

# Learning to Live



**Book 3: Considering the Commandments**

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# Make the most of This Bible Study

We live in a world of shifting values and conflicting viewpoints. Is it possible in the midst of this to know what is right and what is true? Yes it is! For God is true, and He has chosen to give us in the Bible a definitive expression of his own mind and will, His knowledge of reality, and His thoughts and plans for the world.

*You will know the truth,  
And the truth will set you free.  
(JOHN 8:32)*

It is the aim of this Bible study series to introduce you to the joy and privilege of digging out the truth for yourself.

Personal Bible Study is demanding. You will need to give it much time and serious endeavour. In this series, each chapter takes two or three hours to prepare. The rewards of personal Bible study, however, are great. You will surely discover this for yourself as you complete the books in this series.

Remember that Bible study is not merely an academic exercise. You will need to think, but don't forget that the Bible is God's Word. Pray before you start each study. Ask God to help you understand the truths and make you sensitive to what He wants to say to you through a particular study. Pray as you study, "Lord, what does this mean? How does this relate to me?" Praise Him when you discover something that excites you. The fruit of Bible study should not be just increased head knowledge; it should be a deeper relationship with God and a lifestyle that is more honouring to Him.

If you can find others who are willing to put in the time to do personal preparation, you will find great value in meeting together to discuss each chapter. But don't let the absence of such a group deter you. Get into God's Word for yourself. You won't be disappointed.

*When your words came, I ate them;  
They were my joy and my heart's delight.  
(JEREMIAH 15:16)*

## **Additional References, Further Study Sections**

These are optional sections, which you will find useful in examining in greater depth issues of particular interest.

## **Similar References**

You will sometimes find that two or three similar references are given in answer to one question. This is done to emphasize that a teaching is thoroughly biblical, and not just contained in an isolated verse.

## **Who's Who**

Whenever the name of a person mentioned in the series is followed by an asterisk (\*), you will find a brief biographical note in the Who's Who at the end of the book.

## **Break-point**

For those who wish to prepare or discuss these chapters in two sessions, a suitable break-point is marked about half-way through each chapter, like this:

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

## Considering the Commandments

In this book, we turn our attention very specifically to lifestyle. The book focused on the Ten Commandments given by God to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. One of Satan's devices has been to make people think that keeping these commandments is the key to salvation. Clearly, this is not the case. On the contrary, these standards expose our sin and drive us to seek salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. Nonetheless, they do reveal God's desire for human behaviour. Along with the teaching of the New Testament, they provide us with a way to learn the lifestyle God wants of us.

The first three commandments deal specifically with our relationship with God. You can study those in *Learning to Live* Book 6. In this book, we consider the fourth to the tenth commandments.

## Chapter One

# Work and Rest

The fourth of the Ten Commandments given to Moses states, “Six days you shall labour and do all your work.” But is work a necessary evil, or creative service? In this chapter, we will examine what the Bible teaches about work. Interpreting the biblical teaching and applying it in contemporary society are not easy tasks, but they are of utmost relevance to us.

The Fourth Commandment continues, “But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.” This is the principal purpose of the commandment – establishing the weekly Sabbath day. It is to be a regular break in the normal cycle of work – a special day, a holy day. This principle of limiting and ordering work and setting aside special time for God has obvious implications in our hectic society.

## Pause for Prayer

Before you begin this study, read the entire Fourth Commandment:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.  
(EXODUS 20:8-11)

According to Psalm 119:2, “Blessed are they who keep his [the Lord’s] Statutes and seek him with all their heart.” Before you begin your study, ask God to give you a heart to seek Him and obey Him wholeheartedly in this area of work and rest.

## A Working Person

1. Read Genesis 1:26-2:15.
  - a. What does this passage tell us about God’s nature as it relates to work?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. “God created man in his own image” (verse 27). What does this teach us about man and work?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What place did work have in God’s original plans for man?

2. Genesis 3 describes man's rebellion against God (the Fall). According to verses 17-19, what effect did this have on man's work?

Since the Fall, work has been marked by frustration. But according to the Bible, we can look forward to the future when we "will not toil in vain" (Isaiah 65:23). And in the same measure, as Christians we can enter into God's original purpose here and now; we can use our gifts and abilities to work together with God in the creative management of this world. In doing this we find fulfilment as human beings. The command to labour was given for our good. This can help explain why unemployment (or some forms of employment) can be demoralizing.

We must not make the mistake of equating work only with paid employment. The housewife engaged in caring for home and family is unpaid, and yet she is clearly doing a most significant work. Students work is learning. Volunteers use their time in creative service to the community. Even those who are paid for their efforts have important work to do above and beyond their jobs.

## Working for Money

3. Read the following passages. What are some possible reasons for taking paid employment?

Matthew 5:13-16

Ephesians 4:28

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Additional references: Acts 20:33-35; 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 3:14

The Bible demonstrates God's approval of many kinds of occupations. Abraham was a successful herdsman and trader. Joseph, Ester and Daniel served in pagan governments. David, before he became king, was a shepherd and then a musician. In the New Testament, Luke was a doctor, Paul a tentmaker and Lydia – the first Christian in Europe – a businesswoman. Jesus Himself spent many years working as a carpenter.

Although in the Old Testament priests were set apart specifically for religious services, under the New Covenant sacred/secular distinctions are abolished. Every Christian is a priest called into the full-time service of Christ (see Revelation 1:5-6). Some serve in specific roles within the Church which demand full-time attention, but the majority of Christians are called to serve Christ in so-called secular jobs.

4. What does 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 teach about work? (The word *idle* refers to people who *will* not as opposed to those who are involuntarily unemployed or engaged in work such as looking after home and family.)

## Attitudes at Work

5. Unless we run a one-person business, employment involves us in a network of working relationships. The New Testament doesn't directly address the employer-employee relationship of modern society. However, there are some parallels with the master-slave relationship which the New Testament does deal with. In a limited sense, employees sell themselves – their physical and mental abilities – to their employers. By so doing, they put themselves under authority.

With this in mind, what can you learn from the following passages about the attitudes you should have as a Christian at work?

Colossians 3:22-4:1

1 Timothy 6:1-2

Titus 2:9-10

Additional reference: 1 Peter 2:18

6. Much modern employment falls short of the creative service God intended work to be. So wherever possible, Christians must work to improve deficient working practices and conditions. At the same time, we are called to display Christ-like attitudes in the midst of the real (fallen) world. This may make it necessary at times to submit to less-than-ideal situations.

What attitudes are called for in the verses below? How can you apply them in your work?

Philippians 2:3-4

Philippians 2:14-16

7. What can you learn from Jesus' example in John 17:4?

**ASK YOURSELF:**

- a. How has my understanding concerning the value and purpose of work increased?
- b. How can I change my attitudes at work?

**For Further Study**

Read about the woman pictured in the Proverbs 31:10-31. What can you learn from her attitude toward work? In what way do you need to follow her example?

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

In Genesis 2:3, we read the God rested from (or ceased) His work of creation on the seventh day. The Hebrew Word Sabbath comes from the verb "to cease."

