



**THE COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
ST. GEORGE AND ST. RUEISS CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM**

**88 LESSONS ON
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

Revised Edition 2019

PREPARATION AND WRITING

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Παποστολος

Πατρις

Μαρκος





THE THRICE-BLESSED POPE SHENOUDA III
OF BLESSED MEMORY



HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate

FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Deir Anba Ruciss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,

CAIRO, EGYPT.

CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.



بطريركية الاقباط الارثوذكسيين

Date / / 19 / / 17

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الى الابن البشري المبارك القوم مرقس الياسن عبد المسيح
والذين تادرس يعقوب ملطي

سلام رحمة وبعد .

بارفي ابنا د. محفوظ رحمه النهج القترح لدارس
التربية الكنسية بالمهجر . وقد درست مع الخطوط الاساسية
للمنهج ، وانه الدخول في التفاصيل . وابدت له بعض ملاحظات
من جهة مناهج العقيدة والحس . وفي الواقع انه الجهد المبذول
جهد كبير جداً بتمه الشكر . ومع ذلك تحتاج دروس الكتاب
المقدس الى زيادة . وسأرسل لكم ملاحظات اخري بالتفصيل بمشيئة

الرب .

فليبارك الرب كل ما قام به ابنا محفوظ من جهود في اعداد
المنهج ، وفي جمع المادة ، وفي عمل الترجمة . وليبارك الرب
ايضاً كل ما اشتركوا في العمل ، وفي المراجعة
ويمكنه صدقنا هو ما نتطلع اليه من كان على قدر
امكاننا ابنا . ويمكنه ترميد المنهج ايضاً بالصورة المناسبة والتي
تقرها كنيتنا به النواحي العقيدية والطقسية والتاريخية
الرب معكم . كوفناً جيد

٤٩
١٩٨٦/٨/٢٤
سيد القديس اغناطيوس

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate

FROM H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Deir Anba Ruciss, Ramses Avenue, ABBASSIYA,

CAIRO, EGYPT.

CABLE : ELANBARUEISS, CAIRO.



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To my blessed two sons: Hegomain Fr. Marcous Elias Abdel Massih and Hegomain Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty.

Peace and love be with you.

Dr. Mahfouz has visited me and brought with him the suggested Sunday school curriculum for the land of immigration. I have studied with him the basic topics of the curriculum without getting into details. Although that I have pointed out some concerns on the doctrine and dogma curriculum, it is clear that the amount of work spent on preparing the curriculum is huge and worth thanking. Nonetheless, the Bible study part of the curriculum needs to be increased. God willing, I will also send you additional details on this curriculum.

May the Lord bless all the effort that our son Mahfouz has done in preparing the Sunday school curriculum, in collecting the relevant topics, and in performing the translation of subjects. May the Lord also bless all those who have joined him in preparing this project and those who revised the topics.

Let our goal be performing our best to try and arrive at perfection given what we have from abilities. Lastly, I would also suggest the addition of different recognized pictures according to our doctrine, dogma and history to the Sunday school curriculum.

May the Lord be with you. Be in peace.

Signed

Pope Shenouda III

22 August 1986

The feast of St. Mary

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IMPORTANT RULES FOR TEACHING THE YOUTH IN THE LAND OF IMMIGRATION

Our youth in the land of immigration are influenced by the society and the culture they live in. This is perfectly normal and inevitable.

Despite the similarities in the content of the Sunday school curriculum and the youth meeting topics across all the churches in the world, the difference lies in the presentation of the topic and the ability to tailor the content to fit the audience's background, culture and spiritual needs. This would greatly increase the topic's comprehension and its receptiveness.

In Saint Paul's sermon to the Jews (Acts 13: 16-41) he spoke to them regarding Moses the arch-prophet and gave an account of their experiences with our Lord throughout their history. Moreover, in another instance, he spoke to the Greek philosophers (Acts 17: 18-33) in a manner that suited their cultural background. In both cases the content is equivalent, both sermons aim to convey the message of salvation that our Lord Jesus Christ granted us on the cross.

Therefore, whether the Sunday school / youth servants are first generation immigrants or are born in the land of immigration, it is important to observe the following guidelines in conveying the topic:

1. Correctness of the language and its clarity: the servant must prepare the topic in an accurate, clear & coherent language. This language should be the audience's preferred language
2. Organization: Our children live in a society where organization and punctuality are governing characteristics, hence, it is imperative to adopt those characteristics to portray to our children that our services and churches are adhering to the norms of the society.
3. Respect: mutual respect is the prevailing trait in the western societies, as a result respect ought to be maintained at all times between the servant and those being served. This is manifested in good communication skills such as listening without interjecting and using appropriate, respectful words.

4. Dialogue: constructive discussions and valuing each other's opinions are fundamental in the western societies. Dialogue often leads to persuasion and mutual love as opposed to just giving orders.
5. Give pertinent examples from the children's day to day life: during the topic we must reference examples that are suitable and related for emphasis and clarification.
6. Questioning everything said or heard: Due to all the strong intellectual movements in society, we as servants must be cognizant of any new infiltrating thoughts. This is achieved through research and analysis so one can answer our youth's questions in a convincing intellectual dialogue.
7. Love between the servant and the children: our children often yearn for compassion and love in our fast paced, materialistic society. Thus, it is extremely important that the servant uses expressions of love, affection and harmony.
8. Establish and maintain the bond between the children and the mother church: this is essential to our unity and there ought not to be any division or separation of any sort from the mother church nor its beliefs, holiness, saints, organization or any other matter.
9. We ask all Sunday school and youth servants to abide by the Orthodox Faith and dogma in all the topics and to use ample biblical examples and references.
10. We ask all Sunday school / youth servants to establish a good spiritual relationship with all those being served.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Principal Goal of Christian Upbringing

The child has, a special importance to our Lord Jesus Christ, first as a person and second as a child. He called the children models of perfection, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt 18:3-5).

Therefore, children are beloved ones to Christ and are His friends with their simplicity and purity of heart. Christ called them, blessed them and asked His Disciples and Apostles to take care of bringing up children and to prepare a suitable environment for their spiritual growth.

St. Paul advises parents saying, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged", (Colossians 3:21). From a Christian point of view, the general principal goal of a religious upbringing is the formation of the perfect man of God who follows the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). Also, our Lord said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

Hence, a Christian upbringing is not merely an education to be given or a curriculum to be taught, but it is rather a life that is given through example and behavior through teaching and discipleship. The saintly Fathers of the church have emphasized this fact. St. John said about his practice of life with the Lord "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

The same fact was emphasized by St. Paul when he told his disciple Timothy "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium ... But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:10-15). Also in the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (3:17), "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern". Therefore, the principal goal of a Christian upbringing is to change the life of our children to the life of Christ in them, i.e. to a life based on the work of Christ in them as true Christians and not just religious persons who fear God but deny Him.

The Starting Point in Achieving the Goal of Religious Upbringing

The teacher should not start with the student from power Zero. The student comes equipped with many social and religious experiences. His religious experience, although limited, has a strong basis that is ready for spiritual growth. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the student has already obtained the spiritual birth i.e. he became spiritually reborn. After his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Myroun (Chrism) and the Holy Spirit dwelt in him. St. John said "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you; and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

Therefore, by obtaining these two Holy Sacraments and the Sacrament of Eucharist, the student becomes a member in the body of the Lord and a living part of the body of the Holy Church. This means that a religious upbringing is not something foreign to the student. The student is a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in him. This means that it is not the teacher who makes the student live a life for Christ, but it is the inner work of the Holy Spirit that makes the whole difference. The role of the teacher is to make the student aware of the effect and the work of the Spirit. In this sense the student becomes aware of the secret grace inside him and as a result the divine word inside him grows as the seed grows inside the earth.

The Difference Between Religious Education and Religious Upbringing

We should not aim at providing lessons in the form of giving information, i.e. a mere religious education. In this case religious experience will never exceed the circle of the mind and will never affect the heart and practice of the student. If we consider religious education as an element in religious upbringing, we are in this case following Christ's plan in the development and building of the Christian personality. Christ with His example and His perfection gave us a model which should be followed and achieved. His teachings are meant to be examples and models.

The Need of our Church for a Coptic Orthodox Sunday School Program

There is one basic difference between Eastern and Western theology; the latter depends on study, analysis and using scientific means, whereas Eastern theology is based on experience and depth. The Eastern Church respects the role of the mind but it works under the supervision of faith.

The majority of recent Western Sunday School programs follow a purely analytical way of explaining the Bible. For example, miracles are explained through psychological and scientific factors. The man of God must accept miracles and believe them as they are. St. Athanasius said, "Our knowledge must not control (or have authority over) the word, but the word itself must have the control and authority over the mind".

Another basic difference is that our traditional Church uses the rites in education as a key in the process of living what is being taught.

Over and above what was mentioned before in relation to the basic differences in religious education between Eastern and Western churches, there are also basic differences in the various beliefs and the way Christianity is lived.

We, as parents, teachers and clergy, are responsible in front of God to bring up our children according to the same spiritual Orthodox principles that we received from our saintly Fathers who shed their blood to perpetuate the perfect Orthodox Faith. Therefore, our children must learn from the same source from which we learned before them.

The Sunday School program in your hands is a fruit of love granted by our Lord Jesus Christ to our children and a gift from Him to them. This program is purely Coptic Orthodox. All its references without exception are Coptic Orthodox (please review the reference list at the end of the book). In this manner all the information that is in this book (as well as all the books in this series) can be used with confidence that it is devised according to our glorified church. The spirit of the lessons is the same spirit as that of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

About the Books

These books are an integrated series which were written for children from age 4 to 18. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, if the child at age 4 follows this series of lessons until age 18, he will obtain a well-rounded spiritual background. The books (from pre-schoolers to grade 12) cover most of the major Biblical subjects of the Old and New Testaments, the celebrations of the church of our Master's feasts, the life of the Saints and their feasts, the divine liturgy with its rites and spirituality, the true Christian life and Christian behavior, church sacraments, fasting, prayers, the creed and its explanation, the Ecumenical Councils, the difference between the various major Christian sects, the Christian family, the history of our church, the major personalities in the Holy Bible, ... etc. The program is indeed comprehensive and it covers all the key areas of our Orthodox church. If these lessons were given in the spiritual way that was emphasized before, great results will be expected with the work of the Holy Spirit.

General Rules and Principles to be Followed by the Sunday School Teachers

- 1) The teacher must know the stage and the characteristics of growth of the children that he or she is teaching. A child who is 12 years old is different than a child who is 8 years old. The teacher must know the level of his/her students, their abilities to receive information that he/she is giving and the differences between the various abilities in the same class.
- 2) The positive participation of the students is very important during the lesson and the effectiveness of teaching. One of the key incentives for the student is to give importance to the lesson and have an effective communication with the teacher and, above all, to define clearly the purpose behind it and present the lesson in the form of problems that attract their attention.

- 3) The teacher must follow the psychological order of the facts he is presenting. Our Lord Jesus Christ effectively used the psychological method of teaching through parables. The parables in their simplicity are drawn from the daily life of the people. We must emphasize here that this psychological method is not the only method of spiritual teaching. We should mention this method as one of the methods used. It is quite important to note that spiritual teaching must be imparted with certain goals in mind which are connected with the life of the children and related to the problems they face. We should provide guidance that is most needed for them.
- 4) The teacher must present the lesson and illustrate it with relevant information and present it as a coherent unity without ambiguity or contradiction. He may use illustrations to help him explain what he means.
- 5) Application of Christian principles to social life must be emphasized in every lesson. The teacher should use stories, from the Old or New Testaments or from church history or church books, to attract the attention of the students and show the Christian principle in an applied manner. The teacher also may divide the subject into stages or small subjects. A good practice is to summarize the lesson or better still, ask the students themselves to summarize it.
- 6) The manner of expressing the lesson to the students is also very important. A teacher who is living by what he/she teaches will be more effective in conveying his/her message. A teacher who is teaching under spiritual influence with compatible emotions to what he/she teaches will be more effective than a teacher who is merely providing information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From someone who is not capable, and does not know anything, was taken and lead by hand, step by step, from the smallest to the largest thing for this work to be done.

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.” Isaiah 40:29

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” John 1:3

On behalf of the Coptic Orthodox children and youth, who are going to benefit a great deal from this revised Sunday School Program, I would like to express a word of appreciation and gratitude to:

The Thrice-Blessed Pope Shenouda III of Blessed Memory

This program leans quite heavily on the writings of His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III. The majority of the contents of the lessons and their attachments are based on His Holiness' writings. This is a very bright and important aspect of this program. In 1986, during the time in which there was no Coptic Orthodox Sunday School program in the land of immigration, His Holiness reviewed the general contents of the program, commented and modified many key subjects, and then authorized the use of this program in all churches outside of Egypt, on a preliminary basis.

I can safely say that, if it was not for His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III's support, wisdom, and writings, these series of books would not exist. The whole generation is in debt to His Holiness the Late Pope Shenouda III, not only because of his great teachings and writings, but also because of his love and leadership.

His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

I had the blessing of meeting His Holiness in 2013 in Austria and I suggested to him about updating and revising the previous version of the Sunday School Program. His encouragement, wisdom, and follow up were key to the development and completion of this program.

His Grace Bishop Reweiss

His Grace Bishop Reweiss has been behind us all the way with his love and guidance. He wrote the forward for our previous version of the program in 1986.

His Grace Bishop Moussa

His Grace Bishop Moussa has provided constant support and encouragement in the completion of the previous program. Of course, His Grace's writings for the youth have been utilized in all the subjects directed towards the youth, in this book.

Fr. Tadros Malaty and Fr. Marcos Marcos

These Beloved Fathers reviewed thoroughly all of the contents of the first six books of the earliest version of the program. Their dedication, experience, and wisdom have been an important factor in the quality of all the material. They contributed greatly towards setting up the lessons, in that sense. Father Tadros Malaty's deep writings, without any doubt, have been a key reference in the majority of the lessons.

Dr. Fayek M. Ishak

Dr. Fayek Ishak (head of the English Department at Lakehead University) reviewed the first six books of the earliest version of the program. He contributed, immensely, towards the setup of the lessons.

Fr. Makary Silwanis

This beloved father's computer skills were utilized in many functions related to this Sunday School Program. His love and encouragement were key factors to the progress of this program.

Tassoni Ragaa

The continuous support and encouragement of Tassoni Ragaa played an essential role in the write-up of the previous version of the program, as well as in this revision. One of the aspects that kept this program centered and on track was her continuous reminder that this program is for generations to come and every effort is worthwhile for the sake of the upbringing of the children and youth.

The Youth of St. George and St. Rueiss Coptic Orthodox Church

A main contributor to this project was Monica Gad, who valued and recognized the importance of having a Sunday School program.

Comments and proof-readings of many of the youth are greatly appreciated.

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TEACHER'S GUIDELINES:

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM?

1. The teacher should realize that each lesson has been prepared to cover a specific topic.
2. The teacher should read all the materials referred to in the lesson, the Holy Bible as well as any articles associated with the lesson, and then proceed by emphasizing all the points.
3. The teacher should enlarge the picture ahead of each lesson and use it as a visual aid.
4. The teacher should discuss the practical applications of the lesson.
5. The teacher should summarize the main points with the students and give prizes.

FEATURES OF THIS SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

A COMPREHENSIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. This Sunday School program was the very first program to be written in the lands of immigration. This work was initiated in 1974, and the first version was published in 1986. We thank our heavenly Father, Who has given us the opportunity to extensively revise and improve it, in 2005.
2. In this version of the program, any repetition that was in the previous program, has been removed, all lessons were upgraded in both coverage and depth. Moreover, a whole new book, on contemporary issues, has been added.
3. The contemporary issues book covers subjects that are important for children and youth in today's world. These lessons are optional. For churches with regular youth group meetings, these issues would best be discussed during those meetings. On the other hand, for churches that do not hold regular youth group meetings, these issues could be discussed as part of the Sunday School program.
4. This version of the program also includes lessons, which form a basis for a missionary service, a service that should in the ideal situation be practiced by every member of our congregation. The objective is that each child, every youth, and in the long run each Coptic individual can behave and act in a way, which is the embodiment of the teaching and tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In other words, our congregation would become role models in their communities, which could attract people to our Lord Jesus Christ through their good practices: sincerity, commitment, hard work and dedication, tolerance, forgiveness, and all the other good qualities that differentiate a good practicing Christian from those who merely have a Christian education.
5. In this Sunday School Program, we depended heavily on the writings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III as a reference for most of the presented material.
6. The lessons in this version of the program have already been tried in Sunday School classes, reviewed, improved and tried again. This ensures that the lessons are relevant and suit the level of the students.
7. In this version of the program, an effort was made to ensure that every aspect of the Christian life in the Coptic Orthodox Church was covered.

8. This Sunday School Program is not merely about giving specific education on Christianity to our children and youth but it is rather an attempt to deeply affect their feelings and spirituality. It is believed that such an approach will facilitate the practical application of the various aspects involved so that Christianity becomes a way of life for the individual, with deeply rooted Christian values, which is revealed in their behaviour and attitude.

9. All copyrights of other Sunday School programs, and other writers, have been fully respected.

10. In this version, each lesson comes complete with pictures and songs that are suitable for the lesson.

11. This Sunday school program comes in various formats, for convenience. In addition to being available on this website for widespread use, it is also available, upon request, in hard copy format or on CD.

12. It is our strong belief that this Sunday School program will play a vital role in the spiritual upbringing of our children. May the Lord bless this Sunday School program and all other programs, for the growth of His Kingdom in us.

THE PREPARATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

A. What is a Sunday School Lesson?

1. It is not a record of events that we convey to the students with the hope of appearing to satisfy the required preparation process in front of other people. Neither is it a lecture that we deliver to our audience or student regardless of their interest in the matter.

2. However, it is, on one hand, a fruit of the interaction between the servant and the lesson and, on the other hand, between the servant and the students. The Holy Spirit matures this fruit and directs this service towards the salvation of the students and towards the glory of God.

For if the servant teaches the people does not teach himself, the voice of the Lord rebukes him saying, " You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself ? " (Romans 2:21), and again in James 3:1, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

Therefore, the servant should engage himself in the lesson through prayers, relevant spiritual readings, and practical application, so that when the servant speaks with his students from experience and true knowledge. Then he says, with St. John the Beloved, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-" (1 John 1:1)

If a servant is not aware of the spiritual level of his students, he may burden them with instructions and lessons which they cannot handle nor apply and this, in turn, may cause the students to go astray and lose their eternal life. Therefore, it is crucial for the servant to establish a healthy, trustworthy, and fruitful relationship with his students, as well as to share in their joys and cheers, and their sadness and fears, all towards Jesus Christ. This is what St. Paul refers to in his epistle to the Galatians when he says, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). This close relationship with the students allows the servant to choose the most appropriate lesson that applies to his or her needs.

Hence a Sunday School lesson is:

The live mixture of the personal lives of the servants and the students through the lesson and the Holy Spirit creates this mixture and through Him, bears of fruit.

B. The Requirements for Sunday School Lessons

1. Humility in prayer before God.

God said, "...for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

My beloved brethren, sit down in peace and tranquility with the Lord and talk to Him about your personal need for Him in your service. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray saying, " Guide me dear God. What would you like my students and I to learn this week ? " Be obedient to His voice. It would be good to maintain a prayer time which equals that of the lesson.

2. Accurate knowledge of the meanings contained within the lesson.

This is achieved through:

a) Occupying yourself throughout the week with understanding the new lesson, from the end of the previous lesson until the end of the new one. It is wise to use your free time, time before sleep, and time with fellow servants to increase and enhance your understanding of the lesson.

b) Resorting to spiritual and religious references and literature to help you develop the right understanding and concepts behind the lines.

c) Resorting to general educational references and literature to embody this understanding and these concepts, making them clear in the minds of your students.

3. Aids of presentation.

It is important that you transform your understanding of the lesson into a simple and clear presentation. It has been stated and proved that 85% of knowledge acquired is acquired through the sense of sight and visual learning as opposed to the 10% that is acquired through the sense of hearing. The rest of the knowledge acquired is done so through the other three senses.

In reality, the least effective way of transmitting knowledge to others is by merely talking; this has the weakest influence on the students. In contrast, the most effective way to teach is to use the "Learning by Doing" method, which requires enough time as well as sound experience.

What differentiates between the effectiveness of the two means of presentation are the tools used in the presentation. These tools aid the students in effectively understanding and retaining the purpose of the lesson by engaging both senses of sight and sound. These tools may include audio-visual devices such as pictures and movies, spiritual trips and outings, role playing during class, intellectually stimulating games, etc.

C. Recording the lesson.

It is recommended that the servant records the following during the preparation of the lesson:

- Date of the preparation of the lesson.
- Date of the delivery of the lesson.
- Title of the lesson.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON

- References.
- Preface.
- Lesson.
- Inference.
- Bible verse.
- Homework.
- Aids of presentation.
- Other points for memory.
- Songs.
- Personal reflections of the servant.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

It is necessary for the servant to clearly understand the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of his preparation. It is also necessary that the purpose of the lesson should agree with the maturity level of the students. For example, it is more appropriate for children to learn about God's love; on the other hand, learning about the power of God in their lives and in the lives of the saints is more appropriate subject matter for youth. As for young adults, learning about Christian virtues and spiritual practices is most appropriate. Most importantly, the purpose of the lessons should agree with Coptic Orthodox Christian teachings, whether in specific occasions or in general.

References:

References could include:

- a. Stories, examples, verses, etc. from the Holy Bible.
- b. Spiritual books and literature.
- c. General educational books and literature.

Recording the references is very useful for the servant because it helps the servant to refer back to them, if forgotten.

Preface:

The preface is the background of the lesson. It cultivates the thoughts of the students and directs their thoughts towards the lesson. This allows the lesson to be implanted in their minds and to, eventually, bear fruit.

It is important that the preface remain simple, short, and concise. The introduction could be in the form of focused questions, but should not be in the form of stories. Several stories in one lesson may deteriorate its effectiveness.

The Lesson:

The lesson could be divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction - it should be quick and concise and related to the preface. It should introduce the lesson smoothly without interrupting the chain of thoughts.

2. Body of the lesson - it contains the principle subject of the lesson, and follows these guidelines:

- a. You must be accurate and careful when explaining theological concepts.
- b. You must be careful when relating events and examples to elucidate the subject of the lesson, in order to properly guide the students' imagination without restricting it.
- c. You must diligently expose the Coptic Orthodox doctrine in the lesson.
- d. You should not use more than one story during the lesson and the story should be relevant to the subject matter.

3. Focal Point - the point during the lesson at which the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined. (Examples: The Lord responds to the prayers of a needy person, or the angels come to give the saints their heavenly crowns and take them to heaven after many trials and persecutions.)

4. Conclusion - it should be, like the introduction, short and concise. It can summarize the purpose of the lesson, without introducing any new concepts.

Inferences:

Inference is a method used to determine how much the students have absorbed and retained from the lesson. It should be in the form of questions with the following guidelines:

THEY SHOULD CLEARLY SHOW THE PURPOSE OF THE LESSON.

- a. They should suit the maturity of the students.
- b. They should be simple and direct.
- c. They should link to each other.
- d. They should not be `Yes' or `No' questions.
- e. They should each have one correct answer.

Bible Verse:

The memorization of a Bible verse is an excellent way to help the students remember the purpose of the lesson. The chosen Bible verse should meet the following guidelines:

It should show the purpose of the lesson clearly.

- a. It should be short which allows it to be easily memorized.
- b. Children can easily memorize, as well as understand it.

Homework:

The height of your diligence in preparing the lesson is in choosing the proper and effective homework or application. The homework should have the following characteristics:

- a. It should contain practical applications that apply to everyday life.
- b. It should suit the maturity level of the students.
- c. It should help in mastering the comprehension and retention of the lesson.
- d. It should not include more than one instruction, in order to simplify the application of the lesson.

INTRODUCTION

The Need for Contemporary Issues Book

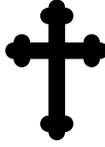
We are pleased to present to the Coptic Orthodox Community a set of lessons on contemporary issues that we hope will be helpful for Sunday School teachers and youth group counselors. These lessons will educate and equip the servants of Christ to better deal with the practical issues and problems our children and youth face today.

The servants may replace some of the lessons in the regular Sunday School program with these lessons. They may also use these lessons during children/youth group meetings or during conventions.

This wealth of material can also be distributed to the children and the youth to read and enrich their spiritual understanding. We leave this wealth of material in the hands of God for the benefit of the children and youth, for the glory of His Name.

Fr. Rueiss Awad

PERSONAL ISSUE TOPICS



HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM (I)

Please read 2 Tim 1:1-7 and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons on self-esteem. In this lesson we focus on the importance of having healthy self-esteem. Bad self-esteem is a curse.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power
and of love and of a sound mind.”
2 Tim. 1:7*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

Some believe self-esteem and the Bible don't mix. Others are convinced there is no better place to find self-respect and self-acceptance.

The truth is that self-esteem can be pursued with pride or humility. It can be cultivated within the boundaries of Biblical wisdom (and it produces healthy self-esteem) or without it (and it produces bad self-esteem).

B. WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

It means several things. It means self-respect, self-acceptance, determination to go further in life, self-confidence and good actions.

C. Examples of healthy self-esteem versus bad self-esteem

Two people were students in high school. One seemed to have everything going for him while the other had a lot to overcome. The first came from a rich family, had good looks, grew up in an expensive neighborhood, and had many of the social privileges usually associated with wealth and success. The other one was plain in appearance, came from a working-class family and had to work hard to get good marks.

We asked them both about their feelings. The first one said that he was full of self-doubt, didn't like the way he looked and suspected that others paid attention to him only because of his family's money. The second was amazingly happy, well-adjusted and thoughtfully aware of her limitations and was determined to go further in life than others thought she could.

They were two people with different ways of looking at themselves. He had bad self-esteem while she had a healthy self-esteem. Together they remind us that we all have a way of looking at ourselves that influences whether we feel adequate or inadequate, likeable or unlikable, valuable or worthless.

What causes this great difference in the feelings of these two people?

We have found out the answer. Our opinion of ourselves depends largely on how we have learned to think about ourselves from the "important people" in our lives. If the "significant others" in our life have helped us to feel important and loved, we will be inclined to have a healthy opinion of ourselves. If they have given us reason to feel inadequate or unneeded, we are apt to find ourselves thinking:

- ‡ There is something wrong with me.
- ‡ I do not belong here.
- ‡ I do not like myself.
- ‡ I do not have what it takes.
- ‡ I do not compare well.
- ‡ I want to hide.

Bad self-esteem is a curse. Another type of bad self-esteem that is cultivated because of false hope given in education by the media and even in religious circles. It is self-confidence that says:

- † I can be anything I want to be.
- † I deserve more.
- † I do not need anyone else's help.
- † I do not have any regrets.
- † I do not have any fears.

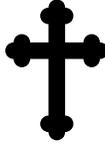
Instead, the right kind of self-esteem rests on a fair assessment of our real strengths and weaknesses. A healthy self-esteem expresses itself with a confidence they says:

- † My life has a purpose.
- † I can be anything God enables me to be.
- † I will seek forgiveness for my wrongs.
- † I belong here.
- † I can love and be loved.
- † I need others as they need me.

Healthy self-esteem is a blessing.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. To avoid the two bad types of self-esteem described above.
2. Review our situation and have a realistic assessment of our life.
3. Men and women who experienced rejection in their early years often struggle for the rest of their lives trying to feel good about themselves. Let us develop the attitude from now on that it is not other people's opinion about us which shapes our feelings. We are sons and daughters of God and belong to Him.



HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM – (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the second lesson in a series of two lessons on self-esteem. In this lesson we focus on Christian self-esteem.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“For You are my hope. O Lord God, You are my trust
from my youth.”
Ps. 71:5*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

Start by reviewing the previous lesson and emphasize that people may have poor self-esteem due to their upbringing or because of their lack of dependence on God or because of false hopes or because of lack of faith or all these reasons put together.

B. Christian Self-Esteem

1. Self-esteem with humility

In the book of Sirach of the Old Testament: “My son with humility has self-esteem; prize yourself as you deserve. Who will acquit him who condemns himself? Who will honor him who discredits himself?” (Sirach 10:31-32)

This verse has two ideas. The first one is clear that Christian self-esteem is based on humility because the Holy Spirit in us does not work with people who are filled with pride. The second idea in this verse is that Christians depend on God's protection and gifts, and they respect and honor themselves on that basis. This means self-respect and self-honor are based on giving glory to God not to the self.

Basing self-esteem on humility and giving glory to God removes the bad type of self-esteem that is based on pride and dependence on personal abilities and possessions.

St. Paul said "For I say through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" Rom.12:3. As we read on Rom.12:4-12 we find the Bible telling us to think of ourselves as people who are mutually reliant on one another's strength.

When St. Paul used the word "soberly" he was discouraging his readers from believing that they could do anything they wanted to do. Instead of Paul encouraged them to have a sobriety about themselves that is rooted in realism. So, St. Paul is asking his readers to think of themselves as people who understand their dependence on (1) God and (2) one another.

Therefore it is important to have a healthy self-image that reflects our dependence on God.

Example to show the meaning here:

Think about a child who has a big brother for protection. How would the child feel in front of friends at school? If there is praise involved the child would feel good about himself. The praise is toward the big brother but the result is the child feeling good about himself or herself which is a separate thing. In other words, the result is that we are made to feel confident because of the praise of God's work in us.

2. Self-esteem based on God's measure, not people

St. Paul wrote "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and

comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends” (2 Cor. 10:12, 18).

So we should not compare ourselves to others, or to listen to what others say about us, but we have to think of what God will think of us. We do not have to praise ourselves. We do not have to look for people’s praise for us to be good. We are good because God is with us and we are doing our share all the time under His direction.

3. Self-esteem as a by-product of the nearness of God

We should feel good about ourselves as a by-product of the nearness of God, not by esteeming ourselves directly. We should feel good about ourselves and have confidence as a result of the nearness of God, but not because of self-directed praise. This is King David’s approach to this important issue “But it is good for me to draw near to God, I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.” Ps. 73:28. He also said in his Psalms “O my soul, you have said to the Lord, You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from you” Ps.16:2. So we must keep thanking the Lord and always doing our share.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON:

1. Christian self-esteem is a healthy one. It has the tendency to act and move forward based on taking its direction and support from God.
2. Christian self-esteem is based on thanking God and enjoying every moment of our life.
3. Christian self-esteem is not interested in judging others or having conflicts with others or worrying about things.



HOW TO IMPROVE ACADEMICALLY

PLEASE READ: 3 John 2, John 15:4-5 and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

In this lesson we would like to show the importance of doing well at school and how this can be achieved.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”
3 John 1:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Let us be convinced first of the importance of doing well academically

1. We as children of God must be good examples in everything because the Lord has given us a lot. See the above memory verse. When we do very well at school, we glorify God’s name.
2. If we do well academically, we can establish good careers for our lives. So, for the rest of our life, we do not have to suffer in bad jobs.
3. By having good careers for ourselves we can serve our church community as well as society in general. We help the needy and the poor in all places of the world.
4. By doing well in our careers, we will be good examples for our children when we grow up and form our families.

B. Set your goals clearly

1. School gives us not only a degree but also personal capabilities.
2. School contributes to our personal growth (spiritually, socially...etc.)

C. To do well in school, guard your feelings

† Avoid negative feelings that can come to you from friends and others. To achieve this one has to have the three S's:

† Spiritual atmosphere

† Spiritual program

† Spiritual father

PLEASE READ: John 15:4-5

D. Perform well at school

† Get to know your teacher.

† Have an excellent relationship with your teacher.

† Choose courses you like.

† Never miss classes.

† Sit in the front row.

† Do not be shy to ask questions.

† Ask the teacher, how you can get higher marks.

† Learn to write fast, in big letters.

† Know how the marks are distributed between assignments, tests, final exams. ... etc.

E. Perform well at home

† Read at home or at least glance at the lesson of the next day.

† Study smarter: in short bursts do right things not things right.

† Focus, focus, focus.

† Draw pictures or diagrams to describe or clarify what you read.

† Study one thing at a time. Do not think of all things you have to study.

† Use notebooks not separate sheets.

† Never be a last minute person.

† Be careful of the Internet. Do not abuse this tool.

F. Perform well in assignments and exams

† Although marks are given for right answers and not for hard word or time spent, remember that as a Christian our focus is on the process – do your best to study hard, and study smart.

† Use an erasable pen.

† Experiment with previous tests and exams.

† Do not spend too much time on any one question.

G. Have some fun

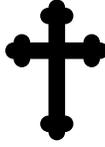
- ‡ Sports, walks, hymns, music, songs, short trips, youth group activities.
- ‡ Smile, smile, smile.

H. Be persistent and keep trying

- ‡ Never give up.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

We can do better at school if we observe the above mentioned points. With prayers and the help of God, we can do very well.



AVOID ANGER

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

In this lesson we will discuss: (a) human anger, (b) God's anger and (c) The Christian's anger. We must avoid getting angry.

MEMORY VERSE:

"A quick-tempered man acts foolishly..."
Proverbs 14:17

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Human Anger

1. Origin and Causes

Anger is a natural emotional reaction which arises when someone, or something:

- ✚ Is a source of doubt, or fear, because of perceived potential for harm or conditions of dependency, or ;
- ✚ Has something you think you want, need or are entitled to, or; is considered indifferently, or as inferior, or is disliked or hated.
- ✚ Anger is an expression of opposition directed towards the person or thing identified as the source of harm, with the intent of: causing harm; preventing change or cause change; restoring the prior condition should change have happened.
- ✚ Since the harm, and the degree of possibility of harm, arising from an event is interpreted differently by different people, it is easy to see why each of us can get angry at different things. Some of us do not get angry at anything.

- † Anger can be more easily provoked by certain activities such as playing games of chance and wagers, the love of possessions, gossip, and association with unpeaceable and vexatious people.
- † Anger may arise from chemical imbalance in the body. This imbalance may be temporary, caused by drugs, food or contaminants. It may become permanent, as the continued input of toxic chemical may cause irreversible changes to the brain.

2. **Expressions of Anger**

Directed towards others:

- † displeasure
- † annoyance
- † irritation
- † exasperation
- † animosity, sarcasm, verbal abuse,
- † ire
- † fury
- † wrath
- † violence

Directed towards self:

- † irrationality
- † depression
- † physical ailments
- † drunkenness
- † addictions

3. **Effects of Anger on the body.**

- † Anger de-commissions the mind. Strong emotion clouds reason, which is why no decision should be made while in the grip of any emotions.
- † Anger is felt in the body. The heart beats faster, and muscles tense. The face may go red, the teeth and hands clench, and breath may be held. Pains in the chest and stomach, as well as stiffening of the neck, muscles and headache can occur.
- † Every time you get angry, the part of the brain associated with anger and aggression changes, and this makes it easier for you to get angry more quickly in the future.

B. God's Anger

1. Origin

“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” Ps. 7:11

God's anger is His natural rational response to the breaching of His laws. It is an expression of opposition directed toward the person identified as wrongdoer with the intent to:

- † prevent worsening
- † cause betterment
- † restore the better condition should worsening have happened;
- † educate others

Knowing no fear, God does not vent His anger on those who are unconnected with the wrongdoer. Evil actions and injustice towards other people will arouse God's anger.

God's anger must be taken seriously, and generally brings about the desired effect.

God is slow to become angry, and quick to stop being angry. His anger last only as long as the wrongdoing persists and repentance is not made.

C. Christian Anger

The origin, cause and expression of Christian anger must work within the limits God has set for us. Christians do not have the right of vengeance, which is a large component of human anger.

Expressions of human anger in a Christian are at best serious failings, and at most willful indulgences.

Since a Christian should not:

- † be doubtful, or fearful, even when faced with perceived potential for harm, or conditions of dependency;
- † have expectations of satisfaction from others;
- † consider others indifferently, or as inferior;

✠ have dislike, or hatred for others or things;
Anger should never arise from these causes.

Anger should be a response to the shortcomings of loved ones, if they are persistent even after rebuke or counseling.

If someone you love, or care about, harms you, or does something unjust or evil, the first reaction should be one of dismay, disappointment, sadness, or some combination of all. If one considers these feelings as a sort of anger then there are limits for these feelings to be acceptable and beyond which they are not acceptable. What and when is anger sinful in Christianity?

1. Anger that exceeds the time limit.

St. Paul said “Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” Eph. 4:26-27.

