

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

STUDENT EDITION



Shepherds Global Classroom exists to equip the body of Christ by providing curriculum for rising Christian leaders around the world. We aim to multiply indigenous training programs by placing a 20-course curriculum tool into the hands of spiritual trainers in every country of the world.

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COURSE OVERVIEW

TO THE TEACHER

This book, *Practical Christian Living: Student Edition*, is designed to be used by secondary students in a classroom setting. This book is an abridged version of the Shepherds Global Classroom *Practical Christian Living* course text, which you will need to use as your guide in teaching the class. It would also be helpful for you to be familiar with the text of this book, the *Student Edition*.

In the *Practical Christian Living* course text you will find specific directions for teaching the class and leading discussion. You will also find greater explanation of the concepts presented. You will notice that the objectives listed in the *Practical Christian Living* course text are broader than those given in the *Student Edition*.

TO THE STUDENT

You should read the material for each lesson before the class meets, so you can participate in the discussion with better understanding.

Always bring a Bible, the printed copy of the lesson, a separate notebook to write in, and a pen for writing notes. Be prepared to look up Scripture references, answer discussion questions, and participate as the class leader directs.

Each lesson includes assignments. Assignments should be completed after the lesson and submitted to your teacher at the beginning of the next class.

LESSON 13 ASSIGNMENT

Write your answers to each of the following questions in a personal journal entry. (You should not turn this in to the class leader.)

- Have you fully dedicated yourself to God? What does that mean to you?
- What natural desires most often lead to temptation in your life?
- What two or three scriptures should you memorize to help you consistently overcome these temptations?
- What changes has God talked to you about making as you have studied this lesson?

LESSON 1

CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Identify areas in which the world's values have influenced one's life.
2. Show that Christian truth should be applied throughout the details of life.

A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The world is composed of millions of natural, fallen people, separated from God, and united by what they have in common:

1. They have wrong affections or desires (1 John 2:15-16).
2. Their wrong affections lead to wrong behavior (Amos 5:11-15; 21-24).

What does the Bible say about the world?

- Jesus said that he was not of this world (John 17:14).
- To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4).

not to heal, we should pray for grace and strength to be faithful.

HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

Some people use substances that give their body pleasure but have bad results, such as narcotics, alcohol or tobacco (Proverbs 20:1).

The greatest danger of these substances is their tendency to make the user addicted. Addictions take control of a person's life. They consume his resources. They affect his perceptions, making him irrationally justify them (Proverbs 31:4-5). He makes sacrifices that harm his family and work. The addiction demands loyalty that is similar to a religion and conflicts with loyalty to God.

Ephesians 5:18 tells us that believers should not get drunk, but rather be filled with God's Spirit.

CLEANLINESS AND APPEARANCE

People of the world often have selfish motivations for how they dress. Their appearance might show that think they are superior to others. They may try to attract attention to their bodies by dressing sensually. They may try to communicate a message of rebellion through their appearance. Or, they may have a careless appearance. This can imply a lack of respect for others.

Believers should dress and adorn themselves in ways that honor God and show respect for others. The believer should also have habits of physical cleanliness that are at least as good as the normal customs in his culture.

liever should apply the principle of dedication to God to their own situation (Romans 12:1).

The Bible does not specifically forbid anything for food. However, diet is important for the sake of physical health and strength. We should try not to damage our bodies or shorten our lives with bad diets.

Physical exercise is necessary for a person to stay in good physical condition. A person should not allow lack of exercise to cause him to lack strength or have excess body weight that hinders him from doing his best for God.

MIRACULOUS PHYSICAL HEALING

Disease is a result of the curse that came on all creation when the first people sinned. Our bodies will continue to suffer aging and disease until God's plan of salvation is finished.

Many miracles of healing are recorded in the Bible. God promises to heal in response to prayers of faith by the church (James 5:14-15). However, we cannot expect that a person with faith will never suffer sickness (see Job 2). Some of the greatest Christians in history, people of great faith, suffered sickness for long periods.

The Bible does not forbid the use of doctors and medicine. Even though we pray for health and healing, it is not wrong to use the help that is available.

It is wrong to seek healing from people who claim magical power or serve spirits that are not from God. We do not serve Satan, and we should not seek benefits from him. Our loyalty is to God. If he chooses

- The world is spoken of as an evil entity (1 John).
- Satan is called the ruler of this world (John 16:11).

By convincing people of wrong ideas (Colossians 2:8), the world robs people of their relationship with God, spiritual benefits, and heaven. The philosophies and controlling motivations of the world show in the lifestyle of people who are of the world. The speech, attitudes, dress, entertainment, and behavior of the world are all expressions of the sinfulness of their hearts.

FOLLOWING CHRIST WHILE LIVING IN THE WORLD

Believers have received new life, so they cannot follow the morality of the culture. They do not follow sinful desires and ambitions, as society does. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 tells believers to be distinct from the world. Followers of Christ live differently than people in society because they want to please God most of all.

To be distinct and separate from the world does not mean that believers should separate from society and form their own communities (John 17:15). Jesus said that his disciples are salt and light for the world, which means they must be present and visible in society (Matthew 5:13-16). Believers should participate in government and in community business except when participation would require them to do something wrong.

THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRITY

If a person has integrity, his behavior matches his beliefs. For example, a person who is honest will integrate honesty throughout all his behavior and speech. A person who says he is honest but does something dishonest does not have integrity.

In some languages the term *integrity* is also used to describe other things, such as the structure of a building. If a building begins to lean or collapse, it is because it lacks integrity.

A building that has integrity:

- Has solid construction throughout its whole structure.
- Supports its own weight and the weight of everything inside it.
- Stands for a long time.

Jesus said a person who hears and obeys God is like a person who builds his house on a rock (Matthew 7:24-25). That house stands when storms come. A person who does not obey God is like a person who builds his house on sand. It is not enough only to hear and know the truth.

James said that people are deceiving themselves if they hear God's Word but do not do it (James 1:22-24). When we read God's Word we should not be like people who look into a mirror but do not change because of what we see.

Integrity is demonstrated in lifestyle. Believers should not be satisfied with themselves when they realize

and are dedicated to serve him, it is wrong to damage them.