8. What can you learn about the purpose of the Old Testament Sabbath from these references?

Exodus 20:8-11

Exodus 34:21

Leviticus 23:3

Isaiah 58:13-14

Additional references in Exodus: 16:1-31; 31:12-17

At its best the Old Testament Sabbath is very worthwhile. At its worst, it became a mere outward form, and as such was condemned by prophets (see Isaiah 1:10-17 and Amos 8:4-10). By the time of Jesus, tradition had added numerous petty rules and regulations that precisely defined unacceptable work. Such activities as tying a knot, lighting a fire, moving a lamp, preparing a meal, and even healing, were prohibited.

9. Look at the ways Jesus used the Sabbath. What can you learn from His attitudes?

Luke 4:16

Luke 13:10-17

Luke 14:1-6

## The Lord's Day

The first day of the week rapidly replaced the seventh as the customary day for Christians to gather for worship. We find hints of this in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2. In Revelation 1:10, the day of worship is referred to as "the Lord's Day." Such a designation reflects the fact that Sunday was the day of Jesus' resurrection – the day on which His lordship was revealed beyond question.

For the early Christians, of course, Sunday was an ordinary working day, so they met for worship before dawn. Later it became a day of rest for many.

10. In the setting aside a special day, it is important that we have the right attitudes and motivation. What do you find in the following passages regarding right and wrong attitudes?

Romans 14:5-12

Colossians 2:16-17

*"The observance of days among us is free service and void of all superstition."*  
– JOHN CALVIN\*

## Worship

11. As we have seen, corporate worship was central to the Old Testament Sabbath and the Lord's Day in the early Church. Read the description of heavenly worship in Revelation 5:11-14.

a. What can you learn from it about the nature of worship?

b. How can setting aside special time to worship God help us consecrate our lives to Him?

12. As well as being a time to worship God, the Old Testament Sabbath was also a time for people to remember that He had made them and redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. 2Timothy 2:8 suggests a Christian equivalent. How could you obey this?

## Rest

As we have seen, Jesus had no time for petty regulations regarding the Sabbath. Nevertheless, the Fourth Commandment clearly states the need for a right balance between work and rest. For some, the challenge may be to work harder. Others need to take more seriously the principle of one day's rest in seven.

13. In Exodus 20:10 we read, "You shall not do any work" on the day of rest. What does this mean for you?

In contemporary society, some people must work on Sunday. The early Christians certainly had to do so. If such work is unavoidable, it is important to remember the attitudes we considered in question 10. We can take another day for rest and renewal. And we can find other opportunities to worship with fellow Christians.

14. What principles can you find in the following verses that should influence how you use your free time?

1 Corinthians 6:12

1 Corinthians 10:31

Philippians 4:8

1 Timothy 4:3-5

*"The Sabbath was made a day of holy rest, so that it might be a day of holy work. From this holy work, in our sedentary and lonely world, physical recreation and family fun will not be excluded, but worship and Christian fellowship will come first."*<sup>1</sup> – J. I. PACKER

ASK YOURSELF:

a. How can I make worship a more central part of my week?

b. Does my life reflect the right balance between work and rest? If not, how can I change that?

## Stop, Think and Pray

What have I learned from this study of the Fourth Commandment and other related Bible passages? How has God spoken to me concerning my own life? How do I need to respond?

How God has spoken

How I need to respond

### **REMEMBER**

One way to remember the truths you have studied is to choose key bible verses and memorise them. You can select your own verses from the passages you study or memorise the one suggested at the end of each chapter. (See the back of this book for help in memorising Scripture.)

Suggested memory verse about work and rest

**Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD you God.  
(Exodus 20:9-10)**

NOTES: 1. J. I. Packer, *I Want to Be a Christian* (Kingsway, 1977), page 212.

## Chapter Two

# Parents and Children

The fifth of the Ten Commandments is the first one to directly address relationships between people. Significantly it focuses on the family: "Honour your father and your mother."

The family is under great stress in contemporary society. Some see it as an outmoded pattern, a barrier to social progress. Family life, however, is God's idea. It has been a part of His good plan for mankind from the beginning. Yet even those who do not deny the validity of family life find it extremely difficult to make it work without God's guidance and help. The full beauty and joy of life within a family can be discovered only by those who live it God's way.

In this chapter, we will examine the Bible's teaching on one aspect of family life – God's way for parents and children to relate.

## Pause for Prayer

The entire Fifth Commandment reads, "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). And the writer of Psalm 199:4-5 prayed, "You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!"

Ask God to teach you through this study, and to give you a desire for full and consistent obedience to the things you learn. The first half is a study of your relationship as a parent to your child.

## Responsibilities to Parents

Your parents have a unique relationship to you. They gave you life and cared for you when you could not care for yourself. Think about the relationship you currently have with your parents. What is good about it? What is not good about it? How do you feel about it? How do you think they feel about it? Write your thoughts below. (If one or both of your parents are now dead, do this exercise retrospectively.)

## Obey

1. Read carefully the two references in the chart. Then write down in the space provided the content of each command and any personal comments you have.

<b>Ephesians 6:1</b>	<b>Colossians 3:20</b>
Command	Command
Reason	Reason
Comments	Comments

Parental authority is clearly under the authority of God, so a child who is able to see that his parent's command goes against a clear command of Scripture is justified in disobeying his parent. Larry Christenson writes that such a child "must arm himself with trust in God, not with thoughts of rebellion. He must ask God that He will not permit things to such an extremity."<sup>1</sup>

2. There may be a point in life when parental authority ceases to apply.

- a. What ideas in the following passages relate to this issue?

Matthew 19:4-6

Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

Luke 2:41-52

- b. What additional factors are important?

- c. What is your conclusion about parental authority?

ASK YOURSELF:

To what extent should I currently be living under the authority of my parents?

## Honour

Although there may come a point when we are no longer under obligation to *obey* our parents, that must not be allowed to obscure our obligation to *honour* them, which is a lifelong responsibility.

TO HONOUR: to hold in respect, to confer distinction upon.

Honour is something we owe to our parents, regardless of their particular merits or limitations.

3. What did Jesus have to say about honouring parents in Matthew 15:1-9?

4. What does John 19:25-27 demonstrate about Jesus' commitment to His parents?

ASK YOURSELF:

What ways of honouring my parents can I think of?

## Love

5. What do the following passages indicated about the priority of family relationships?

Matthew 10:34-39

Matthew 19:28-30

6. According to Matthew 22:39, the second greatest commandment is, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Think about what this means for you relationship with your parents.
7. The intimacy of family relationships can often test the quality of love for each other. In the following Phillips translation of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, underline qualities of love most needed in your relationship with your parents.

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it shares the joy of those who live by the truth.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything.  
Love never fails.

ASK YOURSELF:  
How can I show love to my parents?

8. How would you apply the biblical principles considered in the first seven questions to the following situations? (You may identify further information you need, and describe possible solutions for different circumstances.)

SITUATION 1: Dave's parents have recently separated and his father is now living with another woman. Dave's mother wants him to cut of all contact with his father. What should Dave do?

