

Lesson
15

The Christian Life

My father who has been a missionary for many years has been in a number of trying situations. He has been held at gunpoint, threatened and jailed for his faith. But he never wavered. His most trying experience, however, happened just a few years ago.

A man who claimed to be a believer, but was actually in rebellion against God, decided to slander and insult my father. The man told terrible lies. But instead of planning vengeance, my father prayed and left the matter in God's hands. Within a few months the man was found guilty of the very sins he attributed to others.

My father's story is repeated in the lives of thousands of believers all over the world. They aren't born strong Christians, but they let God work in their lives and develop character through the years. Like tall trees, they put their roots down deep and the winds cannot blow them over.

Would you like to be a better person, one who trusts God and holds steady in all situations? We can put to use that which we have already studied and, like the tree, "grow tall."



In this lesson you will study...

Receiving and Sharing
Christian Growth
Thoughts and Actions
Church Life

This lesson will help you...

- Trace the basic principles that lead to a victorious Christian life.
- Be committed to applying them in your daily life.

RECEIVING AND SHARING

Objective 1. *Identify at least two steps essential to Christian growth.*

We have already learned who gives us eternal life and how we receive it; but it is good to remind ourselves often so we will never forget that our source of life is Jesus.

Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life giving water and give him eternal life (John 4:14).

It is wonderful to be part of God’s family. It makes us want to share the good news with others so they can become part of the family too. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, “If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to me, I will do the same for him before my Father in heaven.” Isn’t that a beautiful promise?

But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will become ashamed of what they say (1 Peter 3:15-16).

We share Christ because we want to and because the Bible encourages us to tell others about Him. When we take our stand for Christ we grow stronger.

Another way to declare publicly that we belong to Christ is by being baptized in water. Water baptism is an important step in your Christian growth. Jesus Himself was baptized—not because He needed to be, but because He is our perfect example. You can read about it in Matthew 3.

Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

Becoming a member of a church, joining a local group, is not necessary for our salvation, but it does give us a closer tie to our Christian family. We become responsible to and for those around us. We learn to care more for each other. Just as the natural family is part of God’s plan, so is the spiritual family—a group with whom we can share and learn from each other. Acts 2:47 says that the Lord added those who were saved to the group of believers.



For You To Do

1 According to Romans 10:9-10, what two things must a Christian do?

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2 Read John 1:43-46. What did Philip do right after Jesus called him?

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3 Which of the following statements are TRUE?

- a** Water baptism is one way to publicly confess Christ.
- b** It isn’t necessary to share Christ; we can be secret followers just as well.
- c** Christian friends can help us and we can help them.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Objective 2. *Identify two activities most helpful for Christian growth.*

There is more than one kind of hunger. We may long for news from someone who has gone away or we may hunger for new opportunities. Folks have been starved for love and affection. And certainly our hearts, our spirits, have reached out for more than this world can offer.



After you are saved you will feel another kind of hunger—a hunger for God’s Word. “Be like newborn babies, always thirsty for the pure spiritual milk” (1 Peter 2:2). Jesus said, “Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks” (Matthew 4:4).

A Christian needs to read his Bible every day. Israel’s King David set a good example. He said, “Happy are those who reject the advice of evil men... Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord, and they study it day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2). “How I love your law! I think about it all day long” (Psalm 119:97).

It is important not only to read God’s Word, but to memorize it and hide its precepts in our hearts. What we have learned the Holy Spirit can bring to our remembrance in times of need—when we must have guidance and direction in our lives.

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you (John 14:26).

Prayer should accompany our daily Bible reading. Jesus who knew the glories of heaven before He came to this earth felt the need of prayer. He spent the whole night in prayer before choosing His disciples (Luke 6:12). Paul and Silas were praying and singing when they were set free from their prison chains (Acts 16). Christ told His disciples, “Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9).

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray at all times.” Even though we are in school where our minds are kept busy, or on a job that requires our full attention, we can live in an attitude of prayer. If an emergency arises we know how to call on God; we take advantage of a pause in our work to lift a note of praise to the Lord. In this way we are continually worshipping Him.

4 What two activities will help the believer grow spiritually?

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.....

THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Objective 3. *Identify how a believer’s thoughts can be protected and controlled.*

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts (Proverbs 4:23).