2. Anger that has no reasonable basis.

Our Lord Jesus said “... whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” Matt. 5:22. We must avoid groundless burst of anger. It can open a door to Satan.

3. Anger that is easily provoked.

St. James wrote “ ... let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:19-20.

Anger is very easily kindled when we do not listen carefully, and when we speak too often.

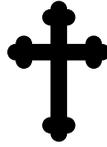
4. Anger that is unforgiving.

Forgiveness is not easy. In fact, when we forgive with God’s help, it is a miracle. When the Lord Jesus was asked if one should forgive seven times, He replied “not seven times, but I tell you seventy times seven times.” Matt. 18:22.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Avoid all situations that trigger your anger. Stay calm.
2. Pray and develop ways and means to control your anger.
3. Overcome evil, and anger, by praying for those who hurt you. Forgive them and ask God to help you in this.
4. Do not speak too often. Listen more, and be careful about what to say.

5. Remember that getting angry does not help in solving problems. In fact, even if you are right, you lose your cause when you become angry.



DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Please read the attached material entitled: “Be not afraid”, “Do not worry”, “Dealing with Anxiety with Thanksgivings”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

In these lessons we like to present the Christian way of dealing with anxiety.

MEMORY VERSE:

“CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.”

1 Peter 5:7

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Introduction

In our world today, worry seems like just a normal way of life. But by reading God’s word, it seems that worry is something we shouldn’t even think of, let alone spend so much of our time experiencing it.

B. TRADE-OFFS

Life is filled with trade-offs. These are not easy decision anymore. Every individual has needs (Bodily, Psychological, Personal and Spiritual). These needs cannot be all satisfied at once. There may be conflict of interest with other people’s needs and there may be contradictions in satisfying those needs. Decision

making is not easy. I have limited options, money, restrictions and personal requirements.

C. Time is a Big factor in causing anxiety.

If you have enough time pray, think and act at your convenience, life will be much easier. But having to act within certain time frame adds pressure and you become too worried and may fall in despair, and become restless and hopeless. Once the time constraint is removed the pressure on the person is reduced.

D. DON'T WORRY

1. Take your eyes off the problems

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” Phil. 4:6-7

Turn your eyes to the Lord Jesus. Look fully into His wondrous face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

2. Think of God's protection

Psalm 91 is a great chapter on God's protection. Verses 9 and 10 say that if you make the Most High your dwelling, even the Lord, who is my refuge, then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

3. Do not be afraid.

Read the passage in Matt 6:25-34. It speaks of God caring so much for us and how valuable we are to Him, that He will supply our needs if we first seek His kingdom. If we keep our minds attentive to Him and live for Him, the worries of life will not seem so important. Psalm 23:4 reminds us that God is with us when it says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Psalm 55:22 says to cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. Again in Isaiah 41:13 He reminds us ... For I am the Lord, Your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. If we have the promises of God that He will help us, what is there that should make us worry?

4. Let us be thankful to God

- ✠ Let us thank God for salvation
- ✠ When we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are blessed, with forgiveness; everlasting life; constant communion with Jesus; divine guidance and provision; and answers to our prayers.
- ✠ The beautiful creation of God.
- ✠ Sometimes when I feel down, I go for a walk and praise God for the beauties of this world. The Lord Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of the field... Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”.
- ✠ The fellowship of the Saints.
- ✠ Our Lord has given us our brothers and sisters in Christ for our enrichment: “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord. (Col 3:16)
- ✠ God’s wonderful promises.
- ✠ When troubles assail, I open my Bible and find a promise that gives me comfort.
- ✠ Thanksgiving does drive away anxiety

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Pray and talk to the Lord about everything. Let God participate with you in all your things: study, work, decisions, meals...etc.
2. Anxiety will disappear as soon as you start to read the scripture and realize with thanksgiving what God is capable of doing for you.
3. Do not look back and think that you had troubles in your life.



DEALING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS (I)

Anger – Fear – Guilt

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the needs or problems of anyone, anywhere and at any time, their answers lie within the Holy Bible. For this the Lord Jesus Christ said: “Search the scripture.” John 5:35.

Whatever our feelings, pain or hopes are: the Bible holds the word of life for the benefit of everyone. Unfortunately, quite often we search for solutions concerning our problems outside the Holy Bible. This document, my dear friend, is a humble attempt to gather some of the verses of the Holy Bible to help you if you encounter one of the following circumstances:

- † Anger.
- † Fear.
- † Guilt.

ANGER

- † “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.” *Psalm 145:8*.
- † “But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.” *Nehemiah 9:17*.
- † “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.” *Ecclesiastes 7:9*.
- † “A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated.” *Proverbs 14:17*.
- † “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” *Proverbs 16:32*.
- † “A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention.” *Proverbs 15:18*.

- † “An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.”
Proverbs 29:22.
- † “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go,
lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.” *Proverbs 22:24-25.*
- † “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret-it only causes harm.”
Psalms 37:8.
- † “Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”
Ephesians 4:26.
- † “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to
overlook a transgression.” *Proverbs 19:11.*
- † “Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry
woman.” *Proverbs 21:19.*
- † “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him
water to drink.” *Proverbs 25:21.*
- † “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause
shall be in danger of the judgement.” *Matt 5:22.*
- † “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from
you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving
one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” *Ephesians 4:31-32.*
- † “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is
written 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, ' says the Lord.” *Romans 12:19.*
- † “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak,
slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of
God.” *James 1:19-20.*

FEAR

- † “Do not fear, the flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the
kingdom.” *Luke 12:32.*
- † “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” *Matt
10:28.*
- † “But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no
faith?’” *Mark 4:40.*
- † “But whoever listens to Me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without
fear of evil.” *Proverbs 3:25-26.*
- † “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your
sleep will be sweet.” *Proverbs 3:24.*
- †

- † “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” *Proverbs 29:25*.
- † “For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you'” *Isaiah 41:13*.
- † “In righteousness you shall be established: You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.” *Isaiah 54:14*.
- † “I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of man who will be made like grass?” *Isaiah 51:12*.
- † “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.” *Isaiah 43:2*.
- † “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” *1 Peter 3:12-14*.
- † “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'” *Romans 8:15*.
- † “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” *Psalms 46:1*.
- † “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge: His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.” *Psalms 91:4-6*.
- † “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.” *Psalms 23:4-5*.
- † “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?” *Psalms 27:1*.
- † “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” *John 14:27*.
- † “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 8:37-39*.

FEELING GUILTY

- † “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” *1 John 1:9*.
- † “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” *1 John 3:20*.
- † “I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.” *1 John 2:12*.
- † “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sins.” *1 John 1:7*.
- † “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” *Isaiah 55:7*.
- † “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.” *Isaiah 43:25*.
- † “For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.” *2 Chronicles 30:9*.
- † “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” *Psalms 103:12*.
- † “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” *2 Corinthians 5:17*.
- † “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” *Jeremiah 31:34*.
- † “I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.” *Jeremiah 33:8*.



DEALING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS (II)

Being Troubled – Jealousy – Laziness – Loneliness

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the needs or problems of anyone, anywhere and at any time, the answer lies within the Holy Bible. For this the Lord Jesus Christ said: “Search the scripture.” John 5:35.

Whatever our feelings, pain or hopes are: the Bible holds the word of life for the benefit of everyone. Unfortunately, quite often we search for solutions concerning our problems outside the Holy Bible. This document, my dear friend, is a humble attempt to gather some of the verses of the Holy Bible to help you if you encounter one of the following circumstances:

- † Troubles.
- † Jealousy.
- † Laziness.
- † Loneliness.

BEING TROUBLED

- † “But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble.” *Psalm 37:39*.
- † “The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.” *Psalm 146:8*.
- † “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.” *Psalm 37:24*.
- † “You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.” *Psalm 32:7*.
- † “You who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again from the depths of the earth.” *Psalm 71:20*.

- † “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.” *Psalm 42:11.*
- † “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” *Psalm 73:26.*
- † “No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.” *Psalm 91:10-11.*
- † “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtlessly come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” *Psalm 126:5-6.*
- † “Oh, love the Lord, all you His saints! For the Lord preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person.” *Psalm 31:23.*
- † “For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard.” *Psalm 22:24.*
- † “The Lord also will be a refuge for oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” *Psalm 9:9.*
- † “For you will light my lamp The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.” *Psalm 18:28.*
- † “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” *Psalm 34:19.*
- † “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me.” *Psalm 138:7.*
- † “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” *Psalm 18:2.*
- † “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness.” *Micah 7:8-9.*
- † “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” *John 16:33.*
- † “He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.” *Job 5:19.*

- † “For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” *Lamentations 3:31-33*.
- † “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.” *Nahum 1:7*.

JEALOUSY

- † “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” *Psalms 37:7*.
- † “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s .” *Deuteronomy 5:21*.
- † “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.” *James 3:14*.
- † “Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.” *Proverbs 3:31*.
- † “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.” *Proverbs 14:30*.
- † “Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?” *Proverbs 27:4*.
- † “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them.” *Proverbs 24:1*.
- † “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day.” *Proverbs 23:17*.
- † “Do not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” *Galatians 5:26*.
- † “For where envy and self-seeking exists, confusion and every evil thing are there.” *James 3:16*.
- † “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.” *1 Corinthians 10:24*.

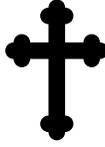
LAZINESS

- † “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” *1 Thessalonians 4:11-12*.
- † “Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” *Romans 12:11*.

- † “He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!” *Proverbs 28:19.*
- † “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a wise son; but who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.” *Proverbs 10:4-5.*
- † “I went by the field of lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come like a prowler and your need like an armed man.” *Proverbs 24:30-34.*
- † “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.” *Proverbs 20:13.*
- † “The way of the lazy son is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway.” *Proverbs 15:19.*
- † “The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.” *Proverbs 21:5.*
- † “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labour.” *Proverbs 12:24.*
- † “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding” *Proverbs 12:11.*
- † “Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds.” *Proverbs 27:23.*
- † “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” *2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.*
- † “The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.” *2 Timothy 2:6.*
- † “Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labour-this is the give of God.” *Ecclesiastics 5:18-19.*

LONELINESS

- † “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am' if you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness.” *Isaiah 58:9.*
- † “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life.” *Isaiah 43:4.*
- † “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” *Genesis 28:15.*
- † “But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.” *Psalms 40:17.*
- † “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” *John 14:18.*
- † “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” *2 Corinthians 6:18.*
- † “And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoken to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’” *Matt 14:26-27.*



DEALING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS (III)

Lust – Sickness – Pride

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the needs or problems of anyone, anywhere and at any time, the answer lies within the Holy Bible. For this the Lord Jesus Christ said: “Search the scripture.” John 5:35.

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- † Lust.
- † Sickness.
- † Pride.

LUST

- † “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” *James 4:1-4.*
- † “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded.” *James 4:7-8.*

- † “For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” *1 John 2:16-17*.
- † “You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery' but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” *Matt 5:27-28*.
- † “Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, not let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent.” *Proverbs 6:25-29*.
- † “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul.” *1 Peter 2:11*.
- † “As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'” *1 Peter 1:14-16*.
- † “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” *2 Peter 1:4*.
- † “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” *2 Timothy 2:22*.
- † “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” *Titus 3:3-6*.
- † “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the other. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by His grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” *Ephesians 2:3-6*.

- † “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” *Titus 2:11-12.*
- † “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” *Galatians 5:24.*
- † “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.’” *James 1:13.*
- † “How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” *Jude 1:18-21.*
- † “I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish.” *Galatians 5:16-17.*
- † “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” *Romans 6:11-14.*

SICKNESS

- † “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” *James 5:14-16.*
- † “And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes Lord”. Then He touched their eyes saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them saying, “See that no one knows it.” *Matt 9:28-30.*

- † “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people, who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were with demon-possession, epileptics and paralytics; and He healed them.” *Matt 4:23-24*.
- † “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise.” *Jeremiah 17:14*.
- † “For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds, says the Lord.” *Jeremiah 30:17*.
- † “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' – then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he rose and departed to his house.” *Matt 9:6-7*.
- † “So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you.” *Exodus 23:25*.
- † “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.” *1 Peter 2:24*.

PRIDE

- † “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” *Proverbs 16:18*.
- † “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” *Proverbs 26:12*.
- † “A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.” *Proverbs 21:4*.
- † “He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.” *Proverbs 28:25-26*.
- † “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” *Proverbs 8:13*.
- † “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips.” *Proverbs 27:2*.
- † “Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; tread down the wicked in their place.” *Job 40:12*.

- ✝ “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” *Isaiah 5:21.*
- ✝ “You rebuke the proud – the cursed, who stray from your commandments.” *Psalm 119:21.*
- ✝ “And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.’” *Luke 16:15.*
- ✝ “How can you believe, who receive honour from one another, and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God?” *John 5:44.*
- ✝ “And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” *Mark 9:35.*
- ✝ “But he who glories, let him glory in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” *2 Corinthians 10:17-18.*

PRAYER

I thank You, O Lord Jesus Christ for all the love, peace and quietness that You grant me. O Lord Jesus Christ, Your word is my only condolence, it is the only reliable source of every thought and for every situation I encounter in my life. Enlighten me with the meaning of Your word and help me to abide by it, and apply it in my daily life. Your word of life purifies my heart, my soul, cleanses my thoughts, my senses and lightens my way. Surround me with Your angels so I can enjoy the beauty of Your words and live peacefully with You. With the intercession of the Virgin Mary, all Your Martyrs, and Saints who satisfied You since the beginning of time and by the prayer of your honourable Pope Tawadros II, hear me and accept me.

THANK YOU MY LORD JESUS CHRIST



ACHIEVE YOUR POTENTIAL

The Importance of Setting up Goals in Life

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the first of two lessons in series on achieving our potential as Orthodox Christians. In this lesson the focus is on the importance of setting goals in life.

MEMORY VERSE:

“I press toward the goal for the prize ...”
Phil. 3:14

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Life without a goal

Life without a goal has no taste. It leaves the individual with no desire to do anything and it leads to depression and various other psychiatric diseases. Life without goals will make the individual live just for the flesh “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” 1Cor. 15:32.

B. Goal-based life:

Our Lord Jesus taught us a very important principle in life “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” Luke 9:62.

St. Paul said “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3:13-14.

From these verses we can see that we must look ahead and move forward towards achieving good goals. There are good goals (eternal life) and bad goals (leading an evil life). We must pray and ask God to open our eyes and our understanding to set up our good goals and proceed towards achieving them.

C. WHY DO WE HAVE TO BASE LIFE ON GOALS?

We have to base life on goals because these goals will provide us with the following:

1. The goals give meaning to life

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

Our life on earth is temporary and it becomes meaningful only when it does not end with death but continues to eternal life. Remember that our church is teaching us according to our faith saying “For there is not death for your servants but a departure” (Litany for the departed).

2. The goals give power to continue and show the way.

Defining goals is the first step toward achieving them by following the right path. Example: a group of hungry dogs were together. One of them saw something to eat but it was very far. He started to run and the rest of the dogs, although they did not see the goal were running as well. As the distance became further and further the other dogs started to get tired and because they did not see the goal, they stopped. The only dog who continued was the dog who had his eyes set on the goal. He continued, and he did not get tired and he reached his goal.

D. The importance of the clarity of the goals.

Goals which are not clear will cause confusion. It is like an individual taking his car from the garage for a drive without knowing where he is going! Life is filled with choices. To choose the proper choice one has to have a clear goal. Once a

goal is identified and it is clear, then it will be achieved with the least effort and the maximum return. For example, a student who would like to become a lawyer would choose only the proper courses and enroll in proper programs which would allow him/her to achieve his or her goals.

The goals must be good and clear and the methods to achieve them must also be good. There are wrong goals. For example in The Parable of the Foolish Rich Man, He said, “I will destroy my house and build a much larger one and enjoy myself.” A voice came to him, “today you are going to die, what are all these things for?”

E. Types of goals

1. Long term goals

Eternal life is the most important long term goal, “Also He has put eternity in their hearts” Ecc. 3:11.

How good is life if it ends up with a person who has no place in heaven? It is worth nothing. To ensure that the individual will have a place in heaven, he or she must have a taste of heavenly life while still living on earth. This heavenly life on earth will be filled with peace, joy, love, purity and righteousness.

2. Short term goals

This may include: education, social and spiritual growth.

NOTE: If the individual sets for himself or herself a series of worldly goals and tries to achieve one after the other and continues non-stop, he or she will end up too tired to concentrate on the ultimate goal which is eternal life.

F. How to achieve your goals

1. Direct methods

It requires dealing with the goals in the most direct way. This involves removing the obstacles, going around the obstacles or even changing the goal.

2. Indirect methods

When the direct methods fail, one should try the indirect methods provided that these indirect methods agree with our Christianity. Lying, withdrawal from good things, defiance, making excuses or taking a negative approach are all not Christian. The proper indirect method to achieve goals is to try other means, to pray or even to change the goal for now. Patience is needed “Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!” Ps. 27:14.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Identify your goals and make sure that they are consistent with the commandments of God in the Holy Bible.
2. Pursue your goals after you pray and seek God’s help and support.
3. Listen to your father of confession.



ACHIEVE YOUR POTENTIAL (II)

The Power to Become

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the second lesson in a series of two lessons in achieving our potential as Orthodox Christians. In this lesson the focus is on the power to become a better person.

MEMORY VERSE:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
Phil. 4:13

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing the previous lesson.

A. Sin holds us back from achieving our potential:

When asked what he thought the business of the church was, one person said "It is to show people what they can become by the grace of God." The one thing that holds us back from becoming what God created us to be is sin. That is why the church calls on us constantly to repent: because it is sin that holds us back from greatness, from achieving a great potential.

B. My best painting is yet to be done:

A young artist won an award for a painting of unusual merit. On receiving the award he said to a friend "That really isn't my best painting." "Oh" said the friend

“then why didn’t you exhibit your best?” With a smile he replied “because my best painting is yet to be done.”

As Christians, we are painting pictures of Jesus with our lives each day. But because we are constantly growing, the best painting is yet to come. As St. Paul said “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected ... I press toward the goal...” Phil. 3:12,14.

C. Simon Peter

When the Lord Jesus first met Simon Peter, He saw beyond the exterior to the depth of his soul. He knows the kind of person Simon Peter had always been – easily influenced and even cowardly. But Jesus saw what He could do in the life of this man, how He could change him from the kind of person he had been to one He could use for His glory.

So after gazing at Simon intently, Jesus spoke these words, “You are ... but you shall become.” “You are,” expressed the real and actual – what was “You shall be” referred to the potential – what can be.

That’s the way God looks at you and me. He looks at a shepherd boy – David – and sees in him a king. God sees our shortcomings and weaknesses, but He sees beyond these. He sees what we can become through His Son Jesus Christ. He sees our potential to become all that He originally created us to be. In John 1:42 – Jesus looked at him, He said: “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated a stone). You are! You shall be! The actual and the possible! Realism and idealism! What is and what can be! And between the two, the Lord Jesus Christ, His presence is like mighty bridge spanning the vast chasm between the actual and the potential.

D. The Power to become:

God gives us power to become. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” John 1:12. The apostle Peter once came upon a lame man begging for alms. He walked up to the crippled and said “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” Acts 3:6.

This is the kind of power Christ gives us:

- † Power to get up and walk out of a crippled path into a life of power, meaning peace and joy.
- † Power to become better than we are
- † Power to become new creatures in Jesus Christ.
- † Power to become partakers of divine nature, heirs of His kingdom.

E. Achieving your potential.

Many of us go through life wishing for the ideal – the ideal parent, the ideal child, the ideal husband or wife ... We forget that none of us is a finished product, complete like a piece of beautiful china. Each of us is in the process of becoming. How many divorces occur because there is a foolish idea in our minds that some perfect mate exists somewhere, and that we must shed the present mate to find the perfect one? We forget that the perennial problem in marriage is not to find the ideal partner, but to become the ideal partner.

It is His power to let us become better than we are, a new creation, sons and daughters of God.

- † Power to overcome the world.
- † Power to crucify every besetting sin.
- † Power to shout in triumph over every trouble and temptation in life. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” Phil. 4:13
- † Power to become what we are by baptism: children of God, heirs of God’s kingdom.

F. Salvation: A Matter of Becoming:

Salvation according to Orthodox theology is not a state of being but a state of becoming, a constant movement toward union with God (theosis in Greek language) which can never be fully achieved in this life. It is a process that begins here and is consummated and perfected in heaven.

Never would the saints of the church say “I am saved, I have made it, I have arrived.” They were always on the way. So they kept praying to Jesus to the very end “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner”. The Christian life is constant growth, constant becoming, a constant journey from being the image of God, to becoming the likeness of God. The saints’ life was a daily conversion and constant growth. On the other hand, we hear the wrong teaching saying “born

again, that is it.”, “I am saved that is it.” So the whole process of growth is thereby omitted. One goes immediately from the cradle to mature spiritual adulthood!

Orthodoxy believes that to confess faith in Christ is the beginning, not the end. It is a journey, not a bed on which to lie while we wait for the Lord’s return. The moment we become like the Pharisee and say, “I have arrived, I am where I am supposed to be. I thank God I am not like the others” – at that point we become stagnant and stagnation in the spiritual life is condemnation.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We can achieve our potential through the grace of God. We can move forward and grow in everything.
2. We can accept situations that are not perfect and proceed to improve things, expecting to become better. Never lose hope.
3. Salvation is a continuous process; “Theosis” which means constant movement toward union with God.



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHASTE YOUTH

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that purity is a treasure of great price which radiates: joy and serenity in body, soul and spirit.

MEMORY VERSE:

“THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH, AND HE WAS A SUCCESSFUL MAN.”

Gen. 39:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the tide of sin prevalent in this age makes you groan every day, asking for God’s powerful right hand of salvation, chastity, and purity, for you as well as for all creation. There is also no doubt that you have experienced, by the grace of Christ, many times what you have spent in the joy of the Lord and in His light and His holiness. If you have not had this experience, I urge you to read the experiences of the saints on this subject. You will have noticed from you own experience as well as from the experiences of the saints that purity is a treasure of great price which radiates joy and serenity in body, soul, and spirit. Let us long for purity and pursue it through grace. We will find that a chaste youth is always:

1. A Successful Youth

“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man;” (Gen. 39:2)

There is no doubt that a chaste youth retains his physical powers, which in turn develop his mental powers, which help him to concentrate and study, and these are the two basic components of academic and professional success.

The chaste youth is not distracted and his powers are not dispersed, but you always find that he is sound and healthy, mentally alert, with constructive and holy enthusiasms, all of which necessarily contribute to preserving his purity and forming a successful personality.

A chaste youth exercises control in everything: in food, rest, sleep, leisure, and interests; he is instinctually and emotionally well-balanced.

2. A Courageous Youth

Addiction to sin engenders an “inner cowardice” in the spirit, as well as an internal fear of situations where truth and confrontation are required. ***“The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion.”*** (Prov. 28:1)

“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man;” (Mark 6:20)

The ascetic, isolated John the Baptist used to raise the voice of truth in the face of the adulterous king, **“It is not lawful for you..”** !

There we see a foolish, reckless courage whose motive is to do injustice to others and to glorify one’s self. Then there is Christian courage, which takes powerful positions and utters fiery words, supported by a loving heart and by a lowly and humble spirit.

A chaste youth always forges ahead; he fears nothing because he desires nothing: *“I stood at the summit of the world the day I felt that I feared nothing and desired nothing”* (St. Augustine).

He is not lax about the truth and is not timid about witnessing; he does not submit to sin either in his private life or in his public life.

3. A Free Youth

There is no doubt that sin impresses the soul with the stamp of slavery, for ***“whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” (John 8:34).***

The pure heart has broken its bonds and is free from its habits and its bondage.

It has escaped the enemy’s captivity to walk in the way of the Kingdom with steady steps, neither looking behind nor fearfully to what is ahead. The enemy has been crushed beneath its feet through grace, and the bonds on its hands have been broken, and it has been set truly free.

One day, the Lord said to the Jews, ***“if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn 8:36);*** they rebelled and objected saying that they were ***“Abraham’s descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone” (Jn. 8:33).***

While they were groaning under the yoke of bondage to the Romans, they were boasting of a spurious liberty. History is repeating itself. For here the atheists of this age sing of their freedom and ignore the fact that their liberty is only a dangerous illusion. They are slaves to their pleasures. We defy them to be free of them without Christ!

Genuine liberty is when a human chooses between two options, but for him to pursue sin and corruption is the very essence of slavery.

4. A Youth that is Open to Others.

A pure youth has escaped from the captivity of self and is open to others. It is obvious that impurity is the direct and rapid expression of the love of a human being for himself. That is why the saints have connected impurity to pride.

An immoral youth despises himself and extends this contempt to others through a morbid personality. A chaste youth, however, listens to the Lord’s call in his life, humbles himself and attributes everything to God. He opens

his heart to everyone in a welcome that is devoid of selfishness or self-interest.

The pure youth forgets himself in God and in his neighbor, whereas the immoral youth forgets God and his neighbor for the sake of self.

Probably the most successful way of achieving chastity is for the young person to emerge from his egotism and go forward towards others, sharing their pain and joys and serving them in love and humility.

5. A Joyful Youth

This means a serene personality that has no complexes and no deviousness. It has no need for morbid introversion or for a passive humility in society.

It does not suffer from the depression that follows a fall, but rather the body, heart and actions radiate the hope of grace. Whenever you meet such a person, his joy and peace overflow to you and that is why you love to encounter him.

The deviant youth is torn apart with anxiety, and he destroys his potential with repressed desires. He becomes a slave to different and wrong forms of enjoyment which inevitably affect his psychological and spiritual life.

The life of the pure youth is filled with stable and profound joy because he feels that his sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ and that his heart is in the presence of God all the time.

6. A Youth with Well-defined Traits

It is clear that a young person who is tossed by the currents of sin always hesitates in making decisions and in taking the appropriate steps in any given situation. He is weak in the face of the currents of evil and the opportunities for sin in society in general as well as in his inner life.

The young person who has not decided on his way and has not defined his traits is always falling away; he feels that he is less than those who are evil.

The chaste youth, however, has well-defined traits. He knows his way and makes the decision to keep away from sin and transgression quickly and willingly.

He is therefore esteemed by good and evil people alike, is socially successful and loved by all.

7. A Fruitful Youth:

The deviant soul is barren and without fruit: *“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?” (Rom. 6:21)*

✠ The pure spirit is occupied with God and bears fruit in the life of union; it is occupied with souls and bears fruit in the life of services; and it is occupied with holy interests and so is fruitful.

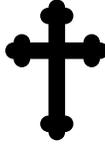
✠ The pure soul obtains the fruits of the spirit through the Holy Spirit: *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal.5:22).*

A pure soul is productive and effective and has visible influence on others, contributing to their salvation and working for the glory of Christ.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. I invite you to spend a few quiet moments in the presence of God during which you examine yourself and submit your life and give yourself to the Lord totally without reservations. Then start to strive in the way of holiness without hesitation, looking back, or despair, but rather with joy, perseverance and strength, confident that the heavenly host watches your struggles and rejoices in them. The blood of Christ is sufficient for daily cleansing and complete purification.
2. Listen to the great Anthony: **“Make an effort to read what will save you from impurity.”** St. John Chrysostom says: **“The face that has been sanctified by the sign of the cross should not bow before Satan.”** St. Ambrose says: **“The cross heals lust.”**

- 3. “The Lord’s hand is not too short to save” (Isa 59:1). Let us lay our lives at His feet with lowliness and joy, confident that our God is with us and that victory is from the Lord.**



HOW TO LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE IN A DRIFTING WORLD

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show how to live a Christian life in a world drifting towards its own destruction.

MEMORY VERSE:

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." 1 Cor. 10:23

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Challenges:

The world is drifting toward its own destruction:

1. Spread of impurity, alcoholism, smoking, drugs, etc.;
2. Materialism and vain pleasures;
3. Broken family ties and rapid increases in divorce rates;
4. Religion has become outmoded.

For example: In the USA advertisements for deodorants, lipsticks, etc. cost on average \$450 million per year. While, losses due to alcoholism equal \$4.0 billion per year. Annually, 7.5 million youngsters start smoking, even though the dangers of smoking are well known to the public (e.g. Cancer, death, etc.).

How in the midst of all these challenges, can a Christian live and maintain a good relationship with God? This is what we will address now.

(A) Do We Feel Satisfied?

Does a world away from God satisfy us? Do we give God enough of a chance to satisfy us? Do we care for holiness in its fullness as a new life? Does dating or chasing bodily desires lead us to deviate from our goal or hinder it? Do we think objectively?

The Lord said to the Samaritan woman: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again." (John 4:13). One has to realize that the world cannot and will not satisfy the person. Only God does.

(B) Basic Christian Issues

- ✠ Right and Wrong: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me but all things do not edify." (1 Cor 10:23). Give no offense... to the Church of God; It is good neither to eat nor drink nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." (Rom 14:21)
- ✠ Purity: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy," (1 Cor 3:16-17).
- ✠ Sex is not evil, but God's commandments are like a fence that God builds around sex to protect it because it is sacred. All precious things in life are protected.
- ✠ Thinking: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think of these things," (Phil 4:8).

(C) A Christian's Goal

Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Therefore you shall be perfect," (Matt 5:48). You should grow towards social maturity:

- ✠ Be responsible and independent decisions based on the help and advice available;

- † Postpone immediate gratification of needs until richer satisfaction may be gained at the appropriate time;
- † Give as well as accept friendship with tolerance and forgiveness;
- † Have a definite philosophy and goal in life.
- † Be aware of God's presence and be obedient to His commandments.

(D) Where To Go?

- † Dishonesty, selfishness, immorality and greed are contrary to the nature of Christ and His followers;
- † You cannot serve God and man, means no compromise.
- † We need Divine help to be good and we should be willing to receive it..
- † The Bible is our guide. The Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the book of St. James, the letters of St. Paul, etc., guide us to specific issues in life. The examples of Joseph, Daniel, Stephen, other saints, etc. inspire us to live Godly lives. When one follows and loves the Bible, it becomes the standard we measure our lives against and hence we make our decisions according to its teachings.
- † Note: Please read and discuss how the Lord supported Joseph while he was a slave in Egypt, by protecting him and blessing everything he was involved in (Gen 39 - 41).
- † Heavenly Wisdom “is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy;” (Jas 3:17). Human wisdom is dangerous because of our limitations in thought, deed and knowledge of the future. God is capable, loving and full of goodness. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of power, love and a sound mind;” (2 Tim 1:7).
- † Premarital relations are false, destructive to self-esteem and misleading.

(E) Don'ts:

- † Don't let your emotions control you before taking the responsibility of marriage;
- † Don't lose the vision of God in your life. Refrain from practicing sin which will distance you from God's grace;
- † Don't abandon yourself to emptiness with the delusions of wishful thinking (work=goodness, idleness=evil); “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” (Eph 4:28);

- † Don't undermine the values of the rich Christian life for earthly or bodily pleasures;
- † Don't defile the proper meaning of love; (1 Cor 13);
- † Don't forget that principles are stronger than the environment;
- † Don't separate yourself from the activities of the congregation which is the body of Christ. Group work is integrative.

(F) How To Find the Will of God?

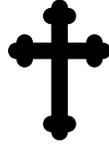
The will of God is clarified through:

- † His Word;
- † Teachings of the Church;
- † Lives of His saints;
- † Guidance of His righteous people;
- † Sense of inner peace;
- † God's hand in outer circumstances;
- † Inspiration through constant life of prayer and faith;
- † Quiet thinking and reason in patience and hope;
- † Fighting against selfish attitudes and immoral issues.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Faith in God will enable the individual to handle any difficult situation and be a source of blessing as well. “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthan, also David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight;” (Heb 11:32-34).
2. We should not escape responsibility, “No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God;” (Luke 9:62). Human nature can be changed by training and the Grace of God.
3. Do not cheat yourself by saying, “It is human nature, “ as an excuse.
4. We should not think it is natural to say, “Do as the Romans do.”

5. By the Grace of God, we can be better than our environment and nobler than our society. We can influence it.



THE INSTINCTS

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To understand the meaning of a person's instincts, created by God. Instincts in humans must be kept under control.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

The instinct is a natural physical and psychological inclination, innate in each person, continuing with him throughout his life. It is usually accompanied by certain actions. Instincts are essential to preserve the life of human beings and to assure preservation of humankind. For example, the instinct of hunger pushes a person to look for food, and consequently to work to obtain it. The instinct of fear pushes him to flee from and avoid dangerous situations. The sexual instinct pushes him to reproduce and to preserve the species within the bounds of blessed marriage and so on with the rest of the instincts.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN AND ANIMAL INSTINCTS:

In animals, the instinct is the only driving force that explains its behaviour. But in the human, there is also the mind and the will-power. The sexual instinct in an animal is only an excitement and a response, but in the human, it is connected with the most noble emotions. It is a holy human feeling with which a human shares with God through the process of creation and continuation of life, if one uses the instinct in the role which was meant by God and the law. It is not feasible for the human to consider sex as an instinctual need like hunger. For example, if one says, "I like apples or I like this kind of fruit," this would be love for consumption. That means you love the thing not for itself but for consumption and pleasure. If one uses the other as a sexual object for consumption, this will deteriorate the holy aspect of sex into a mere primitive need, just like the search for food. This would

be humiliation to the other person (being a cheap means of pleasure and not a person with his or her respect). Moreover, if the other person is only used for consumption, it is natural that one would abandon it after a while. In consumption, one would like for a variety, and that is the difference between true love and false love. The deep love between a husband and a wife lasts forever. But the other kind of love is only for a moment, the moment of pleasure itself. The modern psychologist defines love as the care that one would give for the other and not for his own pleasure. This is the Biblical definition of love: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The true religious education is to build a proper outlook toward others. The relationship between man and God is a personal relationship. It is a love response to the original Divine love; you cannot prove your love to God without loving the other person who is created in God's image. In Matt 22:37- 40, the Lord Jesus answered the question about which commandment is the greatest in the law. He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

SEXUAL INSTINCTS – MODERATION AND DEVIATION:

Sometimes, the sexual instinct drives the person away from the holy goal for which God created it, namely the preservation of the kind and reproduction through holy matrimony. It may deviate to the right or to the left. It has to be controlled by the mind, self-control and the help of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Sacraments, prayers and Bible study.

Deviation to the right: This means that they respond to the excitements of the instinct without any self-control, which may be harmful to the health and honour. They may think that in this way, they are free to do what they please, not knowing that the true freedom is not to do what they please, but what ought to be done. True liberty of sex originates from a free soul which is not enslaved.

Deviation to the left: As a result of the consequences of the fear from the former deviation to the right, some people revolted and considered the instinct as an evil thing, and they wanted to totally deny in themselves what

God had created and permitted. This resulted in the fears and hatred of the other sex to the extent of avoiding the other sex completely. This is a misunderstanding of God's commandments.

MODERATION:

This is what we express as the life of purity, which is defined as the proper direction of the instinct toward its holy goal for which it was created, and its protection from sinful desires. Chastity does not mean suppression of the natural instinct, rather, a guard which protects it.

INSTINCTS BETWEEN SUPPRESSION AND SELF CONTROL:

Suppression is a subconscious process in which there are several contradictory factors and desires at work. For example, in the sexual instinct, there is a drive for the fulfilment of the sexual desire, and there is another moral drive that prevents one from responding to his desires. The struggle between both results in suppression. Its symptoms are anxiety, worry, inability to concentrate, feelings of boredom and isolation, and spending too much time daydreaming. This is a negative approach; one is not facing reality and is still ridden with selfishness.

Self-control is a positive process which does not result in struggle. It is a proper facing of reality where one has a good perspective of all sides of the matter and does what he is convinced to be useful, with conviction and content. He may encounter some difficulties in achieving this from peer pressure, but he is willing to endure for the sake of his convictions. Self-control leads to a life of purity.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

God created our instincts to preserve life.

- ✚ In animals, instincts are the driving forces that explain their behavior. In humans, in addition to their instincts, there is the mind and the will power which drive the actions of humans.
- ✚ Self-control is needed to control sexual instincts.

✠ Sexual instincts must be put under control of the Holy Spirit, the mind, the will power and the power of the Word of God.