SITUATION 2: Clare has an opportunity to attend an important Christian conference. Her father's birthday is the same weekend, and her mother wants to arrange a family reunion. How can Clare decide what to do?



This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it shares the joy of those who live by the truth.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything.

Love never fails.

*“The foundation of a solid relationship with our child is unconditional love. Only that type of love relationship can assure a child’s growth to his full and total potential. Only this foundation of unconditional love can assure prevention of problems such as feelings of resentment, being unloved, guilt, fear, insecurity. We can be confident that a child is correctly disciplined only if our primary relationship with him is one of unconditional love.”<sup>2</sup>*

– ROSS CAMPBELL

ASK YOURSELF:

In what ways can I convey to my children that I love them unconditionally?

## Instruction

11. Consider Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:5-8.  
According to these passages, what responsibility does God give to parents?

*“I learned about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians of England.”*

- JOHN WESLEY\*

12. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, in which Paul describes the ministry of his missionary team. What insights do you find about the responsibility of parenthood?

ASK YOURSELF:

Is there an area of my child’s development that I need to be working on at this time? (If possible, discuss this question with your spouse and pray about it together.)

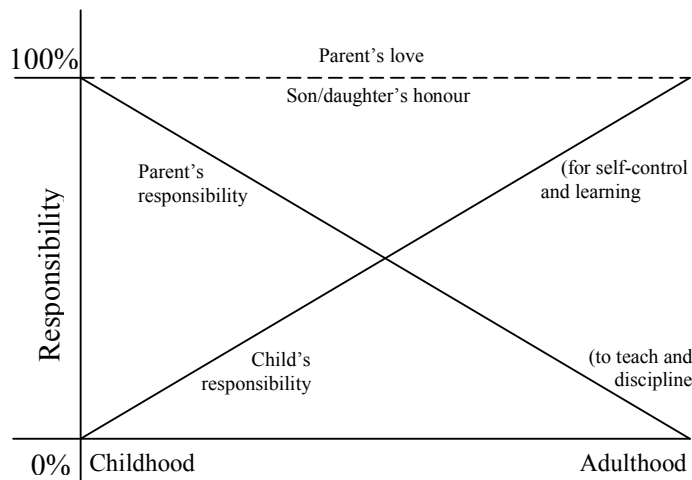
*“The term ‘discipline’ is not limited to the context of punishment... Children also need to be taught self-discipline and responsible behaviour. They need assistance in learning how to face the challenge and obligations of living. They must learn the art of self-control. They should be equipped with the personal strength needed to meet the demands imposed on them by their school, peer group, and later adult responsibilities.”<sup>3</sup> – DR. JAMES DOBSON*

13. In the following verses, what guidance about discipline is given to parents?

Ephesians 6:4

Colossians 3:21

In a child’s early years, parental control and influence are high. As the child grows, this control should slowly decrease, along with the responsibility for discipline and teaching. However, there should be a corresponding increase in the child’s self-control, self-discipline and learning. (See the following diagram.) The exciting challenge facing parents is to bring up a child who will eventually be a responsible adult.



14. What does Proverbs 13:24 teach about discipline?

The greatest discipline problem for parents is their self-discipline to establish realistic standards and be consistent in maintaining them. Correction must be fair and controlled, done out of love and in an atmosphere of love.

15. Meditate on the promise in Proverbs 22:6. How do you react to it?

**ASK YOURSELF:**

In what way do I need to change in disciplining my children?

## Stop, Think and Pray

Ask yourself what you have learned about the responsibilities of parents and children. Are you handling your responsibilities well, or has God spoken to you about some needed changes? It may be that He is concerned about a general attitude or kind of behaviour.

Put in writing the kind of change you want to see; specify your goal. Then prayerfully think of various activities that might help you reach this goal. Finally, plan a time to review your progress. It's exciting to see God changing you as you faithfully respond to His Word.

### REMEMBER

Suggested memory passage about parents and children

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" – which is the first commandment with a promise – "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

NOTES: 1. Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family* (Foundation Trust, 1971), page 59.  
2. Ross Campbell, *How to Really Love Your Child* (Scripture Press/Victor Books, 1977), page 29.  
3. James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline* (Kingsway, 1970), page 13.

## Chapter Three

# Life and Love

Of all Ten Commandments, the one most universally accepted is the Sixth Commandment: “You shall not murder.” It is part of the legal framework in every civilised society. The biblical foundation for the command is the God-given sanctity of human life.

Some Bible translations state the command as, “You shall not kill.” That can be misleading, however. The Hebrew word translated as “kill” usually carries the sense of violent killing of a personal enemy. In the Old Testament, the command was not interpreted as prohibiting capital punishment, nor was it regarded as a total ban on war. The Christian response to these issues must also take into account the teaching of the New Testament. Discussion of these issues cannot be resolved by a simple reference to the Sixth Commandment.

Although the command is still accepted, the foundation for it is increasingly being rejected today. This opens the door for more relative estimates of human value and puts at risk the unborn, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly. A consideration of a biblical foundation can help us develop Christian responses to many pressing social issues.

The command has more value, however. The Bible’s teaching does not refer only to the outward act of murder. The responsibility to respect the lives of others is in essence an obligation to love them as fellow human beings. Seen in this light, through the perspective of the New Testament, the Sixth Commandment contains something of relevance for each one of us.

## Pause for Prayer

Psalm 119:7 reads, “I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.” Before you begin the chapter, take a few moments to praise God for the privilege of having His Word. As you study, ask Him to help you deepen in your understanding and obedience.

## The Value of Live

1. Read Genesis 9:1-6.

a. How does this passage indicate the high value God places on human life?

b. What reason do you find for this value?

2. The Lord gave Moses some instructions in Number 35:9-15. Read the passage.
- a. What did God do about someone who accidentally killed another person?
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How does this underline the value God puts on people?
3. In addition to idolatry, which sin did the prophets speak about in the following verses?
- Jeremiah 19:3-4
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- Ezekiel 22:1-5

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
In what ways is a lack of respect for human life becoming obvious in contemporary society?

**For Further Study**

It is no easy matter to work out Christian responses to the many ethical issues confronting contemporary society. The Bible does not directly address many of them, so it is a matter of considering each issue and then searching for relevant biblical principles. In some areas, there is room for Christians to have different opinions.

As an example in biblical thinking, explore an issue such as genetic engineering or euthanasia. If possible, do it as a project with some Christian friends. Below is a suggested approach.

- A. Read some books and articles written on the subject.
- B. Identify the key biblical principles involved, including relevant passages.
- C. As you reflect on these principles and seek to formulate your opinion,

ASK YOURSELF:  
What can I do to influence society to be more biblical?

*"To those who were robbed of life – the unborn, the weak, the sick, the old – during the dark ages of madness, selfishness, lust and greed, for which the last decades of the twentieth century are remembered."*<sup>1</sup> - FRANCIS SCHAEFFER & EVERETT KOOP

## The Debt of Love

The Old Testament does not simply stop after prohibiting killing. It also touches many other, more positive, things. These are brought into sharp focus in the New Testament.