The Lord can help us control our thoughts. Philippians 4:7 says, “And God’s peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.” Our thoughts please God when they are clean and pure.

In conclusion, my brothers, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable (Philippians 4:8).

To keep our minds on that which is pleasing to God requires constant discipline. As long as we are in this world we will be exposed to sin and temptation, but with the Lord’s help we do not have to yield. An old proverb says, “The birds may pass overhead, but you don’t have to let them build a nest in your hair.” In other words, “Temptation may be all around you, but you don’t have to let it become sin in your mind and actions.” The best way to control our thoughts, to keep our minds free from evil, is to be careful what we see, hear, say, and do.

Be careful what you see. “The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22).

What we hear also influences our thoughts. Mark 4:24 says, “Pay attention to what you hear!” Are the conversations you enjoy or the music you listen to helping you to love the Lord more? Are they building healthy thoughts? If your answer is negative perhaps you need to discipline your listening.

Listening includes hearing our own words as well as the words of others. What we say can be a strong influence for good or for evil. If someone wrongs us we can forget it more easily if we haven’t answered the person harshly. Proverbs 15:1 says it like this, “A gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up.” Our goal could be the fulfillment of Proverbs 25:11, “An idea well-expressed is like a design of gold, set in silver.”

A Christian should be careful of what he does because God requires him to do what is right.

The Lord has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God (Micah 6:8).

Our response can be the words of the Psalmist who said, “May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my refuge and my redeemer!” (Psalm 19:14).



For You To Do

5 Choose a verse from this section that confirms each of the following completions. Write the appropriate reference in the blank provided. Our thoughts

- a** should be on good things.....
- b** are controlled by God’s peace
- c** shape our lives.....
- d** should be acceptable to God.....

6 Read John 17:15-19; then circle the letter of each statement, which completes the sentence correctly. Our thoughts can be protected by

- a) hiding in a cave and meditating all day.
- b) dwelling on those things that are pure, right, and holy.
- c) joining a Christian commune away from worldly influences.
- d) believing Jesus’ prayer that the Father will keep us safe even while we are in the world.

CHURCH LIFE

Objective 4. *State the purpose of having Christian fellowship and supporting God's work.*

As we have already learned, we must share the good news of the gospel with everyone—including unbelievers whom we count as friends. But our closest friends should be chosen carefully. Our free time must be balanced with the right Christian influence, with those who can help us as we grow in the Lord and seek to do His will.

Happy are those who reject the advice of evil men, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God. Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord, and they study it day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).

We want to study the Bible by ourselves and with Christian friends. We also need to hear God's Word preached, "So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer (Hebrews 10:25).

When believers gather together they should be supportive one of another. There is strength in unity, strength in singing and praising the Lord together.

And so there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

God has a plan whereby we can share in the financial concerns of the local body and at the same time reach out to others. Hebrews 7:2-9 gives us an example from the life of Abraham. He gave one tenth (a tithe) of everything he had. Yet giving tithes may not be enough.

The Pharisees, religious leaders of their day, paid tithes, but Jesus said that our standard of giving should be far above theirs. He said they were giving a tenth even of their seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but neglecting the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty (Matthew 23:23). Jesus went on to explain that we must be faithful in all that God has asked.

We want to give generously of our money and at the same time listen for whatever else the Lord wants. He may ask for more of our time, our talents—even our plans for the future. Whatever it might be, we can lay it down as an offering of love to Him who first loved us.



For You To Do

- 7 Giving one tenth of what we have is called
- 8 According to Hebrews 10:25, we gathertogether with other believers to
- 9 Memorize Romans 12:1-2. According to these verses, our true worship to God is.....



Check Your Answers

- 1 Declare with his lips.
Believe in his heart.
- 6 b) dwelling on those things that are pure, right, and holy.
d) believing Jesus' prayer that the Father will keep us safe even while we are in the world.
- 2 He found Nathaniel and told him about Christ.
- 7 tithing, or giving a tithe.
- 3 a True.
c True.
- 8 encourage one another.
- 4 Reading the Bible and praying every day.
- 9 dedicating ourselves to His service and to pleasing Him.
- 5 a) Philippians 4:8.
b) Philippians 4:7.
c) Proverbs 4:23.
d) Psalm 19:14