine.*" This means that the eldership of the church is not to be made of men who consume the compound that may bring harm or reproach against the body of Christ. Elders are in a serious position where they must make weighty, momentous and crucial decisions regarding the lives and souls of people. These men need nothing like alcohol to interfere with this process. God realized this fact long ago.

Is there any pattern noticed in these passages? All those commanded to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages were involved in making good, wholesome and moral decisions. The priest, king, prince, nazirite and elder were told to refrain from that which might cause perversion of justice or ungodly decisions. Now ask these questions; would God give this commandment to His people if drinking were so great? Why would God withhold strong drink from Samson if it were such a blessing? Why were the kings and princes not allowed to take part in what may be considered a royal treat? Indeed, if wine and strong drink were so fantastic, it seems that God would not only have allowed them to be used but demanded both in the lives of Christians. Of course He did not. God knew then and continues to know what many people ignore today — strong drink offers nothing that is positive. God's people are told not to drink because of the perversion that can result.

Are people today excluded from inclusion as God's chosen people? Although today's people are greatly distanced by time, there are still some serious choices to make. It should be your

desire to do the best that you possibly can. God desires that all of His people make morally sound decisions and to live beyond reproach. Alcoholic beverages can not only ruin decisions but also lay waste to entire lives. *“And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know what is that good and acceptable and holy will of God”* (Romans 12:2).

2. The Bible Seems to Authorize Alcohol Use.

There is information in the Bible that seems to indicate to some people that the Bible not only permits, but gives the right to drink. Several of these locations of scripture will be discussed briefly.

In John 12:1-12 the story is told of Jesus' first miracle in the land of Cana. On this particular occasion He turned water into wine during a wedding feast. On the surface this could appear somewhat bizarre. It may look like Jesus helped to bring people into contact with something that the Old Testament required abstinence from. Many people use this story to substantiate their use of alcoholic beverages. In fact a few years ago, your author had a good friend cite this passage in hopes of justifying his drinking of wine. He said, “The good Lord drank wine.” Indeed it would appear that Christ “drank wine.”

There are some very real questions that must be answered before one can conclude that drinking is acceptable. First, does it appear reasonable that Christ supplied a means by which others could become drunk? Second, did Christ create the kind of wine that the book of Proverbs declares is a rager? Third, did Christ drink the kind of wine that disqualified Him for religious service? (These questions will be answered in the section entitled, “Supposed contradiction answered.”)

Further, in 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul, through the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit, told Timothy to, “...*drink a little wine for thy (his) stomach’s sake.*” In looking at the context, Paul had just completed telling the elders never to drink wine (1 Timothy 3:3). Was Paul practicing hypocrisy? Was he saying that drinking was acceptable for one person but not the other? Was he telling Timothy to take part in that which was immoral? If drinking was so wrong, then Paul would never have allowed Timothy to do it, so drinking is obviously allowed.

Jesus instructed people how to make wine in Matthew 9:17. Certainly if making wine was allowed by the sin-free Savior, then a person can make and drink wine today without a transgression being committed.

With this evidence it seems that the Bible both seems to approve and disapprove of drinking. What then is the answer? Is this a true biblical contradiction and is there a way to resolve the question of drinking?

3. The Supposed Contradiction Answered.

A beginning point in being able to answer this question comes from the definition of the word “wine.” It must be understood that just as in the case of biblical dancing, wine is used in a common, general sense. The word wine can be used to mean either the alcoholic or non-alcoholic kind. Such thinking is used in the world today as well. When someone says, “Give me a glass of milk,” you have been given a general term, “milk” for something which can be more specific. Depending on the contextual setting, he or she could mean a glass of buttermilk, 2%, skim, vitamin D, sweet acidophilus and so on. Wine is also used that way. So then, just as in the case of milk, the kind of wine mentioned must be determined by the context and meaning of the passage.

In the case of Paul telling Timothy to “*use a little wine for*

thy stomach's sake," we know that Paul was encouraging Timothy to use wine as a medicinal agent when he was sick. Perhaps you have taken some kind of medication today that contained a high percentage of alcohol. This does not mean that you consume the medication to achieve some kind of physical high, rather you, just like Timothy were using alcohol as a medication for your own health and well-being. Today, modern man is blessed with many good medications which do not contain any alcohol, but it is understood that Timothy had to use whatever medication was allotted him in that day.

When God declares that wine and strong drink are "ragers," it can be rightly and safely concluded that the wine under discussion is the kind that causes people to do things contrary to God's will. When the Bible speaks of Christ making wine, it must be agreed that Christ was not creating the type of drink that violates the will of God. Any type of beverage that can make a person lose all sense of godliness or propriety should be viewed as a dangerous and extremely deadly concoction. Physically it can render you impaired, devastated, unconscious and even bring about death. Spiritually it can separate you from God, can drive away those who are closest and most important in your life, can leave you feeling guilty because of the things you did while under its influence. It can so shame a person that they never seek God for forgiveness again. Alcohol can bring you down in the worst way and for this reason, all people must beware.

VI. Why Should I Abstain from Alcohol Use?

Why should Christians or anyone else abstain from using alcoholic beverages? Although many will ignore and deny the importance of these, the Christian's reason for total abstinence encompasses both systems.

1. What It Can Do and Does to Your Body.

Christians understand that their bodies are beautiful blessings and should be cared for to the best of their ability. By slowly putting poison into God's temple, one is not actively showing love to the bodies God has entrusted to him or her. Further, alcohol begins damaging the human form with even small amounts. When larger amounts are taken, the damage is often beyond repair. A person should take care of himself.

2. What the Bible Teaches About Alcohol Use.

The Bible is the only guide to use as a standard for morally acceptable actions. Since man has been given the Bible, he can rest assured that God loves man. Since God loves man, he can be certain that His words are for our own good. Within the word of God one can read that anyone who takes part in drinking of strong drink is not wise. Solomon says in Proverbs 20:1, "*Wine is a mocker. Strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*" Surely anyone who has any amount of common sense will not want to be foolishly led astray.

VII. "Will That Be One Drink Or Two?"

1. "Only Getting Drunk Is Wrong."

In this section the main focus is going to be on a common argument that deals with intoxication. There is a prevalent theory many people espouse which states that it is acceptable to drink because of the so-called argument of moderation. Some feel that drinking is not bad of itself, so long as there is not a noticeable level of intoxication in the person doing the drinking. People who advocate this idea say such things as, "Only getting drunk is wrong" or "It will not hurt me if I am not getting drunk" and "I only drink one or two drinks." In the author's opinion, such phrases are futile for at least two reasons:

1. Drinking in moderation is toying with a substance that can come to control the person rather than remaining controlled.
2. Consuming alcohol on a sporadic basis, even without overindulging, brings about an unsuitable change in the physical and chemical composition of the human body.

Those who ignorantly profess that the real problem with drinking only comes when one becomes intoxicated first need to understand the proper meaning of the word **intoxication**. Breaking the word down into its root components you see two words. There is the word “IN” which means “Within the bounds, limits and area of. To put into.”²⁵

The remainder of the word, “**toxication**” is defined, “to cause to be poisoned.”²⁶ When one puts together these two words you come to the understanding that intoxication is to poison something. The dictionary defines **intoxication** as: “An abnormal state which is essentially a poisoning.”²⁷ The point to be made here is that regardless of the amount of alcohol one consumes, there is automatic intoxication with even one sip. Although the outer appearance of intoxication is unnoticeable at first, when one continues to drink, it is made obvious. So when someone says they can drink so long as they do not become intoxicated, they deny obvious truth. Intoxication takes place with the first sip!

3. Notice the Word Methusko.

In the Bible people are warned on occasion not to get drunk. The word for “drunk” in this context is a word called **methusko**. The word **methusko** can mean an outward appearance of drunkenness that is clearly obvious. The word can also mean a softening of man’s natural sobriety. When one contemplates drinking to calm his nerves, he must ask how many drinks it would take to

soften or relax him. If only one drink may have some noticeable effect on you, then you can consider yourself “one drink methusko (drunk)”.

In the New Testament there are three places to notice where the word methusko is used. In Luke 12:45 Christ is telling the parable of the faithful and evil servants. When one looks at the passage it is evident that the evil servant was characterized as a mean person who beat those weaker than he. He is a servant who looks only to his own selfish ambitions and does not care about the fact that he must answer to his master. This man, as the story tells, becomes methusko. Growing drunk is a negative characteristic that Christ used to show the contrast between those who are holy and those who sin.

In Ephesians 5:11 Christians are told not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Would drinking beer, whiskey or even wine fall under this category? What types of things are ultimately associated with drinking any alcoholic drink? Would drinking bring any good fruits before God? Would the action of drinking bring any glory to the Father? If not, then one should have no fellowship with such an activity.

1 Thessalonians 5:7 teaches about human nature. Paul says that those who get drunk do so at night. Why is this? In the darkness man thinks he has a better chance of hiding from the truth of light. Physical darkness has always had a great impact on the sins and works of Satan. Thieves are always more prevalent at night because the darkness hides their evil action. When the morally wholesome person is going to sleep at night, the drunkard becomes intoxicated, that is growing methusko, while he should be at home in the bed

All these verses have dealt with the idea that people should not grow methusko. Again, methusko is to cause your natural sobriety to become softened or weakened. This state of

methusko or intoxication comes when someone has only one drink. Methusko does not have to be outwardly seen, although it often is. There is an automatic inner change in the physical composition of the body when it is met with outside poisons. The normal biological processes have been interrupted and the body is forced to compensate for the toxin in the human system. Whenever the physical composition of the body is altered by an unnecessary outside force, it is an unnatural and abnormal occurrence that brings about a person's drunken state. Again, only one drink begins to change the natural chemical stability that God has given to man and this is brought about when intoxication begins.

3. Improper Use of the Word Intoxication.

You may have heard someone say something like, "I was really drunk" or "I was not very drunk." By saying this, one may think that there are levels of intoxication. Where it is agreed that the process of methusko or of growing drunk is noticeable, the truth is that pure intoxication, that is intoxication that can be registered in the bloodstream, is a nearly automatic event. The blood alcohol of 1/10 of 1% can be accepted as the first seen evidence of a person being intoxicated. Many people are already under the influence of alcohol in some way by the 5/100 of 1% range.²⁸ This means that there is not a minimum that can be set where there is absolutely no effect on a person when they are drinking. It is true that some people may be able to hold their posture better than others may after drinking, but to drink in any way is to become intoxicated, regardless of the amount.

This teaches that there is no standard of judgment that says someone is "now drunk" and "not drunk." One has taken the first step of getting drunk when he takes a drink of any alcoholic beverage. The chemical composition of the body is forced to make alterations to compensate for the poison that was volunteered into the bodily system. Surely it is foolish to punish your body by

drinking poison. The reader is encouraged to do a personal study of all the long-term negative effects alcohol can have on the liver, heart and blood.

VIII. Why Not Drink?

Hopefully the entire chapter has answered this question in a sufficient way. As attention is turned to the scriptures, please notice some points about why drinking alcoholic beverages is wrong.