4. What does Romans 13:8-10 indicate regarding the Sixth Commandment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Read Matthew 5:38-48.
  - a. According to Jesus, how should we respond toward and evil person?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What should be our attitude toward an enemy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Why should we behave this way?

*"To exact an eye for an eye was the accepted norm. But Jesus rejected that way of dealing with evil persons. One should not resist evil in that way... But that does not mean that we cannot offer any form of resistance to the evil person. That would contradict Jesus' own rebuke to the soldier who struck Him on the cheek. Rather it means that Jesus' kind of resistance to evil will be of the sort that refuses to exact equal damages for injury suffered, that refuses to consider anyone an enemy no matter how outrages his offence and therefore that continues to demonstrate active aggressive love controlled by the need of the evil person. Thus Jesus' saying is compatible with the use of economic, legal or political power to oppose evil as long as love for the oppressor as well as the oppressed is both the means and the end."*<sup>2</sup> – RONALD SIDER

6. One way we can avoid the command to love people is to label them as enemies. When we categorise people, we are setting them apart from ourselves. We fail to recognise them as equal human beings and succeed in evading our responsibility to love them. But Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

What do you find in the passages below about other forms of discrimination?

Leviticus 19:33-34

James 2:1-9

God's selection of Israel might appear to be discrimination against other nations. However, the Bible indicates that the choice carried no sense of racial superiority (Deuteronomy 7:7-8) and was for the purpose of bringing salvation to all nations (Genesis 12:3). Racial exclusivism in Old Testament history was a necessary practice at times to maintain moral and religious purity (Ezra 9:1, 10-12).

*"Happy is the man who is able to love all men alike."* – MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

ASK YOURSELF:

Am I guilty of valuing people based on their race or education or some other factors? In what way?

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

## In a Life of Love

It is no surprise to find that love is a recurring theme in the New Testament. However, there are especially meaningful passages. 1 Corinthians 13 is a lyrical description of the qualities of love. 1 John is a dynamic presentation of love as the essential hallmark of a genuine Christian. Virtually every New Testament letter includes practical guidelines on how to demonstrate love in day-to-day life.

For the rest of this study, we will focus on Ephesians 4:25-5:2. We will also examine various cross-references in order to deepen our appreciation of the principles. Begin by reading through the passage in Ephesians two or three times.

## Motivation, Imitation, Inspiration

7. Read Ephesians 5:1. How should God's love for us affect our attitude toward other people? (Also see 1 John 4:16-5:1.)

*"If you allow God to share the profound unconditional love He has for you, then it is much easier for you to discover He has the same love for others...and we can participate with Him in His...love."*<sup>3</sup> – E. STANLEY JONES

8. Read Ephesians 5:2. Think about the love God has shown us in Christ. Then write a definition of the kind of love we are to show to others. (Also see Romans 5:6-8 and 1 John 3:16-18.)
  
9. Focus on Ephesians 4:30.
  - a. How do we damage our relationship with God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. According to Galatians 5:13-26, how does God make it possible for us to live a life of love?

## Speech, Attitudes, Action

10. Read Ephesians 4:25 and 29.

a. Describe the kind of speech that is consistent with love.

b. What further insights about speaking with love do you find in these references in Proverbs?

12:18

12:25

15:1

17:9

27:9

27:14

11. Read Ephesians 4:26-27 and 31-32.

a. What attitudes do we need to guard against? (Also see James 3:14-16.)

There is a righteous anger; to be indignant about sin often Christ-like. Such indignation may require a confrontation with another person, but the purpose should always be to help him face his wrong ways and overcome them. The objective should never be to embarrass or hurt.

b. What attitudes do we need to develop? (Also see Romans 12:10,15.)

12. a. What aspect of love do you see in Ephesians 4:28?

b. What is the basic change of direction indicated by this example? (Also see Philippians 2:3-4.)

c. What practical guidance on showing love is found on Matthew 7:12?

ASK YOURSELF:

a. How can I deal with unloving attitudes that I have toward certain people?

b. How can my speech be more loving?

c. What practical action can I take to demonstrate love?

## Stop, Think and Pray

What have I learned about the full significance of the Sixth Commandment? How do I need to change in order to respect and love other people more? How has God specifically spoken to me?

How God has spoken to me

What I need to do in response

## REMEMBER

Suggested memory verse about life and love

**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.  
(Ephesians 5:1-2)**

NOTES: 1. Francis Schaeffer and Everett Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979), page 5.  
2. Ronald Sider, *Christ and Violence* (Lion, 1979), pages 42-43.  
3. E. Stanley Jones, as quoted in *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, by Tom Sine (Word, Inc., 1981), page 188.

## Chapter Four

# Man and Woman

God has included within His Creation a delightful diversity. Nowhere is this more gloriously seen than in the differentiation of male and female. The creation of the first woman drew from Adam an enthusiasm that was unparalleled in his response to the rest of creation: “This *at last* is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23, RVS, italics added). The relationship of Adam and Eve was one of unshamed and joyful harmony. Sadly, the Fall soon shattered their blissful partnership.

The effects of the Fall on all subsequent relationships between man and woman are clear for all to see. The most obvious effect is the corruption of the God-given sex drive. Instead of strengthening commitment and unity in an act of self-giving, it has often become a motivating force for cheap and casual acts of self-gratification. The Seventh Commandment addresses this: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). So, in part, does the Tenth Commandment: “You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife” (Exodus 20:17).

The Fall had also introduced unhealthy sexual competitiveness. Instead of recognising sexual differences and pursuing productive partnerships, the history of the male-female relationship is littered with discord, contempt and exploitation. The modern feminist movement, in particular, has highlighted the way in which men have often used their power to oppress and demean women. Sometimes this movement has criticised the Bible for its supposed support of male domination.

What does the Bible teach? What effects should sex have on roles and relationships? What is God’s pattern for sex and marriage? What about divorce and singleness? We will consider these questions in this chapter.

## Pause for Prayer

Along with the author of Psalm 119:18-19, you might pray, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am stronger on earth; do not hide our commands from me.” Begin your time of study by expressing to God your utter dependence on Him for true understanding. Ask Him to help you set aside preconceived ideas and to open your eyes to understand His ways.

## Equal

1. Read Genesis 1:26-28. What can you discover in these verses about God’s attitude toward men and women?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to Genesis 3:16, how does the Fall affect the quality of the relationship between a man and his wife?

## Women in Old Testament Israel and New Testament Judaism

Despite a few examples of women holding civil office, life in Israel was male-dominated. The Old Testament marriage laws, criminal codes, and inheritance regulations all assumed the functional importance of the family unit. Each one functioned under legal headship of the senior male, or patriarch. It appears that in the early period the patriarch also acted as the family priest in worship, although under Moses this function was restricted to unblemished male Levites and sons of Aaron.

Nowhere, however, is it indicated that the subordinate legal status of women was based on an assumption of inferiority. On the contrary, the Old Testament offers several examples of women who were wiser and more godly than their husbands. The Old Testament laws also limited the possible abuse of male status and stressed the attendant responsibility to act for the benefit of those under authority.

