

S T U D Y G U I D E

Developing Christian Character

R.C. Sproul



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Introduction

One of the greatest struggles every Christian faces is the struggle for spiritual growth. Many men and women become Christians expecting growth to be automatic and easy, and when they discover that it is not, they become disillusioned. Some fall back into old sinful habits. Others adopt different methods of dealing with the problem. Some adopt an antinomian theology that relieves them of their guilt for a time. Others fall into various forms of legalistic activities and rituals that substitute man-made fruit for the fruit of the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul described our struggle for spiritual growth as a war, and Martin Luther described our three main enemies as the world, the flesh, and the devil. In order to grow spiritually, we must not only know our enemies. We must know what we have been given in order that we may defeat those enemies. We must put on the whole armor of God and walk in the Spirit. We must diligently use all the means of grace that God has provided for us. Paul warned the Galatian church many years ago that having begun in the Spirit, they were not to think that they could be made perfect by the flesh. We too must be reminded of these things if we are to press on to the goal.

May this series enable you to understand what is necessary for true spiritual growth and to begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit in abundance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R.C. Sproul". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

R.C. Sproul

The Struggle for Spiritual Growth

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Christian life is not easy. It engages us in a spiritual battle of cosmic proportions. In this study, Dr. Sproul examines our three chief foes in this battle: the world, the flesh, and the devil. This will help us understand why Christian growth is not easy, but is a complex, lifelong process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain why Christian growth is not simplistic but complex.
2. To be able to explain why Christian growth is a lifelong process.
3. To understand that the principal obstacles to Christian growth are the fallen world, fallen man, and the power of Satan.

QUOTATIONS

The devil is a great student in divinity.

— William Gurnall

All the danger is when the world gets into the heart. The water is useful for the sailing of the ship; all the danger is when the water gets into the ship; so the fear is when the world gets into the heart.

— Thomas Watson

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Christian growth is not easy.
 - 1. Becoming a Christian brings a new dimension of complication to a person's life.
 - 2. Some believe that growth comes easily, by "sitting back and letting nature take its course."
 - 3. The basic call of the New Testament—to grow in Christ—accents disciplined struggle.
 - 4. According to Martin Luther, there are three chief obstacles to Christian growth.
 - a. The world.
 - b. The flesh.
 - c. The devil.
 - 5. The great Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper referred to these three obstacles using different terminology:
 - a. Fallen nature.
 - b. Fallen mankind.
 - c. Fallen spirits.
- B. How do these obstacles inhibit Christian growth?
 - 1. Fallen nature (the world).
 - 2. Fallen mankind (the flesh).
 - a. The things that contribute to war and world conflict take place daily at the level of our interpersonal relationships.
 - b. The biggest enemy of my own spiritual growth is me.
 - 3. Fallen spirits (the devil).
- C. What do we have to withstand these enemies?
 - 1. Christ.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit.
 - 3. The Church.
 - 4. The means of grace.

STUDY QUESTIONS—MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1. The basic call of the New Testament—to grow in Christ—accents _____ struggle.
 - a. Little
 - b. Disciplined
 - c. No
 - d. Only spiritual

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2. Who said that the three chief obstacles to Christian growth are the world, the flesh, and the devil?
 - a. John Calvin
 - b. Augustine
 - c. Martin Luther
 - d. John Knox

 3. The world, or fallen nature, resists us because _____.
 - a. We brought God's curse on it through our sin.
 - b. Satan is the one controlling it.
 - c. God wills it for our sanctification.
 - d. Both a and c

 4. One of the marks of Christian growth is an increasing awareness of our _____ condition.
 - a. Sinful
 - b. Righteous
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Perfect

 5. One evidence of our struggle against the flesh is the _____ we experience in our interpersonal relationships.
 - a. Harmony
 - b. Love
 - c. Conflict
 - d. Ambivalence

 6. We experience a struggle within ourselves because _____.
 - a. Our sinful nature still controls us.
 - b. Our old nature has not been completely vanquished.
 - c. We don't know the difference between right and wrong.
 - d. We are not truly Christian.

 7. The phrase "deliver us from evil" in the Lord's Prayer means "deliver us from _____."
 - a. Pain
 - b. The world
 - c. Ourselves
 - d. The evil one

8. The biggest enemy of our own spiritual growth is what?
 - a. Ourselves
 - b. Worldly entertainment
 - c. Legalism
 - d. Antinomianism

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following Scripture passages teach us about growth?
 - a. Hebrews 6:1–3
 - b. Ephesians 4:11–16
 - c. Philippians 2:12–13
 - d. Philippians 3:12–16
2. Read the following texts of Scripture. What does each contribute to understanding of “the world”?
 - a. Romans 8:18–23
 - b. 1 John 2:15–17
 - c. James 4:1–6
3. What do the following texts of Scripture teach us about “the flesh”?
 - a. Romans 7:7–8:2
 - b. Galatians 5:13–26
 - c. James 4:1–6
4. What do the following texts of Scripture tell us about “the devil”?
 - a. Ephesians 6:10–13
 - b. James 4:7–10
 - c. 1 Peter 5:8–9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sproul said that God wills our struggle with the fallen world for our own good. How is this struggle good for us?
2. How does Satan hinder spiritual growth? Do Christians tend to blame some things on Satan that are really the result of our own sinful nature?
3. Many believers begin their Christian life assuming that growth will be easy. Did you assume the same thing? What expectations did you have as a new believer? How has the experience of the Christian life challenged those assumptions?

2

The Goal of Spiritual Growth

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The amount of effort we put into our Christian growth will be wasted unless we are working toward clear goals. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul will examine the ultimate purpose of the Christian life—to be holy as God is holy. Having this as a clear goal directs and focuses our spiritual growth.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to demonstrate why goals are necessary if real progress is to be made.
2. To understand the ultimate goals of our progress according to God.
3. To understand the significance of our final destiny and the beatific vision as an impetus for moving toward our goal.

QUOTATIONS

Character is more important than lifestyle.

— Anonymous

Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, words, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, brokenhearted mourning. A saint sails with every wind. As the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst.

— William Jenkyn

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Nothing happens to our dreams unless they are translated into goals.
- B. What is the goal or purpose of the Christian life?
 - 1. We see holiness as the goal of creation (Gen. 1:26–27).
 - a. The pinnacle of creation is reached on the seventh day (Gen. 2:1–3; Ex. 20:8–11).
 - b. The goal and end for which man is created is holiness.
 - 2. What does it mean that man is created in the image of God?
 - 3. Two extreme interpretations regarding what it means to be created in the image of God lead to serious error.
 - a. Idolatry—making God in man’s image.
 - b. Thinking of God as “wholly other.”
 - 4. Man has been created with a unique capacity to reflect the character of God.
 - 5. Jesus fulfilled the purpose for which man was created (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 5:22).
- C. The highest goal and greatest hope of the Christian is the “beatific vision”—to see God’s face (Exod. 33:18–34:35).
 - 1. God dwelt among His fallen people with one prohibition: “My face shall not be seen.”
 - 2. John says that the hope of God’s people is to see God as He is (1 John 3:1–3; Matt. 5:8).
 - 3. We were made for holiness, and when it escapes us, we suffer deprivation, lostness, and restlessness (1 Peter 1:14–16).