1. Drinking Alcoholic Beverages Distorts Perception.

The truth of the matter is that alcohol defeats rather than helps in the decision-making process. When God says anything, people should accept it and know it is for a good reason. His word teaches that the sins that one commits cause a separation from fellowship with Him (Isaiah 59:1,2; Romans 3:23; 6:23) The sins of premarital sexual relations can lead to disease and spiritual ruin (Galatians 5:19,21; Colossians 3:5). Improper anger can lead one aggressively to murder another person (Genesis 4:6-8) and alcohol can lead to an utter ruin of lives, by causing one to do things that are in direct opposition to God's will.

Genesis 9:21 shows that alcohol weakens moral senses. In Genesis 19:32, the daughters of Lot tried to preserve their father's lineage by getting their father drunk and conceiving children. Isaiah 5:23 tells that by way of intoxicating drink, justice is perverted. Finally in Isaiah 28:7 one reads that the priests and the prophets of God had experienced a loss of understanding and their judgments were distorted. Alcohol weakens the moral senses and renders those under its influence helpless. Wine, beer and liquor are all capable of bringing about this result. Do not allow

your moral convictions to be severed by the outside influence known as the alcoholic drink.

2. Alcoholic Beverages Can Cause Serious Problems.

The book of Proverbs paints a grim picture of the man who was deceived by alcohol. Solomon shows a man in Proverbs 23:20,21 who is forced to live in poverty and rags because he is a drunk and too lazy to work. His life is in total obedience to his habit and he is unable to break that cycle. In Hosea 7:5 the story is told of the prince who is swollen with wine and grows physically ill. Isaiah 19:14 portrays a drunken man staggering around and ultimately ends up in his own vomit. What a terrible scene the Bible paints for God's people to learn from. This person is such a slave to his own addiction that he wakes up surrounded by vomit. The drunk is never able to live a normal life again because he is helpless of himself to break the addiction. He lives in the poorest of conditions because all his money is spent on intoxicating drink and he is too lazy to work for a better situation. He says, "Oh no, just give me a good bottle of wine and I will manage somehow." To bypass this predicament in ones own life, accept what the Bible teaches about drinking alcoholic beverages.

3. Drinking Disqualifies for Religious Service to God.

Perhaps this is the greatest reason to be a non-drinker. Recall in the book of Leviticus 10:9-11, God tells the Levites, the priestly tribe, that they were not permitted to go into the tabernacle if they were or had been drinkers of wine. If they were found in opposition to that command, they were to die. In Ezekiel 44:23, there is an apparent reminder of those verses in Leviticus 10. There one is reminded that God's priest must be able to discern

what is good and bad. One could not drink wine and retain the proper ability to judge. God obviously believed that it was impossible for a person to drink wine and retain the needed ability to make fair and pure judgments. Further the elders in 1 Timothy and Titus were not allowed to partake of wine.

Under what heading do Christians fall? Not all Christians are able to be elders nor are Christians today under the Mosaical Law. Is there some requirement for God's people to follow that they may remain in proper religious service? The answer is yes. Christians today do not have to follow the ceremonial rites as was commanded for the Levitical Priesthood, but there is an aspect of the eternal principle that must be followed. The point has always been and today remains that God's people are always in service and devotion to Him (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Peter 2:5). For this cause, your devotion must be in harmony with His will regardless of the circumstance. God says that He can always see us (Psalms 139:6-16; Proverbs 15:3), and so Christians ought always to glorify Him. Since Christ said in Matthew 5:13,14 that His disciples are the "*lights of the world*" (Philippians 2:15), then Christians must always be the examples in this world, in service to God and therefore should never drink. Since a Christian's joy is to serve the Lord forever, they must declare that drinking is not compatible with worship and devotion to God. It disqualified men from religious service and today makes true religious devotion to God impossible.

IX. Concluding Words.

It is very clear that the habitual and excessive use of alcoholic beverages is condemned without compromise in both the Old and New Testament. There are some universal principles that God's word teaches which point to the fact that a Christian cannot conscientiously partake of an intoxicating drink. Among the multiple verses that could be referred to, please read and

study the following passages.

Romans 12:1,2: *“I beseech thee therefore my beloved brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may know what is that good and holy and acceptable will of God.”*

1 Peter 4:3: *“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting and abominable idolatries.”*

1 Peter 4:7: *“But the end of all this is at hand; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.”*

You have seen the billboards, you have heard or seen the commercials. Beer drinkers seem to be having a great time. Those who drink wine are sophisticated and beautiful. The ones drinking liquor are reminiscing about times gone by. Each day the world tries to portray deadly things as glamorous. Christians need to be on guard and not be fooled by the ways of this wicked, temporary world. The reward Christians have is beyond this place of sin and wickedness (Revelation 22:1-5). One must be cautious of the heresy and filth this world tries to propagate.

God of Heaven calls you to abstain from all the fleshly lusts and worldly ideas that seem so appealing. Drinking alcohol clearly is against the teachings of God’s word. For this cause, you must carefully consider the proper path to take, on a daily basis. The choice is yours to make. You must decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 11

“Abortion: Killing Babies Man’s Way.”

I. All Murder Is Wrong!

When dealing with any issue that pertains to either the creating or taking of human life, there will be many emotions involved. When a person loses a friend or member of the family, there may be feelings of sadness, regret, frustration and loneliness. At the same time, when a newborn baby enters the world there are usually obvious signs of happiness, joy, love and delight. As the discussion of abortion follows, do not be taken by surprise if a wide range of emotions are experienced. Think for a brief moment about life. As you may know, being able to live as God’s child is a precious blessing. The tragic practice of abortion will be looked at in this chapter along side of the principles of God’s word. By the time these words have been read you will see what the Bible teaches about the sacredness of life.

Murder is wrong. One cannot rationalize and explain away a premeditated killing of the innocent. For centuries mankind has been taught that the commandment, “*Thou shalt not kill*” applies to anyone and at anytime in their life. But some have taken it upon themselves to deny this essential commandment. The world has followed in the footsteps of those who would forsake God’s commands, and today those who hold to biblical principles are the objects of mockery. If only this commandment were given a special place in the heart of man today, what a different world this would be. The average American is greatly distanced from the things that go on behind the walls of medical facilities. You live unable to see the senseless death that is inflicted upon so many young lives that will never be given the opportunity to live. Your ears are not attuned to hear the “silent screams” of those

who are killed, even murdered by their own parents. What a bizarre and demented world it is where those who are to be giving protection, nurturing, sustenance and guidance are the very ones who call for the “**abortion**” of the tiny lives entrusted to them?

In this chapter, the subject matter is the problem of killing babies in America, also more commonly known as “Abortion.” Although this is a worldwide problem, the point remains that in this country, “the land of the free,” there are millions of babies put to death each year. And not for any crime against God or man, but simply because someone did not want a baby. One needs to see that in the world today the freedom to live has been forgotten. In this world, the greatest aim mankind desires is choice. Millions of women each year simply “choose” to abort their pregnancies. The great paradox is that to exercise their right to the freedom of choice, there is the denial to the freedom of life for the young child. Indeed, the values of mankind have greatly fallen.

Abortion is a subject containing many serious aspects that will be openly discussed in this article. Perhaps it is a subject that may not wish to be heard by some, and obviously there are some things about abortion that may literally be shocking. As you read this chapter, you may wish to distance yourself from the truth because it makes you feel uncomfortable, but it must be heard. After all the facts are known and you have a deeper understanding of the things included in abortion, there will be some things mentioned that you can do to help fight in this war against those who cannot cry out, “Save us.”

II. Sacredness of Life.

As a basis for this discussion please notice the passage of 2 Timothy 3:1-4. Paul writes the following: “*Knowing this that in*

the last days perilous times will come: For men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful and unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." The things written are clear signs of the coming of the final days of the earth. In looking around, what do you see? Is it evident that the final days are near at this time? As the reality of the approaching "last day" sets in, one should strive more to be prepared for the final judgment of God. Another way to view these verses would be to apply Paul's words to the situation of present society.

Paul also wrote in Romans 1:31 that there would be those who were, "*Undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving and unmerciful.*" From the two passages just alluded to, would it be fair to say that Paul adequately described many in our world today? Who better would Paul's words apply to than those who either accept or practice abortion?

1. Lovers of Themselves and Selfish.

You have perhaps known someone who was "stuck on themselves?" The word used to describe such people is "vain or haughty." The more technical term might be "Narcissistic." When one is narcissistic, he loves himself more than anyone else and is not ashamed to flaunt his self-love. In this verse, Paul is trying to show that many will become selfish in their thinking. James Burton Coffman has the following to say about this, "Self-love is pride, selfishness and a total unawareness of God."²⁹

To now describe selfishness, how many times has it been proclaimed that abortion should be allowed and to justify their action people cry out, "It is a means of birth control." Thousands of women find themselves pregnant, without the "picture perfect

setup” and decide to abort their child so as not to disturb their own lives. What greater example of selfishness can one even imagine? Such activities are a blatant showing of the progression towards immorality man has dared to tread. People all over this world love to fulfill their own selfish desires so much that they reject God’s will.

2. Lovers of Money.

Paul remarked that there would be some who love the “almighty dollar” to such a degree that anything would be done to attain it. In America alone, there is a driving force behind abortion advocates and that is money. According to a 1995 issue of the Wall Street Journal, the abortion industry brings in about 150 million dollars annually. Some other analysts report that abortion brings in as much as 1 billion dollars per year. Recall that Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:10 that, “*The love of money is the root of all evil.*” What other force could cause men to overlook the facts of morality and continue to murder babies and never flinch at God’s word? Could it be that money has such a powerful command in people’s lives? Paul declares, “Yes.”

One of the major reasons that abortion remains legal in this world is because men love the pleasures of this life and are willing to sell their souls to get them.

3. Unholy.

Every day the Christian is bombarded with those who would declare that being devoted to God is utterly foolish. Further, they remark that there is “No God” and that man should look to no one but himself as the ruler of his life. By taking away God, one can then, in his own mind, disregard the basis for all morality and ethical ideas. With God out of the picture and with man as the head of the universe, the self can do whatever he may want to do. In the field of those who would advocate abortion, this is what has

been done. Those doctors or “Pro-abortion” advocates become their own “gods” and make their own guidelines to follow. If they are to accept you, then you must follow their finite opinions and also embrace abortion as morally acceptable. What follows is a classic confrontation between the “*philosophies of men*” (Colossians 2:8) and godly thinking according to the word of God. The Christian then has to face the non-Christian on the foundation of earthly reasoning. God is not allowed in the picture, so God’s child is forced to debate the atheistic, humanistic views of man against one who has no idea what true holiness for God really is.

The world has gone so far from the word of God that the nations are full of unholy people who wander around in ignorance as to what their purpose is. The major problem with defending the “sanctity of life” against those of the world is that they are not founded upon the word of God. The Bible is the standard by which all actions are to be judged. Do you want the ways of man or the way of God?