In the period between the Old and New Testaments (about 400 years), it appears that attitudes toward women in Judaism hardened. They were relegated to a position of inferiority. Jewish men were taught to pray, "Blessed are thou who has not made me a woman!" Although the rabbis praised women for service in the home, they considered them unsuited for public office. Their sexuality and supposed ignorance were held in contempt. Generally, the rabbis did not consider them capable of learning about religious matters; some rabbis actually forbade it. Often women were cited as examples of undesirable traits. Because of the temptation of immorality, segregation was increasingly encouraged.

3. What do the following passages in Luke reveal about the way Jesus related to women?

7:36-50

8:1-3

10:38-42

Additional reference: John 4:27

*"Although Jesus in no way seeks to deny or diminish the distinction between the sexes – He emphasises their partnership in marriage – it is nevertheless difficult to find any difference in the approach of Jesus to women and to men... Men and women alike could talk to Jesus, could follow Him, could be friends with Him, could serve Him, could love Him."<sup>1</sup> – MARY EVANS*

4. What can you learn from the following references about the place in the early Church of both men and women?

Acts 1:13-14, 2:1-4 and 2:17-18

Acts 8:3

Acts 16:13-15

Acts 21:7-9

Romans 16:1-16

Philippians 4:2-3

Additional references: Acts 5:12-14; 8:12; 12:12; 17:4, 12, 34; 1 Corinthians 11:5; 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3-5

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MY SUMMARY

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**ASK YOURSELF:**

In what ways do my attitudes, words or actions imply that I don't believe men and women to be of equal value and worth?

## Complementary

TO COMPLEMENT: to complete, forming a satisfactory or balanced whole.

5. Read Genesis 2:18-25. What can you learn from this passage about the relationship between men and women? (The word translated as “helper” in verse 18 carries no sense of inferiority. The term is used to describe one who lends a hand or helps out, frequently in a context of need. It is most often used for God in relation to Israel. For an example, see Psalm 70:5.)
  
6. What important truth is brought out in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Consider the general statement in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. How do you think this might apply to the way men and women should relate in Christian service?

*“On the Day of Pentecost, in fulfilment of prophecy, God poured out his spirit on ‘all flesh,’ including ‘sons and daughters’ and his ‘servants, both men and women.’ If the gift of the Spirit was bestowed on all believers of both sexes, so were his gifts... We must conclude, therefore, not only that Christ gives [spiritual gifts] (including the teaching gifts) to women, but that alongside his gifts he issues his call to develop and exercise them in his service and in the service of others, for the building up of his body.”<sup>2</sup> – JOHN STOTT*

ASK YOURSELF:

How can I more fully benefit from the complementary natures of men and women?

## For Further Study

Three passages in the New Testament make specific reference to men and women in church worship. The passages are interpreted by some as imposing severe restrictions on the role women can play in church life. These passages have been the subject of much debate; the task of interpretation is far from easy. The questions below should help you get into the passages. They do not, however, constitute an exhaustive study.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

- A. What are Paul's instructions concerning the dress of men and women in worship? (In Jewish society, the penalty for adultery was to shave off the woman's hair and expel her from the synagogue.)
  
- B. What could be the background to this teaching? (Two possibilities: a group of women with the church desired to assert their equality in Christ and so refused to "cover" themselves in worship; the church in general was worried that the custom of women covering themselves contradicted their equality in Christ.)
  
- C. What reasons does Paul give for this instruction?
  
- D. What do you think are the fundamental principles he asserts?
  
- E. How should we apply these principles today?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:34-36.

- F. If this passage requires total silence for women in worship, how can it be reconciled with 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26?
  
- G. If it is not total silence that is required, what particular form of participation is Paul excluding?

H. Is this teaching for all women, including the unmarried, widows and those with non-Christian husbands?

I. What underlying principle does this teaching establish?

J. How should we apply this principle?

Read 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

K. Exactly what does Paul prohibit in verse 12? Is it all teaching of men? Is it a particular kind of teaching? Is it wives teaching husbands?

L. What reasons does Paul give for this instruction?

M. What is the fundamental principle underlying this instruction?

N. How should we apply the principle today?

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

## Sex, Marriage, Divorce and Singleness

Much of Jesus' teaching on sex, marriage, divorce and singleness is found in Matthew 19:3-12. Read this passage two or three times.

### Sex and Marriage

8. In Matthew 19:5, Jesus refers to the experience of sexual intercourse as a man and woman becoming "one flesh." What can you learn about God's attitude toward sex from the passage Jesus quotes (Genesis 2:24-25) and from the other references below?

Genesis 2:24-25

Proverbs 5:18-19

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Sex is God's gift, not His reluctant concession to man's needs. God created us with the capacity and desire for sexual relationships. This Bible even includes one book, Song of Solomon, that describes the joy of physical lovemaking in marriage. The idea that sex is somehow un-Christian is a mark of false teaching. The Bible also emphasises the importance of the right context for sexual intercourse.

9. Jesus' reference to sex in Matthew 19:5 clearly identifies the context.
- a. Based on the following verses, what is the only context in which sex is permissible?

Deuteronomy 22:13-22

Matthew 19:5

Hebrews 13:4

Additional references: proverbs 5:20-23; Colossians 3:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

*“No one can study the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament without seeing the teaching stands for purity and chastity. Fornication, which is sexual intercourse between unmarried people, is condemned at least eighteen times... Adultery, which is sexual intercourse with a married person other than one’s own marriage partner, is condemned at least fifteen times.” – WILLIAM BARCLAY*

b. Why do you think God restricts sex to marriage?

c. What additional teaching regarding sex do you find in the following passages?

Matthew 5:27-30

Ephesians 5:3-14

*“Do not say you have chaste minds if you have unchaste eye, because an unchaste eye is the messenger of an unchaste heart.” – AUGUSTINE\**

## Marriage and Divorce

10. In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus summarises what is involved in marriage.

a. Based on these verses, write a definition of marriage.

b. In Proverbs 2:17, marriage is described as a covenant made before God. What insight does this give you into the nature of the marriage relationship?

11. In Matthew 19:7-9, Jesus turns to the question of divorce.

a. According to these verses; why did God permit divorce in the Old Testament?

b. Even in the case of marital unfaithfulness, what does Matthew 18:15-27 require of Christians?

c. What further teaching on divorce is given in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15?

d. How does Malachi 2:13-16 describe one of God's purposes in marriage and His attitude towards divorce?

## Marriage and Singleness

12. In verses 10-12 of Matthew 19, Jesus talks about singleness.

a. What reason could someone have for not marrying?

b. What additional reasons are found in 1 Corinthians 7:25-28?

c. How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:29-30 affect your view of marriage?

d. According to 1 Corinthians 7:7, both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. How should this shape our attitude toward them?

13. Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2. What can you learn from Paul's instructions to Timothy about the kind of relationships we can enjoy whether or not we are married?

## Marriage Relationships

14. In Matthew 19:5-6, Jesus speaks of unity of man and wife: "They are no longer two, but one."
- a. According to 2 Corinthians 6:14, what implication does this have for Christians on choosing a life partner?

