Taking Sin Seriously

Mark Roberts

The Building Up Series
Getting Serious - An Introduction

The Bible describes Christians as soldiers and conquerors. But how do we fight the good fight? How do we overcome sin?

- UNDERSTANDING GOD’S EXPECTATIONS
  
  Read Titus 2:11-12; 1 Peter 1:15-16; James 1:27 - What is holiness?

- MEASURING THE BATTLEFIELD
  
  Why doesn’t our world today take sin seriously?
  
  How do people minimize sin’s seriousness?

- A LOOK AT OUR ADVERSARY
  
  How would you describe the devil?

- A CASE STUDY IN FAILURE - SAMSON
  
  Read Judges 16.
Conquering Worry

In an age of stress and anxiety can Christians really overcome worry? There is so much to worry about - bills, job, the economy, politics, crime, and the kids. And don't say worry doesn't help — as one fellow said, “Everything I worry about doesn't happen!”

- WHAT’S WRONG WITH WORRY?

Read Philippians 4:6-7 and Matthew 6:25-33. Why does God forbid worry?

- TOUGH QUESTION: Worry or concern?

Is there a difference in worry and being genuinely concerned? Is there no room for thoughtful regard for future possibilities and problems in Christianity? What do you think?

Distinguishing between worry and concern:

- GOD’S INSPIRED PRESCRIPTION FOR ANXIETY AND WORRY
Defeating Discouragement

Can anyone honestly say they never feel disappointment, discouragement or despair? Abraham Lincoln once said “I am now the most miserable man alive. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell.” Despite Lincoln’s strong beliefs in God the pressures of his office and the difficulties of his time provoked him to discouragement. What can be done about discouragement in our lives?

• THE RESULTS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Read Exodus 14:5-12; Numbers 13:27-14:4; Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 3:13.

What happens when God’s people become discouraged?

• THE EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH - “A man like us” (James 5:17)

Read Elijah’s story in 1 Kings 18 and 19. How would you have felt if you had been in that situation?

• ELIJAH’S SOLUTION

• GOD’S ANSWER TO DISCOURAGEMENT AND DESPAIR
Intentional Integrity - Dealing with Dishonesty

Is any part of our society untouched by the plague of lying and falsehood that marks our age? "Mis-speaking" has become so common in politics that it is very nearly the norm. False advertising and advertisements that "push the envelope" in their claims surround us. People regularly lie to others, claiming it is necessary to "spare feelings." Can we rise to a higher calling and be people of truth in such a dishonest age?

• WHY IS TRUTH SO IMPORTANT TO GOD?

Read Colossians 3:9; Deuteronomy 19:16-20; Revelation 21:8; Acts 5:1ff.

What do these verses say about God’s view of honesty?

Do we take God’s word seriously? What kind of excuses are used to take the edge off of lying’s seriousness?

• DIFFERENT KINDS OF SIN: LIES OF ALL SORTS

Why do people lie? How many different kinds of lies can you think of?

Is it ever “okay” to lie? Why and when, or why not?

• GOD’S SOLUTION: DEALING WITH DISHONESTY
Conquering the Failure to Forgive

“I’ll take this to my grave!” he shouts in anger and storms out. The wounds run deep. Will he really carry their scars forever, refusing to give them up in reconciliation and forgiveness? Everyone knows forgiveness is commanded, but it can be very difficult. Think about your own life. What have been some particularly difficult debts and hurts to forgive?

* WHY IS IT SO HARD TO FORGIVE?

Read Matthew 18:21-22. What barriers stand in the way of full and free forgiveness?

* MUST WE ALWAYS FORGIVE?

Do we have to forgive?

Is forgiveness extended unilaterally, i.e., without regard for repentance and restitution? Think carefully before you answer.

* GOD’S SOLUTION: HOW CAN I BE MORE FORGIVING?
Victory over Toys - Materialism

The United States knows one of the highest standards of living the world has ever seen. Americans enjoy luxuries and conveniences scarcely imaginable even a generation ago. Yet, for the most part, we are an unhappy nation, driven to constantly acquire more and more. We are proof of the old adage “When a person’s outgo exceeds his income, then his upkeep will be his downfall.” We may smile at such witticisms but when are we going to practice godliness and self-discipline with our possessions?

● DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK TO THE PROBLEM OF MATERIALISM?

Read Matthew 19:16-22. What kept this man from the kingdom of God?

Think carefully: how many N.T. passages and stories can you recall that illustrate or discuss truths about money and things?

● HOW COVETOUSNESS EATS OUR SOUL

What is covetousness? Why is it wrong?

● GOD’S SOLUTION: PRACTICAL STEPS TO MANAGING POSSESSIONS
Overcoming Gossip

A funny T-shirt says “If you cannot say something nice about people — come stand by me!” People love to gossip about anything and anyone. What can Christians do to make sure they are not swept up in a tide of evil communication?

- WHAT IS GOSSIP AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

Read Proverbs 17:9; 18:3; 26:20. How would you define gossip?

What does gossip do?

- WHY DO WE GOSSIP?

What reasons can you give for people’s love of gossip?

- GOD’S SOLUTION: HOW CAN I AVOID GOSSIPING?
Conquering Fun and Pleasure

“Are we having fun yet?” seems to be our national obsession. Too many Christians are finding it far too easy (and enjoyable!) to pursue pleasure relentlessly at the expense of their spirituality. What does the Bible teach us about the proper role of recreation and entertainment?

● THE WORLD’S VIEW OF RECREATION

   Read 2 Timothy 3:4. *Is this a danger for Americans today?*

   Our society has formulated the equation that fun and pleasure are the highest good.
   This is simply the philosophy of _________________.

● THE BIBLE’S VIEW OF RECREATION

   *Is it wrong for Christians to have a good time? Why or why not?*

● SCRIPTURAL SOLUTIONS: BALANCING FUN IN OUR LIVES
Am I a Pharisee? Conquering Self-Righteousness and False Religion

Give a synonym for hypocrite. What term would you use for a person who is overly pious, too religious? Give a term for one who is very careful about every letter of the law. The answer is the same, isn’t it? Such questions make people think of the Pharisees immediately.

Jesus and the Pharisees were notorious enemies. Time and again He crossed verbal swords with this religious sect. What made them so wrong and so unable to understand Jesus? Could we make the same mistakes today?

● WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PHARISEE?

  Write your own definition of what it means to be a Pharisee today:

  What did it mean to be a Pharisee in Jesus’ time?

  Crucial in the Pharisees’ lives was the ________ Law.

● BEING A PHARISEE DOESN’T MEAN . . . .

● BEING A PHARISEE DOES MEAN:
Victory over Lust

“You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act — that is, to watch a girl undress on the stage. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theater by simply bringing a covered plate onto the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon. Would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with their appetite for food? And would not anyone who had grown up in a different world think there was something equally queer about the state of the sex instinct among us?”

–C.S. Lewis

● WHAT IS LUST?

Write your own definition of lust:

Do some Bible study. What does the word “lust” mean and how is it used in Scripture?

Why is lust wrong? Does that make the sexual relationship in marriage wrong?

How does the Bible treat lusting? Is it a serious matter?

● THE HORRIBLE TEMPTATION OF PORNOGRAPHY

● GOD’S SOLUTIONS: VICTORY OVER LUST
Overcoming Apathy

Too many face life with a “Who cares?” attitude. At work, with their civic responsibilities, in their personal relationships and particularly with God many seem to think that saying “What’s the big deal?” suffices. For the Christian, it does not.

- APATHY: WHAT IT IS

Write your own definition of apathy:

Apathy is the opposite of zeal. How important is zeal to a Christian? Search out passages that speak of zeal’s role in the Christian life:

- WHY WE GET APATHETIC

Why do you think people become apathetic about spiritual matters?

- HOW APATHY AFFECTS US

- GOD’S ANSWERS TO APATHY
Dealing with Irreverence

“Omigawd” seems to have become today’s standard expression for surprise. Behind it is, sadly, a failure to understand the awesome majesty of God and how it is appropriate to use His name. Such disrespect of Jehovah is all too common place — and not just among people in the world. How can Christians improve their attitude of reverence today?

● DEFINING REVERENCE

Read Exodus 19 - 20. Make note of what in the text speaks of the need to treat God as uniquely different and special:

How would you have felt to have been at Mount Sinai? Would you worship differently there?

From your reading how do you define reverence?

● EXAMPLES OF IRREVERENCE

What can you think of that shows a lack of reverence for God today?

● GOD’S ANSWERS: EVERYDAY REVERENCE
Conquering and Controlling Anger

Thomas Jefferson once wrote “When angry, count ten before you speak; If very angry, a hundred.” About seventy-five years later Mark Twain revised Jefferson’s rules with “When angry, count four. When very angry, swear.” While we chuckle at Twain’s twist to Jefferson’s maxim many of us know the sad truth that anger often gets the better of us and compromises our Christ-like-ness. How can we conquer and control anger?

● ANGER IN THE BIBLE


● WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO BE ANGRY?

Can you list some examples or circumstances where a Christian ought to be angry?

● UNJUSTIFIED ANGER

● GOD’S ANSWERS: WINNING OVER ANGER
Victory over Busy-ness

One has said “Being busy is like the weather; everyone complains about it but nobody does anything about it.” How true! Most of us freely confess to being terribly hurried and rushed in our lives. We scurry from here to there while dreaming about a simpler life. But who does anything to make a simpler life happen? Who treats busy-ness as a sin that could destroy our souls?

- TIME AND BUSY-NESS FROM GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Read Luke 10:41-42. What do you learn from this story?

What excuses do people make to justify their overcrowded lives?

- WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE TOO BUSY?

Note the damage that busy-ness causes in people’s lives:

- GOD’S ANSWERS: TOWARDS BALANCE WITH TIME AND ACTIVITIES
Conquering Temptation

A series on taking sin seriously wouldn’t be complete without a careful look at needed skills for overcoming temptations of every kind and every form. What assets and resources can we marshal to defeat our adversary no matter what sin he brings to our attention?

- **WHAT GOD DOES FOR US**

  *Read Job 1 and 2.* What does this say about God’s work on our behalf? *Read 1 Cor. 10:13* as well.