If we want to serve God consistently, we must keep our body under control, instead of being controlled by our desires (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

NATURAL DESIRES

God created people with natural desires. Natural desires are not sinful in themselves, but they make temptation possible. There is no natural desire that you can always follow safely because a desire does not limit itself to the things that are right for you.

Every believer should expect to have temptations because of natural desires. Temptation will appear attractive, but if the heart is established to desire God's will, a believer can truly reject temptation from the heart (1 John 5:3).

Grace does not usually remove natural desires, but it does give a person the power to control his actions and direct his desires toward legitimate objects.

Natural desires make spiritual disciplines necessary for maintaining spiritual victory.

DIET AND EXERCISE

Because we are servants of God, we should want to be in good physical condition. Specific directions about diet and exercise are not in the Bible, but every be-

LESSON 13

THE CHRISTIAN'S BODY

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how physical issues affect spiritual health.
2. Discuss ways to dedicate one's body to God and learn new habits that honor the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 15 explains the doctrine of resurrection. This doctrine is important because a person's beliefs about resurrection affect his choices about what he does with his body.

DEDICATION TO GOD

Believers' bodies belong to God because he has re-deemed us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit lives in our bodies, so they must be submitted completely to God (Romans 12:1). They should not be used for sin.

Addictions and most forms of sin damage a person's body and mind. Because our bodies belong to God

that an attitude or behavior is not consistent with God's truth (James 1:25).

The Test of Fruit

Jesus said there will be many false prophets, whom we can recognize by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-18). Fruit does not refer to success. **Instead, fruit is the natural expression of the character of the tree.**

If a person is not bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 13), or is living a life of sin, he has sinful character and is not a true spiritual leader (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The Apostle Peter said that believers are not to be controlled by their former desires but must be holy in all that they do (1 Peter 1:14-15).

Good fruit does not mean that a person understands how to perfectly apply all Christian principles in his behavior. We are all in the process of learning God's truth.

The Apostle John tells us that a person is cleansed as he walks in the light, living according to the truth (1 John 1:7).

REPRESENTING GOD

When God began to reveal himself, the first purpose of his revelation was to show what kind of God he is. God described himself primarily as *holy*. God also revealed himself as *love*. It's important to keep God's holiness and love together.

- Because God is holy, he demands holiness in us.
- Because God is love he has made a way for us to become holy, as he is holy.

Our attitudes and behavior show what we think of God and the kind of relationship we have with him. If you want people to know that God is holy while he is also forgiving and gracious, they need to see that you are like that.

The church should transform society and culture, but that will happen only as our biblical concept of God is applied to the details of our lives.

Christians believe that any violence against other people is wrong.

Other Christians believe that we should be willing to defend our country as soldiers because of verses like Romans 13:4 and Luke 3:14. They say that if government is God's idea, and if a government should defend its people, then it is right for believers to serve their government to help it fulfill its responsibilities.

Christians around the world do not agree on the issue of military service. It is important for a person to prayerfully consider scripture and reason, then faithfully follow his convictions.

LESSON 1 ASSIGNMENT

Write a paragraph about a worldly value that has influenced your thinking or behavior in the recent past. Then find two scripture passages that address this part of life and record them. Write a paragraph about how you can begin living in obedience to these scriptures.

LESSON 12 ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of these topics:

- Christian influence
- Christians and human laws
- Bribery
- Military service

Look at the scriptures found in this lesson relating to your topic. Write a page explaining what you think is a scriptural approach to this subject.

- Obey the laws of our nation (Titus 3:1), except if they contradict God's Word (Acts 5:29).

In scripture, many believers served in government offices, including Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah. However, believers sometimes had to disobey rulers when the rulers' commands contradicted God's Word (examples: Daniel 3:16-18, Daniel 6:10, Exodus 1:17).

In obedience to God, believers today evangelize, distribute Bibles, defend the lives of the innocent, and gather to worship—even when these activities are illegal. If believers face an ethical dilemma they must do what is right even if it requires sacrifice.

BRIBERY

A bribe is money paid to a person in authority to influence him to permit something.

God condemns:

- Taking a bribe (Exodus 18:21, Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 10:17, Deuteronomy 27:25).
- Paying a bribe to influence someone to do wrong (Deuteronomy 16:19).

It is wrong for an official to demand a bribe before doing the right thing (Luke 3:14), but the person who pays may not have a choice.

MILITARY SERVICE

Many followers of Christ believe it is wrong to serve as a soldier for their country because of such verses as Matthew 5:39, John 18:36, 2 Corinthians 10:4. These

LESSON 2

THE PRACTICE OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the practical relationship between Christian love and the believer's personal life.
2. List 10 areas in which believers should increasingly align their lives to scriptural principles.
3. Summarize nine principles (given in the text) for making lifestyle decisions.

THE RESULT OF AN INCREASING LOVE FOR GOD

A believer's love for God should be continually increasing. As his love for God grows, his ability to discern what is best is strengthened and expanded. As he discerns what is best, he adapts his life to focus on what is best.

Just as a newborn baby has a lifetime of learning and growing ahead of him, so we, at the time of our conversion, do not understand all the truth that should guide our lives. In the above verses, Paul wrote to

people who had been followers of Christ for some time already. Yet Paul prayed that they would keep loving God more, and by that love be able to better understand and obey God's will.

We should expect to continually improve our lives as God gives discernment. God wants our complete obedience in all aspects of our lives, not just in religious observance.

We should not assume that we already know everything that we need to know about how to live. We should not assume that we have made all of the adjustments to our lives that are needed.

SOME AREAS IN WHICH A BELIEVER SHOULD IMPROVE

1. Carefulness of influence (Proverbs 22:1, Matthew 5:14-16)
2. Self-control (Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 25:28; Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Care of health (1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 10:31)
4. Choice of entertainment (Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 6:12)
5. Manners (Romans 13:9, Colossians 3:19, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Peter 3:2)
6. Business ethics (Proverbs 20:23)
7. Punctuality (Galatians 5:14)
8. Dress (1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Peter 3:3-4)
 - Decency - concealing the body sufficiently

can be blessed. They should apply God's principles to every condition and every decision.