*"What a union for two believers is a Christian marriage – to have one hope, one desire, one course of life, one service of God in common one with the other." – TERTULLIAN\**

b. Practical unity is not automatic, however, so the Bible gives clear guidelines on how to develop unity. Two key passages are Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-7. Read through these. Then list the respective responsibilities of husband and wife. (Grammatically, Ephesians 5:21 serves both as a conclusion to 5:18-21 and as an introduction to 5:21-6:7. Also, the term *master* in 1 Peter 3:6 did not, in its cultural context, carry the contemporary negative overtones of distance and formality.)

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Responsibilities of the husband	Responsibilities of the wife
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In studying God's pattern for marriage, it is important to remember Jesus' teaching that a leader must serve. (For example, see Matthew 20:25-28.) The use of authority to dictate the dominate goes directly against biblical teaching.

We must also be wary of reading into biblical teaching our own ideas about tasks that only men or only women should do. The Bible has remarkably little to say on this; our views are usually very dependent on our background.

**ASK YOURSELF:**

a. What have I learned concerning the Bible's attitude toward sex, marriage, divorce and singleness?

b. In what ways are my attitudes, actions and words out of line with biblical standards?

## Stop, Think and Pray

What have I learned from this study? What do I need to remember? Do I need to change my attitude about anything? How are my relationships with those of the opposite sex? What specific things has God spoken to me about and what response do I need to make?

### REMEMBER

Suggested memory verse about man and woman.

**The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)**

Notes: 1. Mary Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Paternoster Press, 1983), pages 56-57.  
2. John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), pages 251.  
3. William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (Collins, 1971), page 208.

## Chapter Five

# Honesty and Integrity

“You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour” (Exodus 20:15-16). These two Commandments (the Eighth and Ninth) establish an essential condition for any society. The Bible, however, goes deeper than mere legal requirements. God desires people who are honest through and through – men and women of complete integrity.

How does this standard compare with the values of contemporary society? We will investigate the biblical teaching and consider its relevance to present-day situations.

## Pause for Prayer

The psalmist wrote, “Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me through you law” (Psalm 119:29). Before you begin, thank God that His Word can help you understand where your life is wrong and can direct you more fully in His way.

## Understanding Honesty

1.
  - a. Read Psalm 15. What does this psalm reveal about the nature of honesty?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What does it teach about the importance of honesty? Also read Psalm 101:7.

2. The words of the Eighth Commandment are clear and familiar: “You shall not steal.”

The verses below list some ways in which God expects this command to be put into practice. What form of dishonesty is highlighted in each passage? List the ways in which you think the teaching of each passage is relevant to your own life.

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Form of dishonesty	Relevance to my life
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Deuteronomy  
24:14-15

Deuteronomy  
25:13-16

Romans 13:7-8

Titus 2:9-10

(You may add other forms of dishonesty that come to mind as you think about the principle, "You shall not steal.")

3. As you completed the chart in question 2, you may have recalled dishonest actions in your past. What can you learn from Luke 19:8-10 and 1 John 1:9 regarding your past actions?

(The principle of restitution was built into Old Testament law. See, for example, Exodus 22:1,5 and Numbers 5:5-7.)

4. The Ninth Commandment states, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour." Specifically, it is dealing with the obligation of a witness in a court of law. In principle, though, it is condemning all untruthfulness. In each of the following references, what form of dishonest speech is identified? In what way is each verse or passage relevant to your life?

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Form of dishonest speech	Relevance to my life
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Leviticus 5:1

Jeremiah  
23:30-32

James 4:11-12

1 Peter 3:10

(Have other forms of dishonest speech come to mind?)

We may lie because of malice or fear. We may lie for profit or to show ourselves in a better light. We may lie by remaining silent or telling a half-truth. We may simply become careless about the accuracy of what we say. Speaking the truth is always a difficult discipline, especially if we have had years of practising falsehood.

5. Consider Matthew 12:33-37. What teaching do you find about the importance of our speech?

6. What does Jeremiah 17:9 teach about the dishonesty within us?

7. What are some ways in which we may even deceive ourselves?

Proverbs 12:11

Romans 12:3

James 1:22

ASK YOURSELF:

a. What action can I take to correct past dishonesty?

b. What areas of actual or potential dishonesty do I see in my life?

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

## Developing Integrity

### Right Decisions

8. As we face difficult moral choices, it can be helpful to ask ourselves questions about possible courses of action. Below are four references from which such questions can be drawn. Study the example and then think of questions based on the other references.

John 14:21 – Would it mean disobeying a biblical command?

Ephesians 5:8-11

Philippians 1:27

1 John 2:6

9. What important truths does Jesus highlight in Luke 16:10-13?
10. Sometimes your refusal to compromise with dishonesty may involve risk and conflict. How can the principle of Matthew 6:31-34 help you?

## A clear conscience

11. According to the Apostle Paul, what is the place of conscience in honest living?

Acts 24:16

1 Timothy 1:5-6

1 Timothy 1:18-19

The conscience is a God-given part of our human personality. It is the faculty that morally evaluates our actions, words, thoughts and motives. However, it is not entirely reliable; like every part of our human nature, it is corrupt because of the Fall. It is also influenced by the wrong standards and values in society.

The Bible speaks of several kinds of conscience.

- A seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:2) – so consistently ignored that it has ceased to function.
- A corrupted conscience (Titus 1:15) – blind to wrong in some areas. The blindness may result of conforming to the wrong values of family or society. It may be the result of continued sinful disobedience in a particular area.
- A weak conscience (1 Corinthians 8:7-13) – over-sensitive, attaching moral conscience to things God does not.
- A good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5) – in line with God's standards. The expression may also mean "a clear conscience."
- A clear conscience (Acts 24:16) – has been taken into account, resulting in appropriate action. The opposite of a seared conscience.

No one has a perfect conscience. It is often ineffective and unreliable. However, when our conscience speaks, we need to respond to it. The right response is not necessarily to obey immediately. Rather, we should pray about the issue, examine Scripture and seek Christian counsel. Then we are in a position to decide if our pang of guilt is the result of a genuinely wrong action or the product of faulty thinking.

12. God is at work by His Holy Spirit to renew every area of our life, conscience included. How can we cooperate with Him in developing a good conscience?

Psalms 139:23-24

Romans 12:2

Hebrews 3:13

## Positive Replacement

13. Meditate on Philippians 4:8. According to this verse, what can we do to control our thoughts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Consider Ephesians 4:22-29.
  - a. What is recommended as the alternative to dishonest speech and actions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Think about the areas in which you are tempted to be dishonest. What can you do or say to exclude wrong thoughts, words or actions?

*"We beseech thee mercifully to shine in our hearts, that the night and darkness of sin, and the mists of error on every side being driven away by the brightness of Thy shining within our hearts, we may all our life walk without stumbling, as in the day time and being pure and clean from the works of darkness, may abound in all works which thou has prepared for us to walk in." – ERASMUS\**

**ASK YOURSELF:**

a. What steps can I take to overcome actual or potential areas of dishonesty in my life?

b. How can I develop my personal integrity?