  *What else has the Lord done for us in our fight with sin?*

- **WHAT THE CHURCH DOES FOR US**

  Many downplay the local church’s role in helping them overcome sin. *What can you think of that a local church provides that impacts our battles with temptation?*

- **WHAT I CAN DO ABOUT TEMPTATION IN MY LIFE**

  *Read James 4:7.* What can we do personally to resist the devil?
Taking Sin Seriously

TEACHING NOTES

Mark Roberts

The Building Up Series
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Taking Sin Seriously!* This is a special class that I taught here at Westside in the spring and summer of 2000. The material was very well received, as many Christians commented on how helpful it was to “target” a specific problem area and give it extra attention from the scriptures.

In this packet you will find the class work book that was distributed to all class members, and these teaching notes. Obviously, don’t give out the notes to the class. As the teacher, you should keep them to help you in your preparation for class, and for leading the class itself. Use the outlines I have given you here to get you started, encourage your own thinking and to make your own applications. By no means should you be tied down by what I have written. Make this class your own class! Add your own thoughts, passages that come to your mind, and especially your own applications of these ideas.

Often in the notes you will find questions or comments in italics. These signal good places to begin class discussion, or a key question that will “kick off” class thought and interaction. You will find that everyone can contribute on these vital topics.

I am indebted to many for triggering the ideas found here, and even for some of the material here. Gary Henry’s *Deadly Weapons the Devil is Using* booklet was a great help, as was many other good brethren’s efforts. I appreciate them all. You will note that in the teaching notes I have footnoted even some denominational works and sources. Don’t be confused into thinking that such constitutes endorsement of those men or those books. Anything written by men must be gleaned carefully. The citations simply show that I took what was true and thus gave credit for it.

You are free to make as many workbooks as your class needs, and to distribute this PDF file in any way that brings glory to our God. The only “catch” is that this material must not be altered in any way. Use it and enjoy it — and may it help many Christians to take sin much more seriously.

Mark Roberts
INTRODUCTION:

A. Approach: Are you a conqueror?
   1. The Bible speaks of many great conquerors: Joshua, David, Nebuchadnezzar.
   2. None of these are as important as the conqueror addressed in Romans 8:37.
   3. That is you! You are a conqueror of trials, tribulations and sin.

B. In this quarter of Bible study we want to see how to be more than conquerors.
   1. We want to talk frankly and forthrightly about sin, and about getting very serious with our attempts to conquer its deadly effects in our lives.
   2. Remember, the Bible regularly describes Christians as soldiers:
      a. Phil. 2:25
      b. 2 Timothy 2:3
      c. Philemon 1:2
   3. Our environment is difficult, and hostile. We are at war.
   4. In this war we need to construct strong defenses against sin, and better our knowledge of the sword of the Spirit for offensive attacks against the enemy.

I. UNDERSTANDING GOD’S EXPECTATIONS

A. The importance of this topic becomes clear when we see what God expects:
   1. Titus 2:11-12
   2. 1 Peter 1:15-16
   3. James 1:27

B. What does holiness mean? Holiness means to be set apart, to be different, unique.


D. What is the reward for holiness? Rev. 3:4; 7:14.

E. Summary: God expects us to pursue holiness, to want to do right.

II. MEASURING THE BATTLEFIELD

A. Our world today does not take sin seriously. Why not?
   1. World is selfish and self-directed.
   2. World doesn’t believe in God’s word, which defines sin.
   3. World doesn’t believe in God’s judgment, instead believing in a God who will not punish.
B. Society minimizes sin’s seriousness:
   1. By familiarity
      a. Sometimes we become so accustomed to living in a dark world that it doesn’t seem so bad anymore.
      b. *Can you think of some illustrations of this truth?*
   2. By euphemisms - in our politically correct world we give our sins respectable, nice names. *Examples?* Re-labeling the poison bottle doesn’t make it less poisonous!
   4. By comparison - we delight in comparing ourselves to others, whom we are sure are worse than we are. See 2 Cor. 10:12

III. MEASURING OUR OPPONENT

A. The Bible shows us that:
   1. **The devil is very brazen** - tempted even Jesus (Matt. 4:3), appears in the Lord’s throne room and challenges God (Job 1:6)!
   2. **The devil is extremely optimistic** - believes he can get anyone, even an apostle, one who is co-worker with Paul, or even the best king Israel ever had.
   3. **The devil is terribly tricky** - 2 Cor. 11:14; Luke 4:9-11 (misuse scripture)
   4. **The devil is incredibly patient** - he wears people down, is always waiting for the right moment.
   5. The Bible makes it clear: Ephesians 6:11ff

B. We need to meditate on this much more. It is frightening — and should motivate us to build up our defenses.

IV. A CASE STUDY IN FAILURE - SAMSON

A. Samson is a tragic tale in scripture.
   1. He had so much potential, could have done so much, but ultimately did little.
   2. Note his failings:
      a. Unrestrained sexual passion - Judges 16:1
      b. Poor choice of companions - Judges 16:4
      c. Lied often - Judges 16:7
   3. The physical consequences of Samson’s behavior dramatically parallel the spiritual consequences of our sinful behavior.

B. Once Samson’s hair had been cut he:
   1. Lost strength, 16:19,
      a. cf. Matt. 5:13
      b. Sin destroys our effectiveness in God’s kingdom.
   2. Loss of sight, 16:21
      a. 1 John 2:11
      b. 2 Peter 1:9
      c. Sin destroys our ability to see truth, reality, and even self as we really are.
   3. Loss of freedom, 16:21
a. Romans 6:16
b. 2 Peter 2:19
c. How many have fallen into sin with the promise of great liberty or more freedom only to find themselves further enslaved?

4. Loss of God, 16:20
a. The greatest loss, of course, is one’s own soul.
b. Matthew 16:26

V. CONCLUSION

A. Paul was right in 2 Tim. 3:13: evil is getting worse.

B. We must not be naive about what is expected of us as Christians or the difficulty of our battle.
**Getting Serious with Sin - Conquering Worry**

**INTRODUCTION:**

A. Text: Philippians 4:6-7

B. Be honest — that’s much easier said than done, isn’t it?
   1. There is much that we are anxious about in our world today.
   2. In the *Lion King* two carefree characters advise “Hakuna Matata,” meaning have no worries.
   3. Is that what Paul means here? “Don’t worry be happy?”

I. GOD’S PROHIBITION: Worry seen as sin

A. Worry violates the clear command of scripture - Matthew 6:25-33

B. *Why is worry wrong?*
   1. Worry illustrates that we don’t trust the Father - Heb. 13:5
      a. *Do we believe that?*
      b. *What kinds of things regarding the future do we sometimes worry about? Do those worries reflect faithlessness?*
   2. Worry strangles spiritual life - “worry” comes from an old German word meant “to choke.” See Mark 4:19
   3. Worry is an invitation to the devil for further sin - see 1 Peter 5:7-8.

II. SHARPENING OUR FOCUS - *Can we never be concerned?*

A. It is wrong to worry about matters far out of our hands, like nuclear war
   1. But what of other situations?
      a. Doctor finds cancer on your x-ray.
      b. Boss announces cuts are coming down.
      c. Child begins to show every classic sign of teen rebellion.
   2. These aren’t pie in the sky things that will never happen, nor are they rooted in the past, nor are they completely beyond your control.
   3. These are very real situations that *could* drastically alter our life circumstance.
   4. Is there no room for thoughtful regard for the future in Christianity?

B. Distinction in worry and concern:
   1. Nothing wrong with being concerned about matters: 2 Cor. 11:28; Col. 4:12-13
   2. We have to be concerned *because concern leads to action.* The opposite of such concern is apathy.
   3. Worry is different from concern. Worry is about the past, minor matters that are unimportant or about the future that is beyond control.

C. How can we tell the difference? Worry kills functionality.
   1. If I can’t do anything because I’m fretting than I may be worrying uselessly.
2. Is my concern driving me somewhere to do something, or I am just caught in the trap of non-functionality?
3. Suggest that when we run out of options then we have to turn it over to the Lord and work on not taking it back from Him.

III. SOLUTIONS

A. Principle of Substitution
   1. Phil. 4:5-6 - verses work together.
   2. We substitute prayer for worry.
   3. Note the dominant role of thanksgiving here.
   4. Prayers of thanks work in two directions:
      a. Gratitude changes our attitude
      b. Reviewing what God has done in the past gives confidence for the future

B. Principle of Uselessness
   1. Matthew 6:27
   2. Worry doesn’t work. It doesn’t help. You cannot worry anything away.
   3. What I see in the lives of worriers more often than not is a refusal to do, to take action, to be responsible. See Prov. 22:13

C. Principle of Priority
   1. Matthew 6:33
   2. Change your priorities and perspectives!
   3. This will change what you are concerned about.

IV. CONCLUSION:

A. Note that this all begins with the conscious decision of Phil. 4:6: “Be anxious for nothing.” I must choose not to worry.

B. One has said “If you aren’t a Christian, this world is all the heaven you will ever know. But if you are a Christian, this world is all the hell you will ever know.”

C. Stop worry before it stops you!
Defeating Discouragement

INTRODUCTION:

A. Text: Mark 8:11-21

B. Approach: Was Jesus ever discouraged?
   1. Believe we could easily characterize this as one of the most discouraging days in
      Jesus’ career.
   2. Both Pharisees and His own disciples demonstrated lack of spiritual insight.
   3. Sometimes we get discouraged as well. Our expectations are dashed or disappointed,
      we feel despair that life isn’t what we want it to be.
   4. That can lead to all sorts of spiritual problems — so we must learn to defeat discour-
      agement.

I. THE RESULTS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

A. Reading: Exodus 14:5-12
   1. Here Israel was trapped at the Red Sea, very discouraging circumstance, looked like
      they might all die.
   2. As a result:
      a. They began to complain to God (14:10) - note they were not praying in faith
      b. They began to criticize their leader (14:11)
      c. They distorted their past (14:12)

B. Reading: Numbers 13:27-14:4
   1. Here Israel appeared to be unable to reach the goal of the Promised Land.
   2. Again, discouragement led to sin:
      a. Useless grief instead of faith (14:1)
      b. Criticizing leadership (14:2)
      c. Ridiculous claims (wishing they had died), 14:2b
      d. Charging God recklessly (14:3)
      e. Outright rebellion (14:4)
   3. Deuteronomy 1:28 shows how a few discouragers can have a deadly effect on every-
      one.

C. Reading: Colossians 3:21
   1. Overbearing parenting is highlighted here.
   2. Can break a child’s spirit, cause either passivity or rebellion.