CHRISTIANITY AND THE BODY

Please read 1 Cor. 6:12-20 and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that your body is precious to God, it must also be precious to you. God has made a future for your body.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own?”
1Cor. 6:19

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

God created a unique body for man that is different from angels and animals. Angels are spirits, animals have bodies but man combines the two elements, body and spirit. In Christianity, a person’s body is anointed with the Holy Myron 36 times at all the openings and the joints of the body in order to consecrate the body for holy purposes only and to become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Also as we lead a Christian life and partake of the Holy Communion we become members of Christ. “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid” (1Cor. 6:15).

So, in Christianity the body of a Christian is very respectable.

B. OUR BODIES ARE PRECIOUS TO GOD.

God loves your physical body and it is very precious to Him. Jesus showed God's love for our bodies when He healed so many people. God states His care and love for our body in Psalm 139 where he says we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that our physical bodies are amongst the concern of His thoughts.

(Psalms 139:13-18) "For you formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You."

God has a plan and purpose for your life that involves your physical body and began from the womb. God is better than an ultrasound – He sees your unformed body in the womb with the eyes of love. God does not behold us with impersonal detachment or scientific curiosity. (Psalm 33:18) God's beholding is the beholding of a lover, the father yearning, the heart following the eyes to the object of love. There is no such thing as "just a fetus" to God; the child in the womb is a person He loves in progress towards plans He has made. No matter what the circumstances of your birth were, whether you were wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, loved or abandoned or rejected there is One who was watching all of this and yearning for you. There is One who loves you, God, and He has a plan for your life.

C. Our Bodies are Precious

"All things are lawful for me", but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me", but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:12-20)

All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.

Our bodies are meant to be under our control. The Corinthians had latched onto grace but not discipline and constructive living. Culturally Corinth was sophisticated, debauched and “liberated”; it was renowned throughout the Roman Empire for “broad-minded promiscuity” and the use of prostitutes in pagan religious worship was very common. The new converts to Christianity came from backgrounds that naturally turned grace into license and used slogans such as “all things are lawful for me.” Knowing human nature it would be remarkable indeed if they made a smooth transition to a godly and disciplined lifestyle. So Paul lays down some very basic principles for them concerning our bodies. The first of these is that we are to be masters of our bodies and dedicate them to good godly purposes. Therefore life-dominating addictions to alcohol, sex, drugs, binge eating or physical “adrenaline highs” are major problems for the Christian life. This leads to the second of Paul’s principles.

Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

The body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The purpose of our bodies is found in God – not in sexual pleasure or the indulgence of appetites as the Corinthian slogan “food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,” implied. God is greater than our earthly appetites which will pass away. Our bodies have an

eternal value which is found in the Lord. Thus we need to take a radical “counter-cultural” view and see our bodies as temples – not amusement parks. The Lord is “for the body”. He is “for” your body, not against it. Here we have to make a distinction between “the flesh” (Greek: “sarx”) which God opposes and the “body” (Greek: “soma”) which He loves and will raise from the dead. “The flesh” (sarx) is the spiritual principle of self-centeredness and disobedience to God that has been biologically worked into our present bodies through habit, training and memory. “The body” (soma) is God’s vehicle for self-expression in a material world. It is with our bodies, given to God, that we speak words of truth and love, touch, comfort, heal others, express practical care and love and worship Him. God loves our bodies as they glorify and serve Him. We will see that He has an eternal plan for them too!

D. God has made a future for our bodies

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by His power.

The destiny of our bodies is in heaven. Just as Jesus’ physical body was raised from the dead so that the scars still showed and He could eat fish so our bodies will be raised. There will be a continuation between this present body and the body we receive in heaven, as well as some very significant differences! God will not leave us to rot. He will not just make new bodies for us out of nothing. He will raise our bodies from the grave and then work a transforming miracle on them. Our present bodies are in some way the starting point for our eternal bodies. Later on in Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians he answers the question “How then are the dead raised ...” let us look at what he wrote in 1 Cor. 15:35-55.

Our present physical bodies shall come out of the grave and the Death’s temporary victory will be over. Furthermore they shall take up a new immortal nature that is no longer subject to death so that death is completely and permanently defeated. Our present “seed” bodies shall suddenly “in the twinkling of an eye” be changed into the “full grown plant” which will be imperishable, incorruptible and immortal. The destiny of our body is in heaven. It is not to be despised as “the prison of the soul” or abandoned to promiscuity as if it did not matter. While flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God or the corruptible inherit incorruption it is still important. Our bodies are like a seed that dies and bears fruit within the Kingdom of God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the members of your body are the members of Christ. Your body is precious to God and you must respect and protect your body.
2. You are not allowed to do or take anything that might hurt your body which is for God.
3. All the members of the body must be kept holy for pure and undefiled use.



THE SENSUAL BODY (I)

WHAT IS THE SENSUAL BODY?

It is the body which is concerned with the pleasures of the senses and materialistic pursuits. This type of body leads the spirit and the soul to commit sin. Pursuit of the pleasures of the senses differs completely from obtaining true happiness.

THE CONTINUOUS DETERIORATION OF HUMANITY

The human being was created in the image and likeness of God. Both Adam and Eve were created as being righteous and without sin. They knew no evil. When they fell from grace by the envy of the devil, human nature was defiled and this was passed on to all generations. The human state deteriorated from the spiritual state and daily contact with God to a state where human beings are concerned with the pleasures of the body and are leading the body toward sin.

This deterioration of the human state continued until our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as a human being to bless the human nature once again and save us from slavery to the devil. He returned man once again to paradise through His crucifixion and His holy resurrection. Christianity spread rapidly and became the most important religion in the world.

However, many did not accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour and the redeemer and the deterioration of the human state caused many to no longer enjoy the presence of God. Today, many cultures have specific downfalls and evils associated with them. For example alcoholism, drug addiction, adultery, same sex marriage, materialism etc.

Our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned this deterioration of the human state and the spread of many evils in the world. Our Lord prophesied that when this deterioration is at its worst, then His much feared second coming, which will

be full of glory, and the end of this world and the entry of the faithful to His Heavenly Kingdom will come. The Holy Bible describes the evils that were present in the Old and New Testament. We find these same evils present now, and they spread rapidly each day, (cf. Matt 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21).

- ✠ For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Pet 4:3-5)

- ✠ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

WHY ALL THIS EVIL IN THE WORLD?

Evil is in the world because humanity has deteriorated from a spiritual state of daily contact with God and a daily worship for Him, to a state of pursuing bodily lusts and allowing the body to lead the spirit. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom 8:13-14)

Hence, the leadership of the human life is the important things. If the leadership over the spirit is given to the body and its pleasures and lusts, then this will lead to eternal death. This is the topic of this booklet. “The sensual body”. To cover this topic, we shall speak about the following points:

- ✠ The first heavenly nature of the human being in its full glory and beauty
- ✠ The components of the human being i.e. soul, body and spirit
- ✠ Humanity's fall and lustful living

- † The destructive lustful look
- † The sensual body
- † The reasons that led to the deterioration of the human state
- † The fall of the children of God
- † The eternal death of the lustful body
- † Conclusion

(1) THE FIRST HEAVENLY NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING IN ITS FULL GLORY AND BEAUTY.

- † God created them in His image and likeness. There can never be anything more glorious than that. (Gen 1:26-27).
- † God created them in His image and likeness in holiness in a supernatural state. Both of them were righteous and without sin. He created them in His likeness as eternal beings. (Gen 2:7).
- † He created them in His likeness having free will. For this reason God created the Law with punishments and reward.
- † Adam and Eve were simple and innocent in nature. They knew no evil. They only know righteousness. In their simplicity and innocence they did not know each other sexually. As two naive children they were not aware of all their body parts. As the book of Genesis mentions, (Gen 2:25).
- † God blessed them both with the same blessing and gave them both equal dominion over the earth with all its creatures.
- † Their happiness did not result only from the fact that they were both created as heavenly beings, but also from the fact that they enjoyed daily contact with God. God used to appear, talk to and bless them.

(2) THE COMPONENTS OF THE HUMAN BEING I.E. SOUL, BODY AND SPIRIT.

- † The Body
- † It is well known that the body has several characteristics:
- † It is weak. “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”, (Matt 26:41).
- † It is the dwelling place for sin. “But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Rom 7:17).
- † It desires against the spirit. “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit

against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, do that you do not do the things that you wish". (Gal 5:16, 17). "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:23-24). "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul". (1 Pet 2:11).

- ✠ Fulfilling bodily desires is enmity with God. "You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?" (Num 11:19-20). "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom 8:6-7). "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life", (Gal 6:8). "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others", (Eph 2:3).

✠ The Soul and Spirit

- ✠ The soul is what gives life to the body. The spirit is what gives to the human being their life with God. Thus the animals possess a soul, but not a spirit as human beings possess. Our spirits are eternal. The beasts do not possess eternal spirits. The soul continues to give life to the body, as it is written in (Lev 17:11, 14). Since the soul of the human being is in their blood, blood was used for the sanctification of sins. (Lev 17:11). If a person's blood is shed he dies. Sometimes, the word "soul" is used to refer to the person as a whole. (Gen 2:7).
- ✠ Sometimes, the word "soul" means "spirit", as the Lord says to the foolish rich man, "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'" (Luke 12:20). The Lord says his soul i.e. spirit (in this case) will be taken away, meaning he will die. It is known that the spirit of the human being will depart from the body upon death. As the Lord said before His death, "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your

hands I commit My spirit.' And having said this, He breathed His last", Luke 23:46.

There are truths that exist concerning the soul, body and the spirit. Let us mention them briefly.

(A)THE BODY IS NOT EVIL IN ITSELF (PLEASE SEE THE ATTACHED TABLE)

- ✠ Had the body been evil, God would not have created a body. For God does not create evil. When God created man with a body, He saw that this was very good. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them..... Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.....", (Gen 1:26-31).
- ✠ Had the body been evil, God would not have worn a body. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth", John 1:14.
- ✠ Had the body been evil in itself, God would not raise it on the last day.
- ✠ Had the body been evil in itself, miracles would not have been performed through the bodies of the saints.
- ✠ Had the body been evil in itself, it would not have been considered the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore the body is not evil. It is evil when the body is concerned with materialistic things and earthly pleasures and desires against the spirit. Hence evil is not present in the body, but in the deterioration of the body towards sin. An example would be adultery, the pleasure of food and drink, drunkenness, and drug addiction. This is what the Holy Bible calls, "For all that is in the world-the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-is not of the Father but is of the world." 1 John 2:16. Also, there is danger of defilement of the rest of the senses, as Solomon says, "All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" Ecc 1:8. Thus, the body is not evil itself, but the inappropriate use is evil. In that case, St. Paul the apostle says, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary

to one another, do that you do not do the things that you wish”, Galatians 5:17. For that reason, he says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” Gal 5:16. However, it is not everybody that desires against the spirit. There are bodies that have lived at a spiritual level. These bodies become holy in their desires and deeds.

(B) THE SPIRIT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FALLING INTO SIN

- The spirit is our connection to God. It is the heavenly component of the human being (prayer, man's love towards God, spiritual meditation). The spirit leads man's thinking and body towards the heavenly path.
- It is possible for the spirit to sin and be led astray as it is possible for the body to sin. It is also possible for the spirit to sin with or without a body, or to lead the body to sin.
- The spirit might also start the sin, leading the body to sin. Alternatively, it is possible for the body to fall prey to lustful desires and to lead the spirit to sin.

(C) THE CAPABILITIES OF THE HUMAN BEING

God has given man numerous capabilities. Among these are the following:

- † The mind
- † The spirit
- † The soul
- † The body
- † The conscience
- † Free will
- † The senses

All these capabilities interact together. As an example, all the thoughts by the spirit, the mind, the free will and the conscience are carried out through the body. Another example is when the illnesses of the body affect the spiritual state of the human being. As well, the desires of the body can affect the mind and the conscience.

Thus the human being consists of body, soul and spirit.

Man is a collection of natural instincts and abilities. Often, man is able to control and direct these natural instincts and abilities to achieve constructive goals. However, sometimes these natural instincts are able to control and direct man's abilities.

Man consists of a beating heart with feelings and emotions. Sometimes, the feelings and emotions are gentle and lowly and rebuke man for his sins, but other times the feelings and emotions are hardened and man becomes as a beast. Even though man's components interact together in a complex manner, St. Jacob the prophet says, "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." Jac 4:14.

(3)THE FALL OF MAN AND LUSTFUL LIVING:

The fall according to man is the fall from the hand of God. Man finds himself naked and defeated by the devil.

The devil is a harsh master without mercy and he is the master of the love of the world and its pleasures. For he is the evil spirit and the father of all liars. God permits spiritual warfare for our benefit and it will be followed by heavenly crowns. As one of the saints said, "No one will be crowned except those who won and no one wins except those who fought".

According to God, it is a test for our free will and a chance for us to be able to deserve the pleasures of the heavenly kingdom if we win. As for the devil, it is his nature to resist the Kingdom of God and to fight against those who pursue it. The devil resists God through his followers.

Since the days of Adam and Eve the devil is trying relentlessly, with all his ability to bring humanity into eternal death. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" 1 Peter 5:8.

Slavery to the devil always starts as a temporary pleasure. It ends up with destruction of the entire human being.

Many of the sins in the lives of the youth start as a temporary pleasure and ends up in their entire enslavement. It becomes difficult to rid oneself of it.

Enslavement ends in eternal death. Does the fall into sin mean change in man's nature? No. It does not. It means defilement of man's nature. As an example, when iron rusts, it does not mean there is a change in its nature, but a deterioration.

(4) THE DESTRUCTIVE LUSTFUL LOOK

Does man think that the body is to be used as a means of pleasure and the facilitation of lustful desires? Whether enjoyment is through food, drink, clothing, sexual contact, adultery, the beautification of the body or, the strengthening of it...This leads to sin.

Is it sinful to have worldly ambitions or to desire to achieve eternal glory? This depends on one's views and goals and that will affect how they go about living their daily lives. If the person pursues worldly ambitions, they will sin.



THE SENSUAL BODY (II)

(5) THE SENSUAL BODY.

It is the body which resists the spirit. As the apostle says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, do that you do not do the things that you wish”, Gal 5:16-17.

The apostle gives many examples of its wrong doings. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” Gal 5:19-20.

+ THE SENSUAL BOY IS SINFUL

Its desires are materialistic and for this reason, the apostle says “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”, Gal 5:16. The desires of the flesh are “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness” Gal 5:19. This may be in the form of food, drink and drunkenness or the pursuit of pleasures of the senses which becomes a habit or in the form of an addiction such as smoking or doing drugs.

+ THE SENSUAL BODY IS ENSLAVED BY MATERIALISTIC PURSUITS

Concerning this, the apostle said, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” and “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” Rom 8:6,7. Concerning this, our Lord said, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor

about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" Matt 6:25.

+ THE SENSUAL BODY LEADS THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT TO SIN

When the senses sin so do the soul and the spirit, thus defiling the entire human being. As our Lord said, "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" Matt 5:28. There exists a connection between the body, soul and spirit.

Consider King Solomon who sinned when surrendering to the desires of the flesh, "I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor" Ecc 2:4-10. And so he lived according to the flesh..... and fell through his love of women, 1 King 11. The Holy Bible says, "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David", 1 King 11:4. Thus his body was able to corrupt his spirit to the depths of sin. He did not glorify God in his body or spirit. Indeed it is true when the apostle said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Rom 7:24.

+ THE SINFUL MEMBERS OF A BODY

It is possible that the entire body would not sin, but that one of the members would. Thus the whole body is defiled as well as the spirit. The tongue, for example, is a small member. As the apostle James says, "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire

kindles and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell”, Jas 3:5.

Let us consider how often one sins through use of the tongue. As the Bible says, “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”, Matt 12:37.

Through the tongue, one is defiled. As the Lord says, it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man; but rather what comes out of the mouth which defiles a man, Matt 15:11.

The eyes can sin as well. The love of the world is enmity with God, as the apostle John says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world”, John 2:15, 16. Eve fell into sin by looking at the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge and desiring to eat of it, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate”, Gen 3:6.

Sin is committed by the eyes when one gives a look of desire, anger, envy, jealousy, revenge, haughtiness, mockery, or harshness. The sins accumulate and appear clearly through sight. Other members often sin as well. The hand may hasten to hit others or to murder or to rob or to commit other sins. The feet may hasten to places of sin. The facial features may express pride, anger or cruelty.

(6) THE REASONS THAT LED TO DETERIORATION OF THE HUMAN STATE

Here we are not judging the world. We would like to clarify what the Bible has said concerning the deterioration of the human state to commit great evils. We need to be cautious so that we do not commit the same sins and be thankful to God for His many gifts.

St. Paul the apostle says in Rom 1:18-32:

(a) “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”, Rom 1:20. God did not leave Himself without witness. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the

firmament shows His handiwork”, Ps 19:1. He shows His glory and might through a marvelous creation. We feel God's love through His continuous care, for He has created all things for our comfort.

(b) Man was not able to achieve salvation through the Law but man instead took position of resistance which is manifested in the following:

“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things”, Rom 1:21-23.

As St. John Chrysostom says, this accusation is more serious than the previous one. For when they knew God they did not glorify or thank Him. They exchanged worship of the living God for idolatry.

As the Lord said through Jeremiah the prophet “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns – broken cisterns that can hold no water”, Jer 2:13. For the downfall of their faith was their dependence on the human mind without the help of God and while they thought that they were wise they became ignorant. As St. John of the Golden tongue said, they sail on uncharted waters, so their ship falls apart.

(c) For they abandoned the God who manifests Himself to them through nature. So He also abandoned them. As the apostle says, “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” Rom 1:24. They left Him according to their own free will. As God values and respects free will, He gave them that which their heart desired. He abandoned them. They pursued their hearts' evil desire since the men and women committed acts unworthy of their bodies. “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”, Rom 1:26,27.

St. John the Apostle believed that if man becomes proud, God will abandon him, though he may possess a pure body, to allow him to fall prey to desires of the flesh, so as to reveal the concealed pride which is within him.

Many of the youth fall into sin even though they pursue many methods leading to salvation. The main reason is their pride which causes loss of the grace of God which provides holiness. So they fall under the burden of their bodily desires and evilness.

One of the Saints said that God allows us to sin because of our pride or neglect. He says, "For we should know that everything occurs according to His will. For all that is for our good happens according to God's will and care for us. We are deprived of God's protection for us due to our sins or the cruelty of our hearts or when we allow shameful bodily desires to control us. The apostle teaches us, "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen", Rom 1:25. Also, "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting", Rom 1:28. God says through David the prophet and king, "But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels", Ps 81:11, 12.

(d) Some excuse themselves by claiming that they sin due to the weakness of their human nature and its constant pursuit of earthly pleasures. The apostle says, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due", Rom 1:26-27.

St. John Chrysostom says: "For they were given a human nature which allows pleasure in righteousness and avoidance of evilness, but they did not desire righteousness. They defiled their nature bringing shame upon it and resisting nature's laws at the same time.

St. John also said that man's life has become filled with unbearable misery. For God has permitted man to marry one wife and the two become one flesh. Man has resisted God's will. Man has become divided against man, man against his wife, and woman against woman, Rom 1:27.

Upon presenting a horrendous picture of man in his evilness, man no longer pursued natural pleasures but defiled his nature. Instead of allowing his body to rise to the spiritual level, so that his body becomes a holy temple of God, he became as a beast, committing inappropriate sexual acts. Man with man and woman with woman. “They were full of all sinfulness, adultery, evilness, greed, sneakiness, jealousies, murder, full of hatred, proud...” Rom 1:29.

If we consider all these sins, we shall discover that man, of his own free will, has given himself over to disobedience and resistance of God. Man himself has become a dwelling place for sin. Committing one sin leads to the commitment of other sins. So man becomes a mockery of his sins.

(7) THE FALL OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

It is possible that man fall into sin due to weakness. Man is not infallible, but he must learn a lesson from his fall. As one of the Saints says, “I do not recall that the devil has tempted me twice with the same sin.”

Even though the children of God are strong through their relationship with God, it is possible that they fall into sin. Examples:

We see this in the life of Elijah, the great prophet, 1 King 19. As well in the life of David the prophet and king in 1 Samuel 25, 2 Samuel 11. We also see this weakness in the life of Samson in Judges 16. Also in the life of king Solomon in 1 Kings 11. Also in the life of St. Peter in Matt 26, Galatians 2:11. There are many more such as these examples.

Therefore we find that even with all the gifts that God gives to mankind, he can still fall under the constant attack by the devil.

HOW IS MAN'S WEAKNESS REMEDIED?

- ✠ Avoid falling into sins that weaken your will power
- ✠ Do not consider that you are stronger than the attacks of the devil. For it is said, “For she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men.” Prov. 7:26
- ✠ Ask God for strength and make your weaknesses a cause for prayer
- ✠ Do not surrender though you may be weak

- † Never give up hope. For despair destroys the soul and makes you fall into sin. Remember that many weak ones have become saints.
- † Fight with all your strength though you may be weak
- † Consider what St. Paul said, “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” Heb. 12:4
- † Concentrate on fighting sins which are repetitive
- † For these are your weak points.
- † Renew your mind to reach a new understanding
- † St. Paul said, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”, Rom 12:2.
- † This means that you have to acquire a new view towards your sins through renewal of your mind. For many have fallen due to a mistaken understanding of strength or eternal glory or the concept of freedom etc. All these are in need of a renewal of their minds.
- † Your weakness disappears when the love of God fills your heart
- † One saint said that repentance means exchanging one desire for another desire. That means that a spiritual desire replaces a bodily desire. Replace your love for the world for the love of God.

(8) THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SINFUL BODY

Isaiah the prophet talks about the death of sinners and their eternal suffering. He says, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Isa 33:14. Also, our Lord says in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, “Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame’”, Luke 16:24. St. Paul says, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God”, 1 Cor 6:9-10.

Let us talk in detail about the eternal suffering of sinners according to the Holy Bible:

✠ They shall dwell forever in darkness, seeing only devils around them, in the flames which were prepared for them. “But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”, Matt 8:12.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgement”, 1 Pet 2:4. “And will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth”, Matt 13:42. “But as they sailed He fell asleep and a wind storm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy”, Luke 8:23.

✠ “He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name”, Rev 14:10-11.

The prophecy in the book of Isaiah describes hell as follows: “For Tophet was established of old, yes, for the king it is prepared. He has made it deep and large; its pyre is fire with much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it”, Isa 30:33. “Its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its durst into brimstone; its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lay waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever”, Isa 34:9-10, Isa 66:34.

✠ (d) The Senses of the body which committed sin are tortured along with the soul, as follows:

+ **The eyes:** by dwelling in constant darkness. (Jude 13).

+ **The nose:** “And their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree”, Isa 34:3-4.

+ **The tongue:** “therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall of drink”, Jer. 9:15.

+ **The ears:** by subjecting them to extremely loud noises, “Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?” Job 21:15

+ **Torture of the body:** by subjecting it to extremely hot flames that were prepared for the devil and his fallen angels. Matt 25:26. St. Augustine says, “The difference between our fire on earth and that of hell is the same as the difference between fire drawn on a frame and real fire.”

+ **Torture of the soul:** It is the torture of constant regret that one did not repent. St. John of the Golden tongue says, “the torture of the soul alone is as 1000 hells.”

(9) CONCLUSION:

The body itself is not evilness because God created it.

The source of sin may be the soul or the heart. “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” Matt 15:18-19. The source may also be the senses (what they sense or see) and they lead the soul and the spirit to sin. “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”. Matt 5:28.

The people of the world choose lies in place of God.

The children of God are not infallible but if they stick with God, victory is inevitable.

The sinful body is a body defiled by lusts and sin.

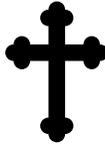
The sinful body is a victim of worship of the creation in place of the creator.

Those who live according to the lustful body will not inherit the heavenly kingdom.

Is the body in itself evil?

Reference	Verse	Reasons why the Body is not evil
Genesis 1:31	Then God saw ever thing that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day	God would not create anything evil
John 1:14	And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.	God used it when He became man, therefore it cannot be evil
1 Corinthians 6:19	Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?	The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit
1 Corinthians 6:15	Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!	The body is a member of Christ
Philippians 3:21	Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself	If the body was evil, why would God give it glory and transform it?
	I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of	If the body was evil, St. Paul would not have asked

Romans 12:1	God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.	the believers in Rome to offer it as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God. One usually offers the best he has to God.
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NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS

Also, known as “Wet Dreams”. This is a physiological phenomenon for young men, not inherently sinful, where spermatic fluid (semen) overflows during sleep for bodily relief.

Part of it can come from lustful thoughts during the day that resurface during our dreams, or simply because of over distended bladder.

The general idea of nocturnal emissions not being sinful, is confirmed by our enlightened saintly fathers. For example, **St. Athanasius** wondered: “What kind of sin or evil is that of a natural secretion? As the divine books say that man is God’s creation, so how can a defiled act result from a pure creator? However, when we commit sin, then we are defiled.”

The Didache (The teachings of the Apostles) teaches us that none of the body secretions is sinful, whether it is the menstrual period for girls or the nocturnal emission for boys.

However, demons can still attack us in our dreams. A person should not feel guilty, for if you fall into guilt, you will be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. It is enough, if you have a watchful mind to reject these thoughts and you are seeking purity with all your heart; and sure enough, God will shortly crush Satan under your feet.

Sanctify your bed through reciting psalms before sleep, prayers, making the sign of the cross, and continuously repeat the Name of Jesus on your lips until you fall asleep.

Some Guidelines:

1. If an evil dream resulted in emission, realize that Jesus is full of love for you, and you will never fall out of His unconditional love. He also knows that you love Him too. As St. Peter said, “*Lord, You know that I love You.*” (John 21:17)

2. Just rise up, wash, lift up your heart, pray, perform prostrations (Metanoias), and offer true repentance. For through all, you will experience God's forgiveness and overcome any temptation.
3. The devil continues to be victorious not only by making us fall into sin, but also by putting us down through despair and unnecessary feelings of guilt. He does this so that we give in and become like a dead fish carried by the stream. We should be as living fish which can resist the current and swim against it.

So, keep up with your spiritual battle till you get crowned. It is a sign of life, to go against the flow and press forward.

"When I fall, I will arise" (Micah 7:8).

Keep the following in mind:

- ✠ Food plays an important role, in terms of quantity, quality and frequency. Avoid fatty and spicy food, especially before sleep, as it promotes excitement.
- ✠ Guard your eyes, and watch your thoughts during the day. This will pay off at night.
- ✠ Avoid a full bladder by not drinking before bedtime.
- ✠ Do not go to bed unless you are exhausted and ready to sleep. When you wake up, immediately rise up. Do not give room for idleness.
- ✠ Invite the angels to surround your bed by praying before sleep, so your bed will be sanctified.
- ✠ Be frank with your Father of Confession and listen to his advice.

* Article written by Fr. Yohanna Naseef (in the book entitled "Life of Purity 2015")



MODESTY

This topic concerns girls more than boys.

If we remember the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we find that one of the consequences of sin is that for the first time they realized that they were naked. They were so embarrassed that they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, which did not cover them in an appropriate manner. However, in His great love, **God made tunics of leather for them to completely cover them and preserve their honor.** From this incident, we realize that **nakedness is shame as well as a disgrace, and that clothes preserve our honor and grant us beauty and dignity!** On the cross, the Lord Jesus was hung naked to carry our shame and grant us the cover of His righteousness and the garment of His holiness so we may live in purity and honor. As we say in the Praises (The Tasbeha), “**He took what is ours, and gave us what is His. Let us praise Him, glorify Him and exceedingly exalt Him.**” {Friday Theotokia}

God’s children cherish modesty in everything: in their looks, clothes, and in their movements, because they understand that through His crucifixion, Christ has taken away their disgrace and shame to grant them His honor of which they can never let go.

Promiscuity is abominable for God’s children. They realize that whoever uncovers themselves despises himself and the Lord Jesus too.

Dear girls:

- ✠ Your value is not in revealing your physical beauty by inappropriate clothes or extravagant makeup, etc... but in your identity as the daughter of the King and a member of the holy Body of Christ. Your body is a precious member of the Body of Christ with His great value and honor.
- ✠ Do not reveal your body and make yourself cheap in the eyes of others.
- ✠ Your true honor is in your chastity and your charm is in your calmness.

✝ Your great value is inside you, in your character, and not in your outward appearance. It is in your thinking, your dignity, and in your successful accomplishments.

Modesty gives honor

Example: You may notice that the altar is always covered with cloths and never naked. Do you know that you, too, are a pure sanctuary for God, and that covering your body increases your honor? However, this does NOT mean that you need to wear a veil or Hijab!

And you **my dear brother**, do you know that wearing tight and revealing cloths, certain hairstyles are undignified acts which take away from your manhood.

Let us put in front of us the **living examples of the saints**, especially those who lived during the Era of Persecution, whose effect is still prevailing up till now.

* Article written by Fr. Yohanna Naseef (in the book entitled “Life of Purity 2015”)



MASTURBATION (I)

Masturbation is considered an individual form of sexual immortality. It is what the Lord Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; ... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you...” (Matt 5:27-30)**

- ✠ **For boys**, it is willfully stimulating the sexual organs until the spermatic fluid is excreted (not during sleep time).
- ✠ **For girls**, it is stimulating the sexual organs to reach sensual pleasure.
- ✠ Excitement may come from:
 - External source such as through the senses, especially the senses of vision, hearing, and touch.
 - Internal sources such as willfully engaging in a defiled thought or a defiled carnal lust.
 - **Thoughts ----- feelings ----- nerves ----- body organs ----- Act**

Masturbation has a dangerous effect on the spiritual life

- ✠ It increases the feeling of isolation and selfishness; selfishness hinders growth of the soul; the feeling of isolation comes when I take my pleasure from myself, and not in joining my spouse.
- ✠ It creates the feelings of guilt, depression, and fear within our souls.
- ✠ It defiles the temple of God inside me which I do not own.
- ✠ God created the human hand to be creative in doing good, to help man, and to become a blessing for him and not a curse. Using the hand for sinful acts

means that the devil rules over it to destroy my life. How can I find this acceptable?

- † Excessive masturbation is harmful to the health of the body, since it consumes a noticeable amount of energy from the body. Some scientific sources claim that the amount of energy expended by the body to make an amount of spermatic fluid is fifteen times more the energy needed to make the same amount of blood.
- † It is a sin against the body and its honor, which has been given to us by God. (1 Cor. 6:18), so whoever practices this habit, despises himself.
- † Also, it is a breaking of God's commandment "**You shall not commit adultery**" (Exo 20:14) which means do not abuse your sexuality, and do not direct it in unnatural direction other than what God has created it for.

The members of my body are the members of Christ, so how can I use my members to commit sin?

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!" (1 Cor. 6:15)

The reasons for falling in sin:

- † **Emotional emptiness** and not being filled with Christ.
- † **Conceit and pride** result in preventing the Grace of God from working within us, which causes us to fall in sin.
- † **Luxury and indulgence in the pleasures of life;** therefore, it is required of us to have self-control in everything.
- † **Surrendering to the devilish thoughts** that result in the abuse of our instincts.

The danger of the lust of the flesh in general

- † **It weights man down** and ties him to earth and dust. It diverts him away from God, the source of his life.
- † **Lust is never satisfied neither satisfying;** it always asks for more. **“The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”** (Ecc. 1:8) It also does not satisfy the heart or quench its thirst since it deals only with the senses. That heart stays empty waiting to be filled with the only source of his satisfaction, that is, the Spirit of God.
- † **Lust blinds the person,** and makes him lose his balance to the extent of leading him to sometimes act irrationally and in other sometimes like an animal.
- † **Lust lowers the human to become led by his primitive carnal instincts,** without the inclusion of emotions, mind, and spirit.

Prevention and Remedy:

- † **I must detest this act,** since it will deprive me of the Kingdom.

** “... Holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14)*

- † **I must have confidence that I can control myself as a human being;** nothing can happen against my will.
 - Notice that it is obvious that I cannot have self-control and, at the same time, allow inappropriate things to enter my heart through movies, pictures, and evil surroundings that influence my emotions and my instincts. This leads to an internal conflict. Wise and pure people do not allow themselves to fall into these situations in the first place; they avoid the cause of excitement at its root.
- † **Preserving the senses** from outside influences and uprooting the love of sin from inside with true repentance.
- † **Confession** is very important in exposing the demon of lust.

† **Make use of your free time wisely**, to enrich your spiritual life and satisfy yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

† **Never fall into despair**, even at the time of weakness.

Story:

A young man was living by himself and used to struggle with purity. Being tempted repeatedly, he fell several times. He continued to struggle patiently. He also worshiped regularly, and prayed diligently saying, **“O Lord, You know my misery and great sorrow, so please deliver me, for I am dust, vulnerable to sin. You are the Mighty God; help me to stop this impurity. You are merciful to the saints, and this makes sense; You deliver the pure for they are worthy, however, I am not worthy, O my Lord; I submit myself to You.”** He repeated this prayer daily, whether he sinned or not. One day, while he was repeating this prayer, Satan appeared to him, and said, **“Aren’t you ashamed to stand in front of God in this sinful condition, and utter His name with your impure mouth?”** The young man answered him, **“You strike me with temptation, and I strike you with fasting and prayer. You entice me to fall into sin while I appeal to my compassionate and merciful God to have compassion on me. I will continue this struggle until I die, and I will never lose hope in my God; then you will find out who will triumph - you or God’s mercy!”** When the devil heard him, he said, **“From now on, I will not come to attack you, lest you gain the crown of victory and hope in your God”** Since that day Satan never returned to him.

† As **St. Isaac the Syrian** said, **“It is more befitting to die while struggling than to live a fallen life.”**

† **Calling on the name of Jesus**, which is known as the **“Arrow Prayer.”** This is a mighty power that cannot be defeated.

† **“He who says “My Lord Jesus”, is like one holding a sword, casting down the enemy.”** (Monday Psali)

† **Humility and contrition before God** and the use of Prostrations (Metanoias) to overcome the attacks of sin and to fill the heart and the mind with peace and purity.

† **Pure and sacrificial love to all around me**, forsaking selfishness, ego, pride, vanity; and by paying attention to people around me and serving them.

† **Preserving our thoughts: since this is the door to sin. “Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death.”** (James 1:15) Prevention is better than treatment. Removal of sin at its beginning, is much easier than uprooting it after it has taken root in the heat and mind.

Asking for the Intercession of the Saints

† **Virgin Mary**, the Mother of the Light, the Queen of the pure, the Chaste, the Compassionate, the faithful Intercessor for all mankind **who presented many people to God over the ages through her purity.** If you cling to her, she will teach you purity, help you, and strengthen you until you achieve victory.

† **St George the Pure**

† **St. Potamina the Chaste**

† **Many other saints.**

Here is an interesting story that illustrates the effectiveness of using the intercession of the pure saints in overcoming the lust of the flesh:

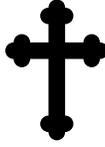
Story

A young monk was tempted to commit adultery, so he went to St. Daniel, and confessed his thoughts. St. Daniel said to him, ‘My son, go to the monastery in which St. Tomais, (a saint who died while defending her purity) is buried. Stay there overnight at the tomb of the Fathers and pray saying, **“O God of Tomais the chaste, help me, and deliver me from sin,”** and I am sure that God will save you, and deliver you from this temptation.’ The young monk went to the monastery where this saint was buried and did what St. Daniel commanded him. After a while, he calmed down, and overcame the temptation. He returned to St. Daniel and told him, “My father, I have been freed by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.” St. Daniel asked him, “How did this happen?” The young monk answered him, ‘I was persistent and repentant in prayer, and accompanied this prayer with prostrations. When I slept, I saw St. Tomais in a vision who told me, “Take this blessing, and go in peace.” When I received the blessing, the temptation ceased

and I was spared.’ St. Daniel said to him, **‘whoever strives for chastity will have great favor in the sight of God.’**

We must spend the time before we go to bed in prayer and praises, so when we sleep, the name of Jesus is on our lips. This way we do not give Satan any chance to excite our thoughts with sinful images.

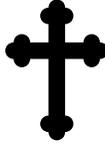
* Article written by Fr. Yohanna Naseef (in the book entitled “Life of Purity 2015”)



MASTURBATION (II)

Link:

<https://youtu.be/3vzqIYsdZk8>



YOUTH SEXUAL LIFE – (I) **Recognizing the dangers of Sexual Temptations**

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the first lesson in a series of four lessons on Youth Sexual Life. In this lesson we will focus on recognizing the dangers of sexual temptation.