Government and society should be shaped by God's Word. From God's revealed truth should come ethics (rules for right actions), from ethics should come politics (government for justice and freedom), and then economics (managing resources). So the right order is

1. Scripture
2. Ethics
3. Politics
4. Economics

The natural tendency of human society is to reverse that order.

The church should stand for biblical truth, not only by rejecting the sins of society, but by explaining and demonstrating what society should be like.

Believers should

- Be actively involved in the community.
- Be advocates for justice.
- Be ethical in all dealings.
- Influence others for righteousness.
- Influence society through participation in the government and in social organizations.

BELIEVERS AND THE LAWS OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

God requires us to:

- Pay taxes required by the government (Romans 13:7, Matthew 22:21).

LESSON 12

GOVERNMENT

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the responsibilities and limitations God has placed on government.
2. Give scriptural references and principles for relating to government.
3. Discuss ways to be an influence for righteousness in society.

INTRODUCTION

God instituted human government, so a person who refuses to obey human government is actually rebelling against God (Romans 13:1-2). A ruler serves God and fulfills God's purposes when he punishes bad behavior (Romans 13:4). When a government functions as it should, it protects the peace of society (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

Jesus told us to be like salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). In the Old Testament Jeremiah told the Jews, who were captive in a foreign country, that they should seek the welfare of the city where they now lived (Jeremiah 29:7). People who serve God should influence their society to respect God's will so that their society

- Humility - not trying to attract undue attention or admiration by what you wear
- Thriftiness - not buying more expensive clothes than you need

9. Language (Colossians 4:6, Ephesians 4:29)

10. Reliability (Psalm 61:8; Proverbs 20:6, Proverbs 28:20)

PERSONAL APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Not all believers agree on the details of how to live out biblical principles and values. Yet a follower of Christ must be serious about living consistent with what he believes.

Behavior, choices of entertainment, and clothing all show something about the inclinations of the heart.

Principles for Lifestyle Decisions

1. We must obey all of the Bible's commands to believers (Matthew 5:19).
2. God's commands are for our benefit (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).
3. Christian freedom is not freedom from obeying God (1 Corinthians 9:21).
4. If we love God we want to know his will, not avoid it (1 John 5:2-3).
5. Scripture gives a basis for establishing specific rules for our lives.

6. Rules about details of life are not our most important beliefs (Matthew 23:23).
7. Keeping rules is not enough to prove our obedience or love for God (Matthew 23:25).
8. Our confidence in the testimony of others does not depend on the small details of their lifestyle (Romans 14:10).
9. Tolerance of diverse opinions does not excuse personal carelessness (Romans 14:5, 23).

LESSON 2 ASSIGNMENT

Study the following scriptures that provide a basis for careful Christian behavior:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 1 Corinthians 11:14-15
- 1 Timothy 2:9-10
- 1 Peter 3:3-4
- Psalm 19:14
- Psalm 101:3

Write the basic meaning of each passage. Describe details of lifestyle that you believe you should practice because of those scriptures.

The New Testament emphasizes the fact that Jesus came among the poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He cared for people who were unimportant in his society: the poor, lepers, widows, foreigners, and children (Luke 7:22). He said that the gospel would free the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus said we should pray that God's kingdom would come and that his will would be done in earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). We know that all oppression will end when God's kingdom fully comes on earth. In the meantime, we should pray for God's intervention for oppressed people everywhere.

LESSON 11 ASSIGNMENT

In your community, what should you be doing:

- To treat people with dignity?
- To help people receive justice?
- To show people mercy?

Write about three ways you can be a good neighbor as God wants you to.

- In the Trinity, God the Son is submitted to God the Father (John 6:38).
- In a marriage, a wife is to obey her husband (Ephesians 5:22).
- In a family, children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1).
- In a nation, citizens are to be subject to the government (Romans 13:1-5).
- In a church, believers are to obey spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

When someone has authority over someone else it does not mean that they are superior to that person. In fact, all leaders should remember that they are servants (Matthew 20:25-28). The leader does not lead for his own profit but sacrifices himself to benefit those who follow him.

APPLICATIONS FOR BELIEVERS

Believers should make sure that all people are cared for by the church family. This includes elderly people, children, poor people, and people from all ethnicities.

A godly family should demonstrate the value of all people. Both the husband and wife should be respected. Children should not be ignored or treated as insignificant. They should be disciplined properly, without violence.

We should help the poor in a way that strengthens their dignity, giving them an opportunity to change their situation. God wants his people to set free the oppressed (Isaiah 58:6).

LESSON 3 WORK

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain what the Bible teaches about work.
2. Describe the characteristics of a Christian work ethic.

DEFINITION OF WORK

Work includes employment, but it also consists of taking care of ourselves and others, managing the things we have, producing things, doing business for profit, and helping others freely.

A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF WORK

When God designed the world, it was perfect (Genesis 1:31). While He could have created a world in which work was not required, He knew that the best life for people included work.

God gave people the authority and responsibility to manage the earth, bring it under control, and develop it for his glory (Genesis 1:28). Because of the first sin, the world changed, and work includes many difficulties and frustrations that were not in God's original

design (Genesis 2:17-19). However, we must realize that God designed us to need work.

The human orientation toward creating, planning, organizing and producing—work—is part of the image of God in man. All work is an act of worship when it is done to please the Lord (Colossians 3:17, 23). We should work because the Bible tells us that:

- A believer is first responsible for his family (1 Timothy 5:8).
- A believer is commanded to work so that he can meet the needs of others (Ephesians 4:28).

GOD'S USUAL WAY OF SUPPLYING OUR NEEDS

God's normal way of providing for needs is through human's work. Proverbs 14:23 teaches us that "In all toil there is profit," while Proverbs 19:15 warns us that "an idle person will suffer hunger."

There are people who wish God would provide something for them, but they reject opportunities to work, because these opportunities are not things they want to do.

Not everyone is hired to work for someone else. Other types of work could include producing or growing something to exchange or offering a service to others. These are all ways that God provides for us.

SLAVERY

A slave is someone who is owned as the property of another person. Scriptural principles for right treatment of slaves ultimately led to the abolition of slavery in the nations most influenced by the Bible (Exodus 21:1-11, 26-27, Ephesians 6:9).