D. Reading: Ephesians 3:13 - Ephesians might be so discouraged at Paul’s imprisonment they
   might give up on Christianity.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH - Review Elijah’s story from 1 Kings 18 and 19.

A. Elijah’s story is very important to us because of James 5:17.
   1. He is described as being “like us.” We must not think of him as a “super saint” or
somehow “above” the turmoil of life.

2. Can you think of any other biblical characters who experienced the same pattern - discouragement after a great victory? Why is this so often the case?
   a. David brought peace/prosperity but then sinned with Bathsheba
   b. Peter walked on the water, then sank

b. Elijah’s discouragement affected him:
   2. Desire to quit: (19:4).
   3. Abdicated his dreams: (19:4).
   5. Exaggerated his problems: (19:10).
   6. What is the end result of doing any one or more of these things? Elijah in the midst of depression/discouragement was of no value to God, could not serve.

III. THE SOLUTION FOR ELIJAH’S DISCOURAGEMENT

A. Respond to your needs: (19:5-8).
   1. No doubt weariness contributed to Elijah’s emotional state.
   2. Physical, financial, spiritual weariness can wear us down emotionally.
   3. Why is physical weariness often the hardest for us to remedy? Too often we ignore the warning signs, will not slow down.

B. Refocus on hearing God: (19:11-13).
   1. Elijah need to stop listening to his own litany of woes.
   2. Instead he desperately needed to perceive the voice of God yet again.

C. Remember your responsibility: (19:15).
   1. God sends Elijah back to work!
   2. This accomplishes two tasks necessary to overcome discouragement.
      a. It gets Elijah back with other people.
      b. It forced Elijah to focus on his work and on others instead of himself.
   3. When discouraged, we are tempted to avoid worship, ignore the Bible, forget to pray, dabble in sinful diversions.
   4. Note Galatians 6:9. Where did we ever get the idea that enthusiasm for a task will return if we quit the task?!
   5. One has said “If you act the way you wish you felt, eventually you’ll feel the way you act.”

D. Receive God’s encouragement: (19:18).
   1. God encouraged Elijah by reminding him of what He knew and that things are never as bad as they may seem to us — if God is on our side!
   2. See this illustrated in Acts 18:9,10.
   3. How can I receive God’s encouragement today?
IV. GOD’S ANSWER TO DISCOURAGEMENT AND DESPAIR - 4 Steps

A. First, prayer - Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7

B. Second, look to grow - 1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:1-4
   1. When in difficulty I need to ask “How can I grow from this?”
   2. Not every problem or trial is sent from God to chasten us but we need to always be looking to grow.

C. Third, keep trusting.
   1. Whatever is going on the Christian knows that God is good.
   2. We must consciously remind ourselves that God is good (Psalm 23; John 10:10-11).

D. Fourth, build expectation.
   1. Whatever the problem is it will not make it to heaven.
   2. 2 Cor. 4:14 - we know we shall be raised
   3. Rev. 7:14-17

V. CONCLUSION

A. Looking to biblical examples and combining that with biblical instruction we can overcome discouragement.

B. Don’t let this become an ongoing problem. Deal with it before it causes more sin in your life.
Lesson 4

Intentional Integrity - Dealing with Dishonesty

INTRODUCTION:

A. Romans 12:1-2

B. *Honey, does this make me look fat?* As a candidate for the Presidency, do you plan to raise taxes if elected? *Has the odometer been tampered with on this used car?*

C. Not any of us can hear these questions and not immediately roll our eyes and think about the possibility of deception and lies. Are we honest?

I. WHY DOES THE TRUTH MATTER TO GOD?

A. Read Colossians 3:9; Deut. 19:16-20; Rev. 21:8; Acts 5:1ff. *Why does God care so much about honesty?*

B. God directly commands us not to lie - Psalm 34:13

C. Truth is part of God’s character - Psalm 31:5; John 16:13; John 14:6; Heb. 6:18

D. Lying is part of the devil’s character - Jno. 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14
   1. Note: lies create doubt, doubt creates instability and uncertainty.
   2. In contrast, Jesus is the truth and the way.

E. The Gospel depends on words.
   1. Communication cannot occur without trust, words having real meaning.
   2. Pure words, truthful words are important to God that we might be able to communicate what He has told us to others.
   3. How can I teach people the gospel if they do not trust me?

F. Deception undermines our relationships with others - Ephesians 4:25

G. Lying almost always gets progressively worse.
   1. *Why is that?*
   2. One lie almost always leads to more lies.

H. Lying hurts us.
   1. Almost always lies are used to cover deficiencies and failures.
   2. Rather than honestly addressing failure so that it can be corrected or even repented of people lie and thus nurture sin.

I. Do we take these commands seriously? *What excuses do people use for lying?*
II. DIFFERENT KINDS OF SIN: LIES OF ALL SORTS

A. What is a lie?
   1. A lie is simply the attempt to deceive, to cause others to think what is not true.
   2. Does it have to be spoken?

B. Outright lying
   1. Prov. 12:22
   2. Slander - spreading false reports about others to their harm and hurt.
   3. Answering direct questions untruthfully.
   4. Falsifying time cards, employment applications, tax returns, resumes.

C. Misleading people - 2 Cor. 8:21
   1. Leaving a false impression (though the words said may be true)
   2. Communicating facts selectively to influence others for my purposes

D. Deception and guile - Psalm 120:2; Psalm 32:2
   1. Attempting to create a better impression of myself than is really so.
   2. Covering up the sins of the past.

E. Hypocrisy - Prov 26:23

F. Flattery - Psalm 12:2

G. Broken promises - Psalm 15:1,4

H. Exaggeration - Prov. 8:8
   1. Exaggerating past accomplishment, or my efforts in the service of the Lord.
   2. Overstating the truth by using words like “always” and “never,” making sweeping generalizations about people, embellishing stories.

III. MUST WE ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH?

A. Attempted justifications for lying:
   1. “People in the Bible lied.”
      a. Midwives lied - Exodus 1:17ff - Are the midwives commended for lying? No. “Even though these women lied to Pharaoh (which the Bible, as is often the case, does not stop to specifically condemn at this point), they are praised for their outright refusal to stake infant lives.”
      b. Abraham lied - Genesis 12:13ff; 20:2ff (a good place to see that a half truth is an all lie!).
      c. Rahab lied - Joshua 2:1-7
      d. ANSWER: these are never commended for their lying. The Bible expects us to be sharp enough to discern that what they did was wrong without having to bludgeon us with the constant admonitions about lying.
2. “Difficult situations make it hard to tell the truth, the truth seems to be hurtful.”
   a. Doctor asked about a terminally ill patient, should he say “It’ll be fine” to spare feelings?
   b. ANSWER: No. By so doing he deprives the patient of the right to make decisions about his condition, treatment and care. Patient may need to get right with God!

IV. CONQUERING DISHONESTY

A. First, monitor your heart - Matt. 12:34

B. Second, determine to tell the truth with everything at all times no matter how small.

C. Third, determine to repent and confess all lies immediately.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Bulgarian proverb: “You are permitted in time of great danger to walk with the devil until you have crossed the bridge.”
   1. This kind of situation ethics seems to be the attitude of many today.
   2. They want to “walk with the devil” for just a few steps over the bridge of difficult human relationships.
   3. But the Christian can’t walk with Christ and the devil at the same time!

B. Resolve to be honest at all times!

VI. ENDNOTES:

1 Much good material for this came from Monte Unger’s article on honesty in Discipleship Journal, Issue 94, 1996, page 54.
Lesson 5

Conquering the Failure to Forgive

INTRODUCTION:

A. Opening text: Matthew 18:23-35

B. Approach: Is this our story?
   1. While having received great grace we can be like this rascally servant all too often.
   2. We hold past offenses near and dear, nourishing and remembering scars that others have inflicted upon us.
   3. Recent poll said that 45% of Americans say they try to forgive as a response to being hurt by others.¹
   4. But sometimes we don’t try so hard and sometimes we don’t succeed.

C. This sin can take many forms:
   1. Refusal to go and talk with someone so reconciliation can be achieved
   2. Refusal to forgive when asked
   3. Refusal to really forgive when asked

D. In this lesson we want to concentrate on what to do to conquer the failure to forgive.

I. WHY IS IT SO HARD TO FORGIVE?

A. Read Matthew 18:21-22.
   1. Peter feels like he is really going all out, doesn’t he? Not good enough!
   2. Forgiveness is the granting of pardon, to absolve of responsibility for an offense or debt. And it is very hard to do. Why?

B. Forgiveness violates our sense of justice - they ought to get what they “deserve”

C. Restitution cannot always be made.
   1. Acts 9:1 - Paul could never “make this right.”
   2. The mother who lost her child to a drunk driver still is childless. The woman whose husband committed adultery is still devastated.

D. Hurts can last a life-time.

E. Many false ideas about forgiveness abound.

F. To forgive we have to get past our feelings and emotions.
   1. Forgiveness is often made out as a big emotional “feel good” emotion. Yet often it does not feel good.
   2. What feels good is anger, hatred and vengeance.
II. MUST WE ALWAYS FORGIVE?

A. Two questions here:
   1. Does God expect us to forgive every person who asks?
   2. What do we do with those who are not penitent, don’t ask?

B. Must we forgive when asked?
   1. Yes. It’s just that simple. We must forgive those who come to us and so ask.
   2. Col. 3:12-13; Matt. 6:12, 14-15.
   3. Note we are not arguing that you should forgive because it’s good for you. We forgive because we are instructed to, and because we have received

C. Do we have to forgive the unrepentant?
   1. The Bible’s answer: Luke 17:3-4
   2. Not hard to see that human forgiveness is just like divine forgiveness. God forgives when we repent, so we forgive others when they repent.
   3. This parallel is very important because our forgiving others is connected biblically with God’s forgiveness - Matt. 6:12, 14-15.
   4. Does God forgive without repentance? No, neither must we.