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. The way to turn our dreams into reality is to translate them into _____.
 - a. Written form
 - b. Ideas
 - c. Goals
 - d. Propositions
- 2. The goal for which man is created is _____.
 - a. Holiness
 - b. Happiness
 - c. Death
 - d. Self-realization
- 3. Because man is created in God’s image, he has a unique capacity to reflect God’s _____.
 - a. Character
 - b. Divinity

- c. Infinity
 - d. Omnipotence
4. The highest goal and greatest hope of the Christian is the “beatific vision,” to see _____.
- a. Infinity
 - b. God’s physical nature
 - c. God’s face
 - d. Love
5. Scripture warns that only the _____ in heart will see God.
- a. Innocent
 - b. Pure
 - c. Perfect
 - d. Repentant
6. The fact that God rested on the seventh day of creation shows what?
- a. His work in creating the universe had tired Him.
 - b. He had already reached the pinnacle of creation on the sixth day.
 - c. The goal of creation is Sabbath rest.
 - d. None of the above
7. After the Fall, the image of God was marred but not _____.
- a. Distorted
 - b. To the degree that it affected every part of human nature
 - c. Renewed
 - d. Obliterated
8. 1 John says that when Christ returns, we will see Him as He is and that we will be _____ Him.
- a. Known to
 - b. Like
 - c. One person with
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following passages of Scripture teach us about Christ?
- a. John 14:5–11
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:45–49
 - c. Colossians 1:15–20

2. Read the following passages of Scripture. What does each say about the Christian's purpose?
 - a. Ephesians 1:3–14
 - b. Ephesians 4:17–5:2
 - c. 1 John 4:7–12
3. What do the following texts of Scripture say about beholding God?
 - a. Exodus 33:12–23
 - b. Exodus 34:29–35
 - c. 2 Corinthians 3:18
 - d. Revelation 22:1–5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you see evidence today that man tries to “create” God in his own image? Explain.
2. Reread 2 Corinthians 3:18. This verse says that as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image. What does it mean to behold the glory of the Lord (see John 1:14)? How do we behold His glory?
3. Reread Exodus 34:29–35. How did fellowship with God change Moses? How does your fellowship with God change you?
4. The chief purposes for which you were created are to pursue a life of holiness, to reflect God's character, and to glorify God. Discuss what each of these means in practical terms. How do they relate to each other? Are they different facets of the same “gem of truth”?

APPLICATION

1. From what you understand to be your goal as a Christian, list three short-term goals you can pursue in the next several months.
2. This week, set apart at least 10 minutes to spend alone. Meditate on what it will be like to meet God face to face. What will it be like to see Him as He is? What longings or emotions does this stir in you? Does it move you to “purify yourself as He is pure”? Translate that motivation into two specific goals, and put them into practice this week.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bridges, Jerry. *The Practice of Godliness*

3

The Priorities of Righteousness

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we must take care that our lives speak well of Him whose name we bear. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul explores our responsibilities as representatives of Jesus Christ. The number-one priority of our lives is to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” As a result of this lesson, we should be better prepared to glorify God in the practice of righteousness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to distinguish between righteousness and spirituality.
2. To explore what it means to imitate Christ and to live for the glory of God.
3. To be motivated to live a life that pleases God and proclaims His glory.

QUOTATIONS

More than anything else, righteousness involves right relationships between ourselves and God, between ourselves and others, and in the world at large. . . . It is born out of a sense of personal need, and expands because of our sense of the world's need. The longing for righteousness issues from a broken heart.

— Sinclair Ferguson

To sum up, man cannot without sacrilege claim for himself even a crumb of righteousness, for just so much is plucked and taken away from the glory of God's righteousness. We must hold this as a universal principle: Whoever glories in himself glories against God.

— John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. What does God expect of us as Christians?
 - 1. We are called to reflect the holiness of God.
 - 2. Man's chief end is to glorify God.
- B. What does it mean to reflect God's glory?
 - 1. Martin Luther said, "Every Christian is called to be Christ to his neighbor."
 - 2. Although Luther's comment can be misleading, what he means is that our lives should so conform to God's will that people can see the reflected holiness of Christ in our lives.
 - 3. When we refer to the "glory of God," we are referring to the inner being of God—who God is, not what He does.
 - 4. When the Bible speaks of what God does, it uses the term "righteousness."
- C. God calls us to righteousness.
 - 1. The primary way in which we glorify God is through the practice of righteousness.
 - 2. In the body of Christ today, we hear almost nothing about righteousness.
 - 3. The goal of the Christian life is not spirituality, piety, or morality—it is righteousness.
 - 4. Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).
 - 5. People try to dismiss Jesus' statement in two ways.
 - a. Some dismiss it by saying, "I possess the righteousness of Christ."
 - b. Some dismiss it by saying, "The Pharisees were not righteous."
 - 6. We must not substitute our culture's values for the priorities of Christ.
 - 7. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

STUDY QUESTIONS—MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1. Martin Luther said, "Every Christian is called to be _____ to his neighbor."
 - a. Christ
 - b. Responsive
 - c. An evangelist
 - d. Generous
- 2. What did Luther mean by the statement: "Every Christian is called to be Christ to his neighbor"?
 - a. We are to tell others how to be saved.
 - b. Figuratively, every member of Christ's body is Christ.

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- c. Others should see the holiness of Christ in our lives.
 - d. We are to rescue other people from a life of sin.
 3. God's _____ refers to God's inner being—who He is.
 - a. Righteousness
 - b. Glory
 - c. Holiness
 - d. Grace
 4. The Bible uses the term _____ to describe what God does.
 - a. Glory
 - b. Truth
 - c. Righteousness
 - d. Infinity
 5. The primary way in which we glorify God is by _____.
 - a. Prayer and fasting
 - b. Having an extensive knowledge of the Bible
 - c. Espousing orthodox theology
 - d. Practicing righteousness
 6. "Righteousness" is defined as _____ God's commandments.
 - a. Knowledge of
 - b. Agreement with
 - c. Obedience to
 - d. Internalizing
 7. Christ requires real righteousness as the evidence and fruit of our _____.
 - a. Justification
 - b. Glorification
 - c. Theosis
 - d. Election
 8. Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed that of _____ if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven.
 - a. God
 - b. Himself
 - c. Unbelievers
 - d. The Pharisees

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following texts of Scripture teach about Christians as Christ's representatives?
 - a. Matthew 10:37–42
 - b. 1 Corinthians 4:1–2
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:17–21
2. What do the following texts of Scripture say about righteousness?
 - a. Genesis 15:1–6
 - b. Psalm 112
 - c. Proverbs 21:21
 - d. Matthew 5:6
 - e. Romans 3:21–4:25
 - f. Romans 6:15–23

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Paul's indictment of the Jews in Romans 2:17–24. When Christians misrepresent Christ to the world, what problems arise? How does this affect your personal sense of responsibility as one who bears the name of Christ?
2. What is the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness?
3. In what ways can you "be Christ" to those around you?
4. Restate the Ten Commandments, not as negative prohibitions, but as positive admonitions. What do they say about everyday priorities and behavior patterns?