4. Untrustworthy.

Somewhere throughout the span of time people failed to teach their children about God. Today the reward is being reaped among those who have grown without the truth being taught to them. When Paul’s text of Romans 1:31 is looked at, what is seen? Obviously one who is without the understanding of how they ought to be living. Likewise today, there are masses of people who really have no idea of the way things ought to be done. By that is meant there is a great ignorance of God’s will among people today. Because the very basic teachings about right and wrong are withheld from certain individuals, they are untrustworthy in regard to some things. It is obvious that when one is entrusted with a great possession, such as a child, there is no guarantee that he can properly handle that possession as a good

steward. With the absence of God's teaching, there is only trouble to look forward to. How does God view those who do not properly care for the life of the child that has been appointed to them? When one decides on abortion rather than responsibly caring for that child, God views them as untrustworthy.

5. Unmerciful.

One of man's greatest needs from God is to receive mercy. The Bible teaches that when one does not show mercy to another, he will not receive any mercy from God. The parable of the "Unmerciful Servant" in Matthew 18:28 tells about one who was shown a great deal of mercy in not having to pay a great debt. This man who was shown great grace and mercy went out and found a person who owed a small amount of money and demanded the money harshly. When the man who had forgiven the greatest debt heard of the harshness and unmerciful attitude of the steward, the master delivered that servant to the torturers. The result of those who will not show mercy to another is being cast away from God's presence.

What do you think about a doctor who ruthlessly takes a child from the womb of his or her mother? Do you see a person full of mercy and compassion? Is it ever moral to murder someone, no matter their size, simply because another person wants it? When you take away all the emotional arguments and view abortion in light of God's word, it is either right or wrong. There are no other options available. Finally, God's word declares that in the last days there will be those who have such characteristics. When it is clearly seen that those who commit or advocate abortion have such traits, then we see that Paul's warning applies to the world today.

III. Life as God Sees It.

The book of Genesis is a marvelous work wherein mankind

can witness the miraculous power of God's spoken word. It is the "book of beginnings" where we see the peak creative power of Almighty God as He created the first man and woman. With life and humanity now set in motion, the great title of "Made in God's image" was forever engraved into people of all races and nationalities. God has always viewed the lives of human beings as set apart, unique and valuable compared to animal and plant life, also created by Him. Because of these truths God commands that all human life be protected and preserved.

Where then does human life begin? At what point should one begin protecting the life of humanity? One will agree that the Bible teaches life begins in the womb. Since life is conceived there, it is in this place that God begins watching over the baby's growth and development until the mature baby can arrive into the world. It follows then that since it is God's will for the baby to have protection after the his/her birth, then the protection should apply in his/her pre-birth state. Unless there are natural occurrences wherein the baby dies, we must do our part in allowing God to mold that small life until it is born into this world. For any person to take part in altering the future of a child, in any way, is beyond our authorization. One must uphold the sacredness of life and look to God as our Father who is supreme head over all things.

IV. Life: A Gift from God.

Life has been created and given to man as a gift from God. When two people make the responsible decision to bring a life into this world, they have been given a priceless gift. Nobody who has any respect for humanity, God, or His word can honestly say that children are not matchless blessings. At this time the focal point of this discussion will turn to several verses from the Bible, which tell how truly precious the gift of life is.

Genesis 1:26,27: *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image...So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He them. Male and female created He them.’”* Notice that from the very beginning man’s existence was a thing that was premeditated in the mind of God. Man is not a “chance happening” as so many theorists claim today. Rather humanity was, in God’s infinite power and knowledge, planned, chosen and formed by the Almighty Father. God’s creative processes over the entire universe were completed when He crowned this world with those that bore His own image.

Exodus 20:3: *“You shall not murder.”* Although this commandment given under the Law of Moses has been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14), one can see from the principle how God views life. For one to shamelessly murder a person who has been created in the image of God is an abomination to God. Solomon writes in Proverbs 6:16,17, *“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood...”*

Psalms 8:4,5: *“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? You have made him a little lower than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor.”* David contemplated the question that many have asked. In comparison to the all-knowing, all-powerful and all-loving God of Heaven, of what concern would finite creatures be to Him? Why would God even care to visit us with His grace and love? The answer comes in the next verses. It is man who has been crowned with glory and honor by God. Again, man has been created in the image of God and for that very reason all of mankind is precious to Him.

Psalms 22:9,10: *“But you are he who took me out of the womb; You made me trust while on my mothers breasts. I was cast upon you from birth. From my mother’s womb you have*

been my God.” David calls his attention back to when he was a baby. He declares that God was his ruler and keeper even before he entered the world. While David was within his mother’s womb, God not only knew him but also kept watch over him. In fact, God was the one who lovingly led him through the womb and into the arms of his caring mother. Today is no different. God acts as the superintendent over the growth and formation of every precious child that enters the world.

Psalms 139:13-16: *“For you formed my inward parts. You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought from the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed. And in your books all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”* From the very beginning of this verse David speaks of God as being there to watch over the formation of him or any child. It is God who covers babies from harm and He watches over them before they are ever formed. Isn’t this an admission that a baby’s life begins in the womb and that God views them as living children? Even before there were any days for David to live in the world, God had a plan and purpose for him. That purpose would never have been realized had David been aborted.

No person who has any respect for the word of God can believe that babies are not recognized and loved by God prior to birth. Since God views the baby as a living child, abortion is nothing less than murdering an innocent child, a person created in God’s image.

V. Abortion: Killing Babies Man’s Way.

There are countless people who see no problems in someone

either administering or having an abortion. They do not see abortion as murdering or even killing anyone. Rather than the abortion being of a baby, they simply say it is an "expulsion of organic tissue." Nonetheless, when a pro-abortion advocate uses the word abortion, they automatically agree that something is being stopped or destroyed. Notice the following breakdown of the word abortion.

ABORT: When you think about the word "abort" you may think of something which is being stopped prior to its completion. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines ABORT as, "The act of terminating a procedure or an operation before completion." The next time someone uses the word abortion, inquire of him or her what is being aborted? They would be ultimately forced into admitting that it is a child's life. If they try to say, "It is the abortion of organic tissue," then you can ask them, "What is that so-called tissue doing there in the first place?" They would have to say that it was there because of pregnancy. Finally you can victoriously proclaim, "Yes, pregnancy! The pregnancy which will bring a living child into this world." The very use of the word abortion shows the logical contradiction that one is led to. Human life is being aborted. Always recall, "What it will be when it develops and exits the womb is what it is within the womb." That "tissue" if allowed to proceed naturally and as planned will be a living, breathing, thinking and emotional child. Therefore, although the child may be unable to support itself without the support of his/her mother, it is a child and remains a child regardless.

The fact has been established that God acknowledges human life within the womb. Now let us notice several of the most brutal and sadistic ways man could imagine to literally torture babies to death. The following paragraphs will deal with the manner in which doctors abort babies. The following facts may be upsetting to some, but they are used to show how far many will go to

have things their own way.

1. Suction Method Abortions.

This method of abortion is commonly used while pregnancies are in the first trimester. The operating doctor inserts a long tube into the womb. This tubing is equipped with a scraping instrument at one end. The suction begins at speeds of 29 times more powerful than the average household vacuum cleaner. The baby is then torn into many pieces that are small enough to be forcefully sucked through the tube and into an awaiting container. When the process is completed, the child is placed into the waste receptacle and disposed of. Of all abortions, nearly 80% were performed by this method.³⁰

2. Dilation and Curettage. (6-16 weeks)

This disgusting and inhumane method of abortion is accomplished when a doctor inserts a knife-like instrument called a curet, into the womb where the baby resides. Unyieldingly, the child and the baby's placenta are cut into tiny, fragmented pieces. The remains of the body are then extracted and discarded.

3. Prostaglandin and Saline. (16-38 weeks)

These two means of abortion are seeing a steady decline in America to give way to more "productive" methods. A statistic dated in 1992 showed that of all abortions in America, only 0.7% or 11,200 were under the headings of Prostaglandin and/or Saline.

Prostaglandin abortions are done when a doctor injects a "prostaglandin hormone" into the fluid that surrounds the baby within the womb. (This is called the amniotic fluid.) This hormone induces contractions of the uterus and the eventual result is the birth of a stillborn baby. In 1978 a study was made and the

result was that the prostaglandin abortions did not always produce the death of the baby. In fact, it was shown that 7% of those babies were not born dead as planned.

The saline abortions are accomplished when a highly concentrated solution of saline is injected into the amniotic fluid that surrounds the baby. This young child directly absorbs the salt that brings about the burning of his skin and the fatal poisoning of his internal systems. The baby goes into eventual shock and eventually dies. The salt causes the uterus to begin contracting, which brings about the birth of the burned, shriveled baby.

4. Hysterotomy.

The easiest way to explain this abortion procedure would be to compare it to the Caesarean Section, commonly known as "C-Section." The mother is situated as to give birth when the doctor makes an incision large enough to remove the baby from his protective sanctuary. The doctor lifts out a living child to greet the world and then the unspeakable occurs. Rather than the child being cradled in the loving arms of his mother, it is allowed to lay, suffer and finally die from neglect.

The above methods of abortion are certainly not extensive reports. In fact there are also other ways that doctors can end young lives. Allow this to encourage you to do personal study and learn as much as possible. To help in the fight against this atrocious activity, one needs to be prepared to combat these issues.

5. Partial Birth Abortion and D & X. (20-32 weeks)

The following are two other procedures for abortion that have recently been under discussion. The Partial Birth Abortion is also called D & X. Finally there is the RU-486 which is com-

monly called the “At home abortion pill”, (Mifepristone).

Understand that it is impossible to compare two sins and wonder which one of the two is worse. Sin is always sinful in the eyes of God and we must never fool ourselves into thinking that one sin is better than another. For this reason, you should not think that one way of abortion is “less wrong” than another. Abortion is completely bad and regardless of the situation there is no morally acceptable method for abortion. As attentions turns to the D & X abortion you may wonder why there is any question about this not being cold-blooded murder. Indeed there is actually a question as to whether or not this method of abortion defies moral law. Are people incredibly blind? Have they lost all propriety and common sense? Yes, abortion is wrong and by briefly looking at the “Partial Birth Abortion” you will see how morally degenerate the world has become.

The Partial Birth Abortion is accomplished when a doctor induces the labor of the mother. When the baby is exiting the birth canal and is nearly born, he or she is taken by force and rotated to be born feet first. As the feet and body are pulled from the mother, the process is stopped at the shoulders. Here the doctor does the unthinkable. He firmly grabs the shoulders of the baby and inserts a pair of specially designed scissors into the base of the child’s skull and pries the neck opened. He then uses a special tool that enables him to literally suck the baby’s brain from his skull. The baby dies quickly and is then discarded.

The question may come, “How can anyone ever suppose this to be anything but heartless murder?” What determines that the baby is non-human and not alive while in the womb and suddenly is a baby outside the womb? Man’s Federal Law says that if the baby’s head is beyond the birth canal, then to take it’s life would be murder. So long as the baby is within the mother, and her decision is to abort the life, then it is a perfectly acceptable

thing to kill the child. How far is this from both God's will and common sense? Surely people have lost their "natural affection" (Romans 1:31). John Wilkes, who has held the position of president of the National Right to Life Foundation, said the following: "Since when does the right to life depend on someone wanting them?" Indeed, does murder become an option simply because you or anyone else is not wanted? So then, is abortion a viable alternative to giving a baby a chance to life, when a person does not want a child? Since when does your right to life depend on someone wanting you?