D. Someone says “We should just forgive them anyway.”
   1. Would that work in Matthew 18:15-17? Failure to repent brings discipline, not forgiveness!
   2. Certainly we don’t want to carry around past hurts, let them dominate and control our lives.
   3. We want to cultivate a forgiving spirit, be ready to forgive.
   4. But that is not the same as forgiveness. Forgiveness is the release of a debt.
   5. Illus: If brother X steals brother Y’s car should he just forgive and pretend nothing has happened or should he seek repentance and restoration? Brother Y’s soul is in jeopardy!
   6. We should expect and demand repentance:
      a. Remorse - godly sorrow - 2 Cor. 7:9
      b. Restitution - many such laws in the O.T., simply conforms to Matt. 7:12
      c. Regeneration - “fruit of repentance” - Matthew 3:8

E. Objections:
   1. Jesus forgave His murderers at calvary - Luke 23:34
      a. No - He prayed they would have opportunity to repent, not be obliterated by God’s wrath.
      b. Note times Jesus forgave: Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:48. Jesus didn’t say that to the crucifiers, did He?
      c. Further proof: Acts 2:23, 36. Note they don’t tell Peter “We are forgiven!”
   2. Stephen forgave his murderers in Acts 7:60
      a. No, he did the same as Jesus.
      b. He is asking for the same thing: the opportunity for them to be forgiven.
Ill. HOW CAN I BE MORE FORGIVING?

A. Decide if you've been sinned against - is it sin or a misunderstanding?

B. Get perspective: focus on how much you’ve been forgiven

C. In humility confront so that repentance will occur.

D. Sacrifice yourself and choose to forgive.
   1. Forgiveness never occurs without sacrifice, both in Old and New Testaments.
   2. Forgiveness will cost you: your hurt pride, the right to go around and tell others how badly we’ve been treated, the privilege of wearing a martyr complex or bad mouthing the offender.
   3. Forgiveness erases all of that. We give it up.

E. Remember forgiveness doesn’t cure everything.
   1. The word “amnesty” comes from the same word “amnesia” — and if we grant true forgiveness over time our minds can rest from the hurt we’ve endured.
   2. But that takes time — time for trust to grow again.
   3. Important for the offender to remember that forgiveness does not end all consequences:
      a. The Old Law contains numerous laws of restitution - Num. 5:5-10.
      b. Moses was forgiven but was not allowed in the Promised land - Num. 20:10-13; Deut. 3:23-28
      c. Zacchaeus was forgiven, but made restitution by paying back what he had cheated from others - Luke 19:1-9.
      d. Sin has consequences. The pain of being separated from God and that we have a debt with our fellow man is part of that — but not all of it.

IV. CONCLUSION:

A. Forgiveness is difficult but so important.

B. Let us be more like God: ready to forgive when repentance is seen.

V. ENDNOTES:

1Michael E. McCullough, Steven J. Sandage, Everett L. Worthington, Jr., To Forgive is Human, Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997, page 16.
Lesson 6

Getting Serious with Sin - Materialism

INTRODUCTION:

A. Approach: when is enough enough?
   1. Bernard of Clairvaux, a writer of devotional material in the middle ages, composed the following lyric: “From all the bliss that earth imparts, we turn *unfilled* to Thee again.” (Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts).
   2. Contrast that to today’s attitudes. Everyone wants more!
   3. We live in an age of materialism, “the great or excessive regard for worldly concerns.”

B. The Bible has much to say about materialism and money.
   1. Someone has calculated that nearly one-half of Jesus’ saying have to do with the problems of money and discipleship in some form or another.
   2. Being addicted to wealth and money (greed) is an addiction our society applauds and justifies.
   3. So we have to ask if we will be different from the world around us in our attitude toward money and what it will buy.

I. WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT MONEY?

A. Read Matthew 19:16-22. What kept this man from the kingdom of God? Could that happen to us today?

B. Many passages in the NT speak to the issue of materialism:
   1. Matthew 6:21-24
   2. Luke 8:1-3, 14
   7. 1 Timothy 6:9-11, 17-19
   8. Revelation 3:17

C. Key observations from these texts:
   1. Riches are a mixed blessing.
      a. It is not a virtue to be poor
      b. Nor is it a sign of God’s blessings to be rich
      c. Proverbs 30:8-9
      d. Job 34:19
   2. Riches can be very dangerous . . .

II. THE DANGERS OF HAVING TOO MUCH MONEY

A. Problem of trusting possessions more than God.
   1. *Is it possible to be “self-faithful” instead of having faith in God?*
2. Can you name a biblical example of trusting possessions over the Lord?
   a. Uzziah - 2 Chronicles 26:16
   b. Israel - Deut. 8:11-14
3. Note the warning of 1 Timothy 6:17ff.

B. Danger of discontentment.
   1. Phil. 4:11-12
   2. How many Christians spend a great deal of time worry and fidgeting about how to have more, more, more?
   3. In all of this, thankfulness gets lost as we just try to grasp more and more.
   4. 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5

C. Problem of envy and jealousy.
   1. Our thirst for more of life’s goods can lead us to be jealous of others who have more than we have.
   2. Note that this is different from simply admiring others blessings. How?
      a. Envy and jealous are evil spirited.
      b. They wish evil upon others for having what we don’t.
   3. These are works of the flesh - Gal. 5:20-21

D. Danger of selfishness.
   1. We have so much but when we become obsessed with adding to it we do not assist or help others as we should.
   2. We may not want to give to the Lord as we should - see Malachi 1.

E. Danger of purchasing things/activities that are sinful.

F. Danger of becoming class conscious - James 2.

III. HOW COVETOUSNESS EATS AT OUR SOUL

A. Much of what we have been described can be labeled as covetousness.
   1. It keeps terrible company - Ephesians 5:3
   2. It is a form of idolatry - Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5
   3. It will send us to hell - 1 Cor. 6:9-10
   4. How much thinking do you do about being covetousness or watching for a covetous spirit?

B. Can we even define covetousness?
   1. Comes from a word meaning “striving for more.”
   2. It is wanting things so much we will do whatever we can or must do to obtain them.
   3. Covetousness is enslavement to possessions or money. It is close kin to greed and lust.
   4. Bible presents us with several famous covetous people:
      a. Aachan
      b. Judas Iscariot
      c. Ananias and Sapphira
C. Covetousness is an “inside” sin. It comes from the heart.
   1. Luke 12:15
   2. How can we be guard for this insidious sin?
   3. Look where it leads: “The greedy man curses and spurns the Lord” (Psalm 10:3, NASB).

IV. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR MANAGING MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

A. Remember who the Bible’s warnings are for: us!

B. Watch out for advertising.
   1. Advertisers are explicitly in the business of making us discontented with our lives so that we will be their product to “fix” our problem.
   2. Proverbs 4:23 - what message about money fills your heart?

C. Track your money.
   1. Make a conscious effort to see exactly what you have got and where it is going.
   2. This is just good stewardship of God’s blessings and will cause two effects in your life:
      a. Cause you to be more thankful — we have more than we think!
      b. Cause you to be more aware of whether your life is selfish and self-centered.
   3. Where is the majority of your money going? Would we be ashamed to show others our graph?

D. Decide what is enough.
   1. The problem is we jack our standard of living up as income rises. By so doing enough is never enough.
   2. Let’s decide how much money we need, and then live within that standard.

E. Practice contentment.
   1. Christians need to practice contentment: Hebrews 13:5; 1 Tim. 6:6
   2. Suggestions for being more content in a world that thrives on discontentment?

F. Focus on money and thing’s limitations.
   1. Money and stuff cannot satisfy (Eccl. 5:10).
   2. Too often we think of money as being the solution to all our problems. We need to think of God first and remember there is much money can’t fix:
      a. Health problems
      b. Broken relationships
      c. Spiritual difficulties

V. CONCLUSION

A. We have so much but, in bitter irony, the devil can use the blessings we have to drive a wedge between us and the Lord.

B. Proverbs 11:4; 23:5 - let us get serious with how we possess our possessions!
Getting Serious with Sin - Gossip

INTRODUCTION:

A. Text: Proverbs 26:20; 18:3; 17:9

B. Approach: “My name is gossip. I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing, I break hearts and ruin lives, I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face. To track me down is impossible. The harder you try the more elusive I become. I am nobody’s friend. Once I tarnish your reputation it will never be the same. I am gossip.”

C. Gossiping is a fixture in modern America - newspaper, TV, Internet. We love to talk about other people.

D. The Bible urges us to a different viewpoint.
   1. Note Romans 1:29-30 - listed w/homosexuality, murder, God-hating.
   2. We need to take a hard look at our communication, make certain that we are not found guilty of being a part of gossip-riddled society.

I. WHAT IS GOSSIP AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

A. Solid definition extremely important. What is gossip?
   1. Not all talk about somebody else, or something they did, is gossip.
   2. If such were the case we could not exercise church discipline - Matt. 18:15-18 says “tell it to the church”
   3. Defined: gossip is idle chatter about others failings - Proverbs 11:13.
      a. “Idle chatter” - it isn’t constructive, it isn’t designed to bring about changes, assist someone. We just don’t have anything better to talk about so we rattle on about other’s deficiencies.
      b. “Others failings” - gossip is never positive, it is never good, it never encourages or tells others good things.

B. When we gossip what happens?
   1. Relationships are damaged - trust is absolutely essential to have a genuine relationship.
   2. Reputations are destroyed - Solomon tells the worth of a good name (Prov. 22:1); it’s a qualification to be an elder (1 Tim. 3:7).

C. Summary: James 3:5

II. WHY DO PEOPLE GOSSIP?

A. The Love of Darkness - John 3:19

B. Pride
1. So many people view others as the “competition.” Doesn’t it feel good to know the chinks in their armor? To know that life isn’t perfect for them? They have problems?
2. Because then we can say, “They may do — or have —, but really I’m still better.”
3. God hates that attitude - James 4:8

C. Guilt - Matthew 7:3-4
1. When we feel bad about our own sin we gloss over them by looking at others.
2. But the standard is the Almighty - 1 Peter 1:15. He cares not how many have joined you in your sin, or worse.

D. Summary: stop all of this with Galatians 6:4

III. HOW CAN I AVOID GOSSIPING?

A. Apply the Test of Love - 1 Cor. 13:4ff
1. This is agape love that seeks the others best interests.
2. In my conversations about this person have I:
   a. Been kind
   b. Not envied them
   c. Not been rude
   d. Not taken a record or scorecard
   e. Haven’t rejoiced in wrong doing.
3. Am I loving as Christ wants me to love?

B. Identify the Source
1. Let’s be wary of “they said” or “I heard from someone,” “Everybody knows....”
2. Ask plainly who said it? Names please?
3. Truth fears nothing, only lies - Isaiah 28:15

C. Practice Matthew 18:15ff - lots easier to gossip than go fix something isn’t it?

D. Don’t Justify Gossip
1. What kind of justifications do people offer for gossip?
2. “You need to know this” - Really? Are we telling to help?
3. “It’s the truth” - so what? if this is truth is told will it harm or damage someone?
4. “This is just between you and me.” - as if gossiping to one is not a sin!
5. “I probably shouldn’t tell you this....” - that’s right!

