

LESSON

12 The Christian Life

The small country was in a civil war and the guerillas were fighting everywhere. They captured a young man and threatened his life if he did not renounce Christianity.

In desperation he yielded and renounced his faith. He was then forced to accompany the guerillas who also expected him to work for them. He became their leader and led the killers to the homes of Christians he had known.

Months passed. Then one day he was in a terrible fight and one of his own men killed him. What a loss—both in this life and in the one to come!

How much better it would have been if the man had stood true to his convictions. He might have lost his life, but he would have gained eternal life. He failed in his responsibility toward God, toward others, and toward himself.

This chapter will help us understand what we owe ourselves and will teach us how to obey God, who wants our lives to count for now and eternity.

The Plan

- A. Self-Denial
- B. Cleansing Ourselves
- C. Christian Growth
- D. Thoughts and Actions

The Goals

1. Explain what self-denial means to a Christian.
2. State why a clean lifestyle is necessary for every Christian.
3. Identify essential steps to Christian growth.
4. Indicate how a believer's thoughts can be protected and controlled.

A. SELF-DENIAL

Goal 1. Explain what self-denial means to a Christian.

A Christian believer's life is not his or her own. The Lord owns the life of a Christian because He bought it with His own blood. Peter writes,

You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18–19)

First Corinthians 6:20 also tells about the sacrifice that Jesus paid on the Cross. Since Christ paid a price for us, we must also pay a price. To be a Christian means to deny ourselves and follow Jesus. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

We deny ourselves when we do God's will rather than have our own way. Jesus Christ set the example for us. He said, “I

have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21)

As Christians we must choose to do right every day even though it goes against our own wishes. Paul instructs, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13:14).

The Lord never asks us for anything without giving us something better in its place. It is like the story of the dog and the bone. His master tried to take the bone but the dog became angry and growled. The bone was all he had and he did not want to give it up. But when his master put down a large steak, the dog gave up his bone immediately.

Sometimes we are too concerned with hanging on to *bones*—the things we think we want. But the Lord is offering us something better. When the disciples were concerned about what they had to give up, Jesus gave them a clear answer.

“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” (Matthew 19:29)

Jesus said in another place that He came that you might have life—life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Life in all its fullness! That is what the world is seeking, but only God can give it.

May you come to know His love—although it can never be fully known—and be filled with the nature of God.

To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:19–21)

Application

- 1 According to Luke 14:27, we should love God above
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- 2 Denying ourselves or carrying our cross means
 - a) not owning any material possessions.
 - b) selling what we own and giving it to the church.
 - c) doing God’s will above our own.
- 3 Which of the following statements are TRUE?
 - a) Jesus gave His life for us, not to add to our burdens but to free us from our own guilt.
 - b) Fullness of life is found by being filled with God’s nature.
 - c) Denying ourselves means to stop giving attention to our sinful natures.
- 4 Read Matthew 11:28–30. To carry the cross of Jesus is not a burden. On the contrary, it is



B. CLEANSING OURSELVES

Goal 2. State why a clean lifestyle is necessary for every Christian.

Christians should keep their bodies and minds pure and clean. The Bible tells us why.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Such habits as smoking and using drugs injure a person’s health, harm the body and mind, and shorten one’s life. Users may think they can stop whenever they want to, but they become slaves to these habits. The apostle Paul asks,

Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to

the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

Perhaps some temptations have overcome you. Do you go to places that are not pleasing to the Lord, or read books or magazines that you would be ashamed for Him to see? Asking God to help us change our ways can break harmful habits.

Tell the Lord that you cannot conquer evil in your own strength and He will help you. Ask for His healing within you. Then learn the following verse and repeat it whenever you are tempted. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. (Psalm 37:5–6)

Application

5 What would you do in the following situations? Answer YES or NO to each of the questions.

- . . . **a** You are invited to an unsaved friend’s party to participate in activities against your Christian convictions. Would you go just this one time in order not to offend your friend?
- . . . **b** Several members of your church have asked you to go to a place where you will be expected to do things you know are not pleasing to the Lord. Would you accept so they will not feel you are trying to be “holier” than they are?
- . . . **c** Several unbelievers have asked you to attend festivities in their home and give your testimony of your conversion. Would you go because it is an opportunity to witness?

- 6** A new Christian confesses to you he cannot stop smoking. Which of the following would you do?
- a)** Tell him he is not going to heaven until he stops smoking.
 - b)** Tell the pastor so the new Christian cannot be baptized.
 - c)** Pray with him and help him go to the Lord and His Word for strength to overcome this habit.
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C. CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Goal 3. Identify essential steps 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 I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to 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, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (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. Read about this event in Matthew 3.

Furthermore, before ascending to heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

Becoming a member of a local church 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 one another. 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.

Application

7 According to Romans 10:9–10, what two things must a Christian do?

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

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9 Which of the following statements are TRUE?

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



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. Peter referred to such hunger when he wrote, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).

Christians need to read the Bible every day. Israel’s King David set a good example. He said, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1–2). “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on 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.

“The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to 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 it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you’” (Luke 11:9).

First Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to “pray continually.” 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 praise to the Lord. In this way we are continually worshipping Him.

Application

10 What two activities will help the believer grow spiritually?

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D. THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Goal 4. Indicate how a believer’s thoughts can be protected and controlled.

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” The Lord can help us control our thoughts. Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Our thoughts please God when they are clean and pure.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (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 do not 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 about what we see, hear, say, and do.

In monitoring what you see, consider Jesus’ words: “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22).

What we hear also influences our thoughts. Mark 4:24 says, “Consider carefully 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 offends us we can forget it more easily if we have not answered the person harshly. Proverbs 15:1 says “a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Our goal could be the fulfillment of Proverbs 25:11, “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”

Christians should be careful of what they do because God requires what is right.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And
what does the LORD require of you? To act
justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly
with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Our response can be the words of the psalmist: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

Application

11 Choose a verse from this section that confirms each of the following completions. Write the appropriate reference on the blank line. 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



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.

We want to study the Bible by ourselves and with Christian friends. We also need to hear God’s Word preached, for “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

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

So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (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 an example from the life of Abraham, who 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.

Application

12 Giving one tenth of what we have is called

13 According to Hebrews 10:25, we gather together with other believers to

14 Memorize Romans 12:1–2. According to these verses, our true worship to God is



Check Your Answers

- 1 a) our family or friends.
- 4 easy and light.
- 2 c) doing God's will above our own.
- 5 Your answer. I hope you said NO to a and b because you should not change your Christian convictions for friends whether they are unbelievers or Christians. I hope you said YES for c. Jesus witnessed wherever He went—in the temple and in people's homes. He would go wherever people are hungry to hear His Word.
- 3 All of the statements are true.
- 6 c Pray with him and help him go to the Lord and His Word for strength to overcome this habit
- 7 Confess with his mouth
Believe in his heart
- 8 He found Nathaniel and told him about Christ.
- 12 tithing, or giving a tithe.
- 9 a) and c) are true.
- 13 encourage one another.
- 10 Reading the Bible and praying every day.
- 14 dedicating ourselves to His service and to pleasing Him.
- 11 a) Philippians 4:8
b) Philippians 4:7
c) Proverbs 4:23
d) Psalm 19:14