APPLICATION

1. Reflect on one of the ways you decided you could "be Christ" to others, and put it into practice this week.
2. Suppose you had one day in which your only priority was to "seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness." List those things you would do in those 24 hours in order of importance. Try to set aside a day in which to do as many of these things as you can, and also begin incorporating these things into your everyday life.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bridges, Jerry. *The Practice of Godliness*

4

The Assurance of Salvation – Part 1

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many people blindly assume that they are at peace with God. How can one who thinks he is saved be sure that he is, in fact, saved? In this lesson and the next, Dr. Sproul will examine this vital foundation for spiritual growth—assurance of salvation. The purpose of these lessons is to enable us to distinguish between genuine assurance and false assurance and to help us deal with doubts about our salvation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the relationship between justification and sanctification.
2. To be able to explain why assurance of salvation is so important to our spiritual growth.
3. To learn to distinguish between authentic assurance and false assurance.

QUOTATIONS

Assurance is not of the essence of a Christian. It is required to the bene esse (the well-being), to the comfortable and joyful being of a Christian; but it is not required to the esse, to the being of a Christian. A man may be a true believer and yet would give all the world, were it in his power, to know that he is a believer. To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is glory upon the throne, it is heaven on this side of heaven.

— Thomas Brooks

None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and chequered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark and others are sunshine. Such is usually the life of the most assured Christian.

— Ezekiel Hopkins

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. There is a particular *ordo salutis*, or order of salvation.
 - 1. The justified believer is, in Luther's terms, "at the same time just and a sinner."
 - 2. The dispute of the Protestant Reformation.
 - a. Roman Catholics taught that justification follows sanctification.
 - b. Protestants taught that we are justified first, followed by the process of sanctification (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4).
 - 3. The first step toward assurance.
 - a. It is impossible to be sanctified without first being justified.
 - b. If you are not sure of your justification, your Christian growth becomes all the more difficult.
- B. What is the problem of assurance?
 - 1. There are four kinds of people in the world.
 - a. Those who are unsaved and know it.
 - b. Those who are saved and know it.
 - c. Those who are saved and don't know it.
 - d. Those who are unsaved and think they are saved.
 - 2. How do any of us know that we are not in the fourth group?
- C. How can people think they are saved when they are not?
 - 1. People in this category either misunderstand the terms of salvation or err in their own self-evaluation.
 - 2. The terms of salvation.
 - a. The Reformation debate
 - b. If we are going to progress in the Christian life, we have to know where we stand with God.
 - c. The dominant doctrine of justification in our culture today is "justification by death."
 - 3. Self-evaluation: some people trust in their own performance.
 - 4. If we are working with a false idea of justification, we can have no authentic assurance.

STUDY QUESTIONS—MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1. The justified believer is at the same time _____ and _____.
 - a. A believer; a nonbeliever
 - b. In the Spirit; in the flesh
 - c. Justified; unjustified
 - d. Just; a sinner

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2. Assurance of salvation is vital to Christian growth because it is impossible for anyone who is not _____ to be sanctified.
 - a. Assured
 - b. Justified
 - c. Glorified
 - d. Baptized
 3. Assurance of salvation is undermined by _____.
 - a. Those who are unsaved and know it
 - b. Those who are unsaved and think they are saved
 - c. Those who are saved and know it
 - d. Those who are saved and are not sure of it
 4. The way to gain assurance of salvation is by _____.
 - a. Looking at your own performance
 - b. Not worrying about it
 - c. Going to church more often
 - d. Understanding what the Scriptures teach on this matter
 5. Which of the following were mentioned in the lecture as sources of false assurance of salvation?
 - a. The belief that everyone goes to heaven
 - b. A faulty understanding of the terms of salvation
 - c. An exaggerated sense of one's own righteousness
 - d. All of the above
 6. We probably won't be able to grow in Christ until we are _____ we are saved.
 - a. Permanently and perfectly assured that
 - b. Unsure
 - c. Sure
 - d. Unconcerned whether
 7. Roman Catholics taught that justification follows _____.
 - a. Sanctification
 - b. Faith
 - c. Death
 - d. Regeneration

8. The dominant doctrine of justification in our culture today is justification by _____.
- a. Faith alone
 - b. Death
 - c. Works
 - d. Faith and works

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Romans chapters 2–5. What is the basic outline of Paul’s teaching on justification in these chapters?
2. What do the following texts contribute to our understanding of sanctification?
 - a. John 17:13–19
 - b. Ephesians 5:25–27
 - c. James 2:14–26
3. What do the following texts of Scripture teach about true and false repentance?
 - a. James 4:1–10
 - b. Hebrews 6:4–12
 - c. Hebrews 12:16–17
4. What do the following texts of Scripture say about assurance?
 - a. 1 John 3:11–24
 - b. 1 John 4:7–21
 - c. 1 John 5:11–13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sproul said that his first step in seeking assurance of his salvation was to check his performance. Have you found this an effective route to assurance? Why or why not?
2. Dr. Sproul names two sources of false assurance: misunderstanding the terms of salvation and faulty self-evaluation. Have you heard people argue from either of these assumptions that they are going to heaven? Give examples of typical arguments you have heard or that you yourself may have used. How would you answer these arguments, using Scripture?

3. In your own words, explain the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant views of justification and sanctification. Under which of these systems of belief is one more likely to gain assurance of salvation?
4. What happens if we confuse sanctification and justification?
5. How do you respond to the common assumption that all you have to do to go to heaven is to die?

APPLICATION

1. Discuss with a friend your understanding of the terms of salvation and the problem of gaining assurance of your salvation. Help each other overcome any doubts you may have.
2. For one week keep a record of what motivates your repentance. Identify any motives that do not reveal genuine sorrow for sin, and reconsider what your motive for repentance should be in that case.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Beeke, Joel. *Assurance of Faith*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, David. *The Assurance of Our Salvation*

5

The Assurance of Salvation – Part 2

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

If we evaluate ourselves by our own standard of righteousness, we will mistakenly think we are fit for heaven. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul shows that God's law sets a standard so high that no one can keep it through his own efforts. Once this delusion is removed, we can find genuine assurance by trusting Christ alone for our salvation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand a fuller dimension of God's law.
2. To be convicted of our absolute need for Christ for our justification.
3. To be able to distinguish the difference between the role of Satan as accuser and the role of the Holy Spirit as convicter of sin.

QUOTATIONS

When God calls a man, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day, and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favourites, and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition admits of no alteration. God's call is founded upon His decree, and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names.

— Thomas Watson

Though Christians be not kept altogether from falling, yet they are kept from falling altogether.

— William Secker

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. There are several sources of false assurance.
 - 1. People may think they are good enough to merit entrance into the kingdom of God.
 - a. Some understand what God's law requires and honestly believe they have fully obeyed it.
 - b. Others do not really understand what God's law requires (Mark 10:17–27).
 - 2. Once you understand what God's law requires, your response should be one of guilt for not keeping it.
 - a. Guilt does not drive us crazy because we have learned to isolate ourselves from the pain of it.
 - b. God demands holiness of His creatures, and anyone who thinks he has attained that holiness is suffering from the worst kind of self-delusion.
 - 3. Some people equate church membership with entrance into the kingdom of God (Matt. 15:8–9).
- B. Our assurance can come only when we trust Christ alone for our justification.
 - 1. We have to ask ourselves what we are trusting in for eternal life.
 - 2. Overcoming obstacles to assurance.
 - a. When I look at my sin, my confidence in my redemption is shaken.
 - b. I must not ask myself if I love Christ perfectly but if I love Him at all.
 - c. Satan majors in the life of the Christian not as the tempter but as the accuser.
 - d. You can answer Satan in the words of Paul: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33).
 - 3. Do not pursue sanctification paralyzed by anxiety, nor in a state of moral hysteria, but out of gratitude to Christ, who has already secured your salvation.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. The rich young ruler (Mark 10) is an example of what type of person?
 - a. Those who understand what God's law requires and believe they have obeyed it
 - b. Those who do not understand what God's law requires
 - c. Those who do not care what God's law requires
 - d. Those who are completely ignorant of what God's law requires
- 2. Once we understand what God's law requires, what is our proper response?
 - a. Guilt
 - b. Doubt
 - c. Peace
 - d. Hate