E. Resist the Temptation to Pry Into the Confidential
1. Some people are just always asking questions about things that really aren’t their business.
2. Don’t try to lever gossip out of someone!

F. Don’t Tolerate Gossip
1. A lot of gossip goes on because no one has the courage to tell the gossiper to hush up.
2. But it must be done! Say “How can we help this person?” or “This must not go any further, should it?”
3. If subtlety doesn’t work be straight out: “I don’t see how this conversation is helping this individual. I don’t want to gossip, let’s change the subject.”
4. Remember our text: Proverbs 26:20

IV. CONCLUSION:

A. Close on this challenge:
   1. Ask yourself, “Do I need to say this?”
   2. “Does this show proper love to that person?”

B. Let’s speak needed truth with each other.
INTRODUCTION:

A. Text: 2 Timothy 3:4
   1. This describes our society perfectly: obsessed with fun and pleasure.
   2. There is no doubt that Americans are pursuing pleasure like never before; where is the time and money and effort being taken from to chase after all this fun?
   3. Could it be from spiritual things?

B. Christians need to carefully assess the dangers of living in a pleasure-mad world!

I. SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND:

A. Key scriptural concepts:
   1. Pleasure not wrong:
      a. Eccl. 5:18
      b. Eccl. 3:12-13
      c. Mark 6:31
   2. Work part of life:
      a. Gen. 2:8-9, 15
      b. Col. 3:23
      c. 2 Thess. 3:10
   3. Thus, there is a cycle of work and then play.
   4. Work and then be re-created in leisure.
   5. What happens when we don’t work very much but want more leisure? There is nothing to be re-created from!

B. Emphasis: pleasure can cause problems:
   1. Isaiah 47:8
   2. 1 Tim. 4:8
   3. Rom. 1:25
   4. Titus 3:3
   5. Think of these terms:
      a. Dissipation - indulgence in sinful pleasures in an unrestrained way
      b. Debauchery - extreme indulgence
      c. Decadence - decaying morally

II. PROBLEMS WITH PLEASURE - What problems come with the pursuit of pleasure?

A. Any pleasure can crowd out spiritual disciplines - Col. 3:2

B. Pleasure can dominate our pocketbooks.
   1. We borrow to have fun.
   2. Would we borrow for the Lord’s work?
C. Fun affects our minds.
   1. Our ability to concentrate is absolutely essential in worship.
   2. Malachi 1:13

D. Many pleasures are sinful, cheap counterfeits of good things.

E. We can become hedonistic - pleasure is the highest good.
   1. Fun is the standard that judges everything.
   2. If it is not fun it is no good.
   3. Where does that leave spiritual matters? Serving God isn't very fun sometimes is it?

F. We can try to find ultimate meaning in something that is purely transitory.
   1. The Bible affirms ultimate meaning is found in God and God alone: Eccl. 12:13
   2. Everything else is passing away, especially sin and its pleasures.
   3. 1 John 2:15-17; Hebrews 11:25

III. ANSWERS

A. Consider our ways more carefully - 2 Cor. 13:5
   1. Am I balanced?
   2. Consider a television viewing log.

B. Refuse to give in to the temptation to relentlessly pursue fun.

C. Be involved in meaningful re-creation.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Exo 32:6 - rose up to play

B. We must do better than being lured into play that leads us away from God!
Am I a Pharisee? Defeating Self-Righteousness and False Religion

INTRODUCTION:

A. Approach: “Pharisee!” is a frequent charge. But what does it really mean?

B. Bashing the Pharisees has become quite a fad.
   1. If you don’t like what one teaches, write him off as a Pharisee.
   2. If someone’s application of scripture makes you uncomfortable dismiss it all by just saying, “You’re being Pharisaical.”
   3. There is no good side to those words in our world. It’s always bad, incriminating, terrible.

C. It’s also vastly misunderstood.
   1. Who were the Pharisees? What did they teach and believe?
   2. What did Jesus condemn them for?
   3. How do we duplicate their error?
   4. Let’s be brave enough to ask a very daunting question: “Am I a Pharisee?”

I. PHARISEES THEN AND NOW:

A. Pharisees were a group of very devoted, very religious Jews.
   1. Their movement seems to have begun about 200 years before Christ.¹
   2. They lived during times when lots of Jews were conforming to the world, losing their distinctive identity as the people of God.
   3. Pharisees began to study and exalt the Law of Moses, and began to discuss how to apply it, make it fit every part of life perfectly.
   4. They decided that the restrictions that were to be applied to the priests ought to be applied to everyone, they each took to themselves that level of ceremonial cleanliness and purity.
   5. Their quest was to become, very much, the perfect Jew. They wanted to keep and obey the Law perfectly.

B. A crucial part of that was the development of the oral law.
   1. The oral law was the sayings of various rabbis about the Law of Moses (Jesus calls it their “traditions”).
   2. Illus: Sabbath law (Exo. 20:8). But what constitutes work? Rabbis debated....
      a. Under some circumstances you could extinguish a fire, others could not.
      b. “If anyone removed his fingernails with his teeth” that was work.
      c. “If a deer came into a house, and someone shut it in, that was work, but if two shut it in, they are exempt because neither completed the whole act by himself.”
   3. Some of these distinctions were just ridiculous, and totally arbitrary.

C. 3 key points to NT Pharisaism:
   1. They were seen as the most religious people in the land, high respected.
      a. Pharisee was not a bad word in Jesus’ day.
b. The surprise in many of Jesus’ parables is that the Pharisee is the bad guy, instead of the good guy.

2. They didn’t set out to be hypocrites, had great intentions.
3. They obsessed (or nearly so) on knowing the Law.

D. With a little background into true Pharisaism, realizing the public perception they had in Jesus’ day I can develop the following:

II. I’M NOT A PHARISEE WHEN I . . .

A. Am careful with scripture.
   1. Jesus never condemned the Pharisees for studying the scriptures, reverencing them, or being careful with God’s law.
   2. Jesus’ attitude well illustrated in Matthew 5:18.
   3. Notice in Matt. 8:4 - Jesus heals the leper, commands the law be kept.
   4. The word is authoritative, and treating it as such is to be like Jesus, not the Pharisees.

B. Diligently try to obey God.
   1. Matthew 23:23 — notice that Jesus did not condemn them for their obedience in small and minor matters.
   2. So many today seem to think the greatest sin of the Pharisees was that they tried to obey God in all things.
   3. The problem the Pharisees had was not obedience, and they were not condemned for that (how could they be?)

C. Speak frankly about sin.
   1. Want to be tagged a Pharisee quickly? Just condemn sin in someone’s life!
   2. Yet look at the pattern of Jesus’ life:
      a. John 8:11 - He told her to sin no more, meaning clearly that He didn’t approve of her lifestyle.
      b. Luke 7:48 - Forgiveness! That means she’s sinned!
   3. Jesus even urges us to judge correctly: John 7:24.
   4. Telling people what the Bible teaches does not make one a Pharisee.

III. PHARISAISM DOES INVOLVE:

A. Need to be careful here not to put together a checklist.
   1. No one can give you a list of the five things to abstain from lest you become a Pharisee because many of the things the Pharisees did were very good things.
   2. What would you think if of a list including “Read the Bible every day, pray every day, try to be holy — that will make you’re a Pharisee”?
   3. So several of the points we look at now involve where we place the emphasis, and the motivations for doing what we do.

B. Exalted their own traditions and bound them on others.
   1. This is where Jesus and the Pharisees had the most trouble.
   2. They had the oral law, which they believed had been given orally to Moses along
with the written law on Sinai. Anyone who transgressed was a sinner.


4. Want to speak very carefully about tradition:
   a. Tradition isn't a bad thing necessarily, we all have them, we are all set in our ways to some extent.
   b. Apostolic tradition is very important, must be followed - 2 Thess. 2:15

5. But we need to be very careful when we force others to follow our tradition, and view them as somehow less than Christian if they don't.
   a. Example: folks on vacation worshiped with brethren, “They had a 3-ring binder with different songs than we sing — it was weird.”
   b. They weren’t following our tradition so we some how less than right.

6. We quickly build a customary approach. Then all that differ scare us, so we write them off as unsound, weak or liberal. That’s the attitude of the Pharisees.

C. Closely associated with this, is **binding the “safe course” on others**.
   1. The Pharisees always looked to find the infallibly safe way.
   2. So if work was forbidden on the Sabbath then it would be a good idea for a tailor not to carry his needle on the Sabbath, nor a scribe his pen. He might be tempted to work — so leave it at home.
   3. They didn’t want to transgress the law, so they built a hedge or fence around the law. Unfortunately, soon they decided that anyone who climbed on the fence was a sinner too.
   4. They confused their interpretation of their law, their own personal scruples and decisions, with the law itself.
   6. We should try to be safe with our souls too — but must understand that our own personal application of scripture is not the same as God’s law.
   7. Illus: Christians should guard their minds, but can I announce “It is sinful to own a TV? All who do so are not as holy as I am?”
   8. **What other examples can be cited?**

D. Despising others/self-righteousness.
   2. There was just a feeling of “we’ve got it all right, we’re doing it all right, so we are better than others.”
   3. Many are those who fall into this trap. They celebrate what they abstain from as a mark they are superior to all others.
   4. The moment we think we are fundamentally any different from any other sinner we are utterly lost.

IV. **CONCLUSION:**

   A. This is tough stuff, isn’t it?
   1. We have chafed under the world’s accusation “You are like the Pharisees!” and tried to explain away, re-define it, get that under control, out of the way.
   2. Yes, some education might be in line here.
3. But we can be like them, can’t we?
4. How easily it is for conservatively minded people who want to do right, who want to
follow God’s law, to let it get completely out of hand, forget God, and build our own
Pharisaical mind set and traditions?

B. Let us be constantly aware of the temptation to become Pharisees!

C. Endnotes (Also consulted the ISBE):

Lesson 10

Conquering Lust

INTRODUCTION:

A. Opening text: Matthew 5:27-30

B. We live in a world that is absolutely enthralled with sex and sensuality.
   1. While physical acts dominate our attention because they are so public and obvious
      Jesus knows that what happens in our minds is more important.
   2. All sin begins there.
   3. That is why Jesus addresses the issue of lust in the heart.
   4. With a world gone mad over sex there are an incredible number of opportunities to lust.
   5. What can we do to conquer the temptation to lust?