ECONOMIC OPPRESSION

The purpose of government is to serve the people by protecting them from attack and by guarding their freedoms. Basic human freedoms are: the right to speak opinions, to practice religion, to work for profit, and to own property. A person not allowed to do those things is not treated as fully human.

In a place that lacks economic freedom, conditions may partly resemble slavery. People may not be able to earn enough money to provide for their families' basic needs.

The book of Amos speaks of economic oppression several times (Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11-12, 24; Amos 8:4-6). Amos 5:24 implies that justice ought to be abundant and available for everyone.

HUMAN VALUE AND AUTHORITY ROLES

The fact that every person is infinitely valuable does not mean that there should be no authority structure among people. Equal value does not mean equal authority.

The social concept of race is not biblical. The Bible teaches that all humans are *one race*—the *human race* (Acts 17:26).

God calls the church to reach out with the gospel to every ethnic group on the earth (Acts 1:8). The value of a human soul is the same no matter what the ethnicity.

DISRESPECTING CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE

Many societies categorize some people as less important than others and treat them as if they are less than human. Wrong philosophies and religions cause people to tolerate horrible mistreatment of classes of people. Societies accept conditions of extreme social injustice as normal.

Believers are different because they know all people are made in the image of God. This biblical doctrine provides the only adequate basis for human value.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR

A Jewish lawyer thought that he was only obligated to do good to certain people, and that he did not have to care about others. Jesus told him a story that taught that we ought to care for any person we encounter (Luke 10:27-37).

Jesus also showed that even a person who is not respected by society can be a good neighbor by showing love to others.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN EMPLOYMENT

The New Testament gives us some principles for workers to follow.

Responsibility (Ephesians 6:5-8)

1. A worker is to obey his employer, not only when watched, but always.
2. A worker should maintain the quality and diligence of his work as if working for God.
3. A worker will be blessed by God for faithfulness in his work.

Honesty (Titus 2:9-10)

1. A worker should be respectful in his response to his employer's directions.
2. A worker should not steal from his employer, even if he thinks he deserves more pay.
3. Faithful work is a testimony for the gospel; unfaithfulness is a reproach on the gospel.

DEVELOPING DESIRABLE QUALITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Employers want to hire people who have a positive attitude about work. They want people who are reliable and ready to learn. Often people are hired for their attitude about work more than for their training or talents. God also cares about our attitude toward work as we have seen in scripture already.

Develop the qualities that make you a valuable worker.

- Be honest, reliable, and patient.
- Learn skills by working with people who already have those skills.
- Learn to serve others.

A readiness to serve brings many benefits:

- It forms relationships that result in some of your needs being met.
- It gives you a valuable place in the church, the body of Christ.
- It may make you a person that someone wants to hire.

LESSON 11

HUMAN VALUE

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how every person is valuable and deserves to be respected because of being made in the image of God.
2. Describe his God-given responsibility to treat people with dignity and to show mercy and justice to all people.

THE CHRISTIAN VALUE OF HUMANITY

In the world, people are often categorized by their ethnicity, social class, gender, age, educational level, and skills. None of these classifications affect God's value of a person. But every human is made in the image of God, with infinite value (Genesis 1:27). People who put their faith in Jesus Christ are members of one body—the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28).

PREJUDICE

It is not wrong to notice physical and cultural characteristics of a group. However, it is wrong to judge a person's character because of his ethnicity or culture.

THE RELATIONSHIP FACTOR

Jesus said we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). We are not supposed to decide who deserves our honesty. Even if we think a person would not be harmed by our dishonesty, we want to please God by being honest (Acts 24:16).

We should not allow the character of others to determine our character. We should not sin, even if someone is sinning against us (1 Peter 2:21-23, 1 Peter 3:8-12).

LESSON 10 ASSIGNMENT

Write a paragraph explaining the relationship between God's character (truth) and God's standard for us (honesty). Explain why God requires us to be honest in what we say and in all of our dealings.

LESSON 3 ASSIGNMENT

Study these passages:

- Proverbs 6:6-11
- Proverbs 10:4-5
- Proverbs 12:11, 24, 27
- Proverbs 13:4, 11
- Proverbs 14:23
- Proverbs 18:9
- Proverbs 20:13
- Proverbs 22:29
- Proverbs 24:30-34
- Proverbs 26:13-16

Write a page of points and applications about work and laziness from these passages.

LESSON 4

RELATIONSHIPS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Describe ways to apply the principles of love, peace, and respect in relationships with others.
2. List the nine scriptural rules that enable a believer's speech to bless others and glorify God.

INTRODUCTION

Our relationships with people affect our spiritual development. Some qualities and behaviors can be developed and demonstrated only in relationships.

The Bible gives directions for specific kinds of relationships. It also gives principles that apply to all relationships.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIPS

The Principle of Peace

Holiness is closely connected to pursuing peace with everyone (Hebrews 12:14).

- Being lazy or careless when hired to work (Ephesians 6:5-6)

3. Theft

- Keeping something that someone lost even though you have the opportunity to return it (Deuteronomy 22:1)
- Stealing the money or belongings of an employer (Titus 2:9-10)
- Using money or resources for yourself that belong to your employer or the ministry you serve

Honesty means that you keep your promises and commitments. A person who is in a good relationship with God keeps his promises even if it is costly to him (Psalm 15:4). We are also to pay others what we owe them (Romans 13:7-8).

RELIABILITY

When you promise something, you are also promising to make the effort necessary to fulfill it. It is wrong to promise something then make no effort to keep your promise.

If you fail to keep a promise, you should apologize. You should not lie about the reason that you failed. It is wrong to blame others for your mistakes. People will not trust you if they know you will lie about mistakes.

- God will judge and condemn liars (1 Timothy 1:10, Revelation 22:15). Liars will not enter God's city (Revelation 21:27).
- Believers should speak truth without exception.
- Lying is part of the sinful life that we put away when we are saved (Colossians 3:9).
 - Truth is essential to our relationships (Ephesians 4:25).
 - Speaking truth is necessary for growing to spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:15).