6. RU-486.

In the news recently this method of abortion has experienced a great deal of debate. The RU-486 is also known the "Abortion Pill" whose scientific name is Mifepristone. There has been much controversy surrounding this pill for many reasons that include the physical affects and psychological outcome from having an abortion at home. In short, the following paragraph will serve as ample information to the procedure involved in the RU-486 abortion pill.

"On the first visit the woman is given a full physical exam, often including a vaginal sonogram to establish the fact that she is pregnant. The second visit is then scheduled about a week later, at which time three RU-486 pills are swallowed so that the action of the hormone progesterone is blocked. On the third visit, two days later, the woman is given prostaglandin, which induces contractions to help expel the uterine lining from the embryo. During this visit the patient is monitored for about four hours for any side effects. Three out of four women abort while at the clinic. The rest are sent home to wait. A fourth visit is scheduled a week later so the doctor can be sure the embryo has been expelled and that there is no excessive bleeding. To ensure that the drug is effective, RU-486 is not used after forty-nine days from the

beginning of the woman's last period. When this procedure is unsuccessful, there is the need for surgical abortion."³¹

VI. So What Is the Problem Anyway?

You may be wondering, "Why is abortion legal at all? Surely anyone can see the great sin involved in aborting tiny lives. What is the problem anyway?" Those who believe in the sanctity and sacredness of human life wonder why those "Pro-abortion" advocates are so blind. At the same time, those who accept abortion wonder why we do not accept abortions as a moral option. What is the problem and why all the conflict?

The problem lies in the fact that there are two opposing forces alive in this world. There is the force of good that is based upon what God has declared for His creation. There is also the force of evil that comes from Satan. It is this force which permits anything that man wants simply because he may be big enough to achieve it. When a Christian is faced with the arguments of the pro-abortion advocate, the problem with convincing them of the truth is that they are not based upon the same moral foundation as the Christian. People of the world are based upon the laws of the self while God's people are looking above to God, the Creator of life and Giver of all good blessings. In the remainder of this chapter, the focus will be on various biblical principles that make abortion morally unacceptable.

1. Abortion Brings About the Murder of a Living Child that God Created.

The Creator and Giver of all life is God. Children are looked upon as great blessings in the Bible. Look in Psalms 127:5 where David writes that the man who seeks to be really happy will have many children. Why is that? The reason is that children are great blessings and gifts from God. Abortion not only takes away a

great gift, but the blessing is stolen away by committing the sin of murder. To have or commit an abortion, the growth process of a developing child is forever halted.

Those who know nothing of God are actually so ignorant as to say that a baby is not a human being or not alive until it reaches life outside of the womb. Such cannot be concluded when studying the issue of abortion on a biblical level. To many, as has already been stated, abortion is only the “expulsion of tissue” or a “way to keep ones own life smooth without any unexpected rifts.” Abortion is the forceful taking of life and the resultant death of an infant who is never allowed to see the life that you do. It is so important to teach others about the one who created all people.

2. Physical Effects of Abortion.

There are both immediate and long-term effects of abortion to be discussed herein. Of course, there is the obvious truth that abortion is always harmful to the child that is being aborted. For now, let the discussion be centered on the immediate physical effects of the woman.

Women experience a vast range of immediate troubles. After all, abortion is quite a shock to the system of any female. This alone should show the natural laws that are broken when abortions have been performed. Abortion was never meant to occur and therefore the body reacts in different, negative ways. Some women experience prolonged pain and excessive bleeding. The abnormal actions and force required for a baby’s removal show that abortions are totally against God’s plan for natural child-bearing.

During the abortion, there is never any guarantee that the woman will enjoy full bodily safety. According to the “Ohio Right to Life” Website, the actual number of deaths related to

abortion is higher than reported. It seems that some women have abortions, experience complications and rather than going back to the clinic, immediately go into the Emergency Room of a hospital. The woman dies. The physical effects on the mother make abortion morally unacceptable.

3. Things Could Go Wrong.

There have been some cases where a lady felt the need to have an abortion, either because of timing, or to save personal embarrassment and heartache. When the decision was made and the process was taking place, the baby was not born dead as supposed, but rather alive. "It can never happen," you might think. But there are many women who are able to say, "It did happen to me." In a pamphlet entitled, "*Babies Want to be Born*" by Rubel Shelley, he writes of one such incident as follows:

"A 17 year old mother checked into the University of Wisconsin for an abortion on May 5, 1982. She received an injection of urea and prostaglandin to kill the fetus in her womb and induce the expulsion of the fetus. She delivered a live baby! The medical team was on a path aimed at killing the baby. Then, receiving a live baby, screaming and kicking, did an about face to save the infant. Why is it legal and moral to cause the baby's death in the womb but murder to do so only minutes later outside the womb?"

How true his question is. What makes trying to kill a baby one-minute proper or morally acceptable and later, only separated by inches and moments, morally unacceptable? The doctor or anyone else would be charged with first degree murder for going into a persons home and forcefully taking hold of an inhabitant and killing him. Yet, a doctor can forcefully enter into the pre-birth home of a living, thinking and feeling child, can tear him apart and be heralded by the masses as a compassionate person.

If someone came at you with a knife or poison, likely you would do everything in your power to stop his or her advances. The baby also does what he can, but where is he to go? He is helpless and must die.

4. Guilt.

Abortion hurts. Not only has murder of an innocent been committed, but any woman who has an abortion may face severe emotional pain. Many women in fact do suffer extreme amounts of guilt and anxiety after having an abortion. Many women never again feel the way they once did about themselves when they come to know the truth about their decision. David Reardon, author of **Aborted Women: Silent No More**, did a study of the emotional and psychological effects of women who were given abortions. The enlightening aspect about this survey is that Dr. Reardon is an abortion advocate. His study expresses only the truth about the guilt that many experience — he is in no way biased. In his study there were 94% of all women who experienced “negative psychological effects” after the completion of their abortions. In society today, many try to say that such cases are very low or even non-existent, but such is simply untrue.³²

Those who are in support of abortion are not going to speak the truth to a woman who is battling with the question of whether or not to have an abortion. When the abortion is over and time passes, it may be the case that the woman learns what a mistake she made. One can only imagine the extreme feelings of guilt that must be residing in the lives of countless women. It seems that the only way to live without the constant emotional strain would be to totally block such an event from the mind and live in a fantasy world, as though it never happened. When a woman is stopped from having an abortion, she is not only saving a child, but herself from years of terrible guilt and depression.

5. God, Not Doctors, Know the Outcome.

The doctrine of humanism has been born in this world for millennia. Ever since mankind has turned his ears from God, the resultant belief is that he can do whatever he wants. Humanism is the teaching that man is the highest order of life in the universe and therefore bows to nobody but himself. When we believe that, we are free to do anything we want to do. Many people today assume that since they are the “measure of all things,” then there is no ultimate outcome from immoral choices. A person will never have to answer for the wrongs he has done because there is no final judgment. With this mindset, is there any wonder why many doctors feel no remorse for requesting and administering abortions?

There are cases in medical history where a couple was told that their child was going to be born with some deformity. The medical opinion is to “abort the fetus.” The problem with this thinking arises by noticing that doctors are not omniscient and cannot therefore conclusively make such claims. Medical tests are not always fully accurate and so when a child is aborted, it may be that he was not deformed at all. Even still, regardless of the physical possibilities, there is no reason to kill a person simply because they are not perfect. One particular case comes to mind. During a medical test, a mother was found to be carrying a child who had a deformed facial feature. In the doctors opinion she should have aborted her pregnancy. The mother was against such a procedure and gave birth to the child. In this case the doctor was correct and the child’s facial area was distorted. Was then the doctor’s advice right? Should she have aborted her baby? No. Within several years the young boy grew and the facial feature healed itself almost completely. The doctor, who made the call to abort based on physical problems, would have murdered a child for a problem that took care of itself. Obviously this doctor was not God and did not know the outcome.

Never should man take any position where he appears to be the lord and master over life. God is the sustainer and has done a great job maintaining our universe for thousands of years. He alone knows the end from the beginning and has authority over this entire system of human life. God's child will remain under His authority and will do His will (Colossians 3:17). The Christian will never cross the boundary of morality when it comes to upholding the preciousness of human life.

6. God Has a Plan for Man Prior to Birth.

In Jeremiah 1:4,5 we are told, *"Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.'"* These verses teach the basic truth that before you were ever conceived, God knew you. If He understood the fact that you would be in existence one day He must then recognize any unborn child as a living human being. It is both amazing and remarkable to understand that God knew you before you were conceived, He was there during your growth within the womb and now He looks upon you after your birth. What is equally as amazing is the fact that God knows those who have yet to be born. Another lesson from those verses is that God has a plan for everyone. In the text above, Jeremiah was told that he had been chosen as a prophet even before he knew what his profession was going to be. Picture a young child playing with toys and God looks upon him and declares, "There is my next great prophet." In essence this was accomplished while Jeremiah was within his mother's womb. When we learn of God and strive to live our lives for Him, our place will be found and His will is accomplished through us. No person has the right to destroy the life of any individual. Every baby has a plan to be lived out, just as Jeremiah. To deny them life is to deny God's plan for them.

In Exodus 21:22-25 the Law tells of the penalty for those who kill an unborn baby. *“If men strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit departs from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye and tooth for tooth, hand for hand and foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound and stripe for stripe.”* The obvious underlying principle of this passage shows that when one kills an unborn child he has committed a great sin. God calls for the punishment for this kind of person. Today, in contrast to those who advocate abortion, how do you suppose God views those who would harm the baby within the womb? It would seem they should be seen as nothing less than murderers. Today then, why would Christians view anyone who kills a child within the protective womb as anything less than a murderer and nothing less?

These two preceding passages of scripture should bring us to the conclusion that: 1) God has a plan for every person while they are yet within the womb. 2) God called for the death of anyone who killed a child within the womb. These two facts show that life is recognized within the womb and not only after they have passed through the birth canal. It is therefore absurd for people to claim that abortion is a morally acceptable practice. Everyone in the world was a living, moving and feeling child known by God even before his or her conception. What a powerful God we truly follow. How great it is to know that God knows us on an intimate, personal level. How great then is our responsibility to teach the world the truth and uphold the sacredness of life?

VI. Why Abortion at All?

How can anybody who looks at the truth about abortion

believe that such should be allowed? What causes man to overlook the objective moral standard (The Bible) and continue to murder innocent people? The only answer to satisfy the question is that those who defend abortion are motivated by rebellion to God's will. For some reason mankind has so twisted his place on this planet as to assume head-ship over the known universe. Because man views himself as the highest power in the universe, he does whatever he chooses. The words of Isaiah 55:8 ring the truth loudly in this matter, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts nor are my ways your ways.*" Until man can reach the status of "creator, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent" it is best to abide by God's ways and strive every day to do His will.

May God bless you as the decisions of life come your way. God's spirit of truth will guide you into all that you think, say and do if you allow it to. The subject of abortion is one of serious consequences. When you are faced with the possibility of helping a friend or family member decide what they will do with their baby, what will you tell them? The decision is yours to make. You must decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 12

“Euthanasia and the Bible.”