I. WHAT IS LUST?

A. Definitions
   1. The Bible uses a term that has the root “thumos” indicating heat, fire, fierceness. The
      Bible word for “lust” just means “strong desire.”
      a. Matthew 13:17 - “desired”
      c. Phil. 1:23 - Paul “desired”
   2. But, when it is condemned, it carries with it a sexual connotation: Romans 1:24; Gal.
      5:16; Colossians 3:5.
   3. The English word has come to mean “excessive sexual desire especially as seeking
      unrestrained gratification,” “a desire to gratify the senses; bodily appetite.”

B. Two questions immediately arise:
   1. Is sex wrong? No!
      a. Sex is from God and can be a powerfully positive force in enriching a marriage.
         Remember, God invented pleasure, not the devil.
      b. God invented sex (Gen. 1:27). He made nothing evil, so it must be good.
      c. The sexual desire is neither vulgar or evil, any more than the desire to eat or drink
         is.
      d. Sex is a gift from God, intended for procreation (Gen. 1:28), recreation (Prov.
         5:18-19; 1 Cor. 7:2-5), and to unify a husband and wife (Gen. 2:23-24).
      e. Conversely, the Bible repeatedly warns us about the dangers of sex outside of
         marriage:
         (1) Acts 15:29
         (2) 1 Cor. 6:18
         (3) Eph. 5:3
         (4) Col. 3:5
         (5) 1 Thess. 4:3
   2. Is it wrong to just see something attractive, beautiful, or arousing?
      a. We see images and people all the time.
      b. What if we notice a person dressed immodestly? Is that sin?
c. The answer comes in understanding the difference in looking and lusting.
   (1) David saw Bathsheba.
   (2) But then David thought about Bathsheba. That is evidenced from the plan he hatched and what he did.
   (3) It is that thinking about process that constitutes lusting.

3. If you see someone or some thing that is not lust. When you begin to think illicit thoughts about that person or thing that is where lust begins.

4. Illus: I see a beautiful new pickup truck. I have not lusted. I begin to plan how to steal the truck — that is lust and wrong even if I never steal the truck.

5. Illus: A person sees a beautiful woman. He has not lusted. He begins to mentally undress her, begins to wonder what it would be like to be with her, to imagine such a rendezvous. That is lust. Again, that is wrong even if it never happens.

C. Why is lust wrong? Why doesn’t God let us think if we don’t do?
   1. Because there is always a connection in thinking and doing - Prov. 4:23
   2. Because God wants us to control even our thoughts - 2 Cor. 10:5
   3. Because sexual lust reduces people to objects to be exploited and used for my pleasure - do you care to be treated that way (Matt. 7:12).
   4. Because sexual lust reduces sex to an act of selfishness, destroying its true purpose in marriage (Gen. 2:23ff).

D. Too many treat this lightly — the Bible doesn’t!
   2. Ephesians 5:5-6
   3. Col. 3:5-7

II. SERIOUS NOTE ON PORNOGRAPHY

A. Pornography has come to a serious problem in our society today. It is everywhere, and easily obtainable via the Internet and video stores.

B. Pornography is no victimless crime.
   1. It treats women as sex objects.
   2. It lowers moral values and leads to active practice of prostitution, fornication, adultery and other perversions.
   3. Pornography creates unrealistic expectations of sex, appearance and sexual practices that spouses may be unwilling or unable to fulfill.
   4. Pornography isolates sexual fulfillment form a caring relationship with our mate and makes it essentially selfish.
   5. Pornography lives off of young women’s naivete, stupidity and desperate need for money.
   6. Pornography is regularly linked to every kind of sexual crime: rape, incest and sexual abuse of children.
   7. Pornography can be addicting.

C. We need to be much more aware of the dangers of pornography!
III. CONQUERING LUST

A. Come to a firm conviction that this is wrong.
   1. 2 Peter 1:4; Gal. 5:16 - it is sinful, it is part of our past way of life.
   2. We have a tendency to think of lust as wrong if it is acted out, or becomes obvious to everyone (a leering stare).
   3. We need to see lust as wrong, not just because it can lead to something, but because it is wrong in and of itself.

B. See this as a heart issue - Matt. 15:18-19
   1. What is wrong in our lives that we have to look at others with illicit thoughts?
   2. We need to do more than treat the symptom (by pitching out the tv, etc.).
   3. We need to peer into our own hearts to see what is motivating such wrong behavior.

C. Recognize dangerous habits.
   1. Do you channel surf late at night?
   2. Who walks down the candy aisle when we’re trying to diet?
   3. We may be very vulnerable when traveling, when working overtime, when any from spouse.

D. Learn to look with love, not lust.
   1. 1 Timothy 5:2
   2. Job 31:1
   3. We need to see people as souls, not as just flesh that can satisfy our appetites.

E. Make no provision - Romans 13:14
   1. This speaks to the rationalization “I’ll look just once” or “I’m cutting down.”
   2. This passage urges cold turkey quitting!
   3. If you are fighting a lust problem unplug the Internet, don’t go to stores that sell trash, stay off the beach.
   4. We carefully avoid sick folks so we don’t get sick. Do we do the same to avoid temptation?
   5. We should expect success and plan for success - 2 Cor. 10:5
   6. Refuse to feed lust.

F. Think positively - Phil. 4:8
   1. Much here needs to be said on the value of pure thoughts.
   2. We can learn purity.
      a. 2 Corinthians 7:1
      b. Garbage in, garbage out. Purity in, Purity out!
      c. Psalm 12:6

G. Have the courage to stay in the fight.
   1. 2 Cor. 7:1
   2. Don’t give up — keep fighting against this terrible work of the flesh.
IV. CONCLUSION

A. 1 John 2:11ff

B. To go to heaven we must conquer lust!

V. ENDNOTES:

¹ This list taken from an excellent article on www.joyfulheart.com by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson on Adultery and Lust in the Sermon on the Mount. I cannot recommend all of his material as it contains much error, but this article was helpful.
Lesson 11

Overcoming Apathy

INTRODUCTION:

A. Text: Revelation 3:14-22

B. Approach: Name the “issue” you think poses the greatest threat to this local congregation?

1. Whatever is named it may not be the threat that sheer apathy is.
2. Our society is infected with apathy. It is having an ill effect in every area of life.
   a. Voter apathy contributes to poor government.
   b. In the work place employee apathy contributes to shoddy service, mediocre products, while often employer apathy feeds employee apathy.
   c. Many people are apathetic about their health, their appearance or their finances.
3. Most serious of all, many are apathetic about God, their soul and eternity (as we see in our opening text).

C. An attitude of “Who cares?” is simply insufficient for Christians. But how do we overcome it?

I. APATHY: WHAT IT IS

A. Defined:

1. “Lack of emotion, lack of interest, listless condition, indifference.
2. Synonyms would be indifference, lethargy, slothfulness, unconcern.
3. It is the very opposite of zeal.

B. The term from the Greek “apatheia”

1. You can see the word “pathos” in that word. It means strong feelings, passions, emotions.
2. The “a” prefix means “without.”
3. So apathy is without strong feelings, without emotion, without passion.

C. Note the importance of zeal to the Christian:

1. Colossians 4:13
2. Titus 2:14
3. Laodeceia told - Rev. 3:19
4. When zeal waned - Heb. 6:9-12

II. WHY WE GET APATHETIC:

A. Affluence is a cause of apathy.

1. Money can cause us to forget God (Deut. 6:10-12).
2. We end up trusting riches - see Luke 12:16-21.
B. Lack of our own faith - second generation Christianity
   1. If we were raised “always” knowing the truth we may not have forged our own faith, lack the deep appreciation for truth, and may fail to truly understand what Christianity is all about.
   2. This can lead to all sorts of problems.
   3. Since second-generation Christians were not converted out of error, there are times when their salvation is not truly appreciated as it should be.
   4. These aforementioned people never felt genuinely convicted of their sinful condition. Consider the example found in Ephesians 2:1,11-12.

C. Too tired to care
   1. Gal. 6:9

D. Don’t believe the truth
   1. Hebrews 11:6

E. Discouraged - why bother?
   1. 1 Kings 19:4ff - Elijah

III. APATHY: WHAT IT DOES

A. Ruins the local congregation
   1. Note what happens to a farm if it is neglected: Eccl. 10:18-19; Prov. 18:9
   2. Much work to be done but if no one cares no one does it and the church falls down and collapses just like a farm.
   3. Can be seen clearly in 3 of the seven churches
      a. Rev. 2:4-5
      b. Rev 3:1-3
      c. Rev 3:16-17

B. Destroys worship
   1. One old lady said “It’s so nice to come on Sunday after a hard week’s work, to sit in a comfy pew and not have to think about anything.”
   2. Yet real worship is a heart matter: John 4:24; Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 11:23ff.
   3. See also Micah 6:6-8

C. Dooms marriages.
   1. Marriage requires effort, expenditure of time and energy.
   2. Ephesians 5’s commands must be done, not apathetically left undone.

D. Stops evangelism.
   1. John 3:16
   2. Do we care for lost souls as much as God does?

E. Paves the way for false doctrine.
   1. Acts 17:11 - that took effort
   2. If we don’t make the effort we will be easily duped.
IV. **ANSWERS TO APATHY**

A. **Repentance**
   1. Two of the seven churches were instructed to repent, see Rev. 2:4-5; 3:15-19.
   2. We treat apathy lightly when we fail to repent of it, acting as if it is not a real sin or really serious.