APPLYING TRUTH TO BUSINESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Being dishonest and stealing from others can happen in many ways, including:

1. Not paying someone what is owed

- Borrowing from someone, without repaying (Psalm 37:21, Proverbs 3:28)
- Withholding promised wages from employees (James 5:4)

2. Cheating

- Pretending something sold by weight weighs more than it does (Proverbs 11:1)
- Lying about the condition of something you are selling, so that you can make more money
- Lying about the cost of something you are buying or selling, so that you can keep the extra

Pursuing peace means that you must:

- Give every person the treatment that you owe (Romans 13:7). If you fail to do so, you are guilty of causing conflict.
- Give the love and kindness you do *not* owe. Be patient and forgiving, even when people have wrong attitudes and wrong motives (Ephesians 4:32).

If someone sins against you, go to him privately and resolve the issue peaceably (Matthew 18:15). Jesus said that even when someone repeatedly hurts you, you must forgive them (Matthew 18:21-22). We must forgive others just as Christ has forgiven us (Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:15). By forgiving others, you are submitting to God and letting Him develop you as He chooses.

The Principle of Love

When we were unbelievers, we were not fit for God's love, but He loved us anyway (Titus 3:2-3). Because of this, we must treat others with love and kindness whether they seem to deserve it or not.

- Love is evidence that a person is a true believer (1 John 4:20).
- There is a special love among Christian believers, and Jesus takes personally your actions and attitudes toward other believers (Matthew 25:40).
- Jesus told us to love even our enemies and persecutors, just as God does (Matthew 5:44-45).

The Principle of Respect

Every person deserves respect because they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The image of God gives every person inherent value, regardless of their intelligence, abilities, education, training, choices, or life circumstances.

As much as possible, we should treat people respectfully even when their behavior is wrong.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONVERSATION

Words and ideas are powerful and can spread and influence many people. The Bible talks about the power of words to do either good or harm (James 3).

Biblical principles for conversation:

1. Don't talk too much (Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 17:28).
2. Don't speak before you think (Proverbs 29:11, Proverbs 14:29).
3. Don't judge a situation at first sight (Proverbs 18:13, 17).
4. Be careful with humor (Proverbs 26:18-19).
5. Don't say it to the wrong person (Proverbs 11:13, Proverbs 26:20).
6. Be careful with criticism (Proverbs 27:5-6a).
7. Don't deceive (Colossians 3:9, Proverbs 12:22).
8. Keep your speech pure (Ephesians 5:4).

LESSON 10

HONESTY

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain at least four ways dishonesty/honesty affects our relationships with others.
2. Summarize what the Bible says about honesty using at least 3 Scripture verses.

THE NATURE OF GOD

The Bible tells us that:

- God cannot lie (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18).
- God's nature is always consistent and unchanging (James 1:17).

GOD'S STANDARD OF TRUTH

God wants us to always tell the truth.

- A person who tells lies is not righteous in God's eyes (Proverbs 12:22).
- It is sin to witness falsely, even if you think your cause is right (Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 6:16-19, Proverbs 14:25, Proverbs 19:5, 9).

9. Don't divide people with your words (Proverbs 16:28, Proverbs 6:16, 19).

Your speech reveals much about your heart (Luke 6:45). Don't damage your Christian testimony by speaking in a way that is not consistent with Christian values.

LESSON 9 ASSIGNMENT

Prayerfully consider the scriptural principles given in this lesson. Answer each of the following questions in writing:

- What temptations have I faced when it comes to money and resources?
- How do I currently gain money and/or resources?
- How do I use and manage money and/or resources?
- What does it mean to trust God with money and/or resources?
- What functioning resources do I have?
- Are there functioning resources I should plan to get in the future? If so, how will I do this?
- In what ways have I misused money and/or resources?
- How will I correct any misuse of money and/or resources listed above?

LESSON 4 ASSIGNMENT

Study Ephesians 5:22–6:9. List and explain the specific directions for behavior in various relationships. Write an explanation of how these directions are related to the principles of love, peace, and respect discussed in this lesson.

LESSON 5

GOD'S GUIDANCE

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how God helps us to make decisions.
2. Describe ways we can discern God's will and make good decisions.
3. Identify errors to avoid when seeking direction from God.

COMMUNICATION WITH OUR COMMANDER

Communication is essential to winning a battle. We are in a spiritual war. The devil tempts and tries to deceive us. The world tries to pull us into its lifestyle and values.

God wants us to win the spiritual war. Prayer is our means of communicating with our commander (Ephesians 6:18). While we are standing in battle against spiritual evil, we are to be praying, staying in communication with our commander.

We need God's guidance all the time. He has promised to guide those who will listen (Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 37:23), but there are times when we especially need to seek His direction and ask Him to help us see

1. Tithe (first 10% of income given to God, Proverbs 3:9-10)
2. Immediate basic needs (predictable routine expenses: food, clothing, housing)
3. Money reserved for future use:
 - For emergencies
 - For big purchases (example: money reserved to buy a home)
 - For purchasing or maintaining functioning resources

A person who does not budget may often be unable to take care of his responsibilities. He may depend on others for help and be unable to help others. His situation never improves because he does not invest in any way.

Budgeting enables a person to prepare for his needs, take responsibility for those who depend on him, invest in his future, respond to emergencies, and support ministry.

THE FAMILY OF FAITH

When the church is at its best there is generosity and a commitment to taking care of the family. Every believer should be part of a local family of faith and should commit to helping the needs of the members and the support of the ministry.

3. The principle of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7)

God wants us to provide service or products for profit rather than taking money from someone else by luck. Gambling is harmful because it is addictive and increases crime.

DEBT

When a person borrows money, he assumes that he will be able to pay it back from money he gets in the future. Therefore, to borrow is to spend money from the future even though the future will bring new needs also. What the Bible says about debt:

- A borrower creates obligations that limit his freedom (Proverbs 22:7).
- It is wrong for a person to borrow without intending to repay, or to borrow and decide later not to repay (Psalm 37:21).
- We must pay others what we owe them (Romans 13:7-8).

BUDGETING

A budget is a plan to manage routine spending. Most people have expenses that they can expect at certain times, and they should reserve money for those needs ahead of time. Order of priorities for spending and saving income:

choices as they really are. God may want to change our course in an unexpected way.