I. Introduction.

Many times the author has had people ask what the purpose of discussing young people in Asia is. As often as that happens, a bit of laughter and embarrassment usually follows when the true meaning of euthanasia is understood. This discussion is not about young inhabitants on the continent of Asia (youth in Asia). The basic problem of euthanasia is whether or not a person has the right to end his own life when faced with the presence of a terminal illness. This chapter is alike to the discussion of abortion in that it is also very emotional and disputed. Anytime a subject centers on the creating or taking of human life, one can expect much controversy. Ultimately, our answer to the practice of euthanasia and other ethical dilemmas is found in the Bible. For this reason, as these comments progress please recall that emotions are not the final standard for judging this subject matter as either moral or immoral. Your final answer must not be guided and based on emotion, but by God's will in the matter.

Young people, the purpose of this chapter is to give you some basic facts and have you to consider some important aspects of this activity. After the facts have been given from a logical and biblical point of view, you can then better make a determination as to whether people have the right to bring about their own deaths in cases of terminal illnesses.

More than likely you have heard the phrase, “The right to die.” It has been spoken of by journalists, discussed by politicians, debated by doctors and lawyers and even possibly examined by members of your family. The question of whether or not it is the right of an individual to chose the time of his own death

has an important bearing in present society. Undoubtedly, euthanasia is a topic that is going to be heard much more frequently as time marches on. For this cause all Christians should prepare themselves to meet and discuss this issue frankly. Admittedly, this is an extremely controversial topic and for this cause the chapter will seek to discuss several aspects about euthanasia from which necessary conclusions will be drawn. It is this writers hope that by the time the chapter ends, you will have a better understanding and clearer idea of what God would have you to do pertaining to euthanasia.

Society today seems to be conditioning mankind into accepting certain things without a great deal of explanation. Although it may seem that euthanasia is granted positive acceptance among those of the world, you need to recall that life is ultimately in the hands of God and He alone is the master over it. For this reason, any action on man's behalf to terminate life for the reason of terminal illness is unjustifiable. A basic problem in this age is that mankind has been plagued with their own teachings for so long that many people have forgotten from whom they came! To accept these teachings of the world is to accept a religious doctrine called "Humanism." Briefly, Humanism is the philosophy that teaches that mankind has evolved over millions of years and that he is the peak of all things in the universe. The implications of such a teaching are obvious.

It is these humanistic social views which proclaim that man may use his own life in whatever way he so desires. Our world today, which is ever increasingly bound by such godless tendencies, is clear in publicly stating its "freedom of choice" ideals. Humanists have what could be considered a written creed of sorts. In the *Humanist Manifesto I*, a very popular atheistic and humanistic handbook, the very existence of God is denied.³³ The pages of this highly esteemed book clearly declare within its pages that man, as the measure of all things, can live any way he

so chooses. The stipulations given are that joy should be present, with pain not being a result of the completed action. They believe that the absence of pain is a sign of "true joy." So then according to this line of reasoning, in cases of illness, euthanasia then becomes a viable alternative to living.

It is obvious that what they have done with this type of thinking is disavowed God's will, denied the fact of eternity and rejected the inevitable Day of Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-11). Since they suppose there to be no God, then mankind is free to do whatever he wants to do, as says their own philosophy. The child of God however must accept the unalterable fact that after this life, all of mankind must face eternity. It is for this cause that one must look to the Bible as the only guide.

In this discussion, it is absolutely mandatory to notice all the elementary aspects and ethical implications involved in prolonging or ending human life. This chapter will give basic ideas about medical, technological and physiological advances in this socio-structure. With a basic understanding to act as a foundation, you will be equipped to do further study on your own. Ever keep in mind that all people are living under the authority of God and their decisions ought to reflect that. Christians should use logical and biblical concepts to soundly determine how God's people should perceive euthanasia.

II. Definition of Terms.

The word *Euthanasia*, which is commonly termed "mercy killing" is derived from two Greek roots. *Eu*, which means simply "Good." Also the word *Thanatos* meaning "Death."³⁴ By putting these two words together one gains the obvious definition of "Good Death." People who support this action are trying to help mankind die in a good way. Anytime one deals with this topic he must understand there are four distinct kinds of euthana-

sia. Such fall under the following headings.

1. **Passive Euthanasia.** If a person was subject to this particular type, then it means that he or she is refused life support or a medicine that could prove to be helpful in some way.
2. **Active Euthanasia.** This would entail the purposeful withholding of basic necessities for the reason of purposely ending a life. This would include food and water.
3. **Direct Euthanasia.** In this case the decision to die is made by the patient either prior to or during the development of the illness.
4. **Indirect Euthanasia.** The reference here is to cases wherein the decision for death is made by one other than the patient. Such would include the doctor and or family members.

III. Five Questions to Answer Regarding Life.

Obviously euthanasia is dealing with someone taking a human life. Since this subject is going to be dealt with in a serious manner, one should ask some very important questions. When the answers for these questions are given, one will be better able to come to firm conclusions towards taking part in euthanasia. Please notice each one briefly and determine the moral implications that euthanasia would bring about.

1. Who Possesses Ownership Over This Life?

It seems that over the years Christians have allowed the doctrines of humanism to invade their lives. One characteristic of Satan is that he is patient. With great precision that Deceiver tears away at the moral fiber of Christians and gets them to for-

get the truth. The true child of God is ever ready for the subtle attacks of the Devil and awaits the ability to respond with offensive and defensive retaliations. For a Christian to lack defenses against the teachings of the world is both dangerous and extremely detrimental to the Christian walk.

The basic thrust of euthanasia seems to suggest the fact that man is his own god and is therefore free to do whatever he may choose. As in any ethical system, be it atheism or Christianity, there must be a standard by which one can judge an action right or wrong. Of course in atheism the standard is the self, whereas in Christianity it is the word of God. The point is that a way to judge moral rightness is a necessity of life. Where the humanist is without divine guidance and must mistakenly use his own limited knowledge as a standard, the Christian has the inspired words of God as his foundation. In that word the point is made that God is the creator and owner of life.

All those who hold to the Bible in even a casual way must understand that the Bible demands a belief in God as the creator, owner and sustainer of life. If man chooses to violate His will for man by rebelliously allowing man a departure from this world, then he disregards the very authority of God who created life.

2. Are Pain and Suffering Always Evil?

So much is said about pain and suffering as not having any real worth in life. Perhaps our minds have been saturated with the false concept that such things as pain and suffering are of no value whatsoever to man. It is not suggested that pain is a thing one would welcome, but to say they are evil or without value is incorrect. From the secular humanist's viewpoint, pain and suffering must be stopped in any way possible. The humanist says that any pain that has an unbearable effect on any person must be alleviated even if it requires the death of the one suffering. In

rare cases, taken strictly from an emotional position, this may seem the merciful and humane thing to do, one must realize that God created man as physical creatures. Man should not question God's creation as though man knows what is best. The very nerves that allow man to experience joy and excitement also detect pain and anguish.

These points lead one to ask whether or not pain and suffering are really evil? Are they really to be avoided at all costs? While in a public discussion of this topic before a college class, Brother Kippy Myers asked, "We could ask if pain and suffering are ever evil." What must be understood is that since man was made to experience pain, then perhaps it suits some purpose for mankind. According to John and Mark Feinberg, authors of *Ethics for a Brave New World*, it is said that, "While afflictions are always evils, God can and does use them to work good in the lives of men."³⁵

Where it is a fact that men do not like to suffer extreme physical pain, there is a sense where a Christian can manage through struggles more easily when he has the knowledge that God is the master of the universe. As James said in chapter one of his epistle, one can become better when he faces hard times. Such "*trying of our faith works patience.*" That patience produces in us the perfection that God would desire of His followers. That perfection is a sign of true spiritual maturity.

3. Is Bringing About Death in the Name of Mercy Justifiable?

Recall that humanists seek to explain all questions about morality with the presupposition that man is the highest intellectual power in the universe. He is, to them, the measure of all things. It is therefore the conclusion of the humanist that killing a person who is in unbearable pain is the merciful thing to do.

Joseph Fletcher, author of *Morals and Medicine*, asserts a biblically based claim that when Christ said, "*Blessed are the merciful...*"³⁶ then the conclusion can be reached that "mercy killing" is acceptable to God. The misinterpretation of this verse from the gospel of Matthew may attempt to tug at our emotional hearts, but Christians must understand that as merciful as it may sound, the end result is still "*putting ones hand forth to destroy*" (2 Samuel 1:14).

4. What Are Some Risks Involved with Accepting Euthanasia?

If it were true that man was simply the chance occurrence of some cosmic cataclysmic eruption, then man is only answerable to himself. For this cause the concepts of eternity and judgment would mean nothing because after this life is over, man would cease to exist. In conclusion, if this life is all there is, then the practice of mercy killing is an alternative that should not only be accepted, but also put into worldwide practice. This is the sentiment of many today. They declare that man should follow the guidelines of the ancient hedonist and create an earthly paradise for ourselves. According to them, let mankind create an earthly paradise where only the intelligent, healthy and beautiful people would reside. Such a place would only allow a high quality of life to be ordained as a standard for society to strictly adhere to. Further, all those who are alive now should be given a swift end to their lives because they cannot contribute anything to the future good of society. How does this suit you?

If it were true that God did not exist, which this writer denies with every ounce of strength he can muster, then whatever a majority of people or military power declares would become law. With God, however, Christians are under the position of submission. God is the Creator of all life on this earth. He, as the Creator, has given each individual an identity that is peculiar

from any one else living. Since the proprietor of life is God, no human being has the right to interfere with the plans that He has set in motion. The Christian is a believer in the absolute sanctity of all human life. The result of purposely ending a human life is sacrilege.

5. What Is Death?

The humanistic society that surrounds God's people today views death as the simple and eternal end to a temporal existence. According to the humanist, since man is without spiritual faculties, then death is an end to all physical and mental functions.³⁷ The body goes to a final place of rest and the life-force ends, never again to be at any place or in any realm of being.

Christians however hold to the words of the Bible. Death is the separation of the spirit from the physical body. Death could come at any time for anyone. James says in 4:14, "*You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even as a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away.*" Further, in Hebrews 9:27: "*It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment.*"

Death ushers in a meeting of the spiritual portion with the blessed Creator. Death is assured and all of mankind will face God one day.

IV. Implications of Euthanasia.

To reach a well-informed decision regarding euthanasia the questions above are necessary. Further one must notice the implications of practicing euthanasia. If one can find that the practice violates some ethical or moral standard, then it should not be accepted in any way. In this chapter the implications of euthanasia fall under are the Moral, Medical, Legal and Biblical headings.

1. Ethical Reasons for Not Accepting Euthanasia.

The word moral means, "subject to all practical purposes."³⁸ In noticing the four major kinds of euthanasia, (as established earlier) let it be questioned as to whether or not euthanasia can be committed by mankind and it remain morally right. As you will see, there are some good reasons that say such is an immoral practice.