3. Guilt does not drive us crazy because we learn to _____.
 - a. Wallow in self-pity
 - b. Ignore it
 - c. Isolate ourselves from the pain of it
 - d. None of the above

4. Anyone who thinks he has attained the holiness that God requires has _____ himself.
 - a. Underestimated
 - b. Proven
 - c. Deluded
 - d. None of the above

5. Regular church attendance does not guarantee salvation because _____.
 - a. God does not care whether you go to church or not.
 - b. People can attend church for the wrong reasons.
 - c. The church is a servant, not a mediator.
 - d. Both b and c

6. To gain assurance of our salvation, we must not ask if we love Christ perfectly but if we love Him _____.
 - a. All the time
 - b. At all
 - c. As He loves us
 - d. Both a and c

7. We should not pursue sanctification out of a spirit of _____ but in a spirit of gratitude to God.
 - a. Fear
 - b. Hope
 - c. Joy
 - d. Faith

8. When I look at _____, my confidence in my redemption is shaken.
 - a. The work of the Holy Spirit
 - b. The cross of Christ
 - c. God's promises
 - d. My sin

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following two passages of Scripture and outline what they teach about the demands of God's law.
 - a. Matthew 5:17–48
 - b. Romans 2
2. What do the following texts teach about man's inability to obey God's law?
 - a. Romans 3:9–20
 - b. Galatians 3:1–25
3. What do each of the following texts contribute to our understanding of salvation by faith in Christ alone?
 - a. Acts 4:8–12
 - b. Ephesians 2:1–10
 - c. 1 Timothy 2:5–6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sproul poses a question about the “mystery of iniquity”: How can redeemed people prefer to sin rather than obey the One who died for them? How do you explain this?
2. No one loves Christ perfectly. But if we love Him at all, how will it show?
3. Read Romans 8:5–17. What are the basic differences between the Christian and the non-Christian, according to these verses?
4. Name some right and wrong motives for attending church. Why do you attend church?

APPLICATION

1. Write out at least one of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17). Below it, write three practical implications of the commandment. What would it mean to perfectly obey this commandment in thought, word, and deed? What does this tell you about God's law and man's inability to keep it?
2. Suppose you were the rich young man (or woman) to whom Christ spoke in Mark 10. On what point of God's law might He test you? Read Mark 10:24–27 and summarize in a sentence how this passage gives you hope in spite of your inability to pass the test.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Beeke, Joel. *Assurance of Faith*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, David. *The Assurance of Our Salvation*

6

The Indwelling Power of Love

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul writes, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” He goes on to describe the characteristics of *agape*—the Christlike love that indwells every believer. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul begins a study of the fruit of the Spirit with an examination of love—the foundation on which all the other fruit rests.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the biblical priority of the fruit of the Spirit as our primary guideline for sanctification.
2. To emphasize the preeminent importance of love as a fruit of the Spirit.
3. To appreciate the relationship between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.

QUOTATIONS

“We love Him because He first loved us.” Love is like an echo, it returneth what it receiveth.

— Thomas Manton

The saints are the walking pictures of God. If God be our Father, we shall love to see His pictures of holiness in believers; shall pity them for their infirmities, but love them for their graces. . . . It may justly be suspected that God is not the Father of those who love not His children. Though they retain the communion of saints in their creed, they banish the communion of saints out of their company.

— Thomas Watson

Love of man necessarily arises out of the love of God. The love of the creature is but the corollary to the love of the Creator. This is what the Christian finds, as a matter of fact. His heart is overcharged with love to God. It finds its way out in love to man. His direct service of God cannot, in the nature of things, go very far. He worships God publicly in His house. He glorifies Him secretly in the constant outpourings of his heart. He gives of his substance to the maintenance of every cause which is God's cause. But here it ends. God is so mighty, so self-contained, that with all our puny efforts, much cannot be done to serve Him. So the Christian looks about to see how he is to show his love for God. He soon finds the way. Clearly, it must be by love for his fellow-men.

— John Hooper

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Bible teaches the priority of the fruit of the Spirit.
 1. It is easy to become preoccupied with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of the fruit of the Spirit.
 2. If there is an accent to be detected in Scripture, it is on the development of the fruit of the Spirit.
 3. The primary gift and fruit of the Spirit is love.
 4. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul teaches that the manifestation of the gifts apart from love adds up to futility.
 5. There are three Greek words for “love”:
 - a. Phileo—brotherly love.
 - b. Eros—romantic love.
 - c. Agape—divine love.
 6. The relationship between the gifts and the fruit is illustrated by the radical and abrupt change in the morality of our culture.
- B. The fruit of the Spirit begins with love.
 1. Love is described in the New Testament not merely as a feeling or an activity, although it is defined in active terms.
 2. Agape is a power and possession reserved for the regenerate person.
 3. Indwelling agape is what we call a habitus.
 - a. What is the controversy over this word?
 - b. Classical Protestantism maintains that at regeneration there is an infusion of love into the soul (Rom. 5:5).
 - c. The catch, however, is that the indwelling agape can be augmented or diminished.
 4. What are the signs that love is operating in our lives?
 - a. Love changes the inclination of our hearts to honor God.
 - b. Love gives credit to God's Word.
 - c. Love acknowledges God's right to govern us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Although Christians tend to be preoccupied with the _____ of the Spirit, the Scriptures emphasize the development of the _____ of the Spirit.
 - a. Gifts; fruit
 - b. Work; person
 - c. Person; work
 - d. Fruit; gifts
2. The supreme gift and fruit of the Spirit is _____.
 - a. Prophecy
 - b. Tongues
 - c. Joy
 - d. Love
3. The manifestation of the spiritual gifts apart from love adds up to _____.
 - a. Futility
 - b. Peace
 - c. Signs and wonders
 - d. Church growth
4. Our culture views love as something that happens to you, but the Bible speaks of love in _____ terms.
 - a. Ambiguous
 - b. Active
 - c. Definite
 - d. Passive
5. Agape is a power reserved for _____ only.
 - a. Friends
 - b. Spouses
 - c. Christians
 - d. God
6. It is impossible for a person to have _____ unless the Holy Spirit dwells in him.
 - a. Phileo
 - b. Eros
 - c. Agape
 - d. All of the above

7. Which of the following was not said to be a sign of the presence of indwelling agape love?
 - a. Love inclines the heart to honor God.
 - b. Love gives credit to God's Word.
 - c. Love makes us more generous in our compliments.
 - d. Love acknowledges God's right to govern me.
8. Indwelling agape is what theologians call _____.
 - a. Habitus
 - b. Concupiscence
 - c. Homousios
 - d. Iustitia spiritualis

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following Scripture passages. What does each contribute to what we know about the Holy Spirit?
 - a. John 14:15–27
 - b. John 16:5–16
 - c. Acts 2:1–4
 - d. Romans 8:5–17
 - e. 1 Corinthians 2:6–16
2. Briefly outline the basic teaching on the subject of spiritual gifts in each of the following passages.
 - a. Romans 12:3–8
 - b. 1 Corinthians 12–14
3. What do the following texts of Scripture teach us about the fruit of the Spirit?
 - a. Galatians 5:19–25
 - b. Romans 12:9–21
 - c. 2 Peter 1:2–11
4. Read the following texts of Scripture, which speak of love. What is the basic point of each passage?
 - a. Romans 13:8–10
 - b. 1 Corinthians 13
 - c. John 13:34–35
 - d. 1 John 3:11–18

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3. Why is the exercise of spiritual gifts apart from love futile?