We should look for direction from God:

1. When making life-changing decisions: marriage, occupation, education, commitment to a local church.
2. When making practical decisions: job opportunities, where to live, large purchases.

HOW YOU CAN BETTER DISCERN GOD'S GUIDANCE

A person's spiritual condition affects his decisions. To find the will of God, one must first devote himself entirely to God (Romans 12:1-2).

Motives are the most important factor in discerning God's direction. A person who seeks the will of God only so that he can decide whether or not to do it will probably become confused. A person who is committed to obeying God and is following biblical principles will be able to make good decisions.

1. Stay close to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6).
2. Don't trust your own reasoning more than definite scriptural truth (Proverbs 3:5). Whenever something is clearly commanded or forbidden by scripture, we know the will of God.
3. Always obey what you know for certain to be God's will (Luke 11:35). We know it is God's will that we:

- Do right and speak the truth in our hearts (Psalm 15:2)
- Respect faithful spiritual leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
- Abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

There are many other commands which are summarized in one word: love! (Romans 13:8-10). As we do what we know to be God's will, many of our less important decisions become obvious.

4. Be patient (Psalm 37:7).
5. Listen to good advice (Proverbs 24:6).

ERRORS TO AVOID WHEN SEEKING GOD'S GUIDANCE

Some people expect supernatural directions for every decision they make. They ignore normal reasoning and circumstances, because they assume that God's will might be opposite to all reasoning and circumstances. They may ask God to give a certain sign to show His will.

It is wrong to insist that God must give supernatural revelation for our

decisions because he often does not show his will that way. If a person ignores reasoning and circumstances, he may think he is getting direction from

work (Ephesians 4:28). If a person is not willing to work, he should not expect God to provide for him, and other people should not be obligated to give to him (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

We should not expect God's provision to make us rich. God blesses a few people with riches, but riches are not God's plan for everyone.

FUNCTIONING RESOURCES

Functioning resources are things people have that help them produce (Proverbs 14:4). A person can use a functioning resource to make profit, but he must maintain it and cannot sell it, or the production will stop.

Scripture implies that the kind of prosperity God gives is for people to have their own functioning resources (Micah 4:4).

GAMBLING

Gambling is risking money in an attempt to gain money freely. Each person who wins is taking money from someone who loses, without giving anything in return. Many people become addicted to gambling, waste their money, and fail to take care of their families.

Gambling is contrary to many Christian principles:

1. The principle of gaining wealth through work (Ephesians 4:28)
2. The principle of contentment (1 Timothy 6:6)

God expects us to apply scriptural principles as we reason carefully and examine the circumstances.

- Being wealthy can make people think they don't need God.

God pronounced judgment on prosperity when it led to ease, self-indulgence, and indifference to the plight of the poor (Amos 6:1, 3-6; Amos 8:4-7, 11-12, James 5:5).

Rich people should be generous givers and accomplish good things with their money (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Every believer should give to help the poor and oppressed, tithe to support his local church, and give to support missionary work.

THE LOVE OF MONEY

Money cannot bring satisfaction (Ecclesiastes 5:10). We should avoid the love of money and be content with our basic needs (1 Timothy 6:8-10, Hebrews 13:5). Godliness with contentment is of great value (1 Timothy 6:6). The Apostle Paul said that with God's help he could be content, even in poverty (Philippians 4:10-13).

TRUSTING GOD

Jesus promised that if we prioritize God's kingdom our needs will be provided (Matthew 6:25-33). God wants us to trust him daily (Exodus 16, Matthew 6:11).

Poor people have a better opportunity to depend on God than people who think they have financial security (James 2:5).

Trusting God does not mean that we should be irresponsible. God normally provides for us through our

God when really he is following his own emotions or imagination.

People who claim to receive special direction from God sometimes refuse to listen to other people (Proverbs 12:15). They may become angry when people question their decisions. They show pride and stubbornness rather than humility (1 Peter 5:5-6).

MORE PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

John Wesley said that God's will for us, revealed in the Bible, is that we be holy and that we accomplish good. Therefore, to make a specific decision, we must consider which option will most enable us to be holy and will maximize our effectiveness. We learn from experience which circumstances are spiritually helpful for us and which are dangerous.

When thinking about your options, consider:

1. Is it consistent with clear scriptural commands?
2. Is it consistent with scriptural priorities?
3. Is it consistent with a realistic view of the circumstances?
4. Is it reasonable?
5. Is it godly behavior?
6. Is it consistent with loving others as yourself?
7. Will it have a good influence?
8. Is it confirmed by godly advisors?

LESSON 5 ASSIGNMENT

Study Proverbs 3:1-12. Write about the priorities, attitudes, and character described here. Write several paragraphs about how you personally can develop those characteristics.

LESSON 9 MONEY

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain God's principles for proper use and management of money and resources.
2. Describe some of the spiritual dangers associated with improper beliefs about using money and how to avoid them.

INTRODUCTION

As the Creator, God is the owner of all people and the wealth that they have. As believers, we should consider ourselves the managers of possessions that should be used for God's glory.

WARNINGS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE RICH

These scripture passages have special warnings for rich people (Matthew 19:24, 1 Timothy 6:17, and Deuteronomy 8:6-18):

- Love of money can keep people from following Jesus.
- Being wealthy can make people think they are more important than other people.

sheep. Pastors are likewise compared to shepherds in 1 Peter 5:2.

DISTINCTIONS OF A CHRISTIAN ECOLOGY

Some people think we can save the earth by preventing pollution. We humans cannot save it, though we should do our part to preserve it for as long as we can. Believers know that we cannot ultimately reverse the decline of the universe. God will ultimately renew the earth (Revelation 21:1).

Believers care about the earth because

1. It belongs to God.
2. Humans have a God-given responsibility to care for the earth.
3. We care about the next generation of people.

LESSON 8 ASSIGNMENT

Write a paragraph describing your plan to change your habits because of the truth you learned in this lesson.

LESSON 6

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Explain God's design and purposes for marriage.
2. Describe the value God places on women.