15. How would you apply principles from the previous questions when advising close Christian friends in the following situations?

SITUATION 1: Robert was involved in a minor car accident in which a man who had obviously been drinking hit his car. The policeman asked Robert how fast he was going at the time of impact. Robert replied, "About 30 miles per hour, I think" (the speed limit). The following Sunday in church, Robert found himself worrying about his answer. He felt sure that his speed was closer to 40 miles per hour.

SITUATION 2: Sharon lives in a college hall of residence. When her friend Naomi comes for a visit, she joins Sharon for a meal in the dining hall. Naomi should buy a guest meal ticket, but since the cost of meals is considered excessive, no one bothers with the system. There is also a rule about guests not being allowed to stay overnight in student rooms, but Sharon lets Naomi stay.

SITUATION 3: Carol is working in a new job. It is the practice every Friday for most of the employees to take an extended lunch break at the pub. When Carol joins the group, she doesn't find the conversation very profitable. She finds herself thinking, "Is it right to be here on the company's time?" On the other hand, if she goes back to the office, she will be virtually alone.

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Jacob is an Old Testament character who illustrates the way God works to transform us into people of honesty and integrity. Read about him in Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-33:20. How is his dishonesty evident? How does God work to show him the foolishness of it? How does God change him?

## Stop, Think and Pray

What have I learned about God's standards for honesty? Has He exposed areas of dishonesty in my life? What do I need to do to become a person of integrity? What specific actions do I need to take? Should I set long-term goals?

### REMEMBER

Suggested memory verse about honesty and integrity

**No one who practises deceit will dwell in my house;  
No one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.  
(Psalm 101:7)**

## Chapter Six

# Money and Materialism

The last of the Ten Commandments reads, “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour” (Exodus 20:17). This commandment has great relevance or our modern world, in which the acquisition of money had assumed massive importance. Money is desired because it brings power: to influence others, to accumulate material possessions, to attain a more comfortable lifestyle, and to enjoy new experiences.

The Bible has much to say about this love of money. It calls us to a radically different lifestyle in which money and material possessions are put in their proper place. In this chapter we will examine the biblical guidelines on money and its use. Our attitude to the biblical teaching in this area may prove to be the acid test of our Christian discipleship in our affluent society.

## Pause for Prayer

As you begin, pray the words of Psalm 119:36-37: “Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life according to your word.” Thank God that He can give you a true perspective on life. Ask Him to help you gain a fuller understanding of His values as you complete this study.

## The Ultimate Owner

1. 1 Chronicles 29:10-20 records what King David Prayed after the people of Israel brought gifts for the building of the Temple. From that passage and Psalm 2:1, what can you learn about God and His relationship to material things?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Deuteronomy 8:17-18 is part of a warning to the people of Israel as they are about to enter the Promised Land. What important truth do you need to remember?

### ASK YOURSELF

If God owns all things, how should this affect my attitude toward my money and possessions?

## The Serious Danger

The Bible has a great deal to say about our attitude toward money and material possessions. For many people, the accumulation of wealth and possessions can become a dominating motivation in life.

In this section we will focus on two key New Testament passages: Luke 12 and 1 Timothy 6.

3. Read Luke 12:13-21.

a. Write verse 15 in your own words.

b. What is the attitude of the man in the parable that Jesus tells? (Parables are stories that usually have one main point. We should not read significance into every detail in the story.)

c. Is his attitude right or wrong?

4. Read Luke 12:22-31. Describe the attitude that Jesus wants His disciples to have.

*"I Fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion." – JOHN WESLEY\**

5. Read Luke 12:32-34.

a. What do you think Jesus is saying here?

b. What reason does Jesus give for adopting the attitude described in Luke 12:22-31?

*"I believe Jesus is asking us to give away what we do not need – such as money, possessions or food – to those who are in need. So let us prayerfully consider these areas. Are we saving for the right purposes, or simply as a prop for our faith? Are we carrying surplus possessions which others could use? Are we eating too much?"<sup>1</sup> – JAMES BROAD*

6. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and 17-19.

a. Based on these verses, what can you learn about attitudes toward money? Also see Proverbs 30:8-9.

b. What guidance is given about how to overcome the wrong attitudes? Also read Ecclesiastes 5:10 and Matthew 5:42.

*"The Christian should not accept the capitalist assumption that great abilities or ownership of resources entitles a man to a commensurate level of consumption... Decisions about consumption should start from a consideration of needs not from the amount of income that there is to be spent."<sup>2</sup> – DONALD HAY*

ASK YOURSELF

How can I decide whether or not I have a right attitude toward money and material possessions?

**B R E A K - P O I N T**

## The Responsible Manager

Although materialism is a danger, it is not wrong to enjoy the good things God gives us: “God... richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17). However, since God is the owner of all things, we must answer to Him for the way we manage the money and possessions He entrusts to us. (Early Bible translations used the word *steward* for a person with delegated responsibility to oversee or manage. Hence, much Christian writing refers to “stewardship.”)

7. Read Matthew 25:14-30. What does this passage teach about the use of money?

It is important that we don't isolate our management of money from other responsibilities. While it is good to use money to generate more money, this cannot be our only intention. The overriding principle must be the service of our fellow men. To put Matthew 25:14-30 in context, read verses 31-46.

8. Read Luke 16:1-15. This passage includes a parable. Remember that we should not read significance into the incidental details; Jesus is not commending dishonesty!

a. What quality in the manager is commended?

b. What importance does Jesus attach to the way we handle money and possessions?

c. What can you learn from verses 13-15?

9. According to the following verses, what are some ways in which we need to show responsibility in use of money?

Proverbs 21:3

Romans 13:7

1 Timothy 5:8

### ASK YOURSELF

In what ways can I be more responsible in my use of money and material possessions?

## Think It Through

An important step in the responsible management of money is knowing where your money is going. List your basic income and regular expenditures for whatever period is most appropriate for you – a week, a month, or a year. The categories listed are suggestions only. (This exercise is also valid for those with unusual patterns of spending, such as students.)

Giving:

Taxes and other deductions:

Housing:

Gas, electricity, etc.:

Telephone:

Food:

Household maintenance:

Travelling/car expenses:

Clothes:

Savings for future needs:

Other:

At the end of the study, you may find it helpful to pray about ways in which to change your spending patterns.

*“We lay down no rules or regulations for either ourselves or others. Yet we resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, occasional celebrations and normal routine, and between the service of God and slavery to fashion. Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decisions by us, together with members of our family.”<sup>3</sup>*

## The Generous Giver

As we have seen in several of the passages already considered, money and material possessions can be used in positive ways; for example, to give to those in need. Generous giving also reflects God’s concern for the poor. It also helps the giver overcome the danger of possessiveness.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul describes the generous giving of the churches in Macedonia, and uses that example to teach the Corinthians about giving. These two chapters contain a useful summary of the biblical principles of giving. Read through them to gain an overview before considering specific details in the questions below.

10. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

a. What can you learn about giving from the examples of the Macedonians?

b. What incentive to give is provided by the example of Christ?

c. What principle is brought out in verses 13-15?

11. What do the following verses teach about the way we should give?

Matthew 6:2-4

1 Corinthians 16:2 and 2 Corinthians 8:10-12

2 Corinthians 9:1-7

“How much should I give?” is a question many Christians ask. In the Old Testament, the people of God were to give a tithe, that is 10% of a person’s income. (See, for example, Leviticus 27:30, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, and Malachi 3:8-18. In fact, a detailed study suggests that the average Israelite must have contributed about a third of his income.)

The New Testament does not emphasize that we should give a particular portion of our income. It stresses that we should give in proportions to what we have for the needs we see. Also, our generosity should be real cost to ourselves. A tenth may serve as a guide. Above all, make your decision prayerfully.

12. Another important question is, “To whom should I give?” Primarily, your giving is to the Lord and as part of your worship (see Philippians 4:18). Beyond that, what does the Bible teach about to whom your giving should be allocated? Look up the verses listed and fill in the chart.

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To whom we should give	Specific person or group
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Proverbs 19:17

Luke 12:33

1 Corinthians 9:13-14

3 John 5-8

Galatians 6:6  
1 Timothy 5:17-18

Matthew 25:34-40  
James 2:15-16

13. According to 2 Corinthians 9:8-15, what does God promise regarding giving?

*"If God is looking for faithful stewards, then it may be generally assumed that when He finds them He will desire to trust them with more. But, true as these blessings in kind are, the primary benefits of faithfulness in stewardship are spiritual."*<sup>4</sup> – SIMON WEBLEY

ASK YOURSELF

a. In what way do I need to change my attitude toward sharing my money or material possessions?

b. Do I need to change my plans for how much I give and to whom?

*"I place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity."* - DAVID LIVINGSTONE\*

## Stop, Think and Pray

Look over your answers to the questions in this study. Pray that God will show you the things He wants you to do. Summarise what you have learned and your plan for putting it into practice.

Main lesson learned

What I am going to do

## REMEMBER

Suggested memory verse about money and materialism

**Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”  
(Luke 12:15)**

NOTES: 1. James Broad, “Christian Lifestyle,” *British Navigator Log*, Summer 1977, page 7.  
2. Donald Hay, *A Christian Critique of Capitalism* (Grove Books, 1982), pages 20-21.  
3. *An Evangelical Commitment to a Simple Lifestyle* (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980), page 18.  
4. Simon Webley, *Money Matters* (InterVarsity Press, 1978), page 16.

# Memorising Scripture

## As You Start to Memorise a Verse

1. Read in your Bible the context of each verse you memorise.
2. Try to gain a clear understanding of what each verse actually means. (You may want to read the verse in other Bible translations or paraphrases to get a better grasp of the meaning.)
3. Read the verse several times thoughtfully, aloud or in a whisper. This will help you grasp the verse as a whole. Each time you read it, say the topic, reference, verse and then the reference again.
4. Discuss the verse with God in prayer, and continue to seek His help for success in scripture memory.

## While You Are Memorising a Verse

5. Work on saying the verse aloud as much as possible.
6. Learn the topic and reference first.
7. After learning the topic and reference, learn the first phrase of the verse. Once you have learned the topic, reference and first phrase and have repeated them several times, continue adding more phrases, one at a time.
8. Think about how the verse applies to you and your daily circumstances.
9. Always include the topic and reference as part of the verse as you learn it and review it.

## After You Have Memorised a Verse

10. Write the verse from memory and check your accuracy. This deepens the impression in your mind.
11. Review the verse immediately after learning it, and repeat it frequently in the next few days. This is crucial for getting the verse firmly fixed in your mind, because of how quickly we tend to forget what we have recently learned.
12. REVIEW! REVIEW! REVIEW! Repetition is the best way to engrave the verse on your memory.

# Who's Who

Below, listed in alphabetical order, are the biographical sketches of figures from Church history who are quoted in this book.

**Augustine of Hippo** (354-430)

The son of a pagan father and Christian mother, he was born and educated in North Africa. Following a dissolute lifestyle, he moved to Italy and became professor of logic in Milan. There, in 386, he was converted to Christianity. Returning to North Africa, he became Bishop of Hippo and one of the great writes and theologians of the Western Church.

**Erasmus, Desiderius** (1466-1536)

Dutch scholar, famous for his Greek New Testament. He spoke of the need for Church reform, although he did not identify with Luther.

**Livingstone, David** (1813-1873)

Scottish missionary and explorer. He established mission stations in remote parts of South Africa and discovered such natural wonders as the Victoria Falls. He was also concerned about eradicating slave trading.

**Maximus Confessor** (580-662)

Born in Constantinople, he was one of the most prolific writers of the Greek church. He was a monk and a defender of the orthodox faith against the Monothelite heresy. He died from injuries received during persecution, but his stand helped orthodoxy to triumph.

**Tertullian** (160-about 220)

A Roman lawyer, he was converted in mid-life. He lived and worked in North Africa and became the first theologian to write in Latin. He was a brilliant writer, especially in defending Christianity against opponents. Later he joined the Montanist movement.

**Wesley, John** (1703-1791)

A great preacher of English evangelical revival. Although already a Church of England minister, he came to a living faith in 1738. Prevented from speaking in churches, he travelled some two hundred and fifty thousand miles and preached some forty thousand sermons, mainly in the open air. He organised the converts into classes and societies, which developed into the Methodist Church after his death.

# For Further Reading

## Chapters 1-6

*Deuteronomy*, a LIFECHANGE Bible study, NavPress.

1.     **Work and Rest**  
Peabody, Larry, *Secular Work*, Christian Literature Crusade  
White, Jerry and Mary, *Your Job: Survival or Satisfaction*, Zondervan Publishing House
2.     **Parents and Children**  
Campbell. Ross, *How to Really Love Your Child*, Victor Books/Scripture Press  
Dobson, James, *Dare to Discipline*, Kingsway  
*God's design for the Family*, a Navigator Bible study series, NavPress  
Schaeffer, Edith, *What is a Family?*, Kingsway
3.     **Life and Love**  
Schaeffer, Francis and Koop, C. Everett, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, Good News Publishers  
Verwer, George, *Revolution of Love and Balance*, STL Books  
White, Jim, *Christlikeness*, NavPress (booklet)
4.     **Man and Woman**  
Evans, Mary, *Women in the Bible*, Attic Press  
Hurley, James B., *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, Zondervan Publishing House  
Karssen, Gien, *Getting the Most Out of Being Single*, NavPress  
Mayhall, Jack and Carole, *Marriage Takes More than Love*, NavPress  
Wheat, Ed, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, Zondervan Publishing House  
White, John W., *Eros Defiled: The Christian and Sexual Sin*, InverVarsity Press
5.     **Honesty and Integrity**  
Sanchez, George, *Changing Your Thought Patterns*, NavPress (booklet)
6.     **Money and Materialism**  
Sider, Ronald S., *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, Hodder and Stoughton