MEMORY VERSE:

“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself” Prov. 22:3

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

- † Sexuality is one of our creator’s most beautiful gift. But we have to use this gift within marriage as God intended when He gave it to us.
- † We must recognize and respond to “sexual temptation” before we go too far. “A wise person foresees evil and takes action to avoid trouble”. Prov. 22:3
- † Temptations are not new. Remember the temptation of Joseph in the Old Testament.
- † Temptation is like a fishing lure that makes a trout think he is getting his favorite meal, half-truths and deceptive statements about our sexuality hide the “hooks” that can catch us. Of course, we are usually more intelligent than fish. Sometimes, however, we trade the future for the moment. Like a fish, we are deceived by a lure we don’t really understand.

B. PRINCIPLES THAT HELP US IDENTIFY THE DANGERS OF SEXUAL TEMPTATION:

There is a passage in the Holy Bible that is very focused on our subject here:

“Finally then brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness but in holiness. Therefore, he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” (1 Thess 4:1-8)

These words are just as timely and important today as they were in the first century.

GOD’S WORD IS GIVING US WHAT IS THE BEST FOR US

No one understands us better than God who created us. No one cares about us more than God. No one is in a better position to see the long-term implications of sexual choices. “You know what commandment we gave you through the Lord Jesus” (v. 2). “For this is the will of God your sanctification” (v.3) and (v.8). St. Paul said “he who rejects this does not reject man, but God”. Therefore, we cannot dismiss sections of the bible we do not agree with. We cannot reject what God commanded us to do for the sake of our goodness without rejecting God Himself.

GOD WANTS TO PROTECT US NOT TO SPOIL OUR PLEASURE:

In 1 Thess. 4:3 St. Paul said “This is the will of God ... that you should abstain from sexual immorality”.

The Greek word translated: “sexual immorality” is *porneia*, which St. Paul uses to refer to the full range of unhealthy sexual behaviour outside of the one-man-with-one woman marriage relationship. Sexual immorality, therefore, includes premarital relationships. Adultery, homosexual acts, prostitution, incest, rape and even lust and obscene speech. (Leviticus 20 lists a wide variety of sexual acts that violate God’s intent for our sexual expression.)

Why does God place these limitations on us? Again, we need to keep in mind that our creator’s boundaries are for our protection not to spoil our pleasure.

SEXUAL INTIMACY IS A BEAUTIFUL PART OF MARRIAGE

St. Paul spoke of using our bodies in ways that are honourable and will please the Lord
(1 Thess 4:4)

The relationship between husband and wife provides opportunity for the fulfillment of sexual desires. In fact, St. Paul said that a husband and wife owe it to each other to fulfill their partner's needs (1Cor. 7:1-9).

In the original creation account, God stated His intent for a man and woman to leave their parents and join together as "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). This "one flesh" relationship was designed to involve physical and spiritual intimacy within the safety of a commitment to each other. (Mt. 19:5-6).

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOOK AT CULTURE IN ORDER TO EXAMINE THE PRINCIPLES OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

St. Paul said that we cannot use our bodies "in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God". 1 Thess. 4:5

Our culture, since it has forsaken God's wisdom for gods of convenient excuses and immediate personal gratification, cannot give us healthy guidance for sexual behaviour. Our culture has become obsessed with a blind pursuit of sexual pleasure. This unbridled attitude toward sexual expression has not satisfied anyone. The more you feed it, the more it craves.

WARNING ABOUT A HEART BLINDED BY SEXUAL DESIRE:

St. Paul warned about a heart blinded by sexual desire. (1 Thess. 4:5)

Our Lord Jesus taught us that sexuality is first and foremost a matter of the heart (Mt. 5: 27-30).

When our hearts are corrupted with sexual desire then everything else gets corrupted in our life. "Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the

issues of life”. Prov. 4:23. Similarly the Lord Jesus emphasized what comes out of a corrupt heart “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies...” Matt. 15:19

A PERSON CAN LIVE HAPPILY WITHOUT SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP:

St. Paul wrote in 1 Thess 4:1-6 that the important values are pleasing God, treating our bodies with honor and not taking advantage of others. If we pursue sexual pleasure as the path to happiness, we will be disappointed. Instead of finding satisfaction, we are more likely to become addicted to enslaving passions and practices. King Solomon, for example, became a dissatisfied and unhappy man, even though he had many wives and many women he used as sexual partners. (1 Kings 11:3, Ecc. 2)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- ✠ We must be careful. We should develop a futuristic look forward sexual desire. We could be attracted, tempted and then lose a lot. So do not start.
- ✠ Change your energy from sexual desires and try something else. Why not more sports and hobbies...etc?
- ✠ Happiness is not achieved through satisfying sexual desires. Instead the reverse is true, i.e. misery is the result.



YOUTH SEXUAL LIFE – (II)

The consequences of misdirected sexual desires

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the second lesson in a series of four lessons on Youth Sexual Life. In this lesson we will focus on the consequences of misdirected sexual desire.

MEMORY VERSE:

“...because the Lord is the avenger of all such (things)...”
1 Thess 4:6

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

(A) INTRODUCTION

St. Paul mentioned two major effects of misdirected sexual desire in his letter to the Thessalonians “That no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified” 1 Thess 4:6

Therefore, there are two big reasons to avoid all forms of sexual sin.

- (1) It produces victims.
- (2) It invites God’s retribution and judgment.

(1) Sexual sins produces victims:

Proverbs 5 through 7 describe several ways sexual immortality victimizes people. It produces death (5:5), loss of honor (v.9), regret (v. 11-13), misplaced loyalty (v. 15-20) and it reduces a person's value to that of a piece of bread (6:26).

The Bible gives many examples. King David's sin with Bathsheba is as memorable as it is heart breaking. Her sexual disobedience produced several victims: David himself, as he became trapped in his own guilt, Bathsheba, as she was taken from her husband, Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, as he was killed by David's orders; the baby, who died, and the Lord, as the heathen used the incident to blaspheme Him (2 Sam. 11-12).

So, if we choose to sin there will be evil results: guilt, pretrial, aggressiveness, becoming bad examples to put shame on the name of God ... and many other bad results.

(2) Sexual sin invites God's judgment:

St. Paul wrote in 1 Thess 4:6 that "the Lord is the avenger" when people are victimized by immorality. So, God does not take our sin lightly. He sees clearly the damage that we are doing to ourselves and to one another.

Let us give some examples to show how God deals with those who commit immoral acts:

- (a) In the aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba, even though the Lord forgave David when he repented, judgment still followed (2 Sam. 11-12). God said that during David's rule the nation would always be at war, his own family would rebel against him, his wives would be taken and defiled, and the child who was conceived through the adultery would die (2 Sam. 12:9-14). This does not mean that this is always how God judges adultery, but in David's case, perhaps because of his leadership role, the Lord took this course of action.
- (b) Most of us remember Sodom and Gomorrah, two towns whose citizens were notoriously immoral. God destroyed them with fire (Gen. 19)
- (c) Remember God's great blessings to Joseph in prison and after his release (Gen. 39-50) as he resisted temptation because he feared God.

- (d) St. Paul wrote to Timothy that a person who wants to be used to serve God must be purified. (2 Tim 2:21)

So, sex in the wrong setting produces pain.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must follow good behaviour to please God, to protect the name of God's family and help those whom we care about not hurt them.
- (2) We must keep ourselves pure to be useful to serve God and to protect our future happiness.
- (3) God's rules are for our best interest. Sex in the wrong setting produces pain.



YOUTH SEXUAL LIFE – (III)

What answers for Youths' Sexual Problems?

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is the third lesson in a series of four lessons on Youth Sexual Life. In this lesson we will focus on “realistic” answers for youth sexual problems.

MEMORY VERSE

“For God did not call us to uncleanness...”
1 Thess 4:7

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

Partial solutions for problems do not help. You always need to go to the roots of the problem and solve it from there.

Let us give an example:

If a water pipe under your kitchen sink leaks, what would you do? Some of the unrealistic solutions are: put a bucket under it, ask the TV repair man for advice, try to fix it with a Band-Aid, ignore it, file a lawsuit against the pipe maker ... etc. All these are unrealistic solutions.

In this subject of ours, we will talk about realistic solutions. St. Paul pointed us in the right direction when he wrote “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects Him does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4:7-8). So this statement has two parts:

- (1) Remember your calling and purpose.
- (2) Remember who lives in you.

Let us discuss these two parts:

(B) Realistic Answers for Youth Sexual Problems

(1) Remember your calling and purpose

- (a) We have been set free from slavery to sin (Rom. 6:19-23)
Why would we voluntarily choose to live in bondage to self-destructive behaviour?
- (b) We must remember our goal in life and keep in mind how that goal should affect our behaviour.

St. Paul wrote “Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Looking into Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”. (Heb. 12:1-2)

From these verses, we can come up with four helpful reminders:

- ✠ Sin weighs down, so throw it off.
- ✠ Sin ensnares, so watch out for traps.
- ✠ Jesus is our example, so follow Him.
- ✠ Endurance results in reward, so keep on.

The Lord Jesus referred to us as salt and light in the world (Mt. 5:13-16). Salt that becomes contaminated is worthless; a lamp that is hidden under a bowl cannot give light.

We are to be different from the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Although we must live among non-believers, we must not adopt the world’s view of life and sexuality.

A recognition of God's full goal for our lives can help us to see temptations and sexual purity in the light of light.

(2) **Remember who lives in You**

God "has also given us His Holy Spirit" 1 Th. 4:8

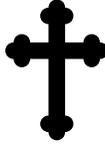
The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. He is the One who applies the work of Christ to our lives by working in us to bring us to full conformity and the image of Christ. Our bodies are the dwelling place of the spirit of God (1Cor. 6:19). Please read 1Cor. 6:15-20. Not only does the Spirit give us spiritual life when we are born again (Jn. 3), but He also works to conform us to the likeness of Christ. We need the help of the Holy Spirit if we are to break the grip of lust, run from temptation, experience release from a sordid past, tear away from an immoral relationship, and maintain sexual purity. He is our Divine helper (Jn. 14:16-17; 16: 7-14)

But how do we experience the help and strength of the Holy Spirit?

- (a) We must actively cooperate with God's spirit. We cannot be passive. Please read Romans 6:11-13
- (b) We must choose to side with God and do what is right. We must reject Satan's lies about finding sexual fulfillment.
- (c) God's Spirit will begin to work in us when we realize our desperate need of Him. That is what true faith is all about. Just as we received the gift of salvation by faith, so now we must continue to live by faith in dependence on the Spirit (Gal. 3:2-3); 5:16; Col. 2:6). When we exercise faith and give our bodies to God (Rom. 6:13), the Holy Spirit works in us to produce purity and the kind of life that pleases the Lord. St. Paul said "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" Gal. 5:16

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON:

- (1) God made you as a sexual person (Gen. 1:27). Recognize sexual desire as a wonderful God-given fact of life. But also realize that how you respond to sexual desire shows whether you have chosen to follow God's route to fulfillment or your own (Gal. 5:16-19).
- (2) Take steps to change your thought of life (Ps. 119:11). Remember that when the Lord Jesus faced temptations He chose to call on the words of Scripture (Mt. 4:1-11).
- (3) Ask for and rely on God's help (Mt. 6:13).
- (4) Do not put yourself in situations where you know temptation will be great. Do not ever plan on sinning or making it easy to fall (Rom. 13:14).



YOUTH SEXUAL LIFE – (IV)
Recognizing the various factors affecting youth sexual pressures

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

As we hear from many of our youth regarding their suffering from sexual pressures and its impact on their lives, we would like to focus on the factors affecting these pressures.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” 1 Cor. 6:19)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

We often hear the repeated cries of young people asking: “Why does God allow us to suffer these sexual pressures? Is He not the one who created in us the sexual instinct? Are these impulses that we feel not normal? How can God then ask us to postpone this form of expression? We find it hard to resist the insistent demands of desire, and sometimes a man thinks of marriage as a way of escape and a release of this energy!”

In order to explain this issue fully, we have to discuss and assess some of the concepts expressed in the young people’s cries.

B. FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

- (1) In man, in contrast to animals, it is not enough to mature sexually in order to lead a normal life: this must be accompanied by psychological maturity. Thus, sexual maturity can be defined as the maturation of both physical and

psychological sexuality. God's divine wisdom in this is that the purpose of human sexuality in general is to prepare the individual for family life. Mere physical maturity is not enough to assume its responsibilities and burdens.

- (2) Physical sexual maturity takes place a number of years before psychological sexual maturity. The reason is that psychological sexual maturity does not happen suddenly but requires constant and repeated interaction with others through which the individual gradually goes out of himself to learn how to give to and make sacrifices for others, forgoing some of his personal needs for the sake of others. This goes hand in hand with understating his own inner sexual feelings on the one hand, and the nature of sexuality on the other. This naturally requires enough time so that mental, emotional, social, and spiritual maturation can also be achieved, for they all contribute to psychological maturity, which takes a long time, extending from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.
- (3) Sometimes psychological sexual maturity is appreciably delayed in spite of an individual's attaining adulthood. This is probably due to the delay in emotional development because the individual's emotions remain childish. He pities and indulges himself, and does not want to expend it on behalf of others; he prefers to gratify it by giving it all the pleasures it desires without thinking of making others happy. Psychological sexual growth takes another path. Instead of sexual energy being expended in order to give others (**the "I" giving the "other"**), it takes advantage of the pleasure that accompanies sexual activity to gratify itself (**the "I" taking from the "other"**). No doubt, this leads to a delay in the achievement of psychological sexual maturity.
- (4) When sexual energy is restricted within the bounds of the ego, man's sexual life consists of consumption instead of being a life of giving love, whether before or after marriage. Before marriage, his attitude to the opposite sex is sensual; that is, he sees the other as something to be possessed for self-gratification. After marriage, the same attitude prevails and his/her partner is a means of finding pleasure (**not an end in him/herself**), a means he/she exploited for his/her own purposes. Marriage is neither an escape from sexual difficulties nor a solution to the sexual pressures that young people are subject to, unless the sexual hardships serve to lead to the individual's maturity, making him fit for the sacrificing life of marriage. Then marriage is not merely a release from sexual pressures but becomes an extension of the life of love- a giving which the young person was accustomed to before

marriage, and which made him/her capable of assuming the responsibilities of marriage and a family.

C. THE CONCEPT OF SEXUAL HARDSHIP:

Sexual hardship is a state of psychological and physical disturbance that begins with the onset of puberty when the sexual hormones first explode bringing with them emotions and feelings for the opposite sex. There are many mood swings and in general there is a special inclination towards the opposite sex, oftentimes changing into sensual desire that soon converts the “**other**” from a person to be loved and lived with into a mere body for selfish gratification.

This results in a conflict (**difficulties or hardships**) within the young person, a conflict between two desires:

- (1) The first desire is to unite with the other which can only be attained through sanctified marriage. This needs to be sublimated towards the love of others and not be limited to one particular person. This is known as general love through which an individual is united to others intellectually and spiritually through social life and the church.
- (2) The second desire is to possess and use the other's body as something to be enjoyed. This conflicts with the desire to unite with the other.

If an individual is inclined towards the first desire, he becomes spiritually and emotionally mature, that is, real love matures and leads to his developing a stable personality. On the other hand, if he tends towards the second desire, he remains emotionally childish, and continues to burn.

Sexual hardship is thus linked with the normal growth of the individual and through it, he can adapt to the numerous physical, intellectual, and emotional changes that he undergoes as well as the changes that result from his relationship with others (**social development**). When we realize that the formation of the personality needs difficulties, the hardship of going beyond self, we soon realize that sexual maturation, if it takes the right path, will give great impetus to the development of the personality and will contribute to its stability, its formation, and maturity. This, sexual difficulties, is necessary for psychological and character maturity on condition that these difficulties are exploited in a healthy way, that is, on the condition that the energy engendered by the hardship is deflected from the ego and directed to love of and openness to others.

D. HOW TO COPE WITH SEXUAL DIFFICULTIES:

We must not interpret the expression “**sexual difficulties**” to mean the painful psychological pressures that tear a person apart. Rather, we must understand it to refer to a symptom of a distress that afflicts a soul that seeks growth and maturity. This depends on the way we cope with sexual difficulties, for we could find release through selfish gratification and thus pervert our sexual energy from the love for which God had designed it and thus delay psychological maturity. We could also put our sexual life on the path of real love and thus grow psychologically. Personality thus matures and becomes integrated. We put up with the hardship for the sake of achieving maturity; we also bear it for Christ's sake and out of love for Him. Thus we achieve continuous spiritual growth.

Oftentimes, young people deal with sexual stresses in such a way as to hinder their healthy psychological development when they try to find release in self-induced arousal or through adultery. These are failed and futile attempts to relieve that intensity of the stresses. If we, however, bear the hardship, attempting to go out of ourselves, seeking true love, and depending on the power of the Holy Spirit, we will discover that the difficulties are gradually alleviated to the extent that we gradually attain psychological maturity and a balanced personality. Thus, the difficulties gradually diminish opening up the way for genuine love to flower in our hearts.

These difficulties which young people experience are part of a normal process through which all who have matured, have passed. They are necessary for the building of love for and relations with others. Young people will find themselves faced with the option of choosing to be imprisoned in self or to give of oneself. As a young person trains himself to love and give, he approaches maturity.

Selflessness is a prerequisite of maturation. This can be attained through the refusal to waste sexual energy outside the framework of love or to treat the opposite sex lightly by changing them into mere bodies from which pleasure is derived. The highest human values are esteem for members of the opposite sex and a respect for their freedom as well as serving the needy and making sacrifices for them. Doubtless, all these help in escaping from the domination of the “**ego**” and in growing in love, giving, and sacrificing. Without all these, there can be no

genuinely Christian marriage. A person can only reach perfect love, “**agape**” , if the spirit of true love, that is the Holy Spirit, is poured into his heart and comes to dwell within our temples (**1Cor. 6:19**) and works in our depths. We have to obey God with all our hearts and offer sincere repentance, and we will enjoy the Christian love that transforms the hardship into a power for personal and spiritual growth which surpasses what we can think of or imagine.

E. DELAYED MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL DIFFICULTIES:

Young People are subject to sexual pressures because sexual feelings for the opposite sex develop before they reach the age of marriage. Hormones from the sexual glands begin to flow before the age of fifteen whereas twenty-five to thirty is generally the age of marriage, and that is often delayed because of complicated social and economic factors.

It is clear that the age of marriage is increasing as a result of economic and social pressures, thus prolonging the period before marriage and this entails psychological and sexual distress.

In rural societies, for instance, young people often marry as soon as the signs of physical maturity appear. Social conditions in the countryside are different from urban areas since there are no housing crises, no elaborate arrangements, and no special preparations to set up a home. This leads to the frequency of early marriage and to the incompatibility of the immature spouses who most probably have not attained sufficient maturity. Early marriage is thus not a solution to the problems of youth that result from the misuse of sexual energy, for the marriage of immature young people will lead to other kinds of marital problems that can most often be complicated.

Many mistakenly believe that the marriage of a profligate will guarantee his reformation and his virtue. It is as though they have diverted him from playing fast and loose within a socially rejected context to playing fast and loose in a socially acceptable context. A licentious youth is unstable and emotionally immature. That is why a mature love is important for young people prior to marriage so that they can give their wedded partners love generously.

We can therefore ascertain that marriage at an older age gives the individual a greater opportunity to achieve a fully developed personality that is socially,

emotionally, and spiritually mature, on the condition that young people make the most of this time to develop their intellect, establish good relationships with others, and grow spiritually

It is evident that the age at which marriage takes place is not as important as the degree of maturity which must be reached by the individual who wishes to marry. If marriage is delayed, this gives him a greater chance to become mature; assuming he makes the most of this opportunity. However, economic factors still exert a lot of pressure and we need to devise new ways of supporting young people at the beginning of their family lives through projects, long-term loans, and new job opportunities for our youth who aspire to an honourable future.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) We must recognize that emotional, psychological, physical, social, and spiritual factors affect the sexual drive of an individual.
- (2) Marriage is not only to satisfy sexual instincts. But it's enjoying living in a family filled with love and taking the responsibilities of raising children for the wellbeing of the society and the world we live in.
- (3) Sexual activity is supposed to be after marriage. In order to maintain this level of purity before marriage, one has to focus on his/her: spiritual and psychological growth, career development, sport activities, and enjoy life with everyone.
- (4) Before an individual develops the ability for a one-on-one relationship, he has to be able to deal with groups of friends of both genders.



TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING, FROM THE BIBLICAL & MEDICAL POINTS OF VIEW

INTRODUCTION:

Some of the current trends in our modern society are tattooing and body piercing. These trends are not only common among the youth but also among the adult population. Certainly, behind this is the evil one who moves the hearts of the weak towards ruining their spiritual life and occupying them with harmful matters without any usefulness. The evil one motivates the media to encourage others to do these things; in addition, the businesses that run these activities motivate the media for their financial gains.

It is not our role to judge anyone; however, I would like to discuss this issue from the perspective of the Holy Bible and God's commands towards these behaviours. I would like to convince you and explain to you why these behaviours are discouraged in our religion so you have an understanding as to why not-to-do them.

Can you imagine that this issue actually has its roots in the Old Testament?

To cover this issue, I will discuss the following points:

1. Tattooing and body piercing in the Old Testament
2. Tattooing and body piercing in the New Testament
3. The negative health effects of tattooing and body piercing
4. The negative social effects of tattooing and body piercing
5. What about the small cross on the wrist?
6. A real life example
7. Conclusion

1. TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The reader of the Holy Bible will find many stories in the Old Testament about people that worshiped foreign gods other than the One True God. They worshiped the idols that could not do anything instead of the True Creator. They become servants of these idols. This is idol worshipping.

Moreover, we find that when people worshipped idols in the Old Testament, they did so through drawing images on their bodies or piercing. They did it for the following reasons:

Drawings... signify servitude to the master that bought them
Drawings and piercing to appease the gods that they worship
Drawings and piercing signify sadness for those who passed away out of respect.

In Leviticus 19:28 “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.”

The Unger Bible dictionary explains the above verse saying: “We find the prohibitions of an unnatural disfigurement of the body: “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, not print any marks upon you”. Marks or incisions refer to tattooing. A commentary on the Bible by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown explains Leviticus 19:28 saying: “The tattooing imprints were made sometimes by means of hot iron, sometimes by ink or paint, as is done by the Arab females of present day, and the different castes of Hindus.”

In the book of Numbers 14:1-2

“You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.”



The life application Bible comments on Deuteronomy 14:1 saying: “Since you are the people of God, never cut yourselves as the heathen do when they worship their idols.”

Please note my dear reader...Look how God describes his children through His great love and Fatherhood:

You are the Sons of the Lord your God
You are a Holy people to the Lord your God
God chose you so that you are His special people
A special people above all other people (i.e. not for pride but for heavenly thoughts from above) that are on the surface of the earth.

And in Leviticus 21:5 “.... or cut their bodies”.

Saint Jerome (a 4th Century saint) comments on these Godly laws and says: “The laws were prompted mainly by the danger arising from the cultic practices of Israel’s neighbors.”

A story from the old testament about cutting the body for appeasing Baals (1 King 17-38)

Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

So, Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So, all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.”

So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And

when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So, all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.” Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, “Fill four water pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.” Then he said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it a second time; and he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time. So, the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.”

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!”

2. TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is a question that should be asked: Are we under the law of the Old Testament; ie the Ten Commandments and all the other laws of God?

The answer: Yes, as the Lord Jesus clearly states: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds

the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ``

How is it, that He destroys the law when He instituted it?

The statement about fulfilling the law means that the person of the New Testament (who enjoys salvation and the blessings of the Holy Spirit) will have many more abilities compared to the person of the Old Testament.



For example: (Matthew 5:38-48)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’

But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Therefore, we are under the command of the Old Testament and much more.

It is important that we realize that we should not join the world in its practices as in 1 Peter 4:3-5, “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

Galatians 5:19-21 states “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions,

jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Romans 12:1-2 says, “... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world...”

For this we must learn to not involve ourselves in the works of wickedness and all its kinds. For the prayer of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ that concluded in the garden of Gethsemane for us:

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (John 17:14-16)

The ownership of God to us

We must realize that our bodies, souls and spirits are owed by God and we have no right to do anything to them that God would not approve of.

How are we owned by God?

He is the one that created us out of emptiness. He is the one that saved us when we fell and lost our eternal life; but He won it back for us.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)



We notice in this verse several things:

First: Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to Him all the respect

Second: We are not to ourselves but are God’s

Third: We must glorify God with our bodies and spirits.

Therefore St. Peter also says: “...for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:19)

Therefore, if a person worships the idea of drawing on this body or piercing it; he becomes a servant to that habit and not to God.

“...For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood” (Revelations 5:9)

Therefore, if God is the owner of my life (not the world); therefore, I must obey him and follow his commands, as this would benefit me.

The care of the body...another distraction

Paying attention to decorating the body lets the person care too much about the outside and not the inside. This person also dedicates himself/herself to appeasing others who only see the body. On the contrary, the spiritual person does not care about the outside appearance, but only cares about the spiritual life and the leadership of the Holy Spirit of body. “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6)

4. THE NEGATIVE HEALTH EFFECTS OF TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING

Tattooing and body piercings have many negative health effects. These include infectious and non-infectious effects; both which can be potentially life threatening.

Infectious effects are those that are caused by the transmission of microorganisms from unsterilized needles during the actual tattooing or piercing process. The most common transmitted microorganism is hepatitis C. This leads to inflammation of the liver and eventually liver failure. This leads to fatality within a limited number of years from the onset of the disease. Also, HIV has been cited as another common infection that can be contracted through the use of “dirty” needles in the tattooing process. This incurable disease has many devastating complications which lead to a slow and painful death; not to mention the social stigmata associated with it. There are many other types of infectious organisms that can be transmitted through tattooing, many of which are life threatening however they are beyond the scope of our discussion.

Among the non-infectious negative effects of tattooing and body piercings are skin rashes and skin changes in and around the tattooed area. It is still not medically understood the reason for these skin reactions; however, it is understood that it is a

form of an allergy. The dye that is used in the tattoo is not a natural substance that the body is used to; as a result, the body starts mounting an attack against the dye. This can lead to a severe skin reaction, which can leave the person with a disfiguring scar (to the contrary of his/her original purpose).

The last devastating end result of tattoos is cancer! There are now many reports indicating that tattoos can actually cause skin cancer (melanoma).

These cancers are induced by some of the chemicals used in the dyes (cadmium). These cancers can spread throughout the body and eventually lead to death.

The other thing to be considered with respect to tattoos is that these skin markings are almost always permanent. While there are laser procedures for the removal of tattoo these are often expensive, painful and leave a disfiguring scar behind.

5. THE NEGATIVE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING

There are many negative social effects of body piercing and tattooing.

Primarily tattoos and body piercing have an associated negative suggestion in society. Usually individuals who have such body art are looked at differently and discriminated against in the public. This could happen in social gatherings or even in trying to apply for employment. Many professional organizations refuse to hire potential employees who have visible tattoos as this could compromise the professional outlook for the company.

Indeed, it would be shameful for someone who had done this as a teenager or even as an adult to ruin their chances at gainful employment. Not only that, but this art is permanent, i.e. it will always be a part of that person. For example, one day in the future, if this individual stops liking the image or the artwork on his body, he begins to regret it deeply and wishes he had not had the tattoo. The individual would start to feel ashamed and begins to socially withdraw because he wants to hide this image.

This can lead to social isolation and depression. Indeed, what may have seemed appealing at some point may not have the same appeal forever; this could change with time and lead to a lot of regret in the future.

Furthermore, there are also financial burdens associated with getting a tattoo or a body piercing. Contrary to common belief, getting a tattoo is quite expensive; not just for the drawing part but thereafter. The average cost of visiting a tattoo artist and the use of dyes and needles averages well above \$100 per hour!

Certainly, depending on the image and the colours, the cost goes up exponentially. In addition, there are additional costs with skin care products and lotions for at least two months after the tattoo is drawn. Finally, when the person finally decides they are tired of this image and decides to remove it, there is another significant financial burden of the removal process. This begins with the laser therapy procedures and many months of skin care to deal with the residual scar.

6. WHAT ABOUT THE SMALL CROSS ON THE WRIST?

Some Christians are used to placing a small cross on their wrist; does this break the command of God? If the command was taken to the letter, then the answer is yes; however, the letter kills but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6). If the placement of a small cross on the wrist was done for taking a blessing; for the attachment of that person to God; if it is not done for decorations; then we say yes, it is okay to have a small cross on the wrist. If it is done for other reasons then it is not pleasing to the site of the Lord.

7. A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE:

A girl who is attending one of the universities went to visit a priest one day after piercing her tongue; and it had a metal object above and below the tongue. She asked the priest how she can take the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ after having these objects in her tongue.

The priest replied and told her: You must know that what you have done is a sin. You have to present a true repentance from your heart to God. After this repentance you must remove the metal that you put in your mouth.

So, she replied: I thought I would be able to take communion with this in my mouth.

Certainly not replied the priest; you cannot even take the piercing off, take communion and then put it back on.

You must be convinced that what you have done is breaking the commandment of God—harmful to your body; so, you must repent and then after that you can take communion.

Indeed, this young girl cried bitterly, regretting what she had done and promised never to repeat it.

8. CONCLUSION:

Tattooing and body piercing are sins because they break the commandments of God that are clearly stated in the bible. We are commanded in the New Testament by God to follow the commandments in the Old Testament.

There are many negative health effects of tattooing and body piercing that we should not expose ourselves to. The removal of tattoos or body piercing on the body is costly and causes other negative health effects.

We must follow all of God's commandments to build a home for us in heaven. Therefore, would tattooing and body piercing help us build a place in heaven? Certainly not.

Can a person take communion from the Holy Body and Blood of Christ while having a tattoo or a bodily piercing? Certainly not.

We can imagine the Christian person as a priest-over his-body (or her-body). That person's body contains the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the priest must maintain and take care of his or her body so that the body is prepared for the Glorification of God; thus, we must protect it and watch over it.



SOCIAL ISSUE TOPICS



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

PLEASE READ: Matt 5:38-45, Jeremiah 6:16 and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON

To show that Christianity is against violence. Do not think of hitting. It is not an option. Flee domestic violence.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."
Matt 5:39*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE

A. INTRODUCTION

In the society where we live, we see a lot of domestic violence in homes, schools and many social gatherings. People use their hands to fight or a weapon to injure or even kill each other.

B. What is domestic violence?

It is a human response arising from jealousy, fear or hatred. E.g.: The story of Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:1-16. Where does Christianity stand on the subject of domestic violence?

C. God rejects domestic violence

There are many stories in the Old and New Testament that show full rejection from God for any sort of violence including domestic violence.

- 1) When Moses killed the Egyptian God said no.
(Please read Exodus 2:11-15)
- 2) When St. Peter took a sword to defend the Lord Jesus The Lord Jesus said no.
(Please read Matt 26:49-54)

D. Sources that Promote Violence

Many TV programs, Internet sites, magazines and books enhance and even praise violence. Such media may turn the individual into a violent person who resorts to aggression.

E. Dangers of Domestic Violence

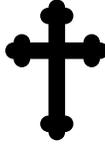
1. It is sinful.
The Lord Jesus Christ emphasized several times in His teachings and actions that Christianity is about “love”. Love and violence are incompatible.
2. It is illegal.
In modern societies, it is illegal to assault anyone (a child, or a woman or an elder or anyone).
3. It can grow.
Small acts of violence can grow and involve more people, cause more losses and result in more problems.
4. It can cause injury or loss of life.
You never know. A small hit may injure or even kill the individual if it is at the wrong place or the wrong time.

F. How to avoid domestic violence

1. Learn to avoid conflicts to start with. Do not hit or be violent.
2. Flee as soon as you feel that there is a potential for hitting.
3. If you experience any violence at home tell the priest to help. If you experience any violence at school tell the teacher or the principal.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON

1. Hitting is totally different from talking. You can differ with a younger brother or sister and talk about it but you must not think of hitting.
2. Avoid any people who are aggressive. Do not deal with them to start with.
3. Pray for people who are violent so God may heal them from the sickness of violence.



AS CHRISTIANS, CAN WE HAVE FUN TOO?

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show the difference between having fun and being involved in sinful actions. In Christianity, one can truly have fun and happiness.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.”
Phil. 4:4*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

The most frequently asked question by many youth is: As Christians can we have fun too? Many youth believe that religious people are boring and cannot have fun in their lives. These ideas are wrong. In fact, true Christians are always happy and have lots of fun. While others who lead a very sinful life are filled with misery (while from outside they look like they are having fun and that they are “cool”).

1. Definition of Fun:

Fun is defined as “the act that brings enjoyment and joy.” So, logically if we are involved in fun actions that bring “inner” joy then that is certainly something fun. What if fun involves wrong actions that bring with it problems, worries and sin? This is not true fun. This is false fun that results in the temporary joy of the five senses and after this temporary joy misery sets in. Is this type of fun worth it? Definitely not.

2. What does the Bible say?

The most important opinion is not our logical opinion only but what God says in the Holy Bible. There are many examples of joy in the Holy Bible; let us mention a few:

- a. The Lord Jesus Himself rejoiced when the Disciples came back from their first mission. (Luke 10:21)
- b. God ordered His people to rejoice when they reach the promised land (Deut. 12:18)

So the Bible is not against joy or fun. The problem is most people confuse fun with sin. Sin is not fun at all. People who are smoking or doing drugs, think they have fun. On the contrary they are doing sinful actions and hurting their bodies and their souls. Let us consider music. It is fun according to the definition since it brings enjoyment to the person. Could it be a sin? Yes, if the music produces bad feelings and bad emotions, it is sin. If I feel angry, depressed or lustful after I hear a piece of music or a song then there is something wrong.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Sports, music, movies, parties, friends, reading, trips or any fun thing one can imagine could be fun and not sinful if it is innocent and it will bring clean joy and happiness to one's spirit.
2. Fun has to be away from sin to bring real "inner" joy.
3. The Holy Bible, Christianity, and the church produce real fun and joy.



MUSIC – (I) *
“The influence of music on us”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of three lessons on music. In this lesson we cover the influence of music on us.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of
darkness, but rather expose them”
Eph. 5:11*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. God created music

God created music so that we might joyfully fulfill the greatest commandment. God created music so that the soul, spirit, and body of man would all come into unity to praise God. Nothing moves all of a man like music. This is why music is so powerful and personal. Men will argue with great emotion over music because all of a man is involved. Music is able to move men to tears and nations to war. In Exodus 32 the people of God built a golden calf in the name of the Lord. They became “corrupt” in their worship of God just as some of the worship leaders and musicians of our day have become corrupt. (Exodus 32:7)

B. The influence of music:

* **Note:** This series of lessons is based on the writings of Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty.

1. Music has an influence on all people. It has the capability to change the nature of man and his or her body, intellect, feelings and spiritual ability. For this reason, music has been used in worship to express the love between God and His children, and to fill the feelings of people with peace, and calmness. The book of Psalms in the heart of the Holy Bible is a book of praising God. It has musical expression, for example, “Salah” is a musical expression which means raising of the hands to up above accompanied with raising the music to tune with the move of the body with the longing of the heart.

Music also has a great effect on animals and plants. Many scientific experiments were performed. When the music was calm and peaceful, plants become healthier and brought more fruits. When the music was aggressive, plants lost their health and almost died. If this was the effect on plants, what do you think the effect of music on humans who are more sensitive and more tender. So, one has to be very choosy when it comes to the music you listen to. Music is not just fun, but it could be beneficial or very destructive to humans.

2. Music today is one of the most popular and effective forms of communication. Its language speaks in every tongue and to every nation. Music stimulates one’s emotions in different ways according to the rhythmical tempo, the lyrics, and so forth. One can be soothed to relaxation and contentment, or one can be stirred to dance to the bounding beat. Music with lyrics is one of the most common channels of self-expression, and one’s mood or motive usually determines the nature of what is expressed. “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Prov. 23:7
3. Many of the major writers have expressed the following related to music: “it affects the person and the whole society”, “it is the language of the spirit”, “it has authority on the personality”, “if abused it can destruct the whole society” and “if abused it can be like a poison that kills the body and the soul”.

4. Effect on the soul:

Music may be more dangerous than drugs because man may not be aware of its dangerous influences.

One of the American companies, specialized in marketing musical recordings, gave guarantees that the sales of any product would be raised, if a specific musical rhythm is utilized to attract the shoppers.