B. **Reaffirm what is most important in life.**

C. **Keep the judgment ever before us.**
   1. The wicked either put off or deny the great day of the Lord.
   2. See Psalm 10:11; 2 Peter 3:3-14
   3. There are those who allow themselves to think that they have all the time in the world to prepare. The put off dealing with the judgment.
   4. Felix wanted to put off dealing with taking the steps to prepare (Acts 24:25)

V. **CONCLUSION**

A. Apathy is a silent killer of our souls.

B. Let us care deeply about spiritual matters!

VI. **ENDNOTES:**

Major contributions to these notes came from Warren Berkley’s fine article in *Christianity Magazine*, “Overcoming Apathy Every Day,” December 1999, page 16. Also some sermons from John Duvall that I discovered on the Internet helped out immensely.
Conquering and Controlling Anger

INTRODUCTION:

A. Introductory text: Deut. 19:5

B. Approach: A reader wrote to the Miss Manners column with wounded feelings and anger because, on being invited to dinner at her son’s house for the first time after his marriage, she was seated to his left and his wife’s mother to his right, contrary to the rules of etiquette. She was furious, and intended never to go to her son’s house again.¹

C. It’s impossible to estimate the amount of harm done by anger, isn’t it?
   1. From broken relationships like described above to a man who beats his wife or a mother who shakes her baby homes and loving relationships are destroyed by anger.
   2. Work relationships are threatened by anger, when employees feel unjustly treated and then show up with a gun.
   3. “Road rage” has become a problem in our world today.
   4. Much of what makes people angry is about as substantive as the Miss Manners problem above.
   5. But is all anger wrong? Is all anger trivial? How do we decide when to be angry, and even more, how to be angry appropriately?

D. These are important questions because our text points out the danger of anger.
   1. The head of an axe or hammer that flies off would be a great danger to self and to others around one.
   2. Likewise, someone who “flies off the handle” is a terrible danger to himself and others.
   3. It has been well pointed out that “anger” becomes “danger” with the addition of only one letter!
   4. We need to learn how to conquer and control anger!

II. ANGER IN THE BIBLE

A. Anger can be a real problem:
   1. Cain - Gen. 4:3-5
   2. Namaan - 2 Kings 5:10-12
   4. Ephesians 6:4 - can damage children.

B. Yet God can be angry
   1. Psalm 7:11; Isaiah 13:13; 2 Thess. 1:7-10
   2. Jesus got angry - Mark 3:5.
   3. People are very uncomfortable with God’s anger or wrath. Does God fly off the handle and kill people in a fit of rage?
   4. God’s wrath is not a fit of bad temper.
      a. God is love (1 John 4:8) but that doesn’t mean God does all the foolish and silly things human do when “in love.”
      b. Similarly, God can be angry but He is never capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, or morally vicious.
      c. God’s anger is righteous indignation.
5. **God’s wrath is not cruelty.**
   a. God doesn’t want to punish anyone, has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:31-32).
   b. If He did, why did He send Jesus to save us?
7. God is angry at sin and wickedness. He actively opposes evil.

C. Can God’s people also be angry? Yes!
   1. Ephesians 4:26-27
   2. Keys to these verses:
      a. Anger is a God-given emotion.
      b. Anger is not necessarily sinful.
      c. Anger must have safeguards
         1) A time limit
         2) A care not to give the devil and opportunity in the way we express our anger.

D. *Believe an important safeguard is distinguishing between righteous anger and evil anger....*

III. **WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO BE ANGRY?**

A. When God’s Word and God’s will are knowingly disobeyed.
   1. Exodus 32:19-20
   2. 1 Kings 11:9-10
   3. Isaiah 5:20-25 - note verse 23

B. Contemporary illustrations:
   1. Abortion - we would be unfeeling and uncaring and ungodly if we were not angry at the slaughter of innocent children.
   2. Homosexuality - so much of today’s homosexual movement is based on lies (e.g., 1 in 10 are homosexual, etc.). It is a terrible perversion of family with a devastating effect on the country.

C. We must be angry at what angers the Lord!

IV. **UNJUSTIFIED ANGER**

A. When anger comes from the wrong motive
   2. Daniel 3:13 - pride

B. When things don’t go our way
   1. Jonah 3:10-4:4

C. When we react too quickly without investigating the facts.
   1. We can become angry without cause when we have not heard an entire matter.
   2. Joshua 22:10-34

D. When it is taken out on another.
   1. Saul was angry with David, jealous of him, but often took it out on Jonathan.
   2. It is not right to kick the dog after a hard day at the office!
E. How do people attempt to justify ungodly anger?
   1. “That’s just the way I am” - blames God!

V. WHY IS ANGER SUCH A SERIOUS PROBLEM?

A. The Bible repeatedly warns of the serious threat anger poses.
   1. Prov. 14:17; 29:22
   2. An elder cannot be known as one given to anger - 1 Tim. 3:3
   3. Why is it so dangerous?

B. Thoughts lead to action - Matthew 5:22ff
   1. Jesus clearly shows here that murder arises from thoughts.
   2. While human courts cannot take action against our thoughts so the heavenly court can.¹

C. It is a physiological emotion.
   1. Anger involves not only the mind but the physical body.
   2. Adrenaline and other hormones pump into the bloodstream.
   3. This is why people do things when “mad” that later they regret or cannot even believe they did.
   4. Anger can take over and control us like few other emotions. I’ve never known anyone swept away by humility!

D. How then can we control it?

VI. WINNING OVER ANGER

A. Learn to ignore petty disagreements.
   1. Prov. 19:11; 17:14

B. Stay away from anger-prone people.
   1. Prov. 22:24-25

C. Watch your tongue
   1. Prov. 15:1
   2. Prov. 21:23
   3. Washington Irving: “The only edged tool that gets sharper with use is the tongue.”

D. Think the best of others
   1. Dena is late but was talking to someone about how to get to church.
   2. I can fume that she deliberately is late or assume the best.
   3. Which action fuels anger? Which defuses it?

E. Be slow to anger — like God.
   1. Psalm 103:8; Prov. 16:32

F. Cultivate honesty in communication so anger won’t build up.
   1. Prov. 27:4-6
   2. Eph. 4:25
VII. CONCLUSION

A. In an old Amos and Andy show there was a big man who would slap Andy across the chest whenever they met. Finally, Andy got enough of it and said to Amos, “I'm fixed for him. I put a stick of dynamite in my vest pocket and the next time he slaps me he is going to get his hand blown off!”

B. Anger destroy us!

C. Prov. 16:32

VIII. ENDNOTES:

2 Several of these points come from Chuck Swindoll's chapter “Anger: Burning Fuse of Hostility,” in Three steps Forward, Two Steps Back, Thomas Nelson, 1980.
4 From Brent Lewis' fine article “Don't Be Angry with your Brother,” Christianity Magazine, January 1985, page 8.
Dealing with Irreverence

INTRODUCTION:

A. Opening text: Hebrews 12:28

B. Approach: irreverence is all around us - jokes, profanity, etc.
   1. Are you aware of Jewish ideas about God?
   2. They refused to pronounce the name of God, “Jehovah,” for fear of mispronouncing God’s name.
   3. When writing or copying the Bible God’s name was always written as YHWH, as it was believed God’s name was too holy to pronounce.
   4. The Jews failed in many ways but I don’t think anyone is going to accuse them of irreverence! They wanted God to receive the honor and respect due Him.

C. Let’s learn what constitutes reverence and how we can do a better job of honoring and respecting God as we should, rather than joining in the irreverence we see all around us!

I. DEFINING REVERENCE

A. Reverence is “an attitude of deep respect, honor, and deference.”
   1. In the O.T. it usually translates a word that is also translated “fear.”
   2. Let’s read together in Exodus 19-20 and note how God is to be treated as uniquely different and special.
      a. 19:10 - special preparedness
      b. 19:12-13 - no one was to break through and casually visit with God
      c. 19:15 - abstinence from normal marital relations
      d. 19:16-19 - visible “special effects” heralded God’s arrival
      e. 19:20 - repeated instructions
      f. 20:18 - body language reflected awe, reverence
      g. 20:21 - very careful with where they stood
   3. It is clear that God appeared and gave His Law in a special way that would provoke respect and profound veneration.
   4. He did not intend to terrify the people (He wanted to speak with them) but He wanted them to see this was very important. A lackadaisical, no-big-deal attitude simply didn’t exist on Sinai that day!
   5. “It’s as if God is saying “Don’t become frivolous nor too family in My presence. Take Me seriously.”
   6. Think about worshiping God that day. How would you have felt and worshiped?

B. Reverence is very important to God:
   1. Why did God do all that on Sinai? Exo. 20:20
   2. Reverence is linked with holiness, avoiding sin!
   3. Those who sin simply lack true reverence and fear of God.
   4. Note these others verses that speak to this matter:
      a. Exodus 3:5
      b. Leviticus 19:30 - even for a building!
c. Psalm 89:7

d. Nehemiah 8:5 - reverence for God’s word

e. Ephesians 5:21 - “fear of Christ” (NASB) better than NKJV’s “fear of God.” Term is “reverence.”
f. Titus 2:2-3 - commanded

g. 1 Peter 3:15 - again, the idea of “reverence” or “set apart” or “sanctify.”

II. IRREVERENCE

A. Examples of irreverence in the Bible:
   1. 2 Samuel 6:7 - NASB has “irreverence” for NKJV’s “error.”
   2. Malachi 1:6
   3. In the Bible reverence must move us to obedient action - see 1 Kings 18:3, 12.

B. Examples of irreverence today: What can examples can you think of?
   1. Speech - cursing, flippant references to God (“the man upstairs,” etc.)
   2. Worship - poor worship habits

C. Enemies of reverence:
   1. Tradition - we’ve seen it before so it’s old hat.
   2. Poor terminology
      a. We love ice cream, our dog and Jesus.
      b. Do we really mean the same thing with the term “love?”
   3. Inadequate understanding of God’s might and power.
      a. Much emphasis is placed on God’s love.
      b. Creation ought to remind us of His incredible might!

III. GOD’S ANSWERS: EVERYDAY REVERENCE

A. Think about what you say.
   1. God’s name is holy and ought to be used in a holy way - Psalm 111:90.

B. Think about what you do.
   1. Again, remember that true reverence leads to obedience.
   2. 1 Peter 1:15

C. Spend time with God - prayer is important here.

D. Refuse any other gods.
   1. Note Judges 6:10; 2 Kings 17:35-39
   2. Service of other gods dishonors the true God.
   3. This would include horoscope, astrology, as well as anything else that takes God’s place like money or relationships.

E. Reverence parents
   1. Lev. 19:3; Exo. 20:12
   2. We need a living example of reverence before us!
F. Read your Bible
   1. Psalm 119:48 - “lift up” is “revere.”
   2. Lifting the hands was gesture of praise and adoration.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. We must reverence God on more than just Sunday.

B. Let us practice every day reverence!

V. ENDNOTES:

2 ISBE.
Victory over Busyness

INTRODUCTION:

A. Approach: Get out a pen or pencil — let’s take a little test!

1. Write down all the activities you do outside the home. Include church attendance. Estimate how much time you spend in each activity.
2. Write an estimate of how much time you spend with your children each day.
3. How much time do you spend alone with God each day?
4. About how much time do you spend interacting with your spouse each day?
5. How much do you spend watching TV each week?
6. Now look it over:
   a. What do you spend the most time doing?
   b. What are your real priorities in life?
7. Significant: Now, are you spending your life doing what you deem is most important?