2. Is it Ever Morally Proper to Commit Passive Euthanasia?

In this author's opinion, there are some cases where a "death with dignity" can be agreed upon without surrendering moral soundness. For example, if one has suffered a serious accident or when one is terminally ill, and if in the doctor's opinion the patient may survive for hours or days, then that patient's life must take precedence. On the other side of the issue, when one has no hope of survival, there is no moral sense found whatsoever in trying to keep someone alive by artificial means, if in fact their death is assured. By doing this, ones action may actually go against the will of God. A natural death without the aid of mechanical contraptions is certainly a biblical concept.

3. Is it Ever Morally Proper to Commit Active Euthanasia?

Recall that for a person to pursue and commit active euthanasia, one must purposely end a human life in some active manner. A person of sound mind, proper mental alertness, and one other than the patient, uses some active means to end the patient's pain or ends their life before the pain begins. Such can be accomplished when a doctor refuses to feed a comatose patient. The process may take some time, but the person will eventually die. It seems that there is again a vast difference between: 1)

Allowing a person a natural death. 2) The blatant act of killing someone before his or her natural time. In every sense, regardless of emotive angles, active euthanasia is morally unacceptable.

4. Is it Ever Morally Proper to Commit Voluntary or Direct Euthanasia?

The patient has previously requested that the doctor provide him with some type of life-ending treatment. One could describe this simply as “physician assisted suicide.” Viewing this concept in light of God’s word, suicide is a definite type of homicide and since homicide is never ethically sound, one must conclude that the act of voluntary euthanasia is unethical. The truth resides in the fact that God is the master of life and man does not have the power to decide when life is over. This decision belongs to God.

5. Is it Ever Morally Proper to Commit Involuntary Euthanasia?

In this case the decision to die is made by someone other than the patient. For this cause the patient could not stand guilty of his own death since he had no say in the matter. One should consider involuntary euthanasia as unethical since the patient is not allowed to answer for himself. There is always the chance that the patient may become responsive before he can affirm or deny the decision.

In regards to brain damage or brain death where there is assuredly no chance for recovery, one should also consider what the natural alternative would be. If technological advances were not present, would the person be alive at all? Or is it the case that without life supporting means the person would be dead? Again, natural death is biblically justified.

6. Medical Reasons Against Euthanasia.

A survey was taken among doctors in the late 1970's and provided some startling results.³⁹ One third of the 418 doctors polled favored:

- A. Negative Euthanasia at the request of the patient.
- B. Positive Euthanasia for certain select patients.
- C. Abortion at the request of the patient.

When physicians are licensed to practice medicine lawfully they take what is called the "Hippocratic Oath." During that oath they vow to uphold the sacredness of life which would include treating it with great respect and to revere it as special.⁴⁰ In essence many of those physicians lied by advocating the degradation of human life.

The world has seen vast and rapid desensitization of how sacred human life really is. In the 1970's again, a doctor raised to life a somewhat dead issue of euthanasia when he ended his own mother's life.⁴¹ Since that time, society has fallen into it's present thinking about how seemingly worthless human life is. One might ask what the purpose of a physician is. It seems that if one were in need of medical treatment, he would seek help from an individual who has been trained to help us. None of us would go to the nearby car garage to request a liver transplant. Such would be ludicrous and absurd. All should understand that to protect and preserve human life is a duty of all of mankind, but how much more those who are specifically trained in the medical capacity.

Anyone who is a commissioned medical doctor must vow to the Hippocratic oath. Under this pledge, the doctor promises to use medicine to help any sick individual. Poison, which would be required for euthanasia, is never to be administered under any

circumstance. From this evidence alone one sees that it is never the duty of the medical community to aid in ending human life. Rather they are to help uphold its sacredness.

There are some who seek to justify the use of euthanasia by stating the following, "Death is the only way to stop the pain." In response to this statement there are some good reasons why patients must not presuppose death to be the only alternative for terminal illness. It is always the possibility that the patient's condition may grow increasingly better with time. Recall that the power of prayer is real. James 5:15 says, "*The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up.*" Never cheapen the power of prayer by not allowing it to have its proper place in the life of mankind.

Today there is no doctor who is able to make a 100% judgment call on whether a terminally ill patient may recover. The reason for man's ignorance is obvious, he is not all-knowing! Many people have had cases of illness or disease where their body is unexplainably healed and the sickness completely disappears. Such could be the result in any medical case. Further, the relief of pain is not a justifiable reason to resort to euthanasia. Modern medical advances make it very possible to live without pain in many cases. According to *Nightline*, which aired in March of 1988, medicine can be administered in nearly all cases so that pain is alleviated to the point of easy living, until natural death occurs.⁴²

In every way, the medical implications associated with euthanasia point towards the following conclusion: those who are equipped to help save human life must do so without going beyond morally acceptable boundaries. Simply because one has the means to hasten death is no valid reason for using such means in the name of mercy and medicine. In fact just the opposite should be the case. The pledge doctors have taken to keep and

view life as precious must be taken seriously. Any thinking that would allow medically trained professionals to take away life is otherwise illogical.

7. Legal Reasons Against Euthanasia.

A telling sign of America's quickly deteriorating morality is shown by at least one state. Oregon has passed a "Death with Dignity" act which gave the right to physicians to administer lethal dosages of medication to end patients' lives. Thankfully in 1995, a federal district court ruled that the act was inadequate in providing safeguards against misuse and was in violation of the protection clause of the United States Constitution. While the laws are pro-life in most cases, sometimes they do fall prey to abuses. Those who would perform euthanasia for those who are terminally ill or seriously debilitated have been prosecuted for their conduct, but such is infrequent. Here is a case of something being condemned in theory, yet tolerated in physical practice.

In legal realms, there is no statute that specifically makes one who practices euthanasia a criminal. What this means is that a doctor who brings about the death of a patient is not viewed as a hardened, blatant criminal. In fact the more likely outcome would be that he will never face any kind of criminal outcome for the following reasons: 1) Many states do not criminalize those who practice physician-assisted suicide. 2) Even in most states that prohibit assisted suicides, when they are committed, prosecutions are almost unheard of. In fact there have been no convictions recorded to this date where any time was served in cases involving euthanasia.⁴³

In an offering of further proof to substantiate this claim, please notice five prosecuted cases that date from 1950 to 1988. They are as follows:

1. In 1950, Dr. Herman Sander was charged with murder

and was acquitted after injecting 40cc of air into his patient.

2. In 1974, Dr. Vincent Montemarano was acquitted of murder after injecting potassium chloride into a terminally ill patient.
3. 1985, Dr. John Kraii was charged with the murder of his friend. He later committed suicide before the judgment was passed.
4. 1986, Dr. Joseph Hossman was charged with manslaughter after injecting his mother-in-law with morphine. He was given a simple two-year probation.
5. 1988, Dr. Ronald Carroccio was charged with murder after he injected his patient with potassium chloride. He pleaded guilty and was given five years of probation.

These five cases demonstrate that even when such cases are prosecuted, convictions are rare and there has never been a person in America serve time because of a being found guilty of euthanasia.⁴⁴ From a legal position, the question as to whether physicians have the right, duty or responsibility to give aid to a dying patient has never been adequately resolved. It is estimated by some, and with good reason, that if the practice of euthanasia continues and soon becomes legalized, that preventing abuses will be extremely difficult to maintain. Some critics have noted that with the legalization of euthanasia, some family members, insurance companies and even physicians will try to hasten and pressure ill patients to be euthanized.

The law is not clear whether a person has the right to choose the time of his or her own death, but where suicide is illegal so then is euthanasia. A common problem that force lawmakers into a dilemma is that while being charged with murder, the doctor is at the same time heralded as a loving person who gave mercy to

the needy. Such is the result of laws without clear barriers. The laws are unstable on this subject and are easily twisted to allowing legalized murder. In that, no morality is found.

8. Biblical Reasons Against Euthanasia.

God created all things. This simplistic truth gives the Christian refuge in a world of conflict. Whether man chooses to believe it or not (Romans 1:20), God created mankind. One should notice the following biblical references to God's authority over creation by virtue of the fact that He created man. In Acts 17:24 Paul declared boldly to the philosophers, "*God, who made the world and everything in it...*" He spoke to the Romans in 1:20 that mankind is without excuse because God is clearly seen by the things which are made. He remarks how God is one of "eternal power" Surely the finite abilities of man cannot compare to the awe-inspiring wonders of God's majesty. In Acts 14:15-17 again Paul and Barnabas are affirming that idols are not to be worshipped because it is God who deserves the glory. "*You should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth and the sea, and all things in them.*"

Among the Old Testament one is not pressed to find references to God's power and creation. In Psalms 8:1-9 David writes there such things as, "*When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers*" (8:3). And "*How excellent is your name in all the earth*" (8:9). Job spoke about the creative power of God in 38:4. God asked Job, "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?*" The point being made clearly that for man to set in judgment of the almighty God is a foolish thing indeed. And finally in Psalms 119:1-14 David again speaks of the importance of heeding God's word, "*I will praise you with the uprightness of heart, when I learn your righteous judgments.*"

Each of these verses points to God as the creator of life and

the universe. Surely God has created mankind with a purpose and function and man is required to accept and bow to this eternal principle. In life free from physical troubles or in pain and suffering, one must never go beyond the will of God, the creator.

God sustains all things. It is a biblical fact that without God one could not live for five minutes. Paul said in Colossians 1:17 that *“In him all things consist.”* It would be absolutely impossible for the universe to continue in motion without God. It would be inconceivable that this earth could continue rotating without God. It would be unachievable that gravity would remain without God. Finally, it would be unobtainable for man to live and breathe without God. In Acts 17:28 Paul said of God, *“In whom we live and breathe and have our being.”* The Hebrew writer said in 1:3 that Christ, *“...upholds all things by the word of his power.”*

As well as many others it is impossible to misunderstand the Bible's intentions. God has the absolute power over this universe. As those who follow the one true and living God, Christians should seek to do His will in all situations. No man has the right whatsoever to place themselves on a preeminent pedestal above God in this life. To do so is blasphemy. *“It was God who created us and not we ourselves”* (Psalms 100:3). By the very word of God this universe continues. God alone sustains all things.

God owns and has control over all things. In Genesis 1:1 one learns that God merely spoke light into existence. Can you imagine the scene where darkness was forever dispelled by a spoken word? What a triumphant time it was. God simply stated, *“Let there be...”* and there was. It is a blessing to know that we serve such a powerful God as that. God is one who has the power to create life and has done so. Although man is a sinful creature and fails God in many ways, He yet remains willing to allow His

creation to worship Him. As you live, always remember that you follow the God who is supreme over all things and that He loved you enough to send His only Son for your sins to be forgiven. Again the words of David in Psalms 100:3, "*We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.*" Since you are part of His sheep, you must not go beyond the authority of the Great Shepherd.

God has authority over all things. All authority resides in power. There would be no power in a law that is not authorized and enforced. So as laws are written for the world to follow, they are only authorized because some power will enforce them. God as the ultimate power also has the ultimate authority to delegate power to others. Christians are told in the Bible that when Christ returns, then all the powers of this world will be put to an end. 1 Corinthians 15:24 says, "*And then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*" God has the supreme authority to one day stop present temporal authorities. Whenever He so chooses to return, all of mankind will be under submission to His authority. This tells that although mankind supposes himself to be the highest power in the universe today, in reality God alone holds that title.