Music is sometimes utilized in psychiatric hospitals to help heal people. Some people felt worse under certain types of music. When an individual

falls under the effect of emotional or sexual types of music, he or she will lose control and behave in an irrational manner.

5. Effect on the Body:

The music has an effect on the human body. For example, listening to martial arts music, causes the person to move his head and his feet in a way to express his enthusiasm to enter the war and become ready to sacrifice. Many major writers have stated that certain types of music can affect the pulses of the heart, blood pressure, endorphins, and on the nervous system.

6. The Effect on the Spirit.

The church believes in the role of the music in the spiritual life of man and the strong relationship between music and the spirit. All the heavenly hosts are praising with great heavenly music i.e. not flesh or material music. They express their love for God and their joy in beautiful heavenly music. It is written that music carries great spiritual power that affects people very much. One of the major musicians named J.S. Bach said: “The goal of music must be to glorify God’s name and the growth of the spiritual depth of humans.”

As through the music God is glorified in people (e.g. the hymn Eporo ...”King of Peace”), some wicked songs and music can cause separation of man from God. What do you think of a song that is said in full pride “Sin in my heart” and it keeps repeating this in full pride?

C. The musical abilities of the devil.

The Holy Bible talks about the devil and his fall under the name “king of Tyre” saying, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying “son of man take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre and say to him ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden – The Garden of God, every stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Ezk. 28:11-15).

As a cherub the devil was a musician, not with materialistic instruments or flesh type music source but he was a very talented heavenly musician. After his fall, he is still a very talented musician that uses his ability to achieve his evil goals. If the

devil can make himself appear as if he is an enlightened angel, he can use the music to destroy people and make them stand against God. The strategy of the devil can be then summarized in three points: First, the devil has a huge musical ability. Second, the devil knows the effect of music on body, soul and spirit. Third, the devil knows that his judgment day is getting nearer. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.” (Rev. 12:12)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Be aware that music has a great effect on your body, soul and spirit.
2. Be selective with the music you listen to.
3. The devil is a great musician who knows how to spread bad music among people to spoil them and the whole world.



MUSIC – (II) “Rock and Roll”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson two in a series of three lessons on music. In this lesson we talk about Rock and Roll music as well as some other evil music.

MEMORY VERSE:

“... to those who are perishing whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”

2 Cor. 4:3-4

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Rock and Roll

Rock and roll, also called rock, is a form of popular music, usually featuring vocals (often with vocal harmony), electric guitars and a strong back beat; other instruments, such as the saxophone, are common in some styles.

As a cultural phenomenon, rock’s social impact on the world is likely unparalleled by any other kind of music. It has been blamed for corrupting the innocent and spreading moral rot. Rock has become popular across the globe, far from its birthplace in the United States, and evolved into a multitude of highly-varying styles. The term rock and roll is vague. It is sometimes used to describe a number of genres only distantly related, including soul, heavy metal and even hip hop. In other circumstances, it is used strictly to apply only to the earliest incarnation of

“rock” – the 1950s scene that started the genre. Some make distinctions between rock and roll music on these grounds, while other unapologetically use it as a synonym for modern Western popular music.

B. The idolist origin of the Rock and Roll music

One of the main elements of rock and roll music is the use of a strong back beat similar to the music of the people who worship idols. Several African tribes who worship spirits and idols use this type of music in their worship to get the response of these spirits. The Africans brought this music to the United States and the first one to spread it all over Europe and the rest of the world was the famous singer Elvis Presley. Currently because of easier communication the effects of music are far reaching.

C. Rock and Rebellion

From its beginnings, rock and roll has been associated with youth, rebellion and anti-establishmentism. The combination of cultural influences, suggestive lyrics and wild response by the younger set made rock and roll shocking and threatening to the older generation. The ability to shock the elders in turn became part of the appeal of the music to young people. Hollywood was quick to produce a series of rock and roll themed exploitation films designed to thrill teenagers and horrify adults.

D. Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll

The rock lifestyle has always been popularly known as being associated with sex and drugs. Many of rock and roll’s early stars (as well as their jazz and blues counterparts) were known as hard-drinking, hard-living characters; during the 1960s a decadent rock lifestyle became more publicly known, aided by the growth of the underground rock press which documented such excesses, often in an exploitative fashion. Musicians had always attracted attention from the opposite sex. Groupies, girls who followed, spent time with and often did sexual favors for band members, appeared in the 1960s.

Drugs were often a huge part of a rock musician's lifestyle too. In the 60s, psychedelic music was created, in which some musicians encouraged and intended listeners of psychedelic music to be under the influence of LSD or other hallucinogenic drugs. They claimed that being on acid while listening to music greatly enhanced the listening experience.

E. Christianity and the Rock and Roll music

The book of Revelation warned us about the coming down of the devil (Rev. 12:12). St. Paul said "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despises of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" 2 Tim. 3:1-5

No doubt that the devil after he was permitted to come down to earth (Rev. 12:12), tried his utmost to enter into every soul with those attributes mentioned above in 2 Tim. 3:1-5. So the devil is using the music as a language to enter into every soul, the lives of people, their thinking and push them to worship him and reject the faith and defile all the holies. All the Rock and Roll tapes which are being spread all over the world promote abuse of sex, drugs, violence, crime and suicide.

It is a situation that is repeated throughout history to different degrees. Whatever is happening today as a preparation for the coming of the anti-Christ and the last appearance of the Lord Christ is very similar to the world before the flood. The Lord Jesus said " But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" Matt 24:37-39.

The Rock music is against God and attracts hearts and minds from God toward the devil. As the church tries its best to glorify God's name and preach the Gospel for spiritual growth, you find evil music distracting and attracting the hearts and minds of people away from God.

F. Other types of evil music

1. Popular music

This is sometimes abbreviated to pop music. Pop music means any sort of music intended for mass consumption and propagated over the radio and similar media. It is the product of the modern business enterprise, and is disseminated for the purpose of earning a profit.

2. Jazz

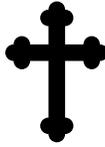
Jazz is a musical art form characterized by blue notes, syncopation, swing, call and response, polyrhythm and improvisation. Jazz is something African Americans invented. The word jazz itself is rooted in American slang, probably in sexual origin.

3. Hip Hop music.

It is the most dangerous type of music. It promotes drugs and, weapons, and uses messages to promote killing. It is a “popular” style of music. It is composed of two parts: rapping (emceeing) and DJing; along with breakdancing and graffiti art.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Rock and Roll music (as well as many other types of music) is used by the devil to spoil the hearts and minds of people and attract them towards him and not God.
2. Our ears that are anointed with the Chrism Oil must not be defiled by listening to such types of music.



MUSIC – (III)
“What Is Acceptable Music?”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the third lesson in a series of three lessons on music. In this lesson we focus on what is acceptable music.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing
his own heart.”*

Prov. 18:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of opinions being aired about what is acceptable Christian music. Rather than frame our discussion by the use of human logic let us look at God's Word - for it is the Word of God that will light our path, and the Bible declares that only a fool delights in airing his own opinion (Prov 18:2).

We accept unholy music because we measure music by what we like - what feels good to us. Our flesh likes what we hear and therefore labels it holy. So often in a discussion of what is acceptable music, result only in arguments. This happens because each individual's flesh is attracted to different styles of music, and they are unwilling to surrender their tastes to the Lord. We must return to the cross, being crucified to what our flesh likes and dislikes, and discover the desire of Christ. This is what Paul means when he declares that he has been "crucified with Christ." Dead men are dead to their likes and dislikes. Only as we become crucified to our

ears, will we have the ears of Christ - ears that listen only to what the Father finds pleasing and pure. Jesus did not come to please Himself but to please God, and we must follow Jesus in those footsteps even in things like music. This is the kind of hatred for our own life that Jesus calls all His disciples to (John 12:25).

God created music so that we might joyfully fulfill the greatest commandment. God invented music so that the soul, spirit, and body of man would all come into unity to praise God. Nothing moves a man like music. This is why music is so powerful and personal.

Men will argue with great emotion over music because the full body of a man is involved. Music is able to move men to tears and nations to war. In Exodus 32 the people of God build a golden calf in the name of the Lord. They became "corrupt" in their worship of God just as the worship leaders and musicians of our day have become corrupt (Exod 32:7).

Worship has become the code word for entertainment in so many situations. Today the church tolerates and whitewashes all manner of ungodly music, performed in the name of Jesus - and, just as Aaron did, there are plenty of individuals to tack on the name of the Lord in order to justify fleshly desires.

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." (Exod 32:5)

We must test what is being done in the name of the Lord by Scripture. Here are a few basic guidelines.

1. **Music must leave as much room as possible for the soul to express itself**

Most artists write music to move the flesh and then the soul. Music should be written from a position of being on the cross - then it will not move the flesh to sin. This is why God tells us to first make music in our "heart" before using instruments.

We must first "speak" words of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to "one another." No lights, no loud music, no fine playing bands, eloquent voices, nothing but normal conversation. A godly service certainly has no worship leaders psyching the crowds up, or musicians giving the people whatever kind of entertainment or worship they want. In a godly church everyone first speaks Scriptures and other spiritual things to each other before ever singing. Their hearts

fill up with the Word of God, by way of a crucified life, and the worship directs what bursts forth from their hearts. It is nothing less than crucified flesh being overcome by the joy of pure heart. A far cry from what we see happening today.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns
and spiritual songs. Sing and make music
in your heart to the Lord. (Eph 5:19)

After we are done speaking, the "heart" should be moved to "make music" to the Lord on its own. The responsibility of every music leader is to make certain that, whatever musical instrument is used, it only brings out the music of the heart that flows first from speaking to one another in song. Any song or music that comes to man outwardly and then moves the heart is fleshly and wrong.

A Christian's music should be alien and strange to the ungodly. In short, they shouldn't like it. When individuals use music to draw the world they actually become enemies of God (Jas 4:4). While it is true that Jesus sat with sinners, it is not true that He sinned while sitting down. Whenever a musician seeks to "cross over" they lose the cross of Christ and all power of the gospel.

2. The outward appearance must not look like the world

It is a lie to say that God does not care what is on the outside, that He only looks at the heart. God, who created your soul, used the same love to create your body. Dress, hair, manners, conversation, and all that other men see should reflect the glory of God. Anything that draws attention to ourselves, whether body piercing, tattoos or hair length and styles, rebels against the Word of God and defies His glory. Not only is there no agreement between the temple of God and idols, but even a casual reading of Scripture clearly declares we are not to mark our bodies, dress in such a way as to draw attention to ourselves.

Therefore come out from among them
and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no
unclean thing, and I will receive you. (2
Cor 6:17)

Everything a musician does should confirm the preceding Scripture; becoming "separate" and touching "no unclean thing." If you don't leave a concert and walk away saying to yourself, "that is different from the world," then it is not of Jesus.

Any concert in the name of Jesus should not have the smoke, lights, volume, and dress of the world. We are called to purify ourselves from outward things that "contaminate" the body and ways of playing music that defile the "spirit". Indeed, if music is so loud that it harms the ears, it is a sin against the body God gave us (1 Cor 3:17).

3. All songs must reflect the Glory of God.

Every song should speak of Jesus. In "word or deed" every song must speak clearly of Jesus and the glory of God. Whether in psalms, hymns or spiritual songs, if a person can't understand that the song speaks of Jesus then it is unacceptable in Gods' ears.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16-17)

4. The musicians must not be preaching themselves.

Drop by the web site of Christian musicians, or look at their album covers, and you will see all manner of spiritual insanity. They seek the applause of man and point to themselves in all that they do. They sing in their own name and are accepted by so many because the audience likes the fact that they really sing about themselves. Listeners recognize that the singer is merely using God to glorify themselves - and that appeals to their flesh. Jesus revealed this truth when He walked on earth.

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not accept Me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. (John 5:43)

This is why Paul speaks of his ministry in these terms.

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Cor 4:5)

All awards and approval of men must be utterly rejected. For music to be acceptable to God we must remove the Dove Awards. No more clapping between songs, no more discussion of how many like the music. The music and musicians must reflect the heart of Jesus that did "not accept praise from men."

I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. (John 5:41-42)

5. Music must never be used for evangelism

God never ordained music to be used as a tool for evangelism. Music was always meant for worship. Using music for evangelism is to sing songs to demons and wicked men, and to lure the most unholy and unrepentant into our temples. Think about it. What interest does an unrepentant man have in the words of worship in our song? Perhaps the only thing that draws them is the beat and style of music or the fact that the words have no depth.

When we create a style of music to draw the world, we become like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. In other words, only their flesh is drawn, just as man's flesh was lured to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we use music to call the worldly to church, we might as well give away free beer. This is why Paul declares that we cannot eat at the table of demons and the table of the Lord at the same time (1 Cor 10:21). If true holiness flowed from our concerts, men would be convicted of sin or spurred onto more holiness. The beat would be lost to the sound of repentance and righteousness.

Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make

one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, "For he is good; for his mercy endures forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God. (2 Chr 5:12-14)

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

True righteousness and purity cannot be hidden, but that which falls short must be explained and justified with much debate. Men like to cloud the issue with words so that they don't have to obey God. Before we ever listen to a song, or pick up an instrument, let righteousness flow like a "never-failing stream"; until then "away with the noise of your songs". Take away from Me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream (Amos 5:23-24).



YOUTH ACTIVITIES FOR THE SUMMER HOLIDAY

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show the importance of utilizing the summer holiday in a constructive way so they may have peace, happiness and become closer to Christ.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“To everything there is a season.”
Eccles. 3:1*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. The problem of spare time

Youth need to realize the importance of being busy doing constructive things. During the academic year, because there are studies and exams to handle, there is less spare time. In fact during the academic year, many youth complain that they need more time for things. During the academic season, people would like to succeed and finish. Now the summer holiday comes, how can youth stay busy doing constructive things? Youth have to be convinced of this simple idea. Some constructive things have to replace all the busy time of the academic season or many destructive things will enter their life with great losses. The summer holiday could be spent in laziness, emptiness, sin, deviation, etc., or be spent in a beneficial way. Let us discuss the following point with the youth.

I need to grow in my practice of salvation and grow in the love of Christ. How? Reading the Holy Bible, repentance, confession and partaking more frequently of the Holy Communion are essential; likewise, reading spiritual books, historical books of the church or some of the specialized books about religion and science ...etc. How about serving more in the church because

during the study season? Remember that God wants us to give the tithes of our time serving Him. Not that He needs it, but this is for our benefit.

So, youth must be convinced before the beginning of the summer holiday that they have to search for their needs and satisfy them. Summer vacation is a double-edged sword: it could, on one extreme be very beneficial or it could, on the other extreme be very damaging.

C. The role of the church activities

One must emphasize the spiritual goal ... and not lose track practicing many side activities. In many situations youth can become too busy with other activities and not pursue their spiritual goal and this is of course, unacceptable.

D. Some youth activities for the summer holiday

1. Prayer meetings, hymn classes, Coptic classes and Bible contests.
2. Service in the church.
3. Spiritual retreats.
4. Arrange trips for children and supervise them.
5. Writing about subjects and holding presentations.
6. Undertake specific assignments e.g. summarize some of the church books, or lives of the Saints.
7. Taking time out for solitude in a secluded area.
(Maybe two times during the summer holiday, two days duration for each).
Each time one has to read the Bible a lot, pray a lot and review areas of improvement in one's life.
8. Church Summer Club.
 - (i.) Organized sports activities
 - (ii.) Organized plays
 - (iii.) Outreach

NOTE: The church summer club must be under enough supervision from the church.

E. Youth work during the summer

Many youth find summer work in various areas. There are two aspects here to mention:

1. Youth must be very careful about the work set-up itself as many companies hire youth for only small jobs with casual workers. The youth must not associate closely with any of those workers who may have bad characters, just to be extra careful.

2. Youth have to be careful how to spend the money earned from summer work. Misuse of money can lead to several problems. Use of the money must be under the direction of the parents.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. One must prepare for the proper use of time during the summer holiday before it starts. Remember you need to fill your time with useful things instead of the studying that occupied most of your time before.
2. One must first identify his or her spiritual needs and try hard to satisfy these during the summer.
3. Be very careful, if you work during the summer, about the work set-up and your use of the money you make.



THE GENERATION GAP

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show how the experience of older generation can work together with the innovations of the younger generations for the growth and well-being of all.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,
And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but
bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
Eph 6: 1 & 4*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

There is constant discussion of the “**conflict between generations**”, but I prefer to call it the “generation gap”. No doubt there is a difference between generations, for what the fathers encountered in their youth is radically different from what their sons/daughters encounter. Whereas the younger generation represents innovations, the older represent experience. Experience must not hinder innovations, but neither should innovations ignore the role of experience.

To begin with, there are certain important facts that we must consider as we examine this generation gap.

1. Being different and having differences

Having differences means conflict and opposition, maybe even hostility, which is sure evidence of spiritual, intellectual and psychological immaturity.

Spiritual maturity makes the heart gentle, humble, open, able to accept the other as a person, the other as thought, as energy and talents that are useful to society.

- † Psychological maturity raises man above well-known and dangerous personality defects such as jealousy, obstinacy, haughtiness, too great a confidence in one's own abilities, intolerance of others and leads to their acceptance as a vessel for different gifts.
- † Intellectual maturity raises man above personal opinion, intolerance, fanaticism, intellectual terrorism, a closed mind, lack of reason and the belief that I alone possess all truth and that all who differ from me in thought or creed are abhorrent enemies.

The most dangerous problem a young people currently suffer from currently is the idea that only they possess sound opinion, can make the right decisions, and can discern matters. Thus, they blindfold themselves and can only think about their own enthusiasms in an emotional, individualistic way that is lacking in objectivity, broadmindedness and openness to debate.

The educational methods in schools stress spoon-feeding rather than formation and development. The teacher stuffs his students' minds with the subject matter without any attention to the creative mind or interactive thought. That makes for the creation of single-track minds. Maybe the methods we use in church promote this too when some imagine that humility means overriding the human personality. This means there is no discussion or debate but rather orders and prohibitions. This is far removed from the Spirit of Christ who used the methods of debate and discussion although He is God and we are human.

Therefore, when you have differences, dear young man or woman, with your father or mother, don't let these differences in opinion cause discord but make them the occasion for interaction and discussion so that we can all be convinced of the right views.

2. Persuading and Being Persuaded

Some people are under the illusion that the job of the minister, of older people, and of parents is “**to persuade**” their sons and daughters to follow the right path, spiritually, morally, or intellectually.

However, there is a great difference between “**persuading**” and “**being persuaded**”. Persuading means that I believe I possess the truth and will persuade others of it and that they have to be convinced! This is a form of covert dictatorship or what is called in Management “**selling an idea**”.

The right way is to engage in a sound and real discussion that leads both parties to a calm and valid conviction. “**Persuading**” requires patience, prayer, gentleness, objectivity, tranquility, composure, and the exchange of opinions and ideas.

If the parents attempt to persuade their children of what they believe to be right, the children might not comply for they too attempt to persuade their parents that what they believe is right.

The correct way is through calm discussion until we (**older or younger**) reach sound views, which may accord with those of the parents or those of the young people, or it may be an entirely new notion that arises out of the dialogue.

3. Innovation and Experience:

Innovation is the prerogative of youth because of their enthusiasm, their overflowing energy, their ardor, and their eagerness for the future.

Experience is the attribute of the older generation because of all they’ve seen of life, its joys and its pains. They have come into contact with all sorts of people and all they have read has added years to their years.

Conflict arises when those two important gifts of innovation and experience clash. The answer is for both to complement each other rather than for one to do away or ignore the other.

Young people can shoot up in one year so that they are as big as, or maybe bigger than their parents. They assume that this growth makes them their parents’, equals in every way. This rapid and sudden physical growth is not accompanied by rapid and sudden mental maturity, for the latter takes place gradually in step with emotional and spiritual maturity. There is therefore a lag between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturity on the one hand and physical maturity on the other.

There is a need for the two generations to complement each other. The young must correctly assess this gap and recognize their need for the experience and wisdom of their parents. The parents should also be gentle with their youth and not belittle their aspirations but channel their energy judiciously.

4. The Difference between Eras

There is a difference between the forties and the Second World War, the fifties and the revolution, the sixties and socialism, the seventies and the open door policy, the eighties and religious extremism, the nineties and terrorism, and our era and the technological innovations and the globalization we are witnessing. Life and the world differ from one age to another and we must adapt to them no matter how advanced the age. We should not deal with our young people in accordance with the circumstances of our youth or the traditions of our generation, but according to the features of the new age. This is the age of communication, information, genetic engineering, test tube babies, social, political, and economic liberty, satellites and all this entails in the way of cultural invasion and entirely different values that formed those that governed the lives of parents. Then, Egyptian values, traditions, and the basic tenets of family life governed people's behaviour, and even their choice of profession, careers, spouses, and relationships.

The older generation must understand the characteristics of the age and deal with their children according to these variables at home, at school, on the street, through the mass media, taking into account the prevalent current intellectual, social and political trends.

5. Differences in Stages

There is a difference between childhood when children are receptive to the basic tenets of the faith and the secondary stage when the personality is being formed. At this stage the mind is critical, the spirit in revolt, and the emotions in ferment. In post-secondary school, firm friendships are formed and emotional bonds are forged with members of the opposite sex. Young people begin to think of choosing their life partners even before they reach the stage where they are interested in one particular member of the opposite sex and while they are still interested generally in members of the other sex.

The graduate then encounters the problems of unemployment and various other career related problems: whether to work for the government, the public sector, the private sector or establishing a small project. He also faces the problems of his social environment as well as those related to marriage such as the choice of a partner, preparing for marriage, implementing the plans, entering into relationships and understanding the future spouse.

Therefore, the older people have to be gentle with their children as they move from one stage to another. Each stage has its own difficulties as well as its blessings and its role in shaping the individual, developing his skills, making his relationship with the Lord grow in experiential faith born of daily life, not just a theoretical faith.

† **What's next?**

It is vitally important for the generations to become acquainted, to help each other, to complement each other and to exchange experiences. No one is immortal or infallible; no one possesses the whole truth, is always right, has all the gifts or the energy. We all need each other!

The parents need their children who have energy, love and loyalty, and the children need their experienced parents who sacrifice and give.

† **What we need is:**

1. Being persuaded that every generation needs the preceding and succeeding generations so that there is continuity in life, accumulation of experience, renewal of vitality and thought through the energies of a creative youth.
2. Mutual love for no one loves the children as much as their parents do regardless of what they imagine or is suggested by Satan to the contrary. No one abandons his parents except if he is an unnatural son who is devoid of humanity, not to mention Christianity.
3. Mutual trust to work in unity of heart, mind, and spirit. How hard it is for young people to feel that their parents do not trust them and how hard it is for parents to feel that their children doubt their love for them. We have to teach our children to trust and train them in gaining it through their daily good and open conduct, even when they make mistakes.
4. Mutual respect because harshness definitely will not work, and neither will compulsion and selling an idea. Respect for the persona and intellects of

the new generation is vital to persuade them to follow the right path and to act sensibly.

5. The spirit of dialogue makes possible the exchange of ideas and opinions in a constructive atmosphere in which objectivity, understanding, and calm prevail over emotionalism, loud voices, issuing orders. The first method is adopted by young people who are loyal, understanding, willing to interact, and who acknowledge their need of the older people's experience and of spiritual guidance. The second method is resorted to by failing young people, who as soon as they grow up, escape their bonds, become extremists, and maybe even resort to violence and sin.

May the Lord, through His Holy Spirit and His divine grace, fill our hearts with love and peace, cleanse our souls, and enlighten our minds so that we can bridge this generation gap.

May life continue so that the intellect is enriched, the hearts are at peace, experience is accumulated, and man is reconciled to his neighbour.

*** This lesson is based on the writings of H.G. Bishop Moussa.**



ADOLESCENCE

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To let the youth of the class understand all major aspects of adolescence age and become capable of handling their issues based on prayer, faith and awareness.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
before the difficult days come” Ecc. 12:1*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

This is a normal stage in human development and it is linked to the previous and future stages. It is not separated, but rather a transitional stage between the late childhood and adulthood. It is not only a bodily transitional stage, but also a mental, psychological, and social one.

Adolescence stages

1. Early adolescence stage

This stage is called the preparatory and resistance stage. It falls between the age of 10.5 – 14 years for males and 12 –14 years for females.

2. Middle adolescence stage

This is the true age of adolescence as the start of fast growth accompanies this stage. It falls between the age of 12.5 – 15 for males and 12 –14 for females.

3. Late adolescence stage

The biological changes stabilize, and the signs of adapting with society and expressing emotions appear. It is worth mentioning that the signs that determine the character start at this stage. This stage extends from 14 – 16 year for males and 14 –17 for females.

Start of the adolescence stage

Adolescence starts with sexual puberty, but is affected by many factors such as:

- The general bodily structure and related issues such as the health, diseases, diet, and the genetic factors (hereditary), in addition to the regional factors. In cold areas, it starts at the age of 15 – 16 years, and in the hot areas, it starts at the age of 9 – 12 years.
- The bodily growth precedes other types of growth. It is not necessary that the growth rate will be the same within this stage. But in the end, the mental, psychological, and social developments stabilize when the adolescent reaches the age of 19.

The characteristics of the bodily development

Fast growth in the bone skeleton

Increase in the height of both sexes; broadening the shoulders and chest in boys and widening of the pelvis in girls.

Appearance of the first bodily characteristics

Increase in the activity of the sexual glands in the males and the start of the menstrual period for the girls and the appearance of hair in some parts of the body in the boys and girls. This is in addition to the change in the voice tone for the boy as it becomes tougher and for the girls it becomes sharper.

Important changes in the internal organs

Development of the heart and widening of the arteries which leads to the increase in the blood pressure. This change has its long-term effects on the sensitivity and emotions of the adolescent. This is in addition to the development of the stomach as it becomes longer and wider.

The characteristics of the mental growth

Knowledge growth

The development of the mental abilities (language & understanding). The rate of intelligence increases during adolescence.

The ability to learn

Some tend to read and go on picnics and try to free themselves from reading the schoolbooks and tend to read scientific, philosophical and religious books, and issues related to sex and memory recording.

Knowledge

The knowledge of the adolescent increases to include the past and the future, in addition to linking the facts and analyzing current issues.

Understanding

The cognitive ability of the adolescent person increases.

Imagination

The ability of the adolescent to imagine increases, and he satisfies his desires by referring to arts, music and poetry. His ability to pay attention, understand and retrieve the information increases.

The characteristics of the emotional development

High sensitivity

Quickly affected by any negligible reason and will be highly sensitive because of the religious advice and human stories that they hear.

Rebelling and disobedience

In an effort to prove themselves, the adolescents will be rebellious against all kinds of authority, in addition to adopting aggressive conduct.

Daydreams

The adolescent finds a vent in daydreaming to achieve his desires and hopes, and to satisfy what he lost in real life.

Fears

The adolescent will have many fears that have no justifications:

School fears, health fears, fears of family disintegration, or moral fears that they may commit a sin that will make them feel guilty.

Adolescence and religion

The adolescent will be suspicious about religion. This leads them to understand the religious issues rationally and they think about the universe and try to discover the supernatural issues, and analyze and link between natural phenomena.

Caring about the opposite sex

Thinking and caring about the opposite sex. At the early stages of adolescence the care will be towards the same sex.

Psychological conflicts

Delay or hesitation in making decisions.

Instability and unsteadiness

Each moment they are in a different mood.

The characteristics of social development

Independence

The desire of the adolescent is to free himself from the authority of the adults and opposing the traditions and current values, in addition to the increase in self-confidence.

Making friendships

Increasing the circle of the friends and joining groups which are governed by special laws and traditions.

Introversion and withdrawal

Some adolescents tend to revert to introversion and negativity, and do not react with the people around them because of shyness and lack of self-confidence.

Control of special motives

Leaning toward idealism and leadership and ostentation and tending to be aggressive and competitive.

Contradictions in sayings and deeds

The reason for this is that the adolescent is passing through a comprehensive transitional stage. The people around him will not change their ideas about him although he changed. Their conception of him is that he is still young. This will upset his self-confidence.

Anxiety and instability

The reasons for anxiety for the adolescent are many such as:

- The bodily changes, especially if the family or the teachers have not prepared them for these changes.
- Emotional changes and different frustrations, which they face from their environment and the people around them.
- Uncertainty about their educational, financial and family future.

The problems of the adolescent stage

The behavioral delinquency

Practicing bad habits such as addiction and smoking which will be part of their future life. These may lead to delinquency and criminal behavior, such as stealing and joining addiction gangs.

Sexual delinquency

Tending to satisfy the sexual needs.

Extreme involvement in day dreaming

Continuous daydreaming to escape reality and living in an imaginary world.

School problems

Quitting school and continuous absence and problems associated with educational understanding.

Health Problems

Acne, hormonal imbalance, menstrual period problems, bending of the back, myopia and problems associated with malnutrition such as anemia, obesity and loss of appetite.

Problems of adaptation

The problems associated with adaptation or lack of adaptation, result from the fast changes that occur at all growth areas, or because of lack of adaptation with the people around the adolescent, as well as health problems.

How is the adolescent able to adapt in this stage?

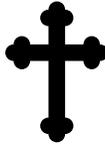
- Accepting themselves and understanding the nature of development stages.
- Decreasing ambitions to suit reality.
- Extending the bridge of communication and dialogue with their family and the people around them.

- Organizing studying times at home, developing different hobbies, and making use of the free time.
- Better selection of friends and avoiding bad ones.
- Practicing sport activities and adopting healthier conducts.
- Avoiding bad habits such as smoking and boring life styles.
- Taking the initiative to ask for advice in case of fear of any health, psychological, and social problems.
- Being concerned about a balanced diet and avoiding excessive amounts of fast foods and soft drinks.

The role of the family and the educators in assisting the adolescent in this stage

- † Understanding the nature of all types of developments at this stage.
- † Satisfying the financial, psychological, mental, and social needs of the adolescent.
- † Building objective dialogue and opening the channels of continuous communication with the children.
- † Assisting the adolescent to show their objectives and balancing their ambitions with reality.
- † Reinforce a positive understanding for themselves, especially in regards to the concept of their body, and to help them understand the nature of the fast growth of their body as it changes.
- † Respecting the privacy of the adolescent and avoiding the criticism which leads to threatening their entity and normal future development.
- † Providing a peaceful atmosphere and support for the adolescent to practice their activities according to their interests and hobbies.
- † It is important that the parents agree on the way to deal with the adolescent by adopting a directed democracy and avoiding authority, and excessive forcefulness.
- † The importance of providing sexual information through the family to avoid getting this information through pornography..
- † Expecting the problems before they occur and activating the prevention means, such as observing any negative change in the daily habits of the adolescents and treating them patiently.
- † The family should extend the bridges of communication and cooperation with the school to know the educational status and the moral standards of their children and to solve any problem.

- ✦ It is important that the family seek advice in solving any problem related to their children without any delay.
- ✦ Adolescence is a stage that requires patience from the adolescent, family and the educators. They should all cooperate so that the adolescent passes this stage peacefully.



CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE

PLEASE READ Matt 5:38-45, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that Christianity is against any kind of violence. The churches are asking for “Not just war, but just peace.”

MEMORY VERSE:

“BUT I TELL YOU NOT TO RESIST AN EVIL PERSON. BUT WHOEVER SLAPS YOU ON YOUR RIGHT CHEEK, TURN THE OTHER TO HIM ALSO.”

Matt.5:39

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

It is common knowledge that much violence that goes on in the name of religion has little to do with religion. Often religion is used, misused, and abused in conflicts that have social, economic and political motivations, and many of the persons that actively perpetrate violence have little or no knowledge of the faith in the name of which they join battle. In most of these cases it is religious identity and fervor that play the important role rather than the motivations provided by the faith itself.

Within the first few books of the Bible, we came across the many dimensions of what is generally covered by the word “violence”.

1. Violence as a human response arising from jealousy, fear or hatred (story of Cain and Abel)

2. Violence as structured oppression (The Hebrews under the Egyptians).
3. Violence as part of a liberation struggle (events connected with freeing the Hebrews).
4. Violence in war and conquest (The occupation of Canaan)
5. Violence and the on-going battles between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. Hence, the eschatological vision in the book of Revelation presents a cosmic battle between the powers of evil and good in which the powers of evil, after a violent struggle, are conquered.

C. The Lord Jesus' stand on violence

The Lord Jesus rejected violence of any sort. He taught about love. Even love of enemies and turning the other cheek. Not only did the Lord teach about love to that extent, but He also practiced it. When one of His disciples drew a sword to defend him, Jesus said “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword”, Matt. 26:52.

D. The Early Church stand on violence

The study of the life of the early church also shows that the church, as it emerged into a new religious tradition separated from its Jewish roots, and exposed a non-violent stance in its relationship to the Roman Empire. Even though the empire had begun an active persecution of the church for the fear that those who followed “the new way” were disloyal to Rome, the church’s non-violent stance appears to have held until its whole ethos changed with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. Our church in Egypt has lived through many generations of suffering from persecution but has never resorted to violence. The church only relied on the power of pray and fasting. What was the outcome? The church has lived and will continue to live and the powers of darkness will go away. Violence is not justified under any circumstance within the church.

After the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the religion of the state, the church was faced with the problem of having to respond to the acts of war undertaken by the empire, often with offensive wars, but also in self-defense when attacked by outside forces. Although the initial response of the church was not to bless wars, the response to the pressure from the rulers brought forth the idea of “Just war”. At that time the church supported wars under certain conditions. Six criteria were developed by which a war might be declared “just”:

1. The war must be declared by a legitimate authority.
2. It must be undertaken with a right intention, namely, to promote peace.
3. It must be used only as the last resort, namely, when all other ways of resolving the conflict have been exhausted.
4. It must be waged on the principle of proportionality, which means that the evil and destruction perpetrated should not outweigh the good that comes out of it.
5. It must have a reasonable chance of success.
6. It must be waged with all the moderation possible, which means that violence unrelated to the battle and to persons unrelated to the war, must be avoided.

Because modern weaponry and methods of warfare make it difficult to achieve those 6 conditions above, churches have been taking the stand saying “Not just war, but just peace”.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We as Christians have respect for life. Therefore we are against any kind of violence.
2. Some use of violence, as in the case of United Nations sending forces to prevent massacre of innocent people (e.g. in Rwanda and Bosnia), is justifiable.
3. We as Christians must vote for just peace rather than just war.



HOW CAN I RESIST PEER PRESSURE? (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To demonstrate the effects of peer pressure in the lives of our youths. Various aspects of peer pressure will be dealt with over two lessons, in the form of questions and answers.

MEMORY VERSE:

“A Prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” Prov. 22:3

KEY QUESTIONS:

Q.1 **What is Peer Pressure?**

A.1 Peer pressure is the strong influence your friends have on you that dictates the clothes you wear, the words you say, the places you go to and the attitude you have. It is the pressure you experience to conform to the standards and the values of your friends even if you don't want to. It can be either positive if you have good friends or negative if you have bad friends.

Q.2 **Why is Peer Pressure so Powerful?**

A.2 Peer pressure is so powerful because God created us all with a need to be loved and accepted. God wants you to find this need fulfilled in your relationship with Him. He wants you to feel that He loves and accepts you. If you are not living a good Christian life you do not feel the Lord's love and acceptance. The more distant you are from God, the greater your need becomes for acceptance by people, the more significant the opinions of your

friends become and the more vulnerable you become to peer pressure. A strong Christian cares only about what God thinks of him or her and does not actually care what others think of him or her. In reality, youths who are still growing in their faith, are easily affected by peer pressure.

Q.3 What areas in a teenager's life are affected by Peer Pressure?

A.3 There are four areas in a teenager's life that are greatly affected by peer pressure: sexual life, drugs, drinking and religion.

A) SEXUAL LIFE AS PEER PRESSURE

Q.4 My girlfriends at school keep making fun of me because I am still a virgin. What can I do?

A.4 Having sexual relations before marriage is called fornication, which is a sin that would anger God. Virginity is something you can give away only once, so one should not sacrifice it because you cannot get it back. You can tell your friends, "In two minutes I can become like you, but no matter how hard you try, you can never become like me again."

Q.5 My boyfriend keeps telling me that if I loved him, I would let him have sex with me. What should I do? I don't know if I can resist much longer.

A.5 It sounds like your boyfriend has confused lust for love. He only has lust and he is pressuring you to satisfy his own needs. You do not have to put up with this pressure. Tell your boyfriend that he can either look for another girlfriend or, if he really loves you, he must wait for you as you cannot anger the Lord your God by doing lustful actions.