B. It is very important that this session not come off as “being busy is bad.”

1. Busy-ness is can represent that we have gifts and talents and opportunities to do many good things.
2. Many faithful men and women in the Bible held important positions or had huge farm operations and so were busy (David, Esther, Abraham, Job).
3. But we want to be busy doing the right things.

C. Jesus calls us to daily discipleship (Luke 9:23). How do we better manage and control our lives for Jesus’ glory?

I. WHY ARE WE SO BUSY? - Get class responses here

A. Materialism and our desire for fun (previous lessons) figures here.

B. Society is more complex, more advanced and faster paced.

1. 100 years ago most men farmed all day. They didn’t worry about losing their jobs to corporate takeovers, have to read three newspapers, several trade journals, schedule business meetings, travel, etc.
2. Kids didn’t have soccer, softball, baseball, basketball, etc.
3. Computers, fax machines, pagers, etc. allow us to do more, but the paradox is we are then required to do more!
4. We have many more entertainment choices today — and too often we are trying to take advantage of all of them.

C. We excuse it by saying it is only temporary.

1. Often that is simply not true. If we habitually over-commit ourselves than when one set of commitments is over we will have already made more.
2. Illus: kids’ sports seasons overlapping and going on and on
3. Illus: Man at work taking too many assignments or projects
D. We believe we can have/do it all.
   1. If it is not morally wrong we believe we can pursue it with abandon.
   2. There is little concern about having to sacrifice the good to be a better servant.
   3. We tell ourselves if we just run a bit faster, get up a bit earlier, push a little harder we can have it all.
   4. Instead, we are just burning ourselves up and out.
4.
E. What a contrast our lives are to Jesus' life....

II. JESUS AND BUSY-NESS

A. Jesus was very busy.
   1. He taught disciples, trained apostles, healed thousands.
   2. Yet He still found time to be alone with God.
   3. Further, He never demonstrated a hurried or rushed spirit - Matt. 19:13ff
   4. Jesus had the kind of peace that we are thirsting for. What was His secret?
B. Dependance
   1. John 8:28; 14:10
   2. We depend too much on self and so feel obligated to get busy.
   3. Rushing here and rushing there we think we are securing our family's financial concerns, or solving this problem or fixing that.
   4. We need to depend on God more.
C. Obedience
   1. John 15:9-10
   2. Here is where Jesus' peace came from — and where our's is missing.
   3. We fudge, cheat and nip away at our Christianity until we have robbed ourselves of its blessings.
D. Focus
   2. Jesus loved to say "This is why I have come" (Mk. 1:38; Luke 5:32; 9:21-22; 12:49-51).
   3. We need to begin with the end in mind.
   4. What do we hope for in life? With family? In our church relationship?
   5. If we were dying now what would we hope God and others would say about us? Let's get busy living that out now!
E. Delegation
   1. Jesus didn't try to do it all.
   3. This is a common scriptural theme: Exo. 18:18
F. Prayer
   1. Prayer re-centers life, puts distractions in perspective.
1. Jesus not only talks it He lives it!
2. Isa 26:3
3. So must we. Why?

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE TOO BUSY?

A. Kills deep spirituality.
   1. Being an intensely spiritual person requires time.
   2. Time for Bible study, meditation, reflection.
   3. 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Tim. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:15ff.

B. We feel discontented and stressed.
   1. Running here and there to do more and get more leaves us exhausted, unhappy and stressed.
   2. We feel we are missing something (and we are!) in all the going, going, gong.
   3. Again, isn’t it interesting how Jesus never prescribes more more more as the way to live, but actually condemns it (see Luke 12:16ff)?

C. The work of the Lord is left undone.
   1. Personal evangelism suffers — who has time?
   2. Hospitality is often a casualty of busy-ness.
   3. Families themselves are affected by busy-ness.

D. Relationships suffer - yet these are the most important part of life!

IV. GOD’S ANSWERS: TOWARD BALANCE WITH TIME AND ACTIVITIES

A. Understand what balance is - eliminate the “two worlds” viewpoint.
   1. It is not “all or nothing” but a need for balance in life.
   2. Ephesians 5:15
      a. Many times we are presented with two equally valid and equally good opportunities.
         (1) Example: go out with wife, take kids to the circus.
         (2) Example: Bible study or visit a shut-in.
      b. Saying “God first, others second, me third” fails in such situations!
   4. Key: everything can be done to Christ’s glory: Col. 3:17.
      a. There is no division of life into sacred and secular realms, one part of life is more “holy” than the other.
      b. We must build balance in all we do to Christ's glory.

B. Try to live one day at a time.
   1. Matt. 6:34; Luke 11:3; Exo. 16:4
   2. Why do we borrow so much trouble?
   3. This teaches greater dependance upon God.
C. Check reality: no one has more time than anyone else.
   1. We all get 168 hours a week.
   2. “When it is always the Lord’s work that ‘gives’ when we have a schedule conflict, that ought to be a warning signal to us that something is wrong.”

D. Learn to say “No.”
   1. Here is where balance helps us.
   2. If balance is destroyed we need to say “No” and make it stick.

E. Work idea: realize you are not indispensable.
   1. What would happen at your job if you were suddenly stricken ill or in an accident and were laid up for six months?
   2. We’d like to think our work could not get along without us but what would really happen? They would find a way.

F. Value rest.
   1. Jesus rested, so must we.
   2. Mark 6:31
   3. Part of the Old Testament law: Exo. 20:8ff (think of how different our society would be if this or a similar law were still in effect).
   4. We don’t put much stock in rest but it is needed so that we can fully function when we need to function.

V. CONCLUSION:

A. In our busy world we need to Take Time to Be Holy.

B. Look back at the test we took to begin. How can you be balanced?

VI. ENDNOTES:

1Much of this adapted from Discipleship Journal, “This is Your Life,” issue 97, page 48-49.
2Gary Henry.
Lesson 15

Conquering Temptation

INTRODUCTION:

A. Approach: 1 Peter 5:8 - Don't we wish this wasn't so?
   1. But it is — and in the last fourteen lessons we have seen repeatedly just how skilled
      and how adept Satan is at leading us into sin.
   2. From gossip to worry to lust to busy-ness the devil finds occasion after occasion to
      devour us.
   3. Believe no class on taking sin seriously is complete w/o some general skills, learning
      the basic principles necessary to stop any sin.
   4. As a plus I believe many times we fail to realize just how many resources and assets
      are at our disposal, helping us to do right.

B. Let’s learn how to overcome temptation.

I. WHAT GOD DOES FOR US

A. General heading for all the Lord does for us: grace.
   1. Ephesians 2:8-10
   2. Maybe we should be more aware that grace keeps on saving us.
   3. God does so much we don’t deserve.

B. Limits Satan and his powers
   1. Job 1 and 2 - believe w/o God’s limitation Satan would just crush us under a weight of
      tragedy, despair and sadness.
   2. 1 Cor. 10:13
   3. James 4:7

C. Sent His Son to die for us
   1. Revelation 12:7-9ff
   2. This is important because it gives us a reason to overcome sin.
   3. In the cross is the hope of heaven, that even though I’ve done wrong I can be re-
      deemed, be right, and go to heaven.

D. Provides the Word of God
   1. It warns about sin - Psalm 119:104; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 2:1
   2. Provides the means to grow and thus become stronger to sin - Heb. 5:12-14
   3. Shows us clearly the justice of God and what happens to sinners - Lev. 10; Acts 5; Rev.
      20:12ff.

II. WHAT THE CHURCH DOES FOR US

A. Restores us when we are in sin
   1. Gal. 6:1
   2. God loves us but He isn’t physically here now. However, His children are and they
      will be His hands and feet and mouth to come and get me out of sin.
3. Shouldn’t this change our feeling about those who come to rescue us?

B. Disciplines us if we won’t respond
   1. 1 Cor. 5
   2. 2 Thess 3
   3. Discipline is badly misunderstood but more than anything it represents a last-ditch effort to get one out of sin before it’s too late.
   4. Some churches never discipline — they are letting their members down.

C. Provides teaching and instruction
   1. Eph. 4:11-15
   2. Although this is not a social gospel lesson since it is God’s word that equips to overcome sin the church that subs games and fun for Bible study cheats its own members.
   3. In effect, churches that have weak Bible classes and preaching are just asking for temptation and sin.

D. Allows relationships that foster accountability
   1. Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:16
   2. AA has powerfully demonstrated the value of accountability.
   3. We want to build that with our brethren, those of “like precious faith.”

III. WHAT I CAN DO

A. Actively fight against temptation.
   1. James 4:7
   2. A naive, “no big deal” attitude dooms us for certain.
   3. Too many don’t seem to care very much about sin or spiritual matters — they are easy marks for the devil!

B. Build discernment.
   1. Hebrews 5:14
   2. Can you discern God’s voice from Satan’s? Can you discern lies from truth?
   3. Watch how Eve failed in Genesis 3:1-7!
   4. Satan’s tactics haven’t changed much since the garden, still the same lies.
      a. One – you don’t understand that God really wants you to do this or,
      b. Two – God is out of touch and you actually know better than He what you ought to do.
   5. Isaiah 5:20-21
   6. How can I recognize Satan’s allures?
      a. Look for something that will damage your relationship with God.
      b. Look for something that will harm your influence for good.
      c. Look for something that will ruin your ability to do God’s work.
      d. Look for something that will enhance your standing with ungodly people.
      e. Look for something that is, beyond doubt, wrong.

C. Second, flee temptation’s seductive attraction.
   1. So many want to flirt with sin!
2. Proverbs 14:16
3. Look carefully at Romans 6:23 - the wages of sin are death. Dead. Eternally lost. Do you want to get close to anything that pays off like this?
4. We need to tell the truth: I am not above sinning, I could sin, if I do I could well be lost and so I want to have nothing to do with sin!

D. Third, expect to overcome.
   1. We seldom rise above our expectations. If we believe we are doomed to fail we just will.
   2. Revelation 2:10

IV. CONCLUSION
   A. We can overcome sin and we must!
   B. Hope this class has been a help to you so that we will be, with Christ’s help, “more than conquerors.”