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

Biblical marriage is a beautiful thing. But couples who want to experience its beauty and taste its goodness must examine what the scriptures teach about it, and then pursue obedience to what they learn. A satisfying marriage requires effort and sacrifice.

Biblical Marriage is for Fellowship

Just as God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in fellowship, God created us for intimacy and fellowship. God said that being alone is not good (Genesis 2:18).

- Marriage is to be a joyful union (Genesis 2:23).
- Marriage is to be a union of equals (Genesis 2:18).

- Marriage is to be a covenant union (Genesis 2:24).

Marriage is established on the unshakable foundation of covenant—one man and one woman exclusively committed to one another for life.

Marriage was designed to be a transparent, trusting, accepting relationship (Genesis 2:25). A strong marriage does not exist where there is insecurity, distrust, suspicion, or fear, where spouses are not sure of one another's commitment to the marriage. Strong marriages require a steadfast pledge that only ends when one spouse dies (Romans 7:1-2).

Covenant love is self-giving, respectful, and beautiful even when the relationship is difficult (1 Corinthians 13). Weak commitment produces tentative effort, emotional disconnection, withdrawal, and temptation.

Biblical Marriage is for Procreation

Children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3), but in a sense they are also the parents' gift to God (Malachi 2:15). Some people prefer to follow a lifestyle that does not include children, but the Bible teaches that God is pleased when parents have godly children.

Biblical Marriage is for Christ

Marriage is an earthly picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:30-32). Paul exhorts believers to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), then he offers the following instruction on marriage:

APPRECIATION OF NATURAL BEAUTY

God does not care only about the practical use of the land; he also cares about beauty (Luke 12:27). Mountains, deserts, rivers, plains, and forests all have natural beauty. God created the beauty of nature in order to provide a beautiful environment for people to inhabit.

THE USE OF ANIMALS

God's amazing creativity is demonstrated in the variety of animals, all designed and created by God (Psalm 50:10-11).

Animals are distinct from humans. They are not made in the image of God. Thus, they do not have immortal spirits (Ecclesiastes 3:21) and they do not have human rights.

God gave permission for people to eat animals, which implies that it is permissible to hunt wild animals for food and to raise domesticated animals for food. Proverbs 12:10 tells us that righteous people take good care of their animals, but cruelty is a characteristic of a wicked person. A person who owns an animal should make sure it has the food, water, and shelter it needs.

God gave animals a special respect for people (Genesis 9:2). He created animals with intelligence and natures that respond to people. To abuse them is to disrespect God's purposes.

Scripture uses the illustration of a shepherd many times. Psalm 23 compares God to a shepherd. He takes care of his people the way a shepherd takes care of his

work became difficult (Genesis 3:17-19). The earth does not have its original perfection (Romans 8:18-23), but it still shows the glory of God in its amazing design.

Human Responsibility to Manage Resources

Though people were given authority over the earth (Genesis 1:28), they are not the supreme authority. All people are accountable to God. The earth and its produce still belong to God (Psalm 24:1).

Ecology is the study of the ways living things relate to each other and their environment.

God designed the earth to reveal his glory (Psalm 19:1), meet the needs of humans (Genesis 1:29), and be a pleasant place for them to live. He intends for us to enjoy the earth and the things it produces. We must not worship the earth, because it is the work of God's hands (Romans 1:25).

God designed the earth to be productive. Therefore, it is wrong for people to use land in a way that destroys it.

God designed the earth to serve many generations of people for thousands of years. Believers should set an example of care for the environment, because we know it belongs to God and because we care about our neighbor and the next generation.

The Spirit-filled bride will *submit* to her husband in the Lord, in the same way that believers submit to Jesus (Ephesians 5:24, 32; see also 1 Peter 3:1). This is the way she shows respect to Jesus and her husband (Ephesians 5:33). This honor, coming from a gentle and quiet spirit, is very precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4-5).

The Spirit-filled groom will *love* his bride as Jesus loves his church (Ephesians 5:25). The groom must love her as he loves his own body (Ephesians 5:28-29). He must manifest the same Spirit-filled self-sacrifice as Jesus manifested toward his church when he gave himself up for her. This is his act of submission (Ephesians 5:21). In a spiritual sense, the husband is to provide every means necessary for the flourishing of his wife—faithfulness, unconditional love, understanding, prayer, counsel, teaching and kindness.

WAYS COUPLES CAN STRENGTHEN THEIR MARRIAGE

1. They must celebrate God's original design and appreciate their unique roles within the marriage.
2. Married couples must cultivate true spiritual and physical intimacy.
3. Married couples must follow the example of God's grace when they fail to measure up.

JESUS' EXAMPLE OF RESPECT FOR WOMEN

Jesus demonstrated that women have inherent dignity and value equal to that of men:

- He spoke to them respectfully.

- He held them personally responsible for their sin.

- He commissioned them as the first heralds of his resurrection.

- He valued their fellowship, prayers, Christian service, financial support, testimony and witness.

Jesus honored women, taught women, and ministered to women in thoughtful ways.

Women were considered valuable in the early church, and men were taught to be respectful of women. The church today should stand up for women and stand against their mistreatment in every culture. We must value women as persons uniquely designed by their Creator in his image.

CONCLUSION

Marriage is God's creation, not man's. Therefore, we must go to God for instruction, not to the world or culture. He alone knows how to make our marriages strong, enduring and rewarding. But we will never be the spouses we ought to be without the Holy Spirit!

LESSON 8

CHRISTIAN ECOLOGY

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Describe how people are unique from everything else that God created.
2. Explain how God has given humankind stewardship of the rest of creation.
3. List several ways that man can rightly manage God's creation.

HUMAN AUTHORITY OVER NATURE

God created the earth for His praise (Psalm 148) and placed humans as managers over it (Genesis 1:26-28). People are created in the image of God; we are not animals. We are made to rule as God would.

God told Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Subduing the earth includes:

- Exploration
- Learning to inhabit new areas
- Discovering and using minerals
- Domesticating animals
- Developing technology

Everything was good when God created it. After sin occurred, nature was affected by the curse, and man's

LESSON 7 ASSIGNMENT

If you are unmarried, write two paragraphs of commitment to obeying God's principles for your premarital relationship and your future marriage. If you are married, write two paragraphs of commitment to obeying God's principles for your marriage.