Q.6 My boyfriend wants us to make love together. What do I tell him?

A.6 Tell him that it is a sin and how can I do such a bad sin and anger the Lord. Tell him that it only takes one time to lose ones virginity, it only takes one time to get pregnant and it may take one time to pick up a sexual disease like herpes or AIDS...etc. **It is not worth it.** Tell your friend never to ask you again.

Q.7 My boyfriend keeps telling me to trust him. Should I?

A.7 No. If he has to convince you that he is trustworthy, chances are he is not. You must always be very careful and do not assume that a friend is trustworthy until it is proven by his actions as opposed to his words.

Q.8 I am nineteen years old, why shouldn't I mess around with my girlfriend? My friends tell me "it is only natural". If I do not mess around like them, they make me feel that I am abnormal.

A.8 Tell them that it is also natural to burp in public or to run around naked, but we do not do it because it is not proper and it offends others. To mess around with a girlfriend is not proper because 1) it would be sinful; it would anger God, it may lead to sexual disease, it would be a waste of time, it would have a negative impact on her spiritual, social, and career life and, if she gets pregnant, it becomes a significant problem; 2) it can offend her parents if they know about it as well as offending her future husband and her future children.

B) TAKING DRUGS UNDER PEER PRESSURE

Q.9 What does the Bible say about drugs?

A.9 The Bible does not deal with the subject of drugs directly; but it does not talk about which side of the road to drive on either, or whether or not you should wear a seat belt. The Bible does say that your body is God's temple, 1 Cor. 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells on you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy." Drug abuse does nothing positive for your body; on the contrary, it is destructive. Do not subject your body, which is the temple of God, to the harmful effects of drugs.

Q.10 My friends say I do not know what I am missing. Is getting high that big of a deal?

A.10 Resisting taking drugs helps you to avoid a lot of very bad things like: addiction, loss of memory, panic attacks, depression, anxiety, drowsiness, impaired judgment, irritability, and violent behaviour. While under the influence of drugs you will be involved in undesirable actions. A high rate of suicide results from the depression that follows being "high". Use of

drugs is the number one killer among teenagers, not to mention its involvement in murders, fights, etc... What are you missing then? Tell your friend: "You are missing the proper way of life. Kick the habit immediately before you ruin yourself forever."

Q.11 My friends tell me just to try drugs once. What is wrong with a little experience?

A.11 Tell your friends to leave experiments to the lab. Experimenting leads to addiction and a whole lot of trouble. There is no need to experiment with your life.

Q.12 My friends say that I should try drugs because I have many problems that worry me.

A.12 Drugs will not solve your problems. While being "high" you may escape them for a while, but when you come back down to reality, your problems are always waiting for you and you add to them all the problems that come from the drugs. For example, the need for extra cash; the need to keep what you do secret; and various health problems. The result is a loss of your freedom to decide where you want to lead your life.

Q.13 I quit taking drugs, but my friend keeps after me. He says I did it before, what is the big deal now? What should I do?

A.13 Tell your friend "you are different now". Identify yourself with your King Jesus Christ the Lord. Tell them you have made the break and you are not going back. Tell him that the Lord has forgiven your sin and made you clean, you do not want to dirty yourself again. Remember what Isaiah the prophet said "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18).

C) DRINKING BECAUSE OF PEER PRESSURE

Q.14 All my friends have started drinking and want me to join them. I turn nineteen next week. Is it wrong for me to join them?

A.14 Just because something is legal, it does not make it right, take abortion or smoking for example. What makes something right is what God says about it. What does the Bible say about drinking?

- (a) “Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hands of Moses.”” (Lev 10:8-11)

- (b) “Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” (Prov 20:1)

- (c) “He who loves pleasure will be a poor man, he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” (Prov 21:17)

- (d) “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long with wine. Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly, in the end it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things. Yes you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea. Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: “They have struck me but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink”. (Prov 23:29-35)

- (e) “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy.” (Rom 13:13)

- (f) “Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal 5:21) Tell your friends that God is against the misuse of alcohol. Do not be afraid to be different.

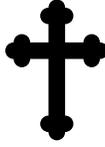
Q.15 My friend keeps teasing me because I do not drink. They ask me what I am afraid of?

A.15 Tell them it's not because of fear that you do not drink. Tell them it's because you are smart. Proverbs 22:3, 5 says "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." "Thorns and snares are in the way of the wicked; whoever guards his soul will be far from them."

Also tell them that alcohol contributes to many diseases such as certain malignancies and liver cirrhosis; it also harms the nervous systems, impairs the memory, and causes guilt, and anxiety. Drinking is harmful, mentally, spiritually, and physically. Hold firm against your friends and do not take anything harmful.

Q.16 My friends tell me if I want to be popular I need to go out drinking with them. Is that true?

A.16 Popularity is not everything. Drinking may make you popular with your friends now, but is it worth it to become a follower just to be popular? At some point you will have to draw a line and refuse to cross it. It may make you unpopular for a while with these friends but in the long run, you will find that it is better to stick to your values and be unpopular than to compromise yourself to become popular. Your friends may reject you at first, but that is O.K. If they do, they are not the best of friends to begin with. Remember that the Lord is constantly looking for people who are completely dedicated to Him. Second Chronicles 16:9 says "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."



HOW CAN I RESIST PEER PRESSURE? (II)

RELIGION AND PEER PRESSURE

Q.17 My friends tell me that in religion all the fun things are always wrong. Is that true?

A.17 God is not against your fun. Not at all. He wants you to have fun, but at the same time He does not want you to regret it. Therefore, God has placed limits to protect you because He loves you. He does not want to take your fun away. God knows what is best for you.

Q.18 How much should I stand up for my faith at school?

A.18 Do not let the fear of losing your friends keep you from standing up for your faith. We should be able to stand up for what we believe in. Many may be waiting for someone to just lead the way so you will have a positive role to lead others.

Q.19 What do I do when people make fun of me for being a Christian?

A.19 The next time you get laughed at for being a Christian, be happy. The Bible says you are blessed. Matthew 5:11-12 says, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

You must be happy because you have been considered worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus, Acts 5:40-41 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Q.20 How do I stand up for what I believe without losing my friends?

A.20 The best approach is to say “I accept you as you are. Please accept me as I am.” Usually you will be accepted if you said this fair statement. However, if it did not work out and it came down to either pleasing your friends or the Lord Jesus Christ, go for the latter every time. If your friends reject you because of the stand you have taken, it is really Christ whom they are rejecting.

Q.21 I am tired of always saying “no”. What can I do to keep from giving up?

A.12 If you want to honour the Lord Jesus Christ all the way to the end, then first be a person of faith and second, stay spiritually fit so you will have the endurance to keep saying “No”. Isaiah 40:28-31, “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases in strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Regardless of how hard or long it seems, if you want to honour your Lord and lead a peaceful life and have a share in eternal life, you must take the road to what is right, the road that leads away from temptation. Doing this requires faith and many prayers.

Q.22 How can I stand firm against peer pressure?

A.22 Do not compromise. In order not to compromise, you must become a person of convictions. A conviction is a standard that you have committed yourself to keeping, regardless of what it costs you. For example, you should have a conviction that says, “Because my body is the temple of God, I will never take any drugs or alcohol or smoke.”

Once you know what your convictions are, you will want to write them down. Writing them down helps you to remember them. It leaves less room for compromise more motivated to follow them. Live by your convictions. Do not let peer pressure persuade you otherwise.

REMEMBER:

A TRUE CHRISTIAN BEHAVES
BASED ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE
FACTS AND FAITH, RATHER THAN
SUPPRESSING HIS OR HER
FEELINGS.



REBELLION

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

Rebellion has become widespread in many areas: families, schools, society and even inside the church services. Rebellion in this context is sinful.

† **MEMORY VERSE:**

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north,’” (Isa 14:13)

† **PLEASE EMPHASIZE:**

† **Definition of Rebellion:**

It is a state of dissatisfaction on the prevailing conditions. It has also has several other meanings:

- † Defiance;
- † Disobedience;
- † Insistence on one’s opinion;
- † Resistance of every thought regardless of its validity.

† **Rebellion is an action started by Satan:**

Satan held one of the highest heavenly ranks. He fell and caused other Angels to fall with him, when he rebelled against God Himself. “For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north.” (Isa 14:13)

It is clear from this verse that rebellion comes from a prideful heart which is opposed to God. Adam and Eve listened to Satan and fell. They rebelled against God; Geneses 3:12 “Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

So Adam blamed God for his fall and could not say sorry or repent.

(3) **Reasons for Rebellion:**

- † It was Satan's **pride** that caused him to rebel against God.
- † The humble individual will try to learn from people, communicate with them and in love deal with them.
- † **Aggressive disciplining** of children.
- † **Lack of wisdom** can lead to rebellion; therefore, one must think and consult with his father of confession before taking a position on an issue. For example, a youth who was born in a simple family with modest income; yet wishes he was born into a rich family. Consequently, he would rebel against his family, becomes depressed and therefore unable to function. This attitude is very hurtful and is not wise.
- † One should not be **comparing** oneself with others. There is no fair comparison. A person can rebel if he or she thought of people who are in much better shape than they are. “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Rom 12:3)
- † Bad friendships can spoil good characters. This can cause rebellion.

(4) **Symptoms of rebellion:**

- † When very young children say no too many times, usually it is not rebellion but for ease they say no.
- † Clear signs of rebellion from some youth including: neglecting their studies causing noise, vandalism, rejecting any advice, aggressiveness, disobedience....etc.
- † Rebellion of a husband against his wife and vice versa:
- † This can happen for many reasons between a husband and his wife and it hurts the family.

(5) **Results of Rebellion:**

- † Defiance and war
- † No progress in life
- † Break – up of families
- † Bad outcomes
- † Note: St. John Chrysostom said rebellion in a family is like a man driving a car with a donkey and horse, it cannot work.
- † Rebellion against the church beliefs can lead to heresies, “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision.” (Tit 1:10)
- † Rebellion leads to anger of God; “For rebellion *is as* the sin of

witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from *being* king.”

- ✠ (1 Sam 15:23) Rebellion is like worshipping idols in a way. The righteous Job said; ”May my enemy be like the wicked, And he who rises up against me like the unrighteous.” (Job 27:7)
- ✠ Rebellion is extremely hurtful to youth and can lead to losing ones career, spiritual life and social status.

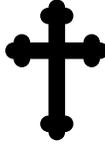
(6) Examples from the Holy Bible about Rebellion:

(Please tell the following stories)

- ✠ Rebellion of King Soul against God (1 Sam 15:23)
- ✠ Rebellion of Absalom against his father David (2 Sam 15, 16)
- ✠ Rebellion of the older son against his father in the parable of the Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-30)

What do we learn from this lesson:

- ✠ We must pray for God to give us humility, love and obedience.
- ✠ We must avoid being rebellious.
- ✠ One should review his or her actions lest it should be the cause of rebellion in others.
- ✠ One must not lose the principle of discipleship to others who are more experienced.
- ✠ Let us all follow the Holy Bible in our daily live. For example what St. Peter said:” Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Pet 3:8-11)
- ✠ Do not compare yourself with others, but rather spend your energy in prayers and working.
- ✠ Accept yourself and whatever you have and be thankful.



THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE IN YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

Solving problems by Confrontation

You will not solve problems by covering them up and keeping quiet but by praying and placing them on the altar. You will need to make an objective analysis of the problems because ignoring them could lead to complicated consequences which might reach a dead end.

Our youth face many personal problems and both the parents and the church should have the understanding to deal with them in love and guidance without conflict. If we do not have the understanding of youth psychology and the knowledge of the stages they go through, then our service to them would be fruitless and we will encounter problems and conflicts with them. One problem facing youth is pride and high self-esteem and what follows from it.

The Origin of the Problem of Pride

Man was created according to the image of God; he has a free will and the desire for perfection. Goodness is in the nature of man but evil is an intruder. The first sin that appeared is the sin of Pride. It is the sin that the devil committed when he said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will be like the Most High." (Isa 14:13-14).

In addition, the first sin that appeared in the world is the sin of pride. When the devil tempted Adam and Eve and said to her, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5).

This is why the Lord, when He was incarnate overcame this sin with His humility. He took the form of a servant and was born in a manger and allowed the devil to tempt Him but He conquered him.

There is no fruitless sin. All sins have offspring. The sin of pride has several weaknesses and problems attached to it, such as love of oneself, dignity, love of compliment, self-excusing and telling lies in addition to disobeying parents and the father of confession or even to the commandments of the Bible.

Pride leads to the denial of the existence of God and the refusal to worship Him. This is what happened to Adam and Eve. It would have been possible for them to live in love and humility and to grow in the spirit, the knowledge, the strength and the holiness through their obedience to the Lord's commandments. But they chose to disobey through their own free will. The cause of their sin was the Pride that the devil introduced into their lives, which was to be separate from God and live by themselves away from God.

The Escalation of the Problem of Pride

Many scientific advances have affected people's minds, especially the youth. This has led them to a modern apostasy, which means a rejection of God and a worship of other gods made by man such as the materialistic theories of life and society, the new ideas and mental influences which separate man from the simplicity of faith. Man has a high opinion of himself with all these scientific achievements. Instead of glorifying God who allowed these good things to happen for the welfare of humans, he continued in his pride and high self-esteem and refused to show obedience to God. He refused to obey his parents and had conflict with them. He refused to obey the word of the Bible. He refused to obey his father of confession. But he obeyed the worldly theories and the computer and became deeply involved in these things.

Some youths refuse confession. Why? Because they do not think that the priest could give them useful advice. Any advice they hear from him could be regarded as an invasion of their personal freedom and dignity as an individual. They may also think that the priest has an old fashioned mentality which does not suit the modern world. All this is caused by the internal pride and the self-centered attitude they develop.

Some youths even refuse help in certain subjects to improve their marks because their pride prevents them from mentioning the fact that they are

weak and need assistance. The youth would rather drop that subject or take a bad mark than admit the need for help.

Some youths refuse to follow the teachings of the Holy Bible saying that this was written in a different age while in fact the Bible is not a history book, it is a book of life that man lives by and adopts in his life now and forever to receive eternal peace and eternal life.

Some Aspects of Pride

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Pro 16:18)

Pride causes the downfall of man when grace abandons him. He will feel weak and this will humble him. This is the way grace treats a person by abandoning him but only so that he learns his lesson and becomes humble after his fall. Pride is the dangerous sin that even God resists, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet 5:5).

The Lord has pity on sinners and considers them sick and in need of treatment. Our Lord Jesus had pity on the sinful woman and defended her. Only then did He let her go in peace. He had pity on the tax collector and preferred him over the proud Pharisee. St. Augustine explains how the proud will perish like smoke: “Smoke is elevated up and on its way up, it is dispersed and then disappears. Unlike flame which does not move up as smoke but it maintains its strength.”

The proud person values his strength and achievements and does not care so he falls unwittingly in sin and encounters problems.

One Consequence of Sin is Self-Justification

A proud person is always defending himself. He sees himself as virtuous and if someone draws his attention to an obvious mistake, he tries to cover it with lies and excuses. He forgets all about repentance. Many youth commit the sin of telling lies to their parents and father of confession. Why? Because their pride prevents them from admitting their mistakes.

Adam did not admit his sin and preferred to justify himself. Eve also did this and so we inherited this from them. A proud person finds it difficult to say “I am sorry”. Although we are all liable to mistakes, admitting you are mistaken and apologizing could solve many problems.

He might say it if it will bring him praise, but he does not feel inside himself that he made a mistake. He would continue arguing to prove his innocence and might be angry and enraged as long as the issue is conflicting with his dignity. Therefore anger is associated with pride.

One of the Aspects of Pride is Being Opinionated and Very Confident

A proud man is overly confident, opinionated, and stubborn. He often persists on his mistakes. There is a lot of stubbornness in a proud person. The Pharaoh of Egypt at the time of Moses was very stubborn and after every strike he went back to his previous state without any remorse. One must ask himself if he has this stubborn mentality? Or if he has a humble Christian mentality?

One of the Aspects of Pride is Going Against God and the Church

When a proud person achieves success or has a certain virtue they claim it to be their hand and not to God's work. They will blame their sins on God forsaking them. When they come to their father of confession, they judge others but not themselves and reject God's advice. They deny the power of Christ's blood for the salvation of their soul. They may attack every act done in church, even the holy Body of Christ. They may criticize the priest and the deacons and judge them. They may refuse the words of the Holy Bible.

Some Sayings from the Holy Bible Regarding Pride

1. Beware of Pride. (Prov. 16:18).
2. The Disadvantage of Pride:
“The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor”. Psalm 10:2.

“How can you believe, who receive honour from one another, and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God?” John 5:44.

“For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” Romans 10:3.

3. Urging us to Be Humble

“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” Mark 10:15.

“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.” Romans 12:16.

Examples of Proud People

A. Haman

At the times of captivity there was a Jewish girl called Esther. She was beautiful and was brought up by a Jewish man called Mordecai. The king Ahasuerus chose this girl to be his wife. He crowned her queen in the place of Vashti who refused to obey the king. Haman was one of the King's men who was proud and wanted all the men to bow for him. But Mordecai refused to bow, and “When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus – the people of Mordecai.” Esther 3:5-6. Haman started planning for the destruction of Mordecai and his people and you could read the detailed story in the Book of Esther, chapter 2-7. But what was the result of Haman's pride? “They hung Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai” Esther 7:10.

B. Nebuchadnezzar

At the time of captivity too, the king Nebuchadnezzar proudly asked the three saintly youths to worship his gods or be thrown in the furnace. “Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands.” Daniel 3:15. The three youth answered him confidently, “let it be known to you O King, that we do

not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Daniel 3:18.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” Daniel 3:19. He commanded to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated and cast the youths in it. The furnace was so hot that the flame of the fire killed the men who put them in. The king was astonished when he saw four men walking in the middle of the fire and the fourth one was like the son of God. The three youth came out of the furnace unharmed and the fire had no power over them. Their hair was not burned nor were their garments affected. But what was the end of this proud Nebuchadnezzar?

“That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.” Daniel 4:33.

C. King Herod

We read in the Book of Acts that King Herod stretched out his hand to harass some people from attending the church. So he killed James the brother of John with the sword and he proceeded to seize Peter also and decided to present him to the people after the days of unleavened bread. But the angel of the Lord saved Peter from the hands of Herod the King.

One day, King Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting that this is “The voice of a god and not of a man!” Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. Acts 12:21-23.

Does Christianity Squander the Humble Man's Dignity?

1. Is the humble Christian person, who follows the example of Jesus Christ, without dignity? Does Christianity squander the man's dignity? We say that pride is a great sin and the Christian person should be obedient, humble and peaceful, but that does not have to lower his value in the eyes of society.

Christianity dignifies man and elevates his value by considering him master over all creation. But it is a spiritual religion aiming to create a spiritual society and to remove the spirit of evil from man in order to bring him back to his first state before sin, when God created him according to His image. [Genesis 1:26].

When Christianity tells us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and do good to those who hate us [Matt 5:44], it aims to straighten those people so that they are no longer enemies but friends. When we do that, it does not make us scared and negative people, but good, mature and positive. It gives us a strong weapon to defeat our enemies but it is the weapon of goodness which defeats evil. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21. Then the endurance here is originated from power and not weakness because “he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city.” Proverbs 16:32.

2. But what does St. Paul mean when he says to the Corinthians, “We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored.” (1 Cor 4:10). This verse means that we are weak for the sake of our sonship to Christ, for the sake of preaching in the name of Christ, and for the sake of taking Christ as our example who said, “Learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matt 11:25. The true Christian is he who took off his worldly dignity and put on humility similar to his master and does not give these worldly matters much importance.

3. What does this saying from the Bible mean, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today ... The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:13-14.

And what does this mean, “He who rejects you rejects Me.”? It means that the humble Christian who does not seek worldly dignities, who can endure even cursing patiently, the Lord will defend him and fight his enemies.

A Story:

There was a priest in one of the villages in southern Egypt. He went to see the mayor. The mayor cursed him, treated him badly and then got up and slapped him across his face. The priest left and went to his church, which was named after St. George. At the same time the mayor was walking in the

village and met a knight who asked him why he insulted that priest. Without waiting for an answer from the mayor, the knight slapped him strongly across the face which made him lose his eye. Then suddenly the knight disappeared – he was St. George.

How can I be humble and get rid of pride?

1. By Living with God

When Christ is within my weak soul – when I carry Him as the Virgin Mary carried Him, when the Lord is with me I feel satisfied and do not need to be concerned with any worldly matters.

But how can I live with God? Love Him, thank Him day and night. Meditate on His word in the Holy Bible and live it in my daily life. Receive His Holy Body and Blood for the healing and uplifting of my soul and body.

2. Give Glory to God and Do Not Boast

Look at all the scientific advances in our lives or in society – they are part of God's blessings and His glory. All success comes from God.

3. Escape all Worldly Dignity

Escape from people's compliments and train yourself accordingly. These worldly dignities are worthless and momentary and deprive us from the Lord's blessing.

4. Enter the School of Humility and Self-denial

Humility is exemplified in our clothes, our homes, our food and our speech. Remember Anba Rueiss who was neither a bishop, nor a monk, nor a priest or a deacon but he was a simple saint and his life was full of peace and tranquility. Remember the words of our Saviour, “If anyone desires to be first let him be last of all and servant to all”. “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever saves his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Matt 16:24.

How do parents of youth deal with them in the stage of pride and self-confidence?

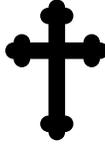
1. Pray for the young people that the Lord may give them grace and lead them to the word of truth to know the greatness of the love of Christ and avoid the pride of the world and its temptations.
2. Surround the youth with love and affection. If we treat them too strictly and lower their self-esteem we could lose them. This could lead to conflict between the family and the youth and no one will benefit. We should apply the wise policy of showing affection and agreeing in some cases with the youth and show them they are worthy of respect and love. This will have positive results.
3. The good example: Parents. They should be a living example of the Bible to their children. That is why the upbringing and the behaviour at home are the most important things in the growth of the youth. If they find their parents busy with worldly matters and care a lot about prestige and dignity and are proud, then it will be difficult for the youth to behave in a humble way.

PRAYERS

My Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave me the new nature through His cross and resurrection and by sending me the Holy Spirit to dwell in our poor souls... Give me, O Lord, through the power of Your cross, the will to erase my desires for boasting and pride. Give me, Lord, the will to live according to the spirit preferring humility and tranquility rather than all the worldly desires. Help me, Lord, to get rid of my ego and selfishness. Teach me, taking my hands every step of the way until I grow and get rid of all the aspects of pride. Keep me close to Your right hand and do not let me be tempted by my personal achievements as if they were mine because I know, Lord, that I am weak and cannot do anything without your help. Allow me to glorify Your Holy name for all Your love and innumerable blessings. Lord Jesus Christ, remember me with Your mercy and not with my many sins. Bless your people through the intercession of our Lady, the Virgin Mary, St. George and St. Rueiss and with the blessings of our Holy Pope Tawadros II.

THANK YOU MY LORD JESUS CHRIST

ADDICTION TOPICS



WHAT THE HOLY BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ADDICTION

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ The Bible covers all topics that relate our spiritual lives to our relationships with God. The Bible did not ignore many of the difficult matters that we face in our daily lives, because the Bible is a book of all eras. Therefore, every time an issue arises on the surface, we find the Holy Bible has clear directions for it; so, we would like to cover the subject of addiction biblically. Christianity is founded on respecting the person's free will.

We find a lot of evidence in the Bible that the Lord desires each person to exercise their free will. The Lord's Jesus Christ said **"If anyone comes to Me ..."** (Luke 14:26). This is contrary to the worship of idols which states, **"if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace..."** Daniel 3:15

Therefore, if something causes the person to lose his free will, then it would not be part of the freedom of Christianity. By employing His free will, Jesus paid the price on the cross as many of the fathers have said. **"Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."** (Prov 16:32)

The subject of addiction is one of the most dangerous issues a person faces ruthlessly in the current modern world that can lead to the destruction of the person, his family, and society if not faced with knowledge, prayer and firmness.

To talk about this subject, we will cover the following points:

- 1) **The definition of addiction**
- 2) **Reasons behind addiction**
- 3) **Addiction Types**
- 4) **Is addiction a sin?**
- 5) **The effect of electronic addiction on children and youth**
- 6) **The danger of addiction**
- 7) **The church's role in addiction prevention**
- 8) **Conclusion**

1) THE DEFINITION OF ADDICTION

Addiction is a bad habit which results in losing control over a specific behaviour or he starts doing drugs until the person becomes submissive to that habit's effect throughout his daily activities. The person then cannot imagine that he can stop that habit and once the habit's effect disappears (or if he cannot redo the same habit), his psychological state gets noticeably affected. At that moment all that he cares about is getting back his fake happiness even if it will cost him his own goodness, his family or the closest people to him.

2) REASONS BEHIND ADDICTION

- ❖ Some people get addicted to a narcotic drug unwillingly, as in the case of being prescribed Morphine for health reasons. Morphine is used medically to relieve pain. The person might then get addicted to the drug.
- ❖ The weak spiritual morals inside a person can lead him to seek happiness and separate himself from reality through addiction
- ❖ Family disagreements: running away from reality through addiction where the person chooses the wide road as opposed to the narrow one.
- ❖ Parents neglecting their children and not watching over their behaviours and actions
- ❖ Idle time that pushes the person to consume his time in destructive behavior.
- ❖ Curiosity to try something new.
- ❖ Bad friends
- ❖ The mythical and untrue tie between drugs and sexual ability
- ❖ The use of drugs without consulting a physician.

3) ADDICTION TYPES

Addiction types can be broken down into the following two types:

A) Behavioural Addiction

It is the addiction to a specific habit that a person cannot get rid of or reduce. As an example: internet addiction, masturbation, sexual addictions, shopping addiction, travel addiction, video game addiction, work addiction, food addiction, gambling addiction, addiction to psychic readings and trying to know the future, addiction to knowing the person's horoscope and finally addiction to personal embellishment (through face or body beautification)

B) Chemical addiction

The addiction to substances that a person seeks to intake. For example, coffee/tea (caffeine), alcohol, sleeping pills, tranquilizers, brain stimulants, Hashish and marijuana, cocaine and opium, as well as morphine.

4) IS ADDICTION A SIN?

- ❖ Addiction is a sin:

The Bible helps us in understanding how addiction is a sin in that it says: **“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey”** Romans 6:16

Also, how can a person who is addicted to something love God with all of his heart?! The Bible says **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”** Matt 22:37

Addiction also can lead to harming others and harming others is a sin (as in smoking which harms others). The Bible says **“love your neighbour as yourself”** Matt 22:39

Addiction destroys the person’s body and as a result his soul and spirit. The Bible says **“Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat”** (Prov 23:20)

❖ **Addiction is a disease**

A person living under the sin cannot be a happy person. He must repent first so that peace will reign in his heart. Therefore, addiction is a sin and a disease that requires treatment. It requires God the healer, a psychologist or a physician specialized in medicines that can help eliminate the addiction.

5) THE EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC ADDICTION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

If you ask most children and youth what is it that makes them happy during their vacation time or school breaks, then most would answer, video games. Unfortunately, most parents have no choice and allow their children to play video games, which leads to endless hours in front of computers and video games.

Effects of Long Hours in Front of A Screen

- ❖ Deserting their friends and family, which leads to difficulties dealing with them.
- ❖ Visual sicknesses
- ❖ Curvature of the spine
- ❖ Increases children and youth’s craving to eat fatty and sugary food. This, accompanied with reduced movement, leads to weight gain and obesity.

Some reasonable solutions to achieve the balance:

- ❖ Learning to play music
- ❖ Signing up for organized sports, or any other educational activities that are outside the house but under the supervision of the family.
- ❖ Helping in house chores
- ❖ Reading spiritual books
- ❖ Writing about different subjects

- ❖ Playing daily sports
- ❖ Learning church hymns

6) THE DANGER OF ADDICTION

❖ Addiction destroys the body

The body is the temple of Holy Spirit **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16)**

The addict takes his body and ruins it. Can anyone imagine that the person, who the Lord Jesus Christ came to save, made of himself an addict?! This way he sold a very expensive thing (e.g. Jesus Christ) to buy for himself death and corruption.

❖ Addiction is a harsh master

“No one can serve two masters” When a person becomes a servant to addiction, he obeys addiction leading him to be very distant and far away from God. Our teacher St. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 6:12 **“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”** How can a person who lost his freedom and will become free for Jesus Christ as well! **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36)

❖ Addiction leads the person to many sins

When a person starts the action of sin, he brings many evil things on himself and falls into many more sins. In many cases, an addict does not have enough money to buy drugs. What would he do? He would try to obtain drugs without money and would not be able to do that, so he starts stealing so that he can buy drugs. He would also start lying to reach his goal. He might commit many crimes just to avoid his inability to obtain drugs. As a result, he becomes an outlaw. He feels lost, worried and scared of the future.

❖ Addiction leads the person to feel listless, lost and a failure

The addict cannot control his senses, mind and will. God did not give us a spirit of failure, but the spirit of strength. However, the addict feels that God has left him. Because the addict’s mind cannot function normally, he starts falling behind in his studies and his fellow students start achieving results better than him causing him to feel depressed and he puts himself in an endless loop of failures. He also would fail in performing his work duties as he cannot concentrate along with the fact that his memory becomes weaker together with his body which results in sexual difficulties.

❖ Addiction leads to prevention of repentance

What are the motives for repentance? It is for the person to know that he has upset the loving Lord and so he wants to go back to his Father’s house. However, when a

person's will is weak and he feels lost as well as under slavery to some other master, he then has no motive to repent. The addict then postpones repentance can't face himself and so he loses hope in becoming a better person.

❖ Addiction leads to losing the eternal share in the kingdom of God

After the addict loses his peace, he loses himself. After he loses his health, power, sanity, and family, he also loses his share in heavens.

7) THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN ADDICTION PREVENTION

(Some of this content is taken from the Addiction Conference that was held in Fayoum, Egypt in 2001 under the Auspices of Eminence Metropolitan Bakhomious of Al-Beheira and the its surroundings)

- ❖ The Church plants faith in her children. Faith is a strong power that protects the person and allows him to face life's trouble and hard aches without surrendering to it, but rather passing it.
- ❖ The church plants in her children virtue and noble values that makes the person avoids bad friends that are considered the first step towards addiction.
- ❖ The church presents to her children the spiritual and filling atmosphere along with warm relations with priests, servants and those who are being served.
- ❖ The church offers many spiritual, cultural, artistic and sport activities
- ❖ The church offers the sacrament of confession where the priest is an experienced and wise person who can offer spiritual advice and leadership.
- ❖ The church embraces those who are suffering of heart-aches and problems.
- ❖ The church does not wait for her children to become addicts to offer her services. Instead the church tries to prevent them from becoming addicts by publishing many articles and books to make them aware of the issue – since prevention is better than treatment.
- ❖ the use of spiritual songs and poems
- ❖ having plays and films to fight addictions
- ❖ Establishing a specific section in the church's book store that has books on fighting addiction.
- ❖ Holding seminars and publishing short informational briefs that help families identify the addict at an early stage and how to deal with him/her.
- ❖ Prepare specialized servants that offer help in addiction prevention, fight against addiction, and addiction cure. Such servants should have special virtues such as:
 - Educational preparation so that the servant is able to understand the psychological state of the addict and how to deal with him
 - Being calm and tolerant

- Having faith and trust in the work of God in those souls that have been destroyed and have no will **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** Matt 11:28
- Having sympathy towards the addict and accepting him as well as respecting him and respecting his feelings and emotions.
- It is not enough to show compassion towards the addict to help him stay clean. However, it is also important that the servant tries to find out the reason that leads that person to this addiction.
- The addiction-servant needs to have good open communication between him, the addict and the addict’s family.
- The servant must be expert in knowing when the right time is to direct his messages to the addict.
- The servant must listen carefully to the addict no matter how the addict’s words are untied and no matter how far his ideas are from reality.
- The servant must have spiritual leadership so that the addict can see in him the image of God as a loving father that is looking for his lost sheep.
- The correct understanding of the addict is that he is a person suffering from a disease and not a criminal.
- The addiction-servant should understand the correct view of Christianity towards narcotics – as Christianity is not against the substance, but rather is against the misuse of the substance.

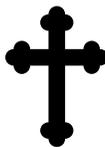
What Does the Bible Say About the Churches Role?

The church’s role towards her children is to teach them how to face all kinds of life problems so that she can help them reach eternity **“...that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand”** Ezekiel 3:18. What is meant by **“hand”** is the priest’s hand or the servant that responsible over the congregation. The Bible also says **“... he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand”** Ezekiel 33:6

8) CONCLUSION

- ❖ Christianity was spread by giving people the free will to either accept or deny Jesus, without threat or lure/glamour.
- ❖ God wanted human beings to have free will to choose either to accept or deny the Lord’s command. This freedom cost the Lord Jesus Christ crucifixion so that no one who believes in Him shall perish.
- ❖ Anything that makes the person loses his free will end up making the person live outside what the Lord God wanted for that person. That person then becomes a tool in the hands of Satan.

- ❖ Addiction is getting used to a specific behavior or substance and that habit becomes an addiction, which in turns controls the person's emotion, will, temper, and spiritual life. The result is the person becomes **“dependent on”** or **“under the influence of”** something that is not God and unable to think and control anything. Addiction makes me lose the free will that is needed to answer the Lord's call of salvation.
- ❖ The Bible has a treatment for all issues that the person faces in his daily life. The Bible is the book of eternal life, and it does not ignore daily needs/issues. The Bible explains that the person worships and submits the thing that controls him.
- ❖ The church has an important role in educating and providing awareness because prevention is better than treatment.
- ❖ The true solution for addiction is **“therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36)



SUBSTANCE ABUSE FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

These two lessons are to show the causes, consequences, preventive measures and potential solutions for substance abuse (alcohol, drugs and smoking) and addiction.

MEMORY VERSE:

“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”

Gal. 6:8

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

God created all things for a reason. He created all materials to be clean. When St. Peter doubted the cleanliness of some of God’s creation, God told him, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”

Alcohol, for example, is utilized in many medications. So, the problem is not that some substances which are created by God are bad; the problem is “abuse” and the dangerous results of this abuse. Abuse leads to addiction.

Alcohol, marijuana and tobacco have been the most abused substances.

B. Substance abuse mentioned in the Old Testament.

The problem of substance abuse is not new. Thousands of years before Christ, the problem existed.

In Deuteronomy 21:20-21 the rules were set down quite explicitly: “And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.’”

There are various passages in the Old Testament about substance abuse. Many of these passages are found in Proverbs. For example, “Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” Proverbs 20:1.

PLEASE READ ALSO: Proverbs 23:29-30.

C. Substance abuse Mentioned in the New Testament.

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph 5:18)

The church in the New Testament is very clear about casting out people who are addicted and preventing them from mixing with believers. Of course the church still loves them and helps them heal, but the church has been very concerned about spreading addiction or substance abuse among the believers. “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person.” (1 Cor. 5:11)

PLEASE READ ALSO: Romans 13:13 and Gal. 5:19-21 and 1 Peter 4:1-3.

D. Causes of Substance abuse and addiction.

Many people think that they are strong, wise, and will never fall into substance abuse and endanger their life. But many times it starts very, very, small ... you give an inch to the devil... he takes it a mile. Then small substance abuse leads to full addiction. Let us examine some of the popular causes:

1. Emptiness

Emptiness is the most common cause of substance abuse and addiction. There is no doubt that some people suffer from all sorts of emptiness.

Intellectual emptiness (lack of social understanding in the youth's heart and mind), emotional emptiness (lack of sense of belonging), physical emptiness (lack of activity and laziness or isolation)

2. Anxiety

The feeling of anxiety results from existing problems (e.g. economic problems, complicated social conditions, problems in education ...etc.) as well as anticipated future problems. As part of these problems anxiety, despair and frustration set in. Those who are far from God and the church are driven to a state of psychological disorder. This leads to deviation which in turn causes addiction, crimes, sex, love of money, violence and other various criminal acts.

3. Sickly low self-esteem

Peer pressures, effects of media (TV and Internet in particular), bad friendships and lack of encouragements can make the youth lose hope in achieving anything good. Holiness, honesty and purity will appear to be impossible. Success in the academic life will also appear to be impossible. What is left? Then the youth will prepare not to do anything but continue their addiction. This leads to a loss of ability to think and then crime.