In Psalms 104:29 you can see another verse that gives weight to the claim of God being the highest authority of this world. "*You take away your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.*" Whenever God is not near to man, then trouble will face him, but when God is near man is fully guaranteed a walk with God. He is depicted as the final authority over life and death. Without God, where could one turn? And finally in Isaiah 40:26-28 a beautiful treatise on the unsearchable wisdom and power of the omnipotent God above is given. "*Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things...He calls them all by name, by the greatness of his might and the strength of his power, not one is missing...Have*

you not known and have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.” Truly with what poetic expertise can one grasp God’s mighty authority and creative power. As your authority, what right does anyone have to set in judgment of God’s creation? Does anyone truly know better than God?

Although it is true that God may allow certain things like pain and suffering to go on, it must always be understood that any temporal trial that the things man must go through are a small price to endure for the joy of entering Heaven. Many have forgotten that and it remains a fact that man has placed himself upon a platform above God. Many believe today that they are the ultimate power in the universe. The man who chooses this doctrine will face God and one day answer to the Almighty Creator for this earthly behavior. May the Christian dare never to rebel against the authority of God. Such has always brought disastrous results. (See Eve and Adam in Genesis 3, Korah’s rebellion in Numbers 16, Saul’s foolish sacrifice in 1 Samuel 13 and others.)

God is Lord over all of Life. A few verses to prove this claim from a biblical standpoint are Romans 9:20-23 where Paul discusses man as the clay of the potter. Paul writes, *“Does not the potter have power over the clay?”* The meaning is that God uses man to accomplish His deeds as they allow themselves to be molded to do His will. 1 Corinthians 6:13,19,20, *“The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord...Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”* Notice also the following passages of Psalms 50:11-16 and Hebrews 12:5-11. Finally, David writes conclusively in Psalms 24:1, *“The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those that dwell therein.”*

Everything that God created belongs to the Lord. Life therefore also is under the jurisdiction of the Master. Man can choose to live in a fantasyland where he fools himself into believing that his actions and thoughts are relevant. He can deceive himself into thinking that immoral actions are fine and that his conclusions become the all-final word. The truth however will remain that God is Lord and Master. He is the owner, sustainer and final authority of all life. This includes whatever man speaks or does. For this reason, one must never go beyond the rules that God has laid down for humanity. Therefore, people cannot say that God, who created all life, is for "Death by Human Choice."

V. Concluding Remarks.

At what depth of moral decay will this country find itself if people do not begin to stand up for the truth? The calling of man to stand for sound biblical teachings is a necessity. How can this country hope to remain firmly built on trust in God when nobody professes His will? May many people have the zeal to be strong standing pillars of truth as the tempestuous winds of moral change beat upon the roof of godliness.

In closing, let it always be remembered that although present society deems it appropriate to commit euthanasia, life is ultimately in the hands of God. He alone is the master over it. For this cause, any action on man's behalf to end life for the reason of terminal illness is unjustifiable. As you face this problem in upcoming days, be ready to offer a defense for the reason that you believe euthanasia is wrong. May you always be a person who seeks to draw people closer to the truth found in God's word. Today you need to come to some conclusion regarding euthanasia. What is your decision? You must decide. **Where Is Your Focus?**

Chapter 13

“Being a Christian All the Way to the Finish Line!”

I. Your Goal Is to Be Constant.

You have made it to the end of this study on Christian morality. As nice as it feels to complete this book, this does not mark the end of your Christian life. You have really only just begun. As time progresses you will find many new challenges and difficulties that will be facing you in the future. It is my hope and prayer that this entire discussion has been a maturing study and that something you have read will help you to make the proper decisions in your Christian life. In looking back, hopefully it can be said that you have been enriched and strengthened by having studied these things.

As you face personal temptations, allow the principles of the Bible to be your only guide as you strive for that eternal heavenly home. Anyone reading this book has the hope of Heaven and it is that great hope that should spurn you to continue no matter what the world says or does. Indeed, as you envision Heaven, allow that great place to become real to your life, then you will desire all the more to attain that goal. God only requires one thing for His people to receive this matchless inheritance. That necessary element is total commitment. Perhaps the idea of “total commitment” is not understood as it should be in this society. To be totally committed means that a person gives never-ending loyalty to a cause or person. When Christians discuss commitment, it takes on special meaning because God’s children give their never-ending loyalty to both a cause and to a person. Christians live for the person of Christ (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21), and desire the cause of Heaven. For the child

of God to enjoy the glory of God's grand reward he must be constant. The Christian's goal is to continue for the cause of Christ and the home of Heaven.

Recall from the very beginning of this book, there were two passages given as "theme verses" of this discussion. One of those verses was Hebrews 6:1 where the author said, "*Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on unto perfection...*" It seems that this verse implies a positive underlying attitude that God's faithful people must possess. When those who deeply love God understand the true meaning of living for Him, they will be desirous to live after the goal of perfection, which has been laid down by Christ Jesus. Christ said in John 13:15, "*For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done.*" Jesus speaks of Himself as the only perfect example. Peter said that, "*Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow in his footsteps*" (1 Peter 2:21). The Christian life is all about striving for perfection and the only place to find perfection is in Jesus.

The question may then come, "So does this mean that I can be perfect and never sin?" The answer is, "No"s. Human beings are sinful and often fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). But it is possible that, after your obedience to God by being buried with Christ by baptism (Romans 6:1-4), when you commit sin, John says that you have an "*advocate with the Father*" (1 John 2:1). Simply put, once you have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ you go from being sinful to being forgiven. When you fall short, you can pray to God, through Christ and be forgiven of those things. So then, although in this physical life, being perfectly sinless will never be attained, it is the goal that Christians are to strive for. Perfection then should become your mindset and an attitude of life. Rather than willfully succumbing to temptations, strive to "*go on towards perfection.*" This is your goal.

When you think about continuing to the end, you may think of some kind of race. Think of a marathon where all the participants are called to run 26 miles. Such a race requires great strength, stamina and proper distribution of energy for the runners to continue to the end. As good as each of the athletes may be, only one can be chosen as the final winner.

The New Testament describes a Christian in several ways. Jesus calls them “Light” and “Salt” in Matthew 5:13,14. Paul calls them “Soldiers” in 2 Timothy 2:3. And further Paul depicts the entire Christian life as a race with many runners involved (1 Corinthians 9:24). Paul implies very clearly with this analogy that the Christian life requires constancy and commitment. Listen as Paul describes the Christian, *“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight; not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Paul makes three good points that Christians should remember:

1. Only one person will be the ultimate winner in any physical race. With this in mind you should run with endurance and constancy as if you want to be found the winner of this spiritual race.⁴⁵
2. In a physical race there is a physical, temporary and perishable prize. How much more should you be running hard for the eternal prize that awaits you in Heaven?
3. You are not running or fighting as if you were without

any real purpose or goal. Heaven is real and the closer you draw near to the finish line, the harder you should fight to cross over as the winner.

Finally, a verse from Hebrews 12:1 also should be noted. *“Seeing then that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”*

The author would have you picture yourself as a runner in a long marathon. As you begin the long trek toward the goal, you may find yourself being bogged down by various weights. It becomes obvious that those troubles are keeping you from properly running the race. What would you do if a great prize were at stake? Likely you would throw those heavy burdensome things away from your person and run as fast and hard as possible. The life of the Christian is the same. One begins running and as he continues there are things in life that pull him down. There are sins that easily grab the Christian and never desire to release him. The remedy is to remember the great reward that lies ahead, cast away those weights and run just as hard and as diligently as you can. Lay aside anything that may come between you and that great goal of Heaven! Christian, you can cross that finish line.

II. Why Is Life a Constant Struggle?

Many people have asked this question for centuries. Even the Christian may wonder why life is so difficult at times. Although Christians are the people of God, they often face trials and times of sadness. As some words of comfort recall the words of James in 1:2, *“Brethren count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith works patience and let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect*

and entire wanting nothing.” According to James, the problems that you face can bring about Christian graces and perfection. Although the follower of Christ realizes that patience and perfection is the end result of trials (so long as they are approached with the proper attitude), it is sometimes difficult for the person who is suffering hardship to accept such logic.

There are no guarantees that the Christian life will be free from troubles. Some people have mistakenly assumed that at the point of obedience there is complete exemption from problems. Such a concept is incorrect. Although being a Christian is a life of spiritual blessings and gives the promise of eternity, no Christian has a life without problems in some shape, form or fashion. Anyone will face personal struggles, turmoil and temptations. You may have to bear the burden of losing a beloved family member or share in the crisis of financial struggles. Regardless of the things that you face in this life, the consolation is that Christians have a reward awaiting them that far outweighs the struggles of this world.

The Bible is very clear that God’s people have been promised and are presently experiencing great blessings. So in comparison, it could be said that your life is like a fine bed of roses. As in any bed of roses it is possible to find some thorns. The thorns of life are not welcomed, but must be endured until somehow they are clipped away. Then it is possible to continue enjoying the beauty all around. Troubles will come and should be endured with the proper mindset. On the other side of this life is eternal rest and when you reach that blessed heavenly shore, there will be no more thorns, no more pain, no more sickness and all will be peace forevermore. Just envision the scene in Revelation 22:1-5. How marvelous it will be.

Why then is life a constant struggle? Is there anything you can do so as to have less struggles and more blessings? Yes

indeed. You should be mindfully aware that making poor decisions in life could haunt a person for years to come. Always remember that you will be making decisions everyday and such decisions will either bring a good or bad, that is positive or negative, outcome. God's people are given choices to make and with those choices will come consequences. In the book of Leviticus 26, God gave the Israelites several decisions to make. Among the words of God were several "If...then" clauses. *If* the Hebrew people did God's will, *then* they would receive the promised blessings. If they did not obey, then they would suffer the consequences of their rebellion. The same principle of doing God's will applies today. When one knows the truth and does not act positively towards it, he will suffer the consequences of wrong decisions. James is clear in 1:22, "*Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.*" Bad decisions can bring unwanted struggles to your life, struggles that you will be forced to endure.

Understand that even when you desire to remain close to God, times of weakness are going to come. As you grow towards spiritual maturity you will develop structured foresight. You will begin to ask certain questions about whether a thing will bring about either a positive or negative consequence. When you determine that an action will lead you to problems later, you will have the sense to deny that activity and thereby save yourself from additional troubles.

When personal temptations do conceive and bring forth sin (James 1:15), it can be very discouraging at times. But rather than allow those sins to remain and bring you under the burden of guilt, the Christian can and should take care of this problem quickly. You can pray to your Father, repent of your sins and go on with life. The sin that you committed will be forgiven so once again you can get back in the race, you can run and be ever desirous of future perfection. Surely, since Christians fall short

in many ways on a daily basis, living for God is a constant struggle. However, the Bible offers you words of consolation. Paul said in Romans 8:24, "*Now we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.*" Do you believe what Paul said? If you believe that all things are on a continuous path towards our ultimate good, then even the times when you personally fail are helpful to personal spiritual growth. This means that even when you fall short in a time of weakness, you are able to grow from the experience and be led towards maturity. Listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "*For our light affliction is but for a moment and it is working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.*"

II. Christians Prepare: Trials Are Coming.

As has already been alluded to, trials can either make a person stronger or weaker. Of course the Lord wants you to enter Heaven triumphantly and so He wants your life to be made stronger by those trying times. The Bible is full of examples of those who found maturity on the other side of trials. How would a writer of the Bible view you? Are your trials making you stronger or weaker? There is a specific case from the book of Psalms that will help in determining whether one is approaching the problems of life with the correct attitude.