2. Explain how a ministry might fail for lack of love.
3. The power of love that indwells the believer can be augmented or diminished. What weakens the power of love in our lives? What strengthens it?
4. What is the proper relationship between the fruit of the Spirit and the use of the gifts of the Spirit?

APPLICATION

1. Read the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. How can you manifest these in your life? Translate each fruit into a goal for action and pursue at least one of these goals each day this week.
2. Read a biography of someone you consider a hero of the faith. How did this person manifest the fruit of the Spirit? Choose at least one way in which you would like to follow that person's example and set a specific goal for doing so.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

7

The Practice of Love

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The financier J. P. Morgan once observed, “A man usually has two reasons for doing something: one that sounds good and the real one.” This tendency to mistrust others’ motives is at the heart of our alienation from others. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul examines how we as Christians can counteract this tendency by practicing “the judgment of charity.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to state in concrete terms what it means to be loved and what love does.
2. To understand what the “judgment of charity” is and its importance in human relationships.

QUOTATIONS

He loves but little who tells how much he loves.

— John Boys

Therefore if we rightly direct our love, we must first turn our eyes not to man, the sight of whom would more often engender hate than love, but to God, who bids us extend to all men the love we bear to Him that this may be an unchanging principle: whatever the character of the man, we must yet love him because we love God.

— John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. What are the characteristics of indwelling agape love?
 - 1. Agape love inclines the soul to do several things:
 - a. Honor and worship God.
 - b. Give credit to and trust God's Word.
 - c. Acknowledge God's sovereign right to govern us.
 - 2. Three additional indicators of the presence of agape:
 - a. Love inclines the heart to desire justice toward our neighbors (Micah 6:8).
 - b. Love disposes us toward contentment in whatever situations we find ourselves (Phil. 4:11; Eph. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:3-4).
 - c. The presence of love restrains the power of the sin of bitterness.
- B. How can we augment this love and cultivate a spirit of charity toward others?
 - 1. The judgment of charity is a skill that can be developed through the practice of giving the benefit of the doubt.
 - 2. Another way to define the judgment of charity is to contrast "best-case analysis" with "worst-case analysis."
 - a. Worst-case analysis is our attributing the worst of all possible motives to those who hurt us.
 - b. Best-case analysis is our attributing the best of all possible motives to those who hurt us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Love inclines the heart to desire _____ for our neighbors.
 - a. Judgment
 - b. Vengeance
 - c. Justice
 - d. Ambivalence
- 2. Love disposes us toward _____ in whatever situation we may be in.
 - a. Discontent
 - b. Contentment
 - c. Apathy
 - d. Zealousness
- 3. The presence of love restrains the power of what?
 - a. Guilt
 - b. Temptation
 - c. Bitterness
 - d. Judgment

4. A Christian can increase the power of indwelling love by practicing the judgment of _____.
 - a. Charity
 - b. Discernment
 - c. Righteousness
 - d. All of the above
5. “Worst case analysis” means _____.
 - a. Thinking of the worst thing we can do to someone who has hurt us.
 - b. Worrying about potential mishaps.
 - c. Doing the opposite of the Golden Rule.
 - d. Attributing the worst of motives to others.
6. The judgment of charity is practiced through giving others _____.
 - a. The benefit of your wisdom
 - b. The benefit of the doubt
 - c. Advice
 - d. Material needs
7. We acquire the judgment of charity by _____.
 - a. Being born with it
 - b. Practicing it
 - c. Reading about it
 - d. Noticing it in others
8. When we practice “best-case analysis,” love is _____.
 - a. Strengthened
 - b. Cheapened
 - c. Diminished
 - d. Lost

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following passages of Scripture teach us about gossip and slander?
 - a. Proverbs 11:13
 - b. Proverbs 15:1–4
 - c. Proverbs 16:28
 - d. Proverbs 26:20
 - e. Romans 1:28–32
 - f. James 4:11–12

2. What do the following passages teach us about contentment?
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:7–10
 - b. Ecclesiastes 4:7–8
 - c. 1 Timothy 6:6–10
3. Read Hebrews 12:14–15. What does this text have to say about bitterness?
4. What does Paul tell us about “quenching the Spirit” in the following texts of Scripture?
 - a. Ephesians 4:30–32
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:19

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 18:15. Jesus said that if someone sins against you, discuss it with him first. Do most Christians follow this rule? Would following this rule solve many of the problems that come from misjudging people’s motives?
2. Agape love inclines your heart to desire justice tempered with mercy toward others, thus mirroring God’s love. How is God’s justice tempered with mercy in His dealings with you?
3. Read Ephesians 4:25–5:2. When you love others, how does it affect the way you talk to them and about them?
4. Read Proverbs 12:18 and 15:4. Have you found that words have the power to heal or harm as these verses say?

APPLICATION

1. Has contentment escaped you because you frequently think of things you wish you owned? This week, think of what you do have and thank the Lord for it.
2. This week, practice applying the judgment of charity to the one person you find most difficult to get along with.
3. Make a conscious effort this week to avoid gossip. If you hear someone else gossip, say something good about the person being talked about.
4. Would your attitudes about your job and your work habits change if Jesus Christ were your supervisor? If so, make those changes this week as you work “as unto the Lord.”

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

Joy and Peace

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

While instructing a group of seminary students on the subject of sermon delivery, Charles H. Spurgeon said, “When you speak of heaven, let your face light up with a heavenly gleam. Let your eyes shine with reflected glory. And when you speak of hell—well, then your usual face will do.” Spurgeon’s wit strikes at the heart of an all-too-common problem among believers—a lack of joy. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul examines the character of true joy and its source in Christ.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the biblical meaning of joy and to begin to experience it in our lives.
2. To understand the biblical meaning of peace and to begin to experience it in our lives.

QUOTATIONS

Take a saint, and put him into any condition, and he knows how to rejoice in the Lord.

— Walter Cradock

I desire the dejected Christian to consider, that by his heavy and uncomfortable life, he seemeth to the world to accuse God and His service, as if he openly called Him a rigorous, hard, unacceptable Master, and His work a sad unpleasant thing. I know this is not your thoughts: I know it is yourselves, and not God and His service that offendeth you; and that you walk heavily not because you are holy, but because you fear you are not holy, and because you are no more holy. . . . If you see a servant always sad, that was wont to be merry while he served another master, will you not think that he hath a

master that displeaseth him? . . . You are born and new born for God's honour; and will you thus dishonour Him before the world? What do you (in their eyes) but dispraise Him by your very countenance and carriage?