E. Consequences of substance abuse and addiction.

1. Physical effects

Take for example smoking tobacco and its very adverse effects on health (may cause cancer in the lungs). Other substances abuse (alcohol and drugs) are very destructive to the body as well.

2. Psychological effects:

Substance abuse and drug addiction can impair the ability to think clearly. Once this happens, bad behaviors and negative feelings, such as fears, will occur.

3. Social effects:

Substance abuse and addiction may cause two extremes: a person may tend to isolate himself or herself from the general society and get attached to a

special addicted group, or the person may commit various crimes and end up in jail.

4. Spiritual effects:

❖ Destruction of the spiritual life

The Lord Christ came and sacrificed His precious blood for our salvation. Addiction will give the Holy Spirit no opportunity to work in us. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

“No one can serve two masters.” Addiction is a merciless master. How can then people follow Christ while they are in the grip of addiction? People lose their spiritual freedom when they are addicts.

❖ Addiction leads to various other sins

Substance abusers may not have enough money to buy their drugs so they steal. Because they lose their wisdom, they will try to get things by any means possible and will be driven to sex, violence and other crimes.

❖ Addiction prevents repentance

A substance addict becomes unable to face his or her sins. A sense of defeat will prevail that will make the person think that it is impossible to repent and be good again. So the person will not repent. Do not forget that substance addicts are always associated with bad company and this makes it more difficult for them to repent.

Be knowledgeable about it so that you do not start.

Ignorance is the worst enemy. If the youth becomes aware of the dangers of substance abuse they may not start.

1. Avoid emptiness of all sorts.

The youth must be kept busy doing useful things (e.g. participating in sports, learning hymns, being involved in church, and more)

2. Strong homes

Family values, happy homes, parents' care for their children, respect for the youth and understand their feelings.

3. Strong church youth programs.

The church must give the highest priority to its service of children and youth. Spiritual programs for the youth as well activity programs (sports

tournaments, trips, open discussions ... etc.) are very important as preventive measures for substance abuse and addiction.

Prayers and love of the family and the church.

1. Consultation with a priest who can give support and time to the youth.
2. Medical help is a must.
3. Get rid of the bad company.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. No one is immune from the temptation of substance abuse. So be very careful not to start.
2. Be choosy when it comes to friends. Remember the 3S's program that every youth needs (a spiritual program, a spiritual father of confession and spiritual friends.)



WHAT IS WRONG WITH GAMBLING? (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the first lesson in a series of two lessons about gambling. In these lessons we will show that there is nothing right about gambling. NOTHING!

MEMORY VERSE:

**“BETTER IS A LITTLE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS
THAN VAST REVENUES WITHOUT JUSTICE.”
PROVERBS 16:8**

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION **Forms of gambling:**

What is gambling? Gambling is trying to get rich or win something easily with the least amount of effort by taking some risk.

There are different forms of gambling. It can be in the form of lottery. The most well-known form is cards, or in general, betting on any game for financial gain. Internet even made it easier to play poker with anyone locally or globally, at your convenience, while staying at home. There are of course casinos which attract people by giving free rides to and back from the casino. Some offer free drinks or even free hotels. Why? Because casinos make huge amount of money from their customers.

North America for example is becoming a nation of habitual gamblers. Probably every city or province or state has legalized gambling in some form whether it is a casino, a horse and/or a dog track, a lottery, bingo tickets, raffles, or other such

things. Conservative estimates place the legal gambling total at \$60 billion annually.

An Example to show how gambling works:

Imagine an excellent picture frame worth \$195.00 and the cost of the raffle ticket is \$5.00. The company organizing the event paid \$200.00. They sold 600 tickets at \$1.00 each. When they did the draw an individual won the prize. What is the outcome of this?

- † 1 person won the prize
- † 599 people lost their money
- † the organizing company made \$400.00 (200% profit)

This is just a simple example to show that there are many, many, losers and only very, very, few winners. Even those winners become addicted to gambling and end up losing all their winnings and often more. Casinos make plenty of money at the expense of these losers.

Gambling starts as innocent play or fun and it grows with time until it matures and reaches the level of addiction. Many families have been destroyed by gambling. Here is an actual case of a family where the father became addicted to gambling... The father kept losing and he wanted to recover what he had lost. He could not. He could not stop gambling either. He had a big loan with the guarantee of his house. He had his line of credit fully used up and he took loans from many family members and friends. He could not take it. His wife filed for a divorce. His children could not even talk to him anymore. He ended up committing suicide.

- † How many successful gamblers do we know? Very, very few. They end up losing what they win.

B. Gambling is wrong even from a logical point of view:

1. Some people may say that gambling is legal. How can you say it is logically wrong?

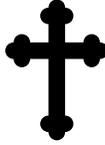
There are many things that have been made legal by those societies and governments that we live with, but it does not mean that those things are right. Abortion, assisted suicide, sale of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and even prostitution. These things are wrong and harmful even from a purely logical, medical and social point of view.

2. Gambling is an addiction. It brings with it a number of problems for a society:
 - ✦ Organized crime. Prostitution. Many prostitutes always work around casinos. Murder. The murder rate increases in areas where gambling is legalized.
 - ✦ Divorce. One partner in the marriage becomes a gambler and the whole family collapses.
 - ✦ Bankruptcy. The numbers of bankruptcies increase drastically in areas with legalized gambling.
 - ✦ Suicide. It increases drastically in areas promoting gambling.

Who loses the money that makes gambling such a profitable business and who then has to support the losers' families?

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Gambling is a temptation which leads to addiction. Do not participate!
2. Gambling as an addiction which makes the person lose his or her self-control. Do not participate.
3. There is no such a thing as "Gambling for a good cause." This is nonsense, do not participate.



WHAT IS WRONG WITH GAMBLING? (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is the second lesson in a series of two lessons about gambling. In these lessons we will show that there is nothing right about gambling. NOTHING!

MEMORY VERSE:

“Better is a little with righteousness than vast revenues without justice.” Proverbs 16:8

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

Start by reviewing the previous lesson in which we showed: What is gambling? Its forms and what is wrong with it from a logical point of view. Now we will show that gambling is sinful. What makes gambling sinful?

B. Gambling is not of God

1. Gambling is of this world; it is definitely not of God.

“For all that is in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 Jn 2:16)

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on those things.” (Ph. 4:8)

The above verses show clearly that everything involved with gambling is against all the qualities expected of us by God.

2. Gambling is not spiritual, it is carnal. Please read Eph. 2:2.
3. Gambling does not help one to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 3:18).
4. Gambling does not glorify God (1 Cor.6:19-20).

C. The Gambling Business Thrives on the Lust and Covetousness of the Carnal Nature.

1. **PLEASE READ:** Acts 20:33; 1 Tim. 6:10
2. Gambling cannot be done “just for fun.” 2 Tim3:2

D. The Lord’s attitude toward gambling

Now that it is firmly established that gambling thrives on the covetousness of the carnal nature, we should consider God’s attitude toward the covetous.

PLEASE READ: Ps. 10:3, 1Cor. 5:10-11, 1Cor. 6:10 and 1 Tim. 3:3

E. Gambling thrives because of man’s desire to have something for nothing, rather than laboring for what he or she gets.

The lazy person does not want to work but that does not keep him or her from coveting something for nothing.

PLEASE READ: Prov. 21:25-26, Eph.4:28, Prov. 13:11 and 1 Tim 6:17

God strongly condemns any effort at getting something for nothing. 2Cor. 3:10-12 and Luke 10:7.

F. Gambling is very poor stewardship of what God gives.

Most people who gamble lose money or the casinos could not continue to operate.

PLEASE READ: Matt. 25:14-30.

God teaches 100% stewardship and that will not permit gambling.

G. Gambling is sinful, even if it is for a “good cause”.

Even if it is done for building a school or a church, gambling is still sinful.

PLEASE READ: Rom. 3: 8. If a single mother needed money for food, clothing and shelter for herself and her children, should she prostitute herself? Why not? The money is for a good cause. This is just an example to illustrate the idea.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Remove any sort of gambling from our churches even raffles or coupons to win a ticket or a picture. It is all wrong and must be out of our churches.
2. Even in our expressions, watch what you are saying. Do not say “you bet”.
3. Do not do any gambling for the sake of fun. It is sinful.
4. Casinos are established to gain huge profits and they are not social organizations to build hospitals or churches.
5. There is just nothing right about gambling. NOTHING.



THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON DRINKING ALCOHOL (I)

INTRODUCTION

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”
(Eph. 5:18)

The above verse makes it clear that the aim of a true Christian is not merely to avoid drunkenness with alcohol (which is also a socially rejected behavior), but to choose with all his heart to live according to the will of God and to be filled with the Holy Spirit whereby he would be transformed from a mere human into a Spiritual being. The human being by nature desires to enjoy worldly pleasures and means (such as drinking alcohol) to deal with his problems. However, the Spiritual person is more than satisfied with Jesus Christ living in him so that he does not need any other worldly pleasure to alleviate his desperate condition. This Spiritual person has a strong relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with Him he does not need anything on earth.

Even the secular view proclaims that excessive drinking leading to drunkenness is an abhorred behavior that is detrimental to the health and leads to significant personal and physical catastrophes.

The Christian person has no need to drink alcohol, which stimulates worldly lusts within, because he is led by the Holy Spirit out of his struggles and hard times.

The topic of alcohol consumption is a controversial one and has different opinions. Some think that alcohol is an unclean material, while others think that it is perfectly alright and allowed in the church, while wrongly interpreting Bible verses to justify their opinions. This is an important topic for our youth and will be covered through the guidance of the Holy Spirit by discussing the following points:

1. Starting with a glass ends with a bottle (a true story).
2. The Spiritual meaning of the “the Vine” and the danger of its misuse.
3. Different types of drinks.
4. Harmful side effects of alcohol as quoted in the Holy Bible.
5. Thoughts on how to quit drinking.
6. Questions and Answers.
7. Summary.

1. Whoever starts with a glass ends with a bottle... a practical story

The church and priests had tried desperately to convince a young man to stop drinking, not

because alcohol is defiled (God does not create anything defiled), but because all bad habits that dominate and control man start small and slowly increase in size and effect till they cause significant harm to. The young man adamantly refused to listen to anyone, insisting that this habit would not dominate him, and that he is in total control of himself since he thought that he was different than other people. He strongly believed that he would never get drunk. His consumption of alcohol slowly increased until one glass was not enough, but he would drink the entire bottle in a single sitting.

Then one night, after drinking a lot of alcohol with his friends, he returned home drunk. His wife met him with sadness and tears and tried to rebuke his behavior. He started beating her cruelly compelling her to retreat in her room and lock herself inside. Then he started beating his children until one of the children started to bleed. The sight of blood eventually made him stop and led him to walk away from the house, thinking that this is the end of the quarrel and they would not bother again. When the wife did not hear his voice, realizing that he is not home anymore, she came out of her room only to realize that her children were injured badly. In that instance, she called the ambulance, and the police arrested him and took him away. And this was the end of this family. Truly, he who starts with a glass ends with a bottle, and this applies to everyone no matter how strong the person may be.

2. Alcohol can have wonderful spiritual meanings but the problem is its misinterpretation and misuse

A) The Vine (the fruit from which wine is made) is Jesus Christ

“I am the true vine, and My father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (John 15:1-8)

B) The Vine is the Church

“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower...” (Matt 21:33)

“Then he began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower...’” (Mark 12:1)

“Then He began to tell the people this parable: ‘A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time...’” (Luke 20:9)

C) The Vine is the people of Israel

“Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?” (Jeremiah 2:21)

“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard. My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” (Isaiah 5:1)

D) The Vine is the Word of God

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Luke 5:37-38)

E) The Vine is the eternal happiness

“But I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.” (Matt 26:29)

Despite all these wonderful spiritual meanings, some people claim that Christianity views wine as unclean or impure. This is wrong. The substance of wine in itself is not impure or a sin, otherwise God would not have created it. Also, the church does not view the alcohol found in the wine as a sin or as impure, since alcohol by itself has many beneficial applications such as in medicine and other industries. The problem and the danger lies in the misuse of these substances that lead to significant harm. And this is the sin.

3. Different types of drinks

A) Non-alcoholic wine or grape juice.

Grape juice is a tasty juice with lots of health benefits. One can drink it as they wish.

B) Naturally fermented wine

Grape juice is mixed with yeast leading to fermentation of the sugar content to alcohol and carbon dioxide.

Glucose ----- zymase enzyme ----- Alcohol + CO₂ + Energy

Alcohol concentrations vary from 5 to 15 %. Drinking this wine can lead to drunkenness and alcoholism.

C) Beer

This is derived from barley which is a useful crop for man and animal. When barely is soaked in water for 2 to 3 days at a suitable temperature, it’s starch content will be transformed to sugar by an enzyme called Diastase that is found in the crop itself. The barely is then dried at very high temperature to deactivate the enzyme and placed in big barrels in which it is mixed with water and boiled along with certain herbs. Yeast is also added to the mixture for further fermentation to

increase alcohol content (yellow beer has 5% and dark beer has 10%). And so, man transforms the beneficial barely into beer with special taste and odor.

D) Whiskey and other liquors

Onion, a nutritious food, is transformed by wicked men into alcohol drink called Whisky with an alcohol content up to 40%.

Other fruits such as Dates can also be transformed into alcoholic drink with alcohol content reaching up to 40%.

It is thus apparent how God gives us many goods for the benefit of the body but evil hands transform them into alcoholic beverages that ruin this body despite that fact that alcohol may have many benefits when used appropriately such as in medicine.

4. Harmful side effects of alcohol described in the Holy Bible

A) Ruins the body

Solomon writes: "Do not mix with winebibbers or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." (Prov 23:20-21).

Alcohol in the wine is comprised of a chain of compounds starting with the simplest group called Methyl alcohol which is poisonous. Medical studies have shown that alcohol consumption leads to weakening of mental faculties, and even hallucinations. It can also cause cancer in the stomach, larynx, and the liver, as well as various peptic ulcers.

Moreover, other effects include physical distortions such as the protrusion of the eyes and gradual loss of appetite, "*Who has woe? who has sorrow? who has contentions? who has complaints? who has wounds without cause? who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.*" (Proverbs 23:29-30).

The human body is a precious gift from God. We do not own our bodies but God does, "...but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:17). Do we then spoil this human body and its members, with wine and alcohol and expect to escape from His divine judgement?

B) Drinking is a habit ending in addiction

"Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands. Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst." (Isa5:11-13).

"Who has woe? who has sorrow? who has contentions? who has complaints? who has wounds without cause? who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed

wine.” (Prov 23:29-30).

C) Drinking leads to loss of consciousness

A person who drinks so much to the extent of losing consciousness and becoming drunk behaves inappropriately without any respect for others or fear of foul language that may insult others.

The Holy Bible describes Noah in the book of Genesis as: *“And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.”* (Genesis 9:20-23).

D) Drinking deviates man from wisdom

“But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgement.” (Isaiah 28:7)

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” (Proverbs 20:1)

“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” (Proverbs 31:4-7)

Therefore, whoever drinks alcohol is not fit to be a leader.

E) Wine overcomes man and leads him to commit adultery

Wine overcame Lot until he became unconscious and vulnerable leading him to impregnate his two daughters in a drunken state over two nights without his knowledge or awareness. The offspring of his two daughters gave rise to two nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites, who were punished by God for their transgressions in the Old Testament.

“Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.” (Gen 19:30-38)

F) Wine leads men to recklessly commit crimes and to sell his most cherished possessions to drink more

“They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.” (Joel 3:3)

G) A drunkard does not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:16-21)

5. Thoughts on how to quit drinking

- † Beware of the first glass.
- † Beware of drinking as a compliment.
- † Conviction of God’s help in time of trouble instead of searching for help in wine.
- † Admit your weakness and inability to stop drinking by yourself and ask God for strength and divine assistance.
- † Regular physical exercise.
- † Attach yourself to the church and practice the sacrament of repentance, confession, fasting, prayer, and taking Holy communion



THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON DRINKING ALCOHOL (II)

Questions and Answers

Q1) ◀ There is a saying that claims that “a little bit of wine is good for the stomach”. What is the validity of this claim? ▶

When St. Timothy was suffering from stomach infirmities, St. Paul advised him to “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.” (1 Timothy 5:23).

St. Paul always taught abstinence from wine consumption; “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,...” (Titus 1:7), and “Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ...” (1 Timothy 3:8), and “the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not give to much wine, ...” (Titus 2:3)

St. Timothy received such teachings whole heartedly, never drank wine, and passed them on to his disciples and to his congregation. However, St. Paul advised him to drink some, in order to teach him that wine has medical uses. This advice is not always suitable, but only for a medical condition under professional medical guidance.

Q2) ◀ In the miracle during the wedding in Cana of Galilee, our Lord Jesus Christ transformed water into wine. Does this mean that the Lord allows the use of wine during feasts and celebrations? ▶

During the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the Lord Jesus Christ performed his first miracle, and this event has become a feast in the Coptic Church. The hosts of the wedding ran out of wine and were in need of something to avoid embarrassment in front of all the guests. St. Mary felt sympathy towards their need and good intentions and brought their case to the Lord who transformed the water into a type of wine that is rejuvenating and not intoxicating. The master of the feast was so astounded by the good taste of the wine, “When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!’ ” (John 2:9-10).

The wine used in the old days was different the wine made now. Unlike today, the fresh juice of the vine was fermented naturally in the open air without additives. This divine miracle does not justify wine consumption, but is an example that from the hands of God we should always take what is beneficial to our bodies and senses.

Q3) ◀ I have read in the book of Sirach what indicates to be permissible consumption of

alcohol. Can your holiness please clarify? ►

In the book of Ecclesiastics, Jesus son of Sirach says: “Do not try to prove your strength by wine-drinking, for wine has destroyed many. As the furnace tests the work of the smith, so wine tests hearts when the insolent quarrel. Wine is very life to human beings if taken in moderation. What is life to one who is without wine? It has been created to make people happy. Wine drunk at the proper time and in moderation is rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul. Wine drunk to excess leads to bitterness of spirit, to quarrels and stumbling. Drunkenness increases the anger of a fool to his own hurt, reducing his strength and adding wounds. Do not reprove your neighbor at a banquet of wine, and do not despise him in his merrymaking; speak no word of reproach to him, and do not distress him by making demands of him.” (Sirach 31:25-31)

This verse presents two types of wine usage: natural uses and unnatural uses.

The natural uses refer to life, simplicity and joy of the heart, but not for drunkenness. The Russian monks utilize wine along with their meals for the purpose of warmth in their harsh and cold environment with temperature reaching –60 C.

The natural uses also refer to medical uses with medications containing alcohol.

The unnatural uses refer to the destruction of many people, evilness, death, and all acts of unrighteousness. This alone is enough for the reader of the verse to understand the spirit of the Holy Bible in presenting the unnatural uses of wine as a sin against the Lord.

7. Summary

1. Christianity does not consider alcohol as defiled in itself and does not prevent its proper uses; however, it warns against its misuse.
2. Christianity distinguishes between grape juice and other alcoholic beverages which present many dangers. Alcohol in itself can have beneficial medical uses.
3. The Holy Bible presents many examples of the harmful side effects of alcohol consumption.
4. There are successful methods for quitting drinking and treating alcoholics.

Thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ



ATTEMPTING TO KNOW THE FUTURE

From a Christian point of view

INTRODUCTION

The worry of human beings and their need to have the knowledge of the unknown

Ever since sin entered into the world human beings have been plagued with fear. This has been happening since the days of our father Adam and continues to take place. Directly after our father Adam's fall from heaven he said "So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:10).

Hence the generations after him inherited his sin which brought with it fear. Fear constantly makes a person want to know the future in order to secure him/herself, and to try to think of ways of getting through whatever circumstances may arise.

The spiritual individual who has a strong relationship with God however; relies on God completely, and does not fear the future, nor wants to know the unknown, because he lives in the hands of his keeper. For it is written "Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust" (Psalms 16:1) and "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4)

This peace found in the spiritual person prevents him from worrying about what is hidden for him/her in the future and so he/she does not feel the need to seek the knowledge of the unknown. During times in which weakness arises where this person is curious regarding his/her future, he/she would turn to the Father who is in heaven asking for guidance and direction. The person who walks in sin and lives his/her life in anxiety and fear wants to know the unknown and is ready to go even to Satan or his followers to ask about the future.

A story from the practical life

A young woman who was engaged went to her priest requesting to break off her engagement from her Christian fiancé even though she had a good relationship with him. So what was the reason for her request? She was advised by a bad friend to go a palm reader in order to foresee her future. And so without consulting anyone this young woman went to the palm reader in order to have her palms read. The palm reader told her that she saw a blocked path in her future and that she must leave this path in order to find peace. The girl interpreted the blocked path to be her engagement, which she thought would lead to an unhappy marriage. All attempts to convince her that what she was doing was wrong failed, and because of the lack of reliance on God, she did not get engaged to an excellent person.

There are many similar examples to this young girl who lose in life because they do not rely on God.

The Spread of the need to know the unknown

The knowledge of the unknown (or knowing the unknown) has become a lucrative business in many countries around the world and represents a large percentage of their profit. This business has been around for a long time and has led to the destruction of many lives.

1. The sin of relying on others, rather than God
2. Satan is the father of all liars... so how can we go to him to reveal the future?
3. God warns us about the consequences of attempting to know the unknown from sources other than Him.
4. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ refused the witness of Satan
5. The blessed apostles refused the sayings of Satan in all its forms.
6. The different evil methods in knowing the unknown
7. The strength of God is infinitely great destroying the power of Satan
8. The story of Saul and the woman with the familiar spirit (1 Samuel 28:14-7)
9. Writings from the Holy Bible
10. Conclusion

1. The sin of relying on others rather than God

Humanity in different eras has relied on many twisted methods in order to be familiar with the unknown. They have sought this knowledge from Satan rather than God, and so sinfully with fear and worry they feel the need to know what is hidden in the future. This is a great sin and it is equal to the sin of murder and adultery. Why? Because seeking Satan is leaving the worship of God and breaking the first of the Ten Commandments “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3)

No Christian person should seek those who use Satan’s power in order to know their future. We should not ask of them what we need, whether it be marriage, success in school or work, children, or any other situation in which we seek guidance.

2. Satan is the father of all liars, so how can we go to him to reveal future circumstances?

It is written in the Holy Bible regarding Satan “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8: 44)

Is it not Satan who lied and deceived our Father Adam and Eve and caused them to fall into sin? Satan is incapable of doing anything good. And even if in the beginning we believe they are benefiting us, greater harm will follow thereafter. Does it make any sense that a human being should surrender to Satan in revealing his/her future when he is a liar and the father of all liars? Of course not.

3. God warns us about the consequences of attempting to know the unknown from sources other than Him

“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a

soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.” (Deut 18:9-14)

“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31) “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them” (Lev 20:27)

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people” (Lev 20:6)

“You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Exo 22:18)

4. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ refuses the witness of Satan

“So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” (Luke 24:33-35). Even though our Lord and Master Jesus Christ would like to spread (heaven or maybe the gospel) throughout the world, He refuses for Satan to take any part in spreading the word of God. The Lord spread his Word through the pure saints, whom he chose and sent to preach the kingdom of God witnessing to the living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is manifested in the flesh.

And likewise we are the children of Our Lord Jesus Christ and we want to live by the example, which was left for us, and follow the steps of our Lord. Hence, there should be no relationships in our decisions, or in our life with Satan, who is the enemy of good and who is a liar, and the father of liars.

5. The blessed apostles refuse the sayings of Satan in all its forms

The acts of the apostles tell us about the refusal of the first church to have any relationship with anyone except God alone: “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.” (Acts 16:16-18)

And likewise another incident with Simon the magician: “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria giving out that himself was some great one.” (Acts 8:9) what was St. Paul’s action towards him? “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghosts set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun of a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” (Acts

13:9-12)

To what extent were the magicians, and those who corrupted society with their lies found in the first generation? “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found fifty thousand pieces of silver.” (Acts 19:19)

Therefore, in past times, all the sin and evil that we see today with respect to trying to gain knowledge of the future through Satanic methods was also present.

6. The different evil methods in knowing the unknown

A. Magic

There is no doubt that there is true magic as long as the Satan exists. And this is what we have read about in both the Old and the New Testament. The Lord God commanded in the Old Testament “You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Exo 22:18). He also forbade magic in the New Testament when he spoke about Simon the magician. Simon used magic and amazed the congregation saying, This is something great. And a multitude of people followed him because they were amazed for a long period of time by his magic. This is the one whom St. Paul the apostle spoke to saying “For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:23). And with St. Paul we see the same thing when Elymas the sorcerer was seeking to turn away the deputy of the country Sergius Paulus from the faith, and Paul filled with the Holy Spirit said to him “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.” (Acts 13:10-14). Therefore it is not appropriate for Christians to seek Satan’s counsel about the future and their problems for he is a liar and the father of all liars.

B. The woman with the “knowing” spirit and the summoning of Satan

This follows the concept of magic, and its followers try through it to know things concerning their lives and their futures. It is wrong for someone to ask of such people and to try to know such things without God. Is this not the first sin that our father Adam fell into? (When the serpent, Satan, said to him: you will not die when you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil). “Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5) And for this reason God commanded saying “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you”. (Deut 18:10-12) Therefore the Holy Bible considers this to be a

serious sin. “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.” (Acts 16:16-18) Even though this servant was speaking the truth, St. Paul refused to accept the words of these Satanic spirits.

C. Stars and horoscopes

Stars and horoscopes are something that we should not trust in or run after. Some of those who practise star-gazing consider it an education (just as they thought preparing spirits were an education) for it is not right to liken those who are born in one month to have the same characteristics and traits because then you will end up with only 12 distinct characters among all of humanity. As for the star that appeared to the Wiseman, this was not a real star (as was said by St. John Chrysostom) but it was the power of God which lighted their way for them because it was going in the opposite direction than the real

stars in the sky, and it was much lower in the sky than the rest of the stars because it was leading the wise man way to a specific house. “When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was”

(Matt 2:9). Therefore reading today’s fortune is recreational and those who follow it day after day and act accordingly are making a big mistake because they are denying God, the source of our knowledge and the focus of our lives and our salvation.

D. Reading coffee cups and sand

They are all very general issues that have no basis in reality. When there is real magic and participation from Satan, that situation becomes unacceptable. As for people who believe such false prophesies of the future, this is wrong and dangerous, because in that way a person exposes himself/herself to be shaken emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, it is not appropriate for Christians, even for recreational purposes to seek such things, which unfortunately are popular in many different societies, even the classy and forward thinking ones.

E. Palm reading

And this is one of the kinds of witchcraft that exists nowadays, which we must escape from and refuse, because the lines on our palm are nothing more than the way we were formed during our growth in our

mother’s wombs. The lines on our palms have no association with the events of our lives or the future. Many youth have sought palm reading, and the readers would often tell them that their life line is short and that they will not live past the age of thirty. This has turned many of their lives upside down and has prevented them from being happy. For some it has also hindered their marriage, because they are in fear that they will widow their spouses and leave their children without a parent. And this all goes against the will of God and the commandments of God, for

God desires that a person surrender his/her life to Him so that he could lead it with all love and wisdom, doing all good things always for us and for everyone around us.

7. The strength of God is infinitely great making all of the power of Satan negligent

The Holy Bible reassures us about the reality of the infinite glory of God. “But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (Exo 7:11-12)

8. The story of Saul and the woman with the familiar spirit (1 Samuel 28:7-14)

“Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor.” So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Please conduct a séance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.” Then the woman said to him, “Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?” And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”

Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” And he said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, “Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!” And the king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What did you see?”

And the woman said to Saul, “I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.” So he said to her, “What is his form?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle.” And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down”

From this verse we can see the following:

1. Samuel the prophet did not come because of the work of the woman with the familiar spirit but appeared before the woman did her work. God is the one who allowed Samuel the prophet to appear to Saul using this method and the reason is that God wanted to record this great sin against Saul, which was breaking God’s commands. So he deserved God’s anger and complete rejection. “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chr 10:13-14)

9. From the saying of the Holy Bible regarding this subject

A. The children of God take guidance from the direction of the Holy Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:14)

“Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”” (John 4:26)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27)

B. The children of God are shown to let the will of God be done

“Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness” (Ps 143:10)

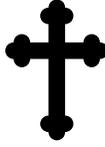
“But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You” (Ps 5:11)

C. Those who seek after Satan for the knowledge of the unknown are unhappy individuals.

“Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, Nor take up their names on my lips” (Ps 16:4)

10. Conclusion:

1. The children of God live in peace and do not fear the future because their lives are in the hands of God, and if they experience weakness or tribulation, then they rely on God alone, asking for his guidance.
2. Reliance on someone else other than God to know the unknown is a great sin, so much so that it is similar to murder and adultery because of the reliance on Satan and the worship to him.
3. In Christianity there is no such thing as fate or luck, because all things are in the hands of God.
4. The devil works through: fortune tellers, and Satan worshippers in order to lead astray Christians who live in sin, and believe in luck and coincidence.
5. Our Lord Jesus and our fathers the apostles rejected any testimony from Satan and all his helpers as well as his participation in anything concerning their lives.
6. It is important for the Christian person to reject all of these methods to reveal the unknown such as opening of the napkin, the date's seed, a cup of coffee, palm reading etc...We should reject simple things such as the fortune cookie (which are given in Chinese restaurants), or the future predictions found in the daily newspaper under the section of “horoscopes”.



IS TV AND/OR INTERNET ADDICTIVE? Psychologists say it can be.

PLEASE READ: Romans 12:2, Phil 4:8, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that TV watching and/or Internet use can be addictive. Thus our youth must be very careful.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“And do not be conformed to this world”
Rom. 12:2*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

Start by asking the students of their opinion about TV and the Internet. Ask them:

- ✚ How many hours/week do they spend watching TV or accessing the Internet?
- ✚ How regularly do they watch TV or access the Internet?
- ✚ What is their opinion on some of the things they see on TV or the Internet?

- ✚ TV watchers or Internet users become addicted when they spend a great deal of time using the TV or the Internet (various sites or chatting). Signs of addiction are using it more than one intends; thinking helplessly about reducing use or making repeated unsuccessful efforts to reduce use; giving

up important social, family or occupational activities to use it and reporting withdrawal symptoms when stopping.

- † Addiction to TV and/or Internet use is a very serious problem. Why? Addiction in general is harmful. One must be in full control of his or her own time and life and must not be controlled by any substance or any views or shows. What is on TV? Plenty of violence, sex and wrong views that do not conform to the Holy Bible or Christian life. Bad language, violence and sexual scenes all have negative effect on the viewer and spoil their characters. Visiting bad sites on the Internet has a similar effect.

What are the effects of TV and/or Internet Addiction?

A. Impact on behaviour

- † Screen violence will lead to real-life violence.
- † Sexuality and use of bad language are also significantly induced by TV and/or the Internet.
- † Disrespect for parents, lying and engaging in aggressive behavior increase dramatically with TV and Internet usage.
- † As Christians we need to be aware of these cultural influences on ourselves and our families.

B. Psychological and Spiritual Implications:

- † As Christians we must be careful not to let TV and the Internet make us conform to the world (Rom. 12:2) but instead we should develop a Christian worldview.
- † “As he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). So, people who watch a lot of TV (or go to bad sites on the Internet) see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens and more fearful of the real world.
- † TV and Internet, with all their wrong ideas, language, sex, violence and imaginary world, can have a negative effect on our spiritual life.

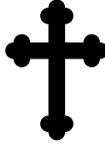
❖ A real example case

A young Christian man (26 years old) married a nice Christian girl. This young wife was very successful in her career, in her spiritual life and in her service in the church. Unfortunately, her husband became addicted to the use of computers and in particular to the Internet. What was the outcome? His career fell apart. His daily life, his spiritual life and his interaction with

everyone was greatly damaged. He needed psychological help. His case was very hard to improve.

What do we learn from this lesson?

1. TV and Internet addiction is a growing problem.
2. Most people agree that the Internet is a productive tool for research and for finding documents; but has serious negative consequences when it is used in a negative manner.
3. TV and Internet addiction makes the person socially isolated and unskilled.
4. The next time you log on to the Internet or watch a TV program, ask yourself if the Lord would approve of these websites, chat rooms that you are visiting or these TV programs you are watching. If you have to ask those questions, you are most likely headed in the wrong direction. Repent.
5. In a similar fashion to a drug addiction it is subject to the law of diminishing returns, so does watching TV or using the Internet. Researchers have found that “people watch a great deal longer than they plan to, even though prolonged viewing is less rewarding”.



PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION

PLEASE READ ROMANS 6:19-21:

"I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death".

MEMORY VERSE:

"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" Matt 5:28

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

Pornography is wide spread in the world today. Satan has succeeded in twisting and perverting sex. He has taken what is good and right (loving sex between husband and wife) and replaced it with lust, pornography, adultery, rape and homosexuality.

Pornography is a first step on a very slippery slope of ever-increasing wickedness and immorality. The addictive nature of pornography is well documented. Just as a drug user must consume ever greater quantities of drugs or more powerful drugs to achieve the same "high", so too pornography drags a person deeper and deeper into sexual addiction and ungodly desires.

B. PORNOGRAPHY IS ADDICTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE:

The three main categories of sin are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life "16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). Pornography certainly causes us to lust after flesh, and it is undeniably a lust of the eyes. Pornography certainly does not qualify as one of the things we should think about, according to Paul: "8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things". (Phil 4:8)

Pornography is addictive:

- † "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor 6:12), "
- † "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19)

And destructive:

- † "Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. 26 For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. 27 Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? 28 Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? (Prov 6:25-28)
- † "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations?" (Ezk 20:30)
- † "who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph 4:19).

The essence of pornography is lusting after other people in our minds:

- † "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28).

When habitual devotion to pornography characterizes a person's life and death, he continues to sin without seeking help, making no attempt to stop and feeling no desire to change his behavior, this demonstrates the person may not be saved "Do

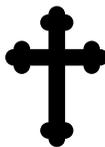
you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 6:9-10).

C. HOW TO OVERCOME PORNOGRAPHY?

Are you involved with Pornography and desire freedom from it? Here are some steps to victory:

1. Confess your sins to your father of confession.
2. Ask God to cleanse, renew and transform your mind.
3. Ask God to fill your mind with things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable.
4. Learn to possess your body in holiness.
5. Understand the proper meaning of sex and rely on your spouse alone to meet that need.
6. Realize that if you walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
7. Take practical steps to reduce your exposure to graphic images. Install the Pornography blockers on your computer, limit television and video usage and find another Christian who will pray for you and help keep your accountable.
8. Do not procrastinate about taking steps to overcome pornography addiction.
9. Do not give up. A 1000 km road trip starts with 1 km.
10. Do not try to solve the results of Pornography, try to solve the problems which lead you to it.





DOES THE BIBLE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT MARIJUANA?

by Heg. Fr. Athanasius Iskander

⁸Be **sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: (1 Peter 5:8)

¹But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be **sober**, grave, **temperate**, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. ⁴...teach the young women to be **sober**, to love their husbands, to love their children. ⁶Young men likewise exhort to be **sober minded**. (Titus 2:1,4,6)

⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be **sober**. ⁸ But let us, who are of the day, be **sober**, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thess 5:6,8)

The Bible tells us in many passages to be **sober**. To be sober is the opposite of being high on marijuana or drunk with alcohol, both being an altered state of mind. The Bible also tells us to be **temperate**, that is to have self control. A temperate person will not be enslaved to alcohol or marijuana or even to chocolate or ice cream.

What? know ye not that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** which is in you, which ye have of God, and **you are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's**. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, **do all to the glory of God**. (1 Cor 10:31)

The Bible tells us that our body is **the temple of the Holy Spirit** and that we are not our own, that is we do not own ourselves! Since we were bought with a price.

And what price? It is the blood of God! As a consequence we are asked to **glorify God in our body and our spirit** since both belong to God. We are even told to do all (everything) **to the glory of God**. If I use marijuana do I glorify God in my body and my spirit? Or am I doing that to the glory of God?

Question: The Bible says that wine can be used in moderation and only condemns being drunk (intoxicated) with it. Can we say the same about Marijuana?

Answer: There is a difference! You can drink a glass of wine or a bottle of beer and not be intoxicated (drunk) It takes several glasses of wine or several bottles of wine to be drunk. For marijuana even one cigarette mixed with marijuana, or one marijuana cookie can get you high (intoxicated). There is no way that you can consume marijuana in any way, shape or form in any amount and avoid being high (intoxicated).