In the book of Psalms 18:16-19 you can read these words of David, "*He sent from above, He took me. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because he delighted in me.*" You can see here another great song of David when he experienced the trials of life. The lesson to learn is that David did not allow these trials to tear him down, rather they made him stronger. Instead of feeling trapped by the troubles of life and entangled by the ropes

of despair, he was taken by God into a “*broad place*” (Psalms 18:19). Of all the giants in life that David previously faced, God always gave him safe passage to spiritual security.

What you see here is the great victory of faith in the life of God’s people. For those who have no faith in God, trials are not wanted because there is no apparent good to be found in them. However, those who do God’s will are being made stronger by their troubles. Paul was put in prison, but for him it became a place for Paul where God’s word could be spread. John was exiled to the island of Patmos. This was supposed to “keep a good man down,” yet it became the place from which the Revelation of Christ was revealed (Revelation 1:1-2,9). You should be careful not to allow the things of this world to hold you down. David was given everything he could have ever wanted. God promises those things to you today! What more could you ever desire?

Perhaps you have been trained to complain about your problems. Recall again that James said, “*The trying of your faith works patience and let patience have her perfect work that you may be complete and entire wanting nothing*” (James 1:3,4). All of these God-ordained trials will come to accomplish greater purposes in your life for God. When difficulties seem to be growing larger, remember that God is greater than your problems. Never let those trials of life pull you down. Great men of the Bible never did.

Moses was a man who never volunteered for the job of Israelite leader. It is obvious that Moses even tried several times to excuse himself from the task. But his faith in God propelled him to continue faithfully his obligation. The job was long and arduous but Moses never gave up. Even when the people constantly murmured and complained, he kept the inner fire burning because he cared about doing God’s will. Think of the tri-

umphant Moses as he stood looking over into the land of Canaan. He can see the lush trees and fertile soils. Although he would never feel the physical dirt beneath his own feet, Moses grew to be a true man of God and he made it to the Promised Land — the spiritual one.

Think of Paul who lived a life of zeal for God. In ignorance Paul harmed many who bowed to the Messiah. Once Paul came to the realization of the truth, he turned his life over to serving Jesus Christ, his Lord. Paul suffered immensely for his pledged devotion to God. Five times Paul was whipped, three times beaten, once stoned and left for dead, three times shipwrecked, in perils of robbers, wilderness, city, countrymen, gentiles, false brethren, often he was hungry, thirsty, cold and naked and without sleep (2 Corinthians 11:24-28). Throughout all of those things Paul did not give up. He is not known as a timid man fearful of speaking the truth, but a bold powerful preacher who died for the cause of Christ! Paul was able to say, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...”* Paul never gave up because he knew what he had been promised in return for his devotion.

Those men struggled, as you will. But the fact that gives them such a state of elevation in the Bible is that they never gave up. They conquered the problems of life, were blessed eternally for it and became examples for Christians who are in need of strength. Can such be said about you? Remember to be positive. After all, Paul said that you can be and already are, *“More than conquerors through Him that loved us”* (Romans 8:37). What kind of example are you going to be to those around you?

III. Defeating the Lion in Your Life.

The words of Peter made in reference to Satan as a lion have

been mentioned in this volume already. Peter told Christians to “*be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the Devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). It is the undeniable case that Satan is constantly on the prowl to destroy your soul. The Devil, just like human beings, has his own agenda. He will do all in his power to see to it that his plans are carried out. His intention and goal is to capture your soul. Whatever this great enemy can do to ruin your spiritual life will be done. With just one foot in the door he can run rampant over you and your entire family, bringing ruin with every moment that he is allowed to continue.

Peter understood the power of Satan and so he reminds all to be “*sober and vigilant.*” The words would lead one to be serious about his Christian life, as a soldier on the watch for an enemy. When the enemy has been spotted, he must be defeated. When he is not stopped in his tracks, his subtle offensive tactics are put into action and another battle can be won against God’s people. Indeed it is often your own choices that cause life to be more difficult. The following poem expresses this sentiment.

The Invited Intruder

Guilt is my burden and welcomed food for the Devil.
With each day of shame and torment, I pass further from
the shores of confession.

Drifting aimlessly toward the abyss of darkened sin,
Quietly I sit, watching, feeling and knowing my life has
grown cold.

Do I dare turn back to the land of sanctuary?
No, for guilt has stricken me to become hardened and
empty.

The tide turns.
Yet I watch in disgust as the evil one moves closer to me

again.

This time I can see light of hope glimmering in the distance.

I can see it clearly shining.

By the grace of my Father I am coming back to Him.

Back to the light.

There I meet Him with arms opened wide,

And the tears of sorrow and joy flow freely down my cheek.

I am free. Free at last and free indeed.

That vessel which once had carried me into sinful darkness,

Was now gone and no longer beneath me.

Now I can walk on solid ground.

Solidarity-firmness-unshaken truth and holiness guides me.

And my desire is to remain.

God knows that I seek to remain with Him.

And fight I will. And fight I do.

What do I see? What do I feel?

The burden of guilt has been lifted away, yet what remains

is a painful pressing.

It is there, it is real and it seeks to enter my soul again.

“Who is it?” I wonder in amazement.

Satan is there and he comes without any regard for my eternal welfare.

His ploy is to wager temporal happiness in return for my promise of unending life.

Even when I feel so close to God he comes.

He treads upon my heart and searches for that unsealed portion of my soul.

That place he knows well, that small tear which has yet to heal, no matter how small.

He enters by my permission yet I proclaim he is guilty of
trespass.

I purposely am drawn to his bargain although I know the
outcome.

My devotion is divided. What a malignant curse stands
before me.

Condemnation is coming, his breath warms my neck and
turns my soul to sickness.

Anxious to hold God yet to keep these temporal blessings
near,

I am helpless by my own choosing and am bound to listen
to his pleas for acceptance.

Then it begins again. A song I have heard many times
before.

That accursed demon plays the strings of my personal
desires masterfully.

Uncaring, he continues. I have been deceived yet again.
He directs his piece and it is obvious that what I hear is a
song he has composed.

He knows it well and never grows tired of hearing it played.
Upon its completion I find myself within a small boat and
slowly drifting from the shore.

The guilt once more plagues me.

How has this happened?

“Not again!” I shout with bursting emotion.

Only some feet from me a figure stands, his arms are out-
stretched,

Beckoning for me to come back.

The moment has come. This is the point!

Dare I travel back-Beyond that point of no return? That
point I nearly passed before?

No. Although I must be mercilessly cut by the cold waters

of humility,
I step out of the boat and greet encapsulating feelings of
homecoming.
Up to my neck I am surrounded. I can barely breathe, but I
can breathe.

With each step I near the shoreline of forgiveness.
With each step the joy of grace spurs my faith to continue
on this trek.
All along, my eyes are affixed on the goal before me.
There are cries from behind however.

It is him!
Condemned Invader!
Bringing all too familiar a composition called deception.

Suppose that you are out in the country enjoying a cool summer evening when suddenly an angry lion jumps in your way. You have two options. You can either conquer the lion or allow the lion to rule over you. Satan is classified as a type of lion and Christians should be on constant alert for his presence in their lives. Just like a lion, he must be conquered completely. If he is not eliminated each time he is presented, then you will be forced to submit to whatever he requires of you. Do not be like the lazy man in Proverbs 26:13, who heard there was a lion in the streets and did nothing to turn him away. Be a strong child of God who is aware of the enemy and strike out to defeat him totally.

IV. Final Words of Encouragement and Exhortation.

Dear Christian, you are special and a beloved child of God. Your soul is worth more than the entire world (Matthew 16:26). So precious are you that God gave you His best! *“For God so*

loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life" (John 3:16). What are you giving God in return? Give God everything you can.

You are living in a world of troubles and sin, but this does not mean that you are able to take part in the sins and iniquities of this life. Although Christians live in the world, they are never to be of the world. The child of God has been saved from the troubles and sins of this world. He has been made a "*new creature*" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Seeing that God has saved Christians from the sins and judgments reserved for those of the world, all of His people should work as much as possible to remain free from this world's pollution. Perhaps you have heard of the analogy of a Christian to a boat in water. As the comparison goes, you are a boat and have been set in a large body of water. So long as you do not allow any water into your boat, then you are fine. When you become wet inside, you have serious trouble and will shortly sink. So is the way of your life. To allow the ways of this world and present society to mold you is incompatible to the life that you are professing.

Christians are called living stones. Seeing that God's children are based upon the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ, they must grow into firm spiritual stones. Peter says of you, "*You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood...*" (1 Peter 2:5). Since Peter calls you a stone, think of your life in this respect. If you take a rock and throw it into a pool of water, that rock's physical composition will never be altered by its surroundings, it's essence will always remain a rock. In the same way, the essence of the Christian will always remain solid and firmly attached to Christ. Although surrounded by a godless society, true devotion will be easily recognized. You are a child of God and based on the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason you are a "wise" person (Matthew 7:24,25).

“Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might know what is that good and perfect and holy will of God” (Romans 12:1). “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10). “Whosoever wants to be a friend to the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). “Do not love the world neither the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him” (1 John 2:15).

Your Christian life is the most difficult thing you will ever do, but nothing is worth more! Although this life is filled with many trying times, you can be a Christian all the way to the finish line! One day you may say as Paul, *“I have fought the good fight I have finished my course, I have kept the faith and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, whom the Lord, the righteous judge will give me in that day and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing and His kingdom”* (2 Timothy 4:6-8). You can be more than a conqueror because of who loved you! Run the race, Christian. Finish the race. You can do it if your focus is right! **Where Is Your Focus?**

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46. Christians realize that in the Christian race, all those found faithful will be the winners.

Dear Achiever,

The time you have invested in reading this book has rewarded you with a further education in many teachings, guidelines and principles taught in God's word.

By learning how God Himself views the issues that are in our world today, we begin to see them in a more serious, realistic and proper perspective. As individuals, we are all faced with a variety of daily trials and temptations that demand us to make certain choices. Isn't it great to know that we have a God who has provided us with the Bible so we can know what the best decisions are?

In this book, you have studied how every choice you make effects the rest of your life while on earth and will ultimately determine your destiny. There is a time coming when every individual will be judged for the way he or she lived in respect to God's word.

Only with true application of biblical principles and obedience to God's teaching, will one be able to genuinely say, "I am truly happy, satisfied and fulfilled." If we live according to God's word, we can endure whatever trials and tribulations may come our way with our Creator's promise of everlasting life.

In Christ's love,
Mike Farris
Minister for the New Hope church of Christ