— Richard Baxter

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. There is an order to the fruit of the Spirit; love heads the list because all the others flow out of it.
- B. The Bible lists joy as the second fruit.
 - 1. Calvin defined joy as the disposition of one's personality toward cheerfulness.
 - a. Joy is grounded in the Christian's celebration of Christ's victory over the world (John 16:22–24, 33).
 - b. This joy is not superficial.
 - c. As we contemplate Christ's victory over the world, it enables us to be joyful even in the midst of dire circumstances.
 - 2. Jesus told the disciples, "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:17–20).
 - 3. The mandate of Christ, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world," is not superficial cheerfulness or irrational escapism but is grounded in cosmic reality.
- C. Peace follows after love and joy.
 - 1. The concept of peace in the Bible is multifaceted.
 - a. It can mean an interlude of safety from the ravages of war.
 - b. Peace almost becomes a synonym for salvation (Col. 1:19–22; Matt. 5:9).
 - 2. Peace, as a fruit of the Spirit, means that we have a new capacity to live at peace with others and ourselves.
 - a. There is what Luther called a "carnal peace," born not of love but of cowardice (Jeremiah 8:11).
 - b. Paul enjoins us, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men," recognizing that it is not always possible (Romans 12:18).
 - 3. The Christian, along with the love of Christ, possesses the peace of Christ.
 - 4. This peace was Christ's legacy (John 14:27).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. John Calvin defined joy as the disposition of one's personality toward _____.
 - a. Love
 - b. Peace
 - c. Frivolity
 - d. Cheerfulness
2. The Christian's joy is grounded in Christ's victory over _____.
 - a. Most temptations
 - b. Himself
 - c. The world
 - d. The angels
3. Christian joy is not _____ because it is based on cosmic reality.
 - a. Superficial
 - b. Surreal
 - c. Real
 - d. Spiritual
4. Christians can have joy even in the midst of dire circumstances because _____.
 - a. The circumstances are not real.
 - b. Joy is an escape from suffering.
 - c. In spite of the suffering, they share in Christ's victory.
 - d. They know that other people are going through the same things.
5. In biblical times, the concept of peace emerges as a synonym for _____.
 - a. Love
 - b. Salvation
 - c. Joy
 - d. Self-control
6. Peace, as a fruit of the Spirit, means that once reconciled to God, we have a new capacity to live at peace with _____.
 - a. Ourselves
 - b. Others
 - c. Sin
 - d. Both a and b

7. The Bible recognizes that it is not possible to live at peace with _____.
- a. Everyone at all times
 - b. God
 - c. Ourselves
 - d. Others
8. There is what Luther called a “carnal peace,” born not of love but of _____.
- a. God
 - b. Cowardice
 - c. Hope
 - d. Both a and c

BIBLE STUDY

1. Examine each of the following texts. What is taught about true joy in these passages?
 - a. John 15:9–12
 - b. John 16:17–22
 - c. 1 Peter 1:3–9
 - d. Hebrews 10:32–39
2. What do the following passages of Scripture teach about the character and source of true peace?
 - a. John 14:27
 - b. John 16:33
 - c. Matthew 10:34–39
 - d. Ephesians 2:11–18
 - e. Philippians 4:6–9
 - f. Hebrews 12:14
 - g. 1 Peter 3:8–12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the inseparable relationship between peace and joy as fruit of the Spirit?
2. If a fellow Christian lost his sense of joy because of some tragedy, how could you help him rediscover the deep, abiding joy of Christ?
3. Paul’s command to believers in Romans 12:18 concedes that it is not always possible to live at peace with others. Why not?

4. Should we seek peace with others at all costs? Why or why not?
5. Read John 14:27. How does the peace Christ gives differ from the peace the world gives?

APPLICATION

1. Set aside time this week to meditate on Christ's victory over the world and what it means for you (John 16:33). Allow this to make you more aware of your joy in the Lord.
2. When you are feeling especially pressured or tense this week, take a few minutes to think about the gift of peace Christ has given you. Let the passages on peace examined above guide your meditation.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

Longsuffering and Kindness

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was once reminded by a friend of how someone had hurt her years before. “Don’t you remember the wrong done to you?” the friend asked. “No,” Clara replied, “I distinctly remember forgetting that.” This ability to “forgive and forget” is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit discussed in this lesson: patience and kindness. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul explains how these biblical concepts are rooted in the character of God and how we can practice them in our pursuit of spiritual growth.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand what it means for Christians to imitate the patience of God.
2. To be able to explain the differences among justice, vindication, and revenge.
3. To recognize opportunities to practice the fruit of kindness.

QUOTATIONS

They who are wicked, although they cannot see the goodness of other virtues, yet can see the goodness of patience, and perceive when they see a patient man and an impatient man both sick of one disease; yet both are not troubled alike, but that he who has most patience has most ease, and he who is most impatient is most tormented, like a fish which strives with the hook.

— Henry Smith

If God should have no more mercy on us than we have charity one to another, what would become of us?

— Thomas Fuller

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Virtue of Patience
 - 1. All Christian virtue is based on the character of God.
 - 2. God Himself is described as long-suffering.
 - 3. Patience is the ability to endure pain over a period of time.
 - 4. The Bible often describes God's love as steadfast.
 - 5. Patient love is long-suffering; it does not have a spirit of resentment or vengeance.
 - 6. Three New Testament words are often confused as synonyms: justice, vindication, and revenge.
 - a. Justice is the manifestation of righteousness and is served when there is a balance between sin and punishment, virtue and reward.
 - b. Vindication occurs when someone falsely accused of a crime is shown to be innocent of it.
 - c. Revenge is trying to pay back the wound (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).
- B. Kindness follows and is related to patience.
 - 1. Kindness is the manifestation of patience.
 - 2. Kindness is born of the fact that we ourselves are objects of God's kindness (Ps. 51:1).
 - 3. Kindness does not pick at everyday sins, nor is it petty over minor issues (1 Peter 4:8).
 - 4. The kind person overcomes pettiness and treats others with a concern for their well-being.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Patience is the ability to endure _____ over a period of time.
 - a. Patiently
 - b. Boredom
 - c. Pain
 - d. Gossip
- 2. What is the expression of love over a long period of time called?
 - a. Loyalty
 - b. Virtue
 - c. Long-suffering
 - d. Vindication
- 3. The opposite of patient love is a spirit of _____.
 - a. Meekness
 - b. Boredom
 - c. Vengeance
 - d. Gentleness

4. What is revenge?
 - a. Paying back a wound
 - b. Being proved innocent after being falsely accused
 - c. A balance between sin and punishment
 - d. None of the above
5. What is vindication?
 - a. Paying back a wound
 - b. Being proved innocent after being falsely accused
 - c. A balance between sin and punishment
 - d. None of the above
6. What is justice?
 - a. Paying back a wound
 - b. Being proved innocent after being falsely accused
 - c. A balance between sin and punishment
 - d. None of the above
7. Kindness is a manifestation of _____.
 - a. Revenge
 - b. Vindication
 - c. Justice
 - d. Patience
8. One sure evidence that kindness is lacking is a spirit of _____.
fault-finding.
 - a. Patient
 - b. Petty
 - c. Diligent
 - d. Both a and c

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following passages of Scripture teach us about patience?
 - a. Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; 19:11
 - b. Romans 12:9–13
 - c. Ephesians 4:1–6
 - d. Colossians 3:12–14
 - e. James 5:7–11
 - f. 2 Peter 3:8–9

2. Read the following texts of Scripture. What do they say about revenge?
 - a. Leviticus 19:18
 - b. 1 Peter 3:8–9
3. What do the following texts of Scripture have to say about vindication?
 - a. Isaiah 54:16–17
 - b. Luke 18:1–8
4. What does Scripture teach about kindness in the following passages?
 - a. Jeremiah 9:23–24
 - b. 2 Corinthians 6:4–7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. You’ve probably heard the phrase “Don’t get mad, get even.” How is vengeance exalted and legitimized in our culture?
2. Read Matthew 5:11. Why can you consider false accusations for the sake of Christ a blessing?
3. Think of a kind act you have witnessed or heard about. What was it about the act, the person who did it, or the way it was done that made it kind? How can we consistently incorporate these qualities in what we do for others?