LESSON 6 ASSIGNMENT

Describe in writing the distinctions between men and women that are practiced in your culture. How would those distinctions be reformed by careful application of biblical truth?

LESSON 7

THE SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Describe God's plan for marriage and the rules for marriage that protect from problems and provide for blessings.
2. Summarize at least three main concepts of God's moral standard.
3. Explain scriptural directions for marriages and families.

GOD'S INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage was instituted by God for the first man and woman he created (Genesis 2:21-24). He designed marriage to be exactly what people needed.

Marriage is designed to be a reflection of God's character and his relationships. In the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, we see unity, intimacy, faithfulness, and steadfast love. Biblical marriage is patterned after this amazing relationship.

God said that in marriage a man and woman leave their parents and join together.

people are responsible to flee temptation (2 Timothy 2:22, Romans 13:14).

The period of time when a relationship exists before marriage is not a time for a sexual relationship to begin. Instead it is a period of time when the man and woman make sure that they share the same spiritual and biblical priorities. It is a time when they develop an understanding of each other that enables them to trust each other enough to make a permanent commitment to one another.

PEOPLE WHO NEVER MARRY

Marriage is God's plan for most people. However, the Bible gives some reasons that people might not marry (Matthew 19:12, 1 Corinthians 7:25-27, 32-35).

BIBLICAL DIRECTIONS FOR MARRIAGE

1 Peter 3:7 says that a man should live with his wife in an understanding way, meaning that he is to do his best to understand her. 1 Peter 3:1-6 says that a woman should submit to her husband and respect him, even if he is not a believer. From a biblical perspective, a husband's priority is to provide his wife with loving care. A wife's priority is to respect her husband.

One purpose of marriage is the satisfaction of sexual desires (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Another purpose of marriage is to create families that provide for their members (1 Timothy 5:8).

Our behavior in marriage affects our relationship with God (1 Peter 3:7).

3. Focusing on Jesus Himself and praising him for who he is (Psalm 105:3-4).
4. Meditating on God's Word (Psalm 119:9).
5. Staying accountable to at least one mature and godly person (Galatians 6:2).
6. Serving others and focusing on their needs (Philippians 2:3-5).
7. Getting married to the right person in God's time (Proverbs 5:15, 18-19).

PRINCIPLES FOR HONORING GOD WITH MORAL PURITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

A young person who wants to have a good marriage should be a faithful, committed follower of Christ so that the right kind of person will be attracted (Proverbs 3:4-8). A person demonstrates good character with appropriate behavior and modest dress (1 Timothy 2:9-10). People who behave carelessly with people of the opposite gender imply that they are willing to have a relationship based on the wrong desires (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7). A person who dresses in a way that causes wrong desires attracts the wrong kind of person (Proverbs 7).

Young people who submit to their parents and Christian leaders in obedience to God (1 Peter 5:5, Hebrews 13:17) will have God's greatest blessings and be protected from much harm and temptation.

God does not allow believers to be in situations of temptation beyond what they are able to resist and escape **if** they are willing to (1 Corinthians 10:13). Young

THE PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE

Jesus said that God intended marriage to be permanent. He said that divorce was instituted for people who are not following God (Matthew 19:3-8).

Obedience to God's plan for marriage creates the very best environment in which to raise children. Children are dependent on parents for protection, provision, and training. Many of the problems in society come from a lack of families that have faithful parents.

Marriage requires people to make a promise committing their whole lives to each other. Romantic feelings will not be constant all of the time. A marriage cannot be based on personal feelings that are changeable. Marriage vows mean that a man and woman are promising to be faithful to each other as long as they both live, and that promise does not depend on any conditions.

MARRIAGE AS CHRISTIAN PARTNERSHIP

Marriage is the closest human partnership. A believer should not even consider marrying someone who is not a committed believer (1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). A believer married to an unbeliever will experience much sorrow and many hindrances in raising children and making lifestyle decisions.

If husband and wife are both believers, they must make sure they agree about important spiritual issues.

GOD'S MORAL STANDARD

Hebrews 13:4 tells us that marriage is supposed to be highly respected. Sexual sin is a disrespect of marriage. God will judge sexual immorality.

Sexual sins include lustful fantasies, fornication, adultery, homosexual activity, and use of pornography. To have lustful fantasies is to willingly imagine sexual activity with anyone who is not your spouse (Matthew 5:27-28). Fornication is sexual activity between people who are not married. Adultery is sexual activity that includes a person who is married to someone else. All of these are violations of the marriage relationship.

Proverbs warns that sexual immorality destroys a person's life and leads to death (Proverbs 2:16-19 and Proverbs 6:24-29, 32-33). Immoral people will not inherit the kingdom of God, but God can forgive these sins and make people holy (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Pornography

Pornography is writing, pictures, or videos designed to cause sexual reactions by showing nudity or sexual activity. When a person uses pornography, they take pleasure in imagining perverse, sexually immoral actions that God condemns.

- Pornography is wrong.
- Pornography is addictive.
- Pornography is progressive.
- Pornography is damaging.

Homosexual Activity

The Bible condemns homosexual activity (Romans 1:26-27, 1 Timothy 1:10, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Some people argue that they naturally have homosexual tendencies. They say they should not be blamed for their behavior because they did not choose to have those desires.

The Bible teaches that every person has followed a natural tendency to sin (Isaiah 53:6). God calls us to repent of our own willful sin (Isaiah 55:7).

Self-Sex

To masturbate is to stimulate one's genitals for sexual pleasure or to relieve sexual tension. The Bible does not specifically condemn masturbation itself as immoral. However, self-sex may lead to lustful thinking, pornography use, and fornication. Masturbation is addictive.

It is best to avoid masturbation because of the temptations that are present and because self-sex does not accomplish God's purposes for sexuality. God designed physical oneness in marriage to help unite a husband and wife emotionally and spiritually (1 Corinthians 6:16-20, Malachi 2:15).

A follower of Christ struggling with masturbation will be helped by:

1. Being confident that Jesus cares (Psalm 139:1-3, 1 Peter 5:6-10).
2. Not believing the devil's lies (John 8:44).