APPLICATION

1. You may find yourself waiting somewhere this week—in line at the store, in traffic, or for an appointment. Instead of getting impatient, discover how you can redeem the time in a manner pleasing to God.
2. Be aware of how you respond to others this week. Are you quick to find fault or correct petty mistakes? Check this impulse and respond with kindness instead. Remember how patient God has been with you.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

Goodness and Faith

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Simple, childlike faith, although commanded by Christ, is often something we have difficulty with when we encounter the pressures and responsibilities of adulthood.

In this lesson, Dr. Sproul looks at the biblical definitions of faith and goodness and explores the ways in which we may practice these virtues in our relationships with God and others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the biblical definition of a good deed.
2. To examine what goodness requires in interpersonal relationships.
3. To understand the biblical meaning of faith and of trust.

QUOTATIONS

We must come to good works by faith and not to faith by good works.

— William Gurnall

It is the office of faith to believe what we do not see, and it shall be the reward of faith to see what we do believe.

— Thomas Adams

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. What does “goodness” mean?
 - 1. One of Paul’s most radical statements in the New Testament is a quotation from Psalm 14: “There is none who does good” (Rom. 3:10–12).
 - 2. Goodness is a relative term and must be defined according to a standard.
 - a. A good deed is one that externally conforms to the demands of the law, but this is not the entire definition of a good deed.
 - b. A good deed is also one that is motivated inwardly by a desire to please God.
 - 3. Jonathan Edwards points out that the fruit of goodness carries with it a new ability to appreciate excellence (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
 - 4. In terms of interpersonal relationships, goodness has to do with basic human integrity and the spirit of generosity.
- B. The basic meaning of the biblical word “faith” is trust.
 - 1. It is one thing to believe in God; it is another thing to believe God.
 - 2. God’s law proceeds from three dimensions of His character:
 - a. His holiness
 - b. His benevolence
 - c. His wisdom
 - 3. Sin is pleasurable, but it does not bring happiness.
 - 4. When faith becomes fruitful, we have an increased capacity to believe God, and that has a direct impact on our struggle with sin.
 - 5. The fruit of faith in interpersonal relationships is the disposition to trust.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. According to Scripture, who does good?
 - a. None
 - b. All
 - c. Many
 - d. Few
- 2. To be genuine, a good deed must be motivated by what?
 - a. Love for humanity
 - b. A desire to please God
 - c. The hope of heavenly rewards
 - d. Radical obedience
- 3. The fruit of goodness carries with it a new ability to appreciate what?
 - a. Beauty
 - b. Truth
 - c. Excellence
 - d. All of the above

4. In interpersonal relationships, goodness has to do with what?
 - a. Integrity
 - b. Loyalty
 - c. Generosity
 - d. Both a and c
5. The basic meaning of the biblical word for “faith” is _____.
 - a. Trust
 - b. Credulity
 - c. Love
 - d. Assent
6. It is one thing to believe in God; it is another thing to _____ God.
 - a. Acknowledge the existence of
 - b. Comprehend
 - c. Believe
 - d. None of the above
7. We sin because we mistakenly think sin will _____.
 - a. Bring us pleasure
 - b. Make us happy
 - c. Draw us close to God
 - d. Be ignored by God
8. The fruit of faith causes us to become not only more trusting but also more _____.
 - a. Trustworthy
 - b. Sinless
 - c. Apathetic
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following passages of Scripture, and note how they deal with the subject of goodness.
 - a. Psalm 145:2–9
 - b. Romans 3:9–18
 - c. 2 Peter 1:3–11
2. What do we learn about the nature of true good deeds from the following Scriptures?
 - a. Matthew 5:14–16
 - b. Matthew 6:1–18

- c. 2 Corinthians 9:8
 - d. Ephesians 2:8–10
 - e. 2 Timothy 2:20–21; 3:16–17
 - f. Titus 2:11–14
3. What do the following passages say about the inability of sin to bring happiness?
- a. Matthew 16:26
 - b. Hebrews 11:24–26
 - c. Galatians 6:7–10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sproul says, “One thing sadly lacking in the Christian community today is a deep appreciation for aesthetics.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Bach composed his music as an apologetic for the existence of God. Can excellence in the arts or other occupations defend the truth of Christianity today? If so, how?
3. What are some implications of goodness as a fruit of the Spirit in developing an appreciation for excellence in the arts, in our work, and in our relationships with one another? Give specific examples.
4. Dr. Sproul says that with the fruit of goodness comes a new appreciation for what is good, true, and beautiful. Have you experienced this as a Christian? Give examples in any or all three of these areas.

APPLICATION

1. Exercise your appreciation for the good, beautiful, and true by visiting an art museum, reading a classic novel, listening to some of the classic works of music by Bach and others, taking a walk to enjoy the beauty of nature, creating something with your own hands, or attending worship in a beautiful environment.
2. Reflect on something you did in the last week that you considered to be a good deed. Reconstruct the complex motives behind it. How “good” actually was it, in your evaluation? How did others see it? How did God see it? How possible is it to achieve pure motives?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

Meekness and Self-Control

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

In this day of self-assertiveness and macho heroes, the word “meekness” conjures up the image of weakness. But the Bible offers a vastly different concept of meekness. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul examines how meekness, gentleness, strength, and self-control operate hand in hand.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to distinguish between the popular concept of meekness and the biblical concept of meekness.
2. To be able to explain the difference between power and authority.
3. To understand the relationship between gentleness and self-control.

QUOTATIONS

Perhaps no grace is less prayed for or less cultivated than gentleness.

— George Bethune

Gentle words fall lightly, but they have great weight.

— Derick Bingham

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The fruit of the Spirit includes meekness or gentleness.
 - 1. The popular conception of meekness imagines a person who is shy, timid, and fearful.
 - 2. In Scripture, meekness is a virtue attributed to some of the most powerful characters in the Bible (Matt. 5:5, 11:29).
 - 3. Gentleness does not exclude the possibility of strength but presupposes it.
 - 4. What is the relationship between strength and gentleness?
 - a. The difference between power and authority.
 - b. The practical principle: The more power and authority you have, the more you need to combine them with gentleness (2 Tim. 1:7).
 - 5. The opposite of gentleness is abrasiveness and arrogance.
 - 6. Gentleness is the manifestation of tenderness (Isa. 40:1-2).
- B. The last fruit is temperance or self-control.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit is not the author of confusion but of order, harmony, and self-control.
 - 2. It is characteristic of the growing Christian to develop the ability to bridle the wild impulses that lead to destruction.
 - 3. The temperate person lives within restraints and keeps his life under control.

STUDY QUESTIONS—MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1. In Scripture, meekness is a virtue attributed to some of the Bible's most _____ characters.
 - a. Godless
 - b. Powerful
 - c. Weak
 - d. Unsavory
- 2. Gentleness does not exclude the possibility of _____; it presupposes it.
 - a. Divinity
 - b. Leadership
 - c. Sin
 - d. Strength
- 3. The more power and authority one has, the more one needs to combine them with _____.
 - a. Ruthlessness
 - b. Gentleness
 - c. Autonomy
 - d. The trappings of success

4. Since Christians possess the power of God, they must temper that power with gentleness lest they _____ others.
 - a. Intimidate
 - b. Corrupt
 - c. Ignore
 - d. Outshine
5. Self-control is a manifestation of the Spirit, who is not the author of confusion but of _____.
 - a. Scripture
 - b. Divinization
 - c. Order
 - d. Both b and c
6. The growing Christian develops the ability to bridle the wild impulses that lead to _____.
 - a. Happiness
 - b. Glorification
 - c. Destruction
 - d. Both a and b
7. The temperate or self-controlled person lives within _____.
 - a. His self-imposed rules
 - b. A monastery
 - c. Antinomianism
 - d. Restraints
8. Gentleness is the manifestation of _____.
 - a. Tenderness
 - b. Power
 - c. The flesh
 - d. Both a and c

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following biblical texts teach us about gentleness?
 - a. Matthew 11:28–30
 - b. 2 Timothy 2:23–26
2. What does Isaiah 40:1–2 say about tenderness?

3. Read the following Scriptures, and explain what they have to say about using authority with gentleness.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 10:1–6
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 2:7–9
4. What do the following texts of Scripture teach about self-control?
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:4–8
 - b. Titus 2:11–12
 - c. 1 Peter 1:13–16
 - d. 1 Peter 4:7
 - e. 1 Peter 5:8–9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of person do you envision as meek? Does Jesus Christ fit your conception of a meek person? Explain.
2. Dr. Sproul mentions a popular book entitled *Winning Through Intimidation*. What do those who live by this secular philosophy usually win? What do they lose?
3. The political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli taught that a leader is better off making his subjects fear him rather than gently trying to win their love. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Read Colossians 2:20–23. What is the difference between self-control as a fruit of the Spirit and self-discipline or sheer willpower?

APPLICATION

1. Identify one area in which you need to develop self-control. Recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the source of a Christian's self-control, what practical steps can you take to allow Him to develop this fruit in your life?
2. Medieval Christian author Thomas á Kempis said, "Habit is overcome by habit." List two or three positive habits you want to form, and begin to work on developing at least one of them this week.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

Growing to Maturity

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

When James Garfield was president of Hiram College, a man asked him to shorten the required curriculum for his son. “He wants to graduate quickly,” said the father. “Can you arrange it?” “It depends on what you want to make of him,” Garfield replied. “When God makes an oak, He takes centuries. But He only takes two months to make a squash.” There are no shortcuts to maturity in education or in spiritual growth. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul will examine what it is we all need to reach maturity in Christ: commitment, perseverance, patience, and the diligent use of the means of grace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith.
2. To be able to distinguish between those areas in which we are to be childlike and those areas in which we are called to maturity.
3. To understand that patience is required for full growth to maturity.

QUOTATIONS

The Christian’s armour decays two ways: either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptation to sin; or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means which are as oil to keep it clean and bright.

— William Gurnall

Neither be idle in the means, nor make an idol of the means.

— William Secker

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Christian's goal is sanctification.
 - 1. The process of sanctification leads to an ultimate terminal point: a consuming work of grace called glorification (1 John 3:1-2).
 - 2. In the meantime, we "know in part" (1 Cor. 13:8-10).
- B. We are called to be both childlike and mature in our faith (1 Cor. 13:11).
 - 1. To think, understand, and act as a child is perfectly appropriate for children.
 - 2. A grave misunderstanding can result.
 - a. Some people refuse to seriously study the Word of God, giving the excuse, "I want to preserve a childlike faith."
 - b. The Bible calls us to be childlike but not childish.
 - 3. To be childlike means that at certain points, we are called to resemble children.
 - a. We must have confidence in our heavenly Father and trust Him implicitly.
 - b. The Bible calls us to be babes in regard to evil.
 - 4. We are called to "in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature" (1 Cor. 14:20).
- C. To reach fullness of fruit takes nurturing and time.
 - 1. Everyone is looking for instant growth.
 - 2. The classic, traditional method of growth is to make diligent use of the means of grace.
 - a. The means of grace are tools that facilitate growth.
 - b. The means of grace are prayer, Bible study, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, fellowship, and service.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Sanctification leads to an ultimate end: a consummative work of grace called _____.
 - a. Glorification
 - b. Regeneration
 - c. Divinization
 - d. Justification
- 2. Which of the following statements is not true of glorification?
 - a. All sin is eradicated from our beings.
 - b. We are deified.
 - c. We see God face to face.
 - d. Our longing for God is fully satisfied.

3. The Bible calls us to be childlike but not _____.
 - a. Babes
 - b. Wise
 - c. Childish
 - d. Both b and c

4. To be childlike in our faith, we must have such confidence in God that we trust Him _____.
 - a. Normally
 - b. Usually
 - c. Often
 - d. Implicitly

5. The Bible calls us to be babes in regard to evil and _____ in regard to understanding.
 - a. Childlike
 - b. Mature
 - c. Ignorant
 - d. Both b and c

6. There are no _____ to spiritual growth.
 - a. Means
 - b. Guides
 - c. Shortcuts
 - d. Both a and c

7. The tools necessary for spiritual growth are referred to as _____.
 - a. Means of grace
 - b. Laws
 - c. Ceremonies
 - d. None of the above

8. Which of the following means of grace is also a sacrament?
 - a. Baptism
 - b. The Lord's Supper
 - c. Fellowship
 - d. Both a and b

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following passages of Scripture teach us about glorification?
 - a. Romans 8:28–30
 - b. 1 John 3:1–3
2. Examine the following texts of Scripture, which call believers to be childlike. What does their context indicate about the meaning of this call?
 - a. Matthew 11:25
 - b. Matthew 18:1–5
 - c. Mark 10:15
 - d. Philippians 2:15
3. What do the following texts of Scripture indicate about maturity?
 - a. 1 Corinthians 13:11
 - b. Hebrews 5:11–6:3
 - c. 1 Peter 2:2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1–4. What words, attitudes, or actions might be typical of “baby” Christians but are not appropriate for mature believers?
2. 1 Corinthians 14:20 says to be babes in regard to malice. What do you gain or lose by being innocent of malice (or evil), by not seeking to be “worldly wise”?
3. Do you see Christians avoiding serious study of doctrine and theology in the Church today? What excuses have you heard (or used yourself) against serious study? How would you now respond to those excuses?
4. Read 1 Peter 3:15–16. Have you ever had a discussion with a non-Christian in which you felt ill-prepared to defend or explain your beliefs? How did it affect you?
5. Having completed this series on Developing Christian Character, what new areas of understanding will you draw on to promote your long-term growth? How will you move toward increasingly effective use of the tools God has provided to aid your growth in grace?

APPLICATION

1. Assess your attitude toward the serious study of Scripture. Is your Bible study what it should be in light of your call to be mature in Christ? In addition to Bible study, what other in-depth study are you now pursuing? What measures can you begin to implement immediately to promote more serious Bible study?

2. Read a thoughtful book on the Christian life or one of the classics of Christian literature by a writer such as Augustine, Calvin, or Luther. Discover what contributed most to the author's maturity in Christ.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*

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