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. (Eph 5:18)

The Bible tells us that instead of being drunk with wine (and similarly being high on marijuana) we should be filled with the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost they were so happy that people thought that they are drunk (Acts 2:13) One of the fruits of the Spirit is Joy.

If we are filled with the Spirit we do not need wine or marijuana. You will say with David the prophet: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. (Ps 4:7)

MEDIA TOPICS



WATCHING TV – “NOT EVERYONE IS RIGHT”

PLEASE READ: 1 John 4: 1-6, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that one should not fall into the habit of watching TV. We must not believe everything we hear on TV because not everything is true.

MEMORY VERSE:

*“Therefore, do not believe every spirit”
1 John 4:1*

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

Start by asking your children:

- † How many hours each week do they watch TV?
- † What other options do they have other than watching TV?
- † Have they ever seen something they didn't like on TV?
- † What are the types of shows they watch?

- † What the TV says is not necessarily the truth. Many writers of movies or shows are non-Christians. Their thoughts are not in conformity with the Holy Bible e.g. love, honesty, purity ... etc. So, their shows and the views in them are wrong from a Christian viewpoint.

- ‡ The information you get from watching TV can adversely affect you. For example, when you see acts of violence on TV, they can scare you and make you afraid. You may even have some bad dreams. You may also become scared from people around you. They may make you more aggressive toward people as well.

Experiment: To show that not everyone is right

Ask the students to close their eyes. Then ask everyone to point to the north. Let them open their eyes. You will find that everyone is pointing in a different direction although there is only one northward direction. Therefore, not everyone is right.

Turn off the TV – and turn on physical activity ... something useful

Imagine having no television for an entire season. Can you keep yourself busy in other ways? How about sports? How about learning to play a musical instrument? How about learning hymns? How about reading the Bible?

Think about the physical loss (e.g. losing strength of eye-sight, putting on more weight because of being inactive and developing back problems) in addition to mental and spiritual losses.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Find an alternative to watching TV that would be beneficial to you.
2. If you are watching TV, limit it to the bare minimum and be choosy about what you watch.
3. Not everything you see or hear on TV is right. Many thoughts are wrong and these are advocated in TV programs. Be careful. Discuss these thoughts with your parents or Sunday School teacher or your father of confession.



HOW TO DEAL WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA

PLEASE READ 1John 4:1-6; Romans 12:2, Phil. 4:8, Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show the dangerous effects of the media and how to deal with them.

MEMORY VERSE:

“AS HE THINKS IN HIS HEART, SO IS HE”
Prov.23:7

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. DIFFERENT MEDIA

1. Television
2. Radio
3. Internet
4. Newspapers, magazines, books
5. Movies or Videos or DVDs
6. Flyers and advertisements

B. SEX, LANGUAGE AND VIOLENCE; HOW BAD IS THE PROBLEM?

Let us demonstrate, how television has declined in mortality in the last decade. On March 30, 2000, The Parents Television Council issued a special report entitled “What a Difference a Decade Makes”. It is a comparison of prime time sex, language and violence in 1989 and 1999. Not surprisingly it demonstrates a steady

decline in broadcast television. In most cases it represents a very sharp decline. Here are a few of the findings:

1. On a per hour basis, sexual material was more than three times as frequent in 1999 as it was in 1989.
2. References to homosexuality increased dramatically. While references to homosexuality were rare in 1989, they were mainstream in 1999, becoming more than 24 times as common during the decade.
3. The study found that the rate of foul language in 1999 was more than 5.5 times higher than in 1989.
4. The study found violent incidents occurred at about the same rate in both years, but the intensity of those incidents greatly increased. Some of the programs they reviewed showed nothing but violent images. So in terms of sexual content, coarse language and violent material combined, the per hour figure almost tripled from 1989 to 1999.

C. Effects of Media:

1. Impact on behavior:

- ✚ Screen violence often leads to real life violence.
- ✚ Premature sexuality and use of foul language
- ✚ Disrespect for parents.
- ✚ Negative cultural influences.

2. Psychological and Spiritual Implications

- ✚ “As he thinks in his heart, so is he” Prov. 23:7.
- ✚ Heavy viewers of TV for example, are more fearful of the real world, struggle with wrong ideas, and are more involved with sexual problems and violence.
- ✚ Less and less time for God, the Holy Bible and effective prayers
- ✚ Media affects both adults and children’s spiritual life in a very negative way.

1. Parental Responsibility

- ✚ Please read Deut 6:4-9
- ✚ The principle is that parental responsibility involves shaping what gets into the minds of children. This is as essential today as it ever was. The tools of information in society must be turned toward the truth.

2. Personal Responsibility

- ✚ In Philippians 3, Paul prays for the church at Philippi that the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Therefore, pray that God guards your heart.
- ✚ In Philippians 4, Paul emphasizes personal responsibility “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” Phil.4:8
- ✚ One of the difficulties in developing preventive measures against abusive image communication is that you have to taste it before you can consume it. The poison is taken in before you can make a judgment. Labeling programs is the preventive response we have made thus far. Christians are especially responsible for being alert about what they feed their mind.

3. Things the Family can do.

- ✚ Parents must watch what the children watch.
- ✚ Take control of your TV watching. Use TV guide or the local TV weekly to choose what you watch. Watch by the show, not by the clock.
- ✚ Set clear limits on how much TV viewing is acceptable. Reduce it to the bare minimum and replace it with other useful things like: sports, music, hymns, church, trips ... etc.

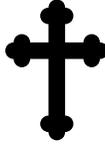
4. Make the consumerism connection.

How TV is produced and financed? Think about it. One has to realize the importance of the commercial side of television. TV producers uses methods to attract me to watch – and to keep watching so I’m there when the commercials come on. Therefore TV programs are very carefully “constructed” in order to attract the audience and keep them from flipping channels.

By asking these kinds of questions, one can begin to learn that the world of TV is not real but completely made up (often even the news is constructed) and you can begin to expose the underlying assumptions and worldview of TV land. Then, you can contrast those with your values- and with reality.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Turn off the TV and participate in physical activities.
2. Think about the commercial goals behind all this media coverage then contrast these with your values – and with reality.
3. Be very careful of everything you see or hear because not everyone is right. Some people are right (in their thoughts, religions ... etc.) and some people are wrong.
4. Your personality is shaped by the qualities that you are born with and the qualities that you acquire from what you see and hear. So be very careful.



SOCIAL MEDIA – WHAT THE HOLY BIBLE SAYS

INTRODUCTION “THE GREAT COMMANDMENT”

‡ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. (Matt 22 : 35-38)

What are those things that hinder us from obeying the great commandment?

‡ **The Love of Money**

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Tim 6:10)

‡ **The Lusts of the World**

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

‡ **The Presence of too many Friends**

A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Prov 18:24)

† **Being too busy**

Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. (Luke 8:14)

† **Social Media**

This can be a very destructive when abused, and can divert a person away from God.

The following topics will be covered to address the issue of social media:

- A) General Introduction about Social Media
- B) What is Social Media?
- C) Social Media Statistics
- D) Common Traps of Social Media
- E) More Bible Verses Concerning Social Media

A) GENERAL INTRODUCTION ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is having an enormous impact on how we perceive ourselves; our lives are now much more public. Like cell phones, and the Internet, social media is breaking down the barriers between people, making us more open. Some people see this new media as a blessing and others as a curse.

Like all things, social media can be used for good or evil. This is true for many things, like for example a knife which can be used for good, such as cutting bread, or for evil, as when Cain slew his brother. So also the Internet can be a powerfully positive tool for sharing knowledge, ideas and information, but it can also be used for things like exploring pornography.

And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and cast it from you (Matt 18:9)

B) WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. -

Whatis.com

Popular Social Media

Facebook

“Facebook is a social networking website and service where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content on the Web, play games, chat live, and even stream live video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person.”

Twitter

“Twitter is a service for friends, family, and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People post Tweets, which may contain photos, videos, links and up to 140 characters of text. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search.”

Snapchat

“Snapchat is a popular mobile app among youth that allows you to send videos and pictures, both of which will ‘self destruct’ after a few seconds of a person viewing them. Snapchat is also a fun messaging app. ... Yes, at its core, Snapchat is used to send photos and videos to friends.” Slogan: “Life's more fun when you live in the moment!”

Instagram

“Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing application that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately in the app, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr.”

Whatsapp

“WhatsApp is a free to download messenger app for smartphones. WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, images, audio or video. The service is very similar to text messaging services however, because WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, the cost of using WhatsApp is significantly less than texting.”

YouTube

“YouTube is a free video sharing website that makes it easy to watch online videos. You can even create and upload your own videos to share with others.”

Google+

“Google+ is a social network that builds off of your Google Account. If you have a Google Account, you can activate your Google+ account as easily as you would activate Google Now. At first, it seems about the same as Facebook or Twitter, importing contacts and assigning them to circles — Google+'s version of lists. After that, you can add curated circles for your particular interests, entertainment, news, sports, etc., connecting you to other people who are interested in your passions.”

Pinterest

Pinterest is a content sharing service that allows members to "pin" images, videos, and other objects to their 'pinboard.' The service also includes standard social networking features to promote sharing among users.

LinkedIn

Popular among the workforce, allows you and coworkers and companies to be connected to you. “LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally. LinkedIn strengthens and extends your existing network of trusted contacts.

LinkedIn is a networking tool that helps you discover inside connections to recommended job candidates, industry experts and business partners.”

C) SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

1. Facebook has 1.9 billion active users
2. 91% of retail brands use social media channels
3. Internet users have an average of 5.54 social media accounts.
4. Facebook Messenger and Whatsapp handle 60 billion messages a day.
5. Youth spend more time with media than any other activity besides sleeping.

D) COMMON TRAPS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Coveting: Other people’s likes, number of friends, number of comments they get, perfect “online life”, etc..

We can begin to get a sense of self-validation through the way people respond to our posts.

2. Venting: Releasing our anger online.

✚ Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back. (Prov 29:11)

3. Time: Easily wasting untold hours each day.

✚ The average American spends 3.5 hours/day on social media.

✚ Make the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Eph 5:16)

4. Secrecy: Often we engage in behavior online that we would not do in public. (talking dirty, flirting, etc.)

✚ 20% of all divorces are the result of an online relationship

5. Distraction: Not engaged with the real world. E.g. chatting online and not interacting with friends and family.

6. Addiction: One can easily develop a behavioral addiction to checking social media sites and messages. This can lead one away from God, making him a servant of endlessly checking news-feeds and messages, posting and messaging.

- ‡ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey" (Romans 6:16)
- ‡ Researchers at Chicago University concluded that social media addiction can be stronger than addiction to cigarettes and booze
- ‡ Like all addictions it has a very negative impact on ones life, often causing the person to fall behind in their studies or work.

E) MORE BIBLE VERSES CONCERNING SOCIAL MEDIA

Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. (2 John 1:2)

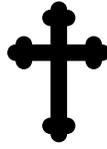
Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. (Prov 3:7)

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. (1 Cor 10:23)

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. (Prov 18:1)

Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. (Prov 6:6)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)



THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON OUR CHILDREN

VIDEO - <https://youtu.be/-M4fBAFNu64>

RELATIONSHIP TOPICS



FRIENDSHIP (I)

INTRODUCTION

Friend in the lands of immigration:

The children and youth meet different types of friends in the lands of immigration, which could involve them into a lot of pressure. There are pressures related to the family, the church and the teachings of the Holy Bible, and the friends with their different values, cultures and religions. How far is the youth's behaviour affected with all these influences? And what form would their personality take? Friends in school or at work have a great influence on the way the Coptic youth think and act.

We have already published 3 books on the subject of the problems of youth with the parents in the land of immigration. We have also published a book about “The Evil Company” which describes the destructive role that such a friendship could have on young people.

In this lesson we will try, with the help of the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to answer the questions that the youth have on the subject of friends. Before starting, we would like to make it clear that the true Christian person, who lives a true spiritual life does not need many friendships because his heart is filled with the Lord and his friendship is with our Lord Jesus Christ and the Saints. The Book says, “A man who has friends may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Prov 18:24.

A friend who sticks closer than a brother is our Lord Jesus Christ who is the creator of our lives and with Him we do not need many friends. However, in the stage of spiritual growth while the complete spiritual maturity is not yet reached, the subject of friends covers a large part of the youth's thinking.

Q.1 I KNOW MANY PEOPLE BUT I FEEL I DO NOT HAVE A FRIEND. WHO IS REALLY A FRIEND? WHY DO WE NEED FRIENDS?

A.1 There are 3 levels for friendship:

The first level: The casual friendship. This includes the boy or girl who has a locker beside yours in school who you meet for a short time. It also includes your fellow students in the classroom and in the youth group. These friends are often referred to as acquaintances.

The second level: The close friendship. This includes the friends you choose to have lunch with, to sit beside them in class or in Sunday School and you who you exchange your views with.

The third level: The committed friendship. This includes a small number of people (which could be one person) whom you trust and could tell them your news. They could share your joys and sorrows. You could discuss with them your problems and go with them on weekends or summer holidays.

In the first level, the casual friendship, you could have many friends. In the second level, the close friendship, you could have less friends than the first level. In the third level, the committed friendship, you might have the least number of friends than the previous two levels. It could be one friend or maybe until now you do not have a friend at this level of friendship.

However, on all three levels, the friends you have may influence your personality and your future. For this reason you should be careful about your choice of friends especially on the second and third levels.

Q.2 I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH MY PARENTS BECAUSE OF MY FRIENDS. THEY SAY THAT MY FRIENDS ARE NOT OF A SUITABLE STANDARD. WHAT SHOULD I DO? HOW CAN I KNOW THE SUITABLE FRIEND FOR ME?

A.2 Remember the words of the Bible “Evil company corrupts good habits” I Cor 15:33. Your parents are concerned about you because of the influence that your friends could have on you which could harm you. If you

discuss the issue with your parents and find out why they do not like your friend, you might be convinced. You have to be careful in choosing your friends.

A friend who does not deal with you according to the teachings of the Lord and the Holy Bible and who is not respectful, should not be a suitable friend for you. Why? Because he will cause you to have negative attitudes which could put you in trouble with your parents and in school too. Have a trained ear to the first words or behaviour that the person says or does. If he/she says bad words and curses, if he/she wants to drink alcohol or smoke then you should seriously consider reducing exposure to such friendships before they start. In the Epistle of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy, he confirms the breaking up of such a relationship. “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boaters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim 3:2-5).

Therefore, reconsider the influence of friends and keep away from those who cause you problems and harm or at least lessen your causal friendships.

Q.3 HOW CAN I GET RID OF A BAD FRIENDSHIP AFTER REACHING THE COMMITTED LEVEL?

A.3 Firstly, you should pray for your friend to put God into this situation. Second, it may be wise for you to gradually withdraw from your relationship by reducing the amount of time spent together and the amount of time you speak to each other. It may also be appropriate for you to discuss with your friend that you have different values and you are not able to help each other become better people. Remind your friend that you are praying for them. Encourage your friend to maintain their closeness with God and remind them of the love of the Father.

Q.4 SHOULD I CHOOSE MY FRIENDS FROM THE CHRISTIANS ONLY? WHY? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO HAVE A FRIENDSHIP WITH NON-CHRISTIANS IN ORDER TO BRING THEM TO CHRIST?

A.4 It is not really important to have only Christians for casual friendships because this friendship does not have a big influence on you. It is better, but not necessary, to have Christians as close friends so that they do not have any negative influence on you. But it is very important to have Christians as committed friends, who share with you a belief in God. The obvious reason in this case is that you want to be close to those you can trust and have the same Christian values and principles otherwise this friendship will be the commencement of pain.

As to your friendship with non-Christians for the reason of leading them to Christ, I would like to ask you, are you a true son of Christ, you believe in Him and you love Him and follow His commandments? If this is the case, you could draw others to Christ and you could befriend a person, but not a group, to bring him to Christ. But if you were still in the stage of spiritual growth and you are a Christian by name and you do not have a stable attitude, you should not befriend a non-Christian to draw him to Christ. You cannot give what you do not have. Seek your salvation and befriend only the Christians especially on the committed friendship level.

Q.5 I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO TALK NICELY TO PEOPLE. MY FRIENDS IN SCHOOL DO NOT TREAT ME NICELY. IS IT BECAUSE I AM FROM A DIFFERENT NATIONALITY (I AM ORIGINALLY FROM EGYPT)? WILL I EVER HAVE FRIENDS?

A.5 My friend and dear son, do not allow the evil one to strike you with low self-esteem and believe that you are unattractive and unwanted. Put these thoughts away. God did not create any one without beauty. I am sure, without knowing you personally, that all God's creations have a special beauty.

As to your friends in school, it is wise to first examine your friendship from their perspective. Maybe the way they treat you is similar to the way you are treating them. If you want the people to treat you nicely you should start with yourself. Even if someone does not treat you nicely and you accept it in

good spirit, his/her attitude may change. In case he/she continues to treat you badly, then you should avoid such people. In any case, do not give too much weight to the actions of your casual friends. In many cases, if your friends in school feel that you are being bothered by their teasing, they will go on doing so. But if you give them the impression that you do not care, then they may stop bothering you.

As to not treating you nicely because you are from an Egyptian origin among Americans, Canadians or Europeans, I am afraid it could happen and is really happening. However, not everyone is closed-minded to that extent. You could have casual friends who do not have this attitude and avoid dealing with anyone who feels strongly about a certain race or color (this will be considered as a sin for him). Such prejudiced friends could cause you low self-esteem and make you feel inferior to them. I have personally experienced this and I tell you do not care about their comments or attitudes. Instead of being concerned with their unnecessary comments, you should redirect your focus on people who care about you and your academic achievements to glorify God's name. You may find that they begin to respect you for your achievements.

These prejudiced friends in school, university or at work could annoy you when they know that you are a devout Christian. In this case you should not give their action any consideration and even if they bother you, take it as an honor. Remember the words of St. Peter, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evil doer, or as a busy body in other people's matter. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Pet 4:14-16).

PRAYER

Thank You Lord for listening to me. I know You always listen to me. My friend and companion Jesus Christ I do not deserve to be Your friend. I do not deserve to be Your servant. I do not deserve to talk to You. I do not deserve to ask anything from You because of my many sins but Your love for me is greater than all this. All this dissolves in Your love and You could make a friend out of Your slave and You could even make me a son of Yours. My Lord, a special prayer for Your sons and daughters and the youth

everywhere, draw them to You so that they do not like any friend other than You and find in You the friend who is closer than the brother. Accept us O Lord not for any good we did but for Your love and through the intercession of St. Mary, St. George & St. Rueiss and the prayers of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II.

AMEN
THANK YOU MY LORD JESUS CHRIST



FRIENDSHIP (II)

IN MY READING OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF DAVID AND JONATHAN, I LONG TO HAVE A FRIEND ON THAT LEVEL. HOW COULD I HAVE SUCH A FRIENDSHIP?

A.6 Remember the 3 levels of friendship, the casual, the close and the committed friendship. By speaking of the friendship of David & Jonathan you are talking about the committed friendship and it is a truly wonderful friendship. Read it in Samuel I, Chapters 18-20 and discover the following:

- A true friend will love you even when everyone else hates you (20:17).
- A true friend will talk positively about you even when others are slandering you (19:4).
- A true friend listens to your problems (20:1-2).
- A true friend works for your good in spite of all his own problems (20:4).
- A true friend protects you from the evil ones (20:19).
- A true friend suffers when you suffer (20:34).
- A true friend understand your inner feelings (20:41).
- A true friend has strong ties with you (20:42).

The most important question is how could you obtain such a wonderful friendship? It is not easy but everything is possible with prayers. From your side, start by dealing with your friends in a loving manner. A relationship must always start with you asking yourself: How can I be the most loving friend (or child, or sibling, or partner, or spouse)? Accept your friends for what they are, do not criticize them or scold hem because that could affect the relation between you. Act positively, avoid competing with your friends, do not betray them and do not interrupt when they talk. Finally, be patient because a committed friendship needs time, patience and above all prayer for others.

Q.7 I AM 19 YEARS OLD AND I HAVE FAILED TO CONVINCING A 17 YEAR OLD GIRL THAT WE COULD BE FRIENDS AND HAVE A NORMAL FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS. HOW CAN I CONVINCING HER? I CAN EVEN HELP HER IN HER STUDIES.

A.7 My dear friend, why do you insist on having her as a friend to you? Friendship is not enforced. A friendship comes naturally. In addition, you should be very careful that you do not develop a premature committed friendship. Although you may have good intentions, at your age it will be extremely difficult for you to prevent yourself from physical desires. Then the evil one will take the chance of finding a girl and a boy in what you call a normal friendship and slowly change it to a physical relationship which could make them fall into sin. I do not encourage you to pressure this girl or to try and help her in her studies. A boy and a girl studying together has proved to be impractical. Take care of your own studies, your prayers and your salvation and avoid such thoughts because they are not for your good.

Q.8 I AM AN 18 YEAR-OLD GIRL AND I HAVE A FRIEND OF THE SAME AGE BUT WE OFTEN DISAGREE IN OUR VIEWS. HOW COULD WE MAKE THESE DISAGREEMENTS LESS IN ORDER TO ENJOY OUR FRIENDSHIP?

A. 8 When disagreements are frequent between you and your friend, you have the freedom to choose either to withdraw from this friendship gradually or you could solve your problems with your friend by the following:

- Avoid obscurity of speech. You might both have the same views but there is a misunderstanding due to the mysterious way of talking.
- Choose the right words in speaking to her and avoid irritating words.
- Watch your voice tone. Your words could be right and suitable but your tone indicates a competitive spirit and anger.
Be in your friend's shoes. Maybe you would do the same thing.
- In every argument try to understand what the problem from your friend's perspective and start solving it in a practical way.

Q.9 AFTER A FRIENDSHIP OF 2 YEARS, I HAD A FIGHT WITH MY FRIEND AND THE RELATIONSHIP WAS OVER, WHICH CAUSED ME A LOT OF PAIN. IS THERE A PERMANENT FRIENDSHIP THAT DOES NOT END IN A PAINFUL WAY?

A. 9 Unfortunately there is no perfect person. Despite everything, the long-lasting friendship could be over and what happened with you could happen with anyone else. That is why "A man who has friends may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24.

The Lord Jesus knows you from inside and He will always love you and if you are going through a hard time, He will not leave you but will strengthen you and guide you.

My friend and dear son or daughter, you will always be lonely without the true friendship and fellowship of Our Lord Jesus Christ no matter how many friends you have. The opposite, such as in the lives of the saints or deeply spiritual people, is when you establish a deep relationship with Jesus Christ without any other friendships with people and you will not feel lonely.

Q.10 HOW COULD I GROW IN MY RELATION AND FRIENDSHIP WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

A. 10 Our Lord Jesus Christ started with us and with you personally and He gave up Himself for you on the Cross. He gave you the new birth through baptism. He gave you the Holy Spirit through the Holy Chrism. He gave you His body and blood to live with them. In your sickness He is the true physician. He gave generously. He is a kind friend who always wants to give. Do you want to take? If you said yes and opened the door to take His hand, the friendship is established and you will start sharing his love and you will enjoy His beautiful voice. Whenever you sit alone in peace He will be with you and you will need no one. Whenever you sit to read the Holy Bible, you will find Him talking to you and sending you special messages. Whenever you stand to pray, you start and end your prayers but He will keep

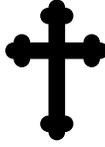
waiting until you come back to Him again. If you want to make our Lord Jesus Christ your friend and companion, spend time with Him every day, morning, afternoon, evening and night. Remember Him during the day, during your studies with short prayers and hymns. Tell Him, "I love You Lord Jesus Christ, You are all I have and I do not need anything other than you." Tell Him, "Help me, while I study. Work with me, enter before me when I enter the door of the school or work. I will not take any action without your concession. I want to leave the world for You and I will start by giving You one hour of my time every day ... In addition to 3 hours every week. I want to love all people but I have my closest friend as You my Lord Jesus.

PRAYER

Thank You Lord for listening to me. I know You always listen to me. My friend and companion Jesus Christ I do not deserve to be Your friend. I do not deserve to be Your servant. I do not deserve to talk to You. I do not deserve to ask anything from You because of my many sins but Your love to me is greater than all this. All this dissolves in Your love and You could make a friend out of Your slave and You could even make me a son of Yours. My Lord, a special prayer for Your sons and daughters and the youth everywhere, draw them to You so that they do not like any friend other than You and find in You the friend who is closer than the brother. Accept us O Lord, not for any good we did, but for Your love. Through the intercession of St. Mary, St. George & St. Ruaeiss and the prayers of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II.

AMEN

THANK YOU MY LORD JESUS CHRIST



HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS

PLEASE READ: the attached article entitled “How to Choose Friends Wisely”, and give this lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that friends influence children and youth more than almost anything else (sometimes even more than the parents and the priest combined). How should you choose your friends?

MEMORY VERSE:

*"A man who has friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

Proverbs 18:24

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Levels of Friendship

The triple C rule is "casual, close and committed" levels of friendship:

1. Casual Friendship Level

This refers to people who we greet and talk to casually at school or exchange lesson notes with.

2. Close Friendship Level

This is the group of friends with whom we sometimes have lunch, invite to a birthday party or send a congratulation or sympathy card to.

3. Committed Friendship Level

This is the group of friends or it may be just one friend who not only comes on time to attend a birthday party but comes much earlier to help with all the arrangements. He/she may be invited to a wedding in our family and has several duties to do in these arrangements. If a family member is sick, he/she will be with us all the time, praying with us, consulting with us and may be sleeping over to help.

NOTE: One has to be careful in associating with all levels of friends but more of course in the category of close and committed friendship. In this lesson the focus is on close and committed levels of friendship.

B. Do we need many friends?

Very few of us desire to live the life of a hermit. We want friends. But do we actually need many friends? The memory verse states clearly that the ultimate friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are happier and become winners when we develop a “committed level of friendship with Him”. But also the memory verse shows that we should not have too many friends (at the close or committed level) otherwise we will be too busy with them, too involved and we will lack the time or energy we need for our spiritual life. Therefore, one can say that happiness is not measured by the number of friends we have. Christ is our number one friend. A person may also have one or two “good quality” friends.

C. Effect of Friends:

The effect of friends is great at all ages and under all conditions. However, the greatest effect of friends is on children and youth. Remember that the personality of any person is composed of qualities he or she is born with and more importantly of qualities that he or she acquires from the society in which he or she lives and in particular from close friendships. At a young age the effect of friends may exceed anything else. This is the reason for the importance of this subject.

EXAMPLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS IN THE HOLY BIBLE:

1. What was happening in the Corinthian church?

The believers at Corinth thought they were doing pretty well spiritually because they could tolerate sin in their church. Yes, God has called us to “forgive one another.”

However, God never encourages the believers to tolerate outright sin in the camp. St. Paul says “Your glorying is not good. “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6).

There are many verses in the Bible that clearly indicate the importance of friends. Let us mention some of them:

† “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.” (Prov 22:24-25)

† “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1Cor. 15:33)

NOTE:

Some of the children or youth who have bad friends might say “I am not going to become like them.” The answer to this is “do not fool yourself. You will be influenced for sure whether you admit it or not.”

2. Moses, in one of his farewell speeches to the Jewish people as they were about to enter the promised land, warned of the possibility that even someone like a close friend “who is as your own soul” could persuasively and surreptitiously lead you to “go and serve other gods” whether they be “the gods of the peoples who are around you”, or any god on Earth (Deut.13:6-7). So great is the danger of leaving your faith that Moses instructed that even though it be your friend who leads you astray, “You shall surely kill him” (Deut 13:9). Staying on God’s side is obviously more important than any friendship.

3. One of the saddest stories in the Bible is found in 2 Sam 13. It involves one of King David’s sons who let a casual friend become an intimate friend and influence him with tragic results. Ammon desired to have an illicit relationship with half-sister, Tamar. His friend Jonadab, encouraged him to play sick and ask for Tamar to be sent into his room with some food. She

came and he raped her. This act brought tragedy into King David's family for many years to come. It all started because Ammon "had a friend".
(2 Sam. 13:3)

D. How to choose your friends:

1. Every good gift comes from God. So, one has to pray so that God Who knows the hearts of everyone. He will help us and guide us to the proper friend.
2. Choose godly friends. This way you will develop godly habits, get closer to God, and lead a wise life. A godly friend will help you and get help from you so that each of you will be Christ-like.
3. There are blessings in friendship and there are dangers too. So slow down and choose wisely.
4. In making friends we must review, whether a new friend is helping us get closer to God or not. If not, let us be serious and cut this friendship short.
5. Choose friends who have thoughts similar to yours, who reflect your family values, who think the way you do.
6. Choose friends who have enough social acceptances, who do not have destructive habits.
7. Last but not least, choose friends you can count on.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Friends are great. But be careful. There are blessings in good friendship and there are dangers in the bad ones.
2. You are influenced by your friends whether you like it or not.
3. Make no friends with people whose values are worldly. Only take for yourself godly friends.

Quotes from the Bible on How to Choose Your Friends Wisely

- † “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.” Prov 12:26
- † “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” Prov 13:20
- † “...what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God” 2 Cor 6:14-16
- † “Keep away from angry, short-tempered people, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.” Prov 22:24-25
- † “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing From such withdraw yourself.” 1 Tim 6:3, 5
- † “Not to us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, because of Your Truth. Why should the Gentiles say ‘So where is their God?’ But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands ... Those who make them are like them, so is everyone who trusts in them” Ps 115:1-8
- † “The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.” Prov 12:5
- † “A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.” Prov 12:23
- † “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” Prov 12:15
- † “A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence.” Prov 13:2
- † “Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding ... Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.” Prov 9:6, 8

- † “Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel and have turned away backward”
Isa 1:4
- † “...if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding... when wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths.” Prov 2:3-15
- † “If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, but you must not return to them. And I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they will fight against you. But they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you,” says the Lord. I will deliver you for the hand of the wicked. And I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible.” Jer 15:19-21
- † “Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil” Prov 4:24-27



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that the Christian family has characteristics that are consistent with: The Christian concept of sacred marriage and the commandments of the Holy Bible in dealing with each other.

MEMORY VERSE:

**“TO PHILEMON OUR BELOVED AND TO THE
CHURCH IN YOUR HOUSE”**

Phil. 1:1-2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A Christian family has special traits that arise from the Christian concept of sacred marriage and the commandments of the Bible to the married couple about how to deal with each other and how to raise their children.

The Definition of a Christian Family

The Christian concept is that a family is a small church, for St. Paul says: “To Philemon, our beloved friend and fellow laborer, and to the church in your house” (Philem. 1:2). The family is an arena for experiencing the work of God in uniting the couple and sanctifying their offspring for Jesus Christ, and in radiating His light to those around Him.

Domains of Family Love

Christian love is manifest in many domains such as:

1. The Family Altar

The family prays together and reads chapters of the Bible as a means of binding its members together spiritually, so that they may all receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit and the power to overcome every evil.

2. Taking Communion Together

It is when the whole family is gathered around the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist that the church – as a community --- is best expressed. This is a feature of our Orthodox Church, for not only does it bring the individual into a relationship with God, but it also nurtures the relationship of the group with God: *“In the congregations I will bless the Lord” (Ps.26:12).*

The Spirit of God endows groups with more than it endows individuals. This is why taking Holy Communion together, after repentance and confession is a continuous source of renewal for the family.

3. Bringing Problems Before God

It is important to get our children used to lifting up their hearts to God when they face a problem. Besides the fact that this makes a way for God to intervene in our problems and our hearts ready to cooperate gratefully, we find that this method builds up faith and fellowship so that we turn to God in all circumstances. *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” (Ps. 50;15)*

4. Mutual Understanding

The pressures of life in our era, whether those exerted on the exhausted husband, the working wife, or the stressed children who have their conflicts and worries about the future, demand that the family stay committed to settling disputes in a spirit of mutual understanding.

It is a great crime against the unity of the family and against oneself that a person puts his foot down and acts in a self-centered, stubborn manner

without consideration for others. We must learn to be understanding and to let go of our preconceived ideas and to be open to one another.

5. Friendly visits

It is a good idea for the family to pay friendly visits to other Christian families because this strengthens the spirit of love in the Christian community. It also nurtures and renews love among the family members.

It is important that the wife care for the feelings of her husband's family and the husband for the feelings of his wife's family. Most of the problems emerge from neglecting those important feelings. The harmony between the two families is a strong support for a Christian family and an important basis for psychologically well-balanced children.

We warn against interfering in family affairs because such interference frequently causes problems, divisions, and serious disruption.

6. A Spirit of Simplicity and Contentment

One of the most disruptive influences on a family is that of imitation and envy of other families and trying to 'Keep up with the Jones's.' However, the Christian soul that the Lord has filled with His grace sings in heavenly peace: *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Ps.23:1)*

It is important to examine oneself on this point and both spouses are responsible for doing so. St. Paul teaches us that, *"Godliness with contentment is great gain ... And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. 6:6-9).*

7. A Sound Upbringing

Parents should realize that the sound upbringing of children in early childhood and succeeding stages is very important. When the parent is at one time tender to his or her children and on many other occasions strict, the child becomes confused. The child does not understand what principles to follow nor what good behavior means. When the father is strict with his

adolescent son or daughter while the mother treats the same one with leniency, being ignorant of the nature of that stage and of the father's aim, the young person will be confused and neglect his duties.

There must be an agreement between the parents about how to deal with their children. Affections should be balanced during the process of upbringing.

It is important to watch the children's behavior with compassionate understanding.

This must be done effectively and persuasively so that they become capable of choosing good friends and steer clear of pitfalls.

8. The Family and the Community

Sometimes the parents are very lax with their children; they let them give way to peer pressure. After a while they become mixed up with the wrong kind of company.

A positive and flexible Christian approach is to be open to people and deal with them in love and cooperation without getting involved in their delinquencies. What is most harmful is being flexible to the point of laxity: letting our values, principles, and kids go adrift. The family should be cautious when it is a matter of getting involved with other families. What some would consider innocent friendships might end up causing critical problems.

9. Family and Mass Media

It is not wrong to have access to different kinds of media at home like TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines, but it is wrong not to help children, and even parents, choose the right thing. All should learn to pick the appropriate method for improving their minds: the right program, a good book, etc. It is up to us to stop and ask ourselves if we are abandoning our children to trivialities or negative influences that will ruin their spiritual lives.

We hope for the day when the mass media offer material that will build up the spiritual lives of our children, because life is not a decadent play or a

violent movie. Indeed, the mass media should elevate --- not degrade --- people's instincts. There are fields of science, art, sports, and even better, religious knowledge that fight atheism and spread the principles of pure, genuine love. These are the themes that we can watch or listen to on the mass media.

10. Service to Others

Christ taught us that He came not to be served but ***“to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt.20:28)***. There is no doubt that the spirit of service is the sign of a real Christian soul and the blessed testimony of what Christianity does in people's lives. We should become accustomed to serving others and teach our children to do so.

The selfishness we teach our children will cost us dearly unless we correct ourselves. We ask our children to be selfish and hate even their cousins, to be envious and take advantage of others. All this creates a divided community full of weak and covetous people. Christianity requires self-sacrificial love from us: ***“Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Cor.13:4-7)***

Hence, it is necessary to have the spirit of service, to give part of our time, effort, money and talents to others, especially within the church which channels such donations to the needy. Be honest in giving your tithes to the Lord and you will know His blessing. ***“Bring all the tithes ... and prove Me now in this If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal.3:10)***

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- 1. The church trusts that you are going to respond to its appeal for family repentance, that you are going to pray and worship God together, take Communion together, glorify Jesus, and offer active and fruitful service.**
- 2. A home is blessed when everyday tasks are accomplished with prayers; “pray without ceasing”. (1Thess. 5:17)**



HOW CAN I GET ALONG WITH MY PARENTS?

THE REASON FOR THIS LESSON

As a youth counselor for many years, I heard a lot of complaints regarding the difficulties children have when dealing with their parents.

Then through my service as a priest I heard a lot of complaints from parents regarding the behaviour of their sons and daughters. These problems consumed a considerable part of my time and were usually mentioned during the prayers on the altar as the Lord's interference was very much needed.

I would like to mention here that these problems between the youth and their parents are present everywhere, not only in these land of immigration. However, the nature of the problems and the manners of solving them differ from one country to the other. Therefore, definitely the youth problems with their parents here are not the same in many aspects as those in Egypt or Sudan. Thus the reason for this lesson is clear. It is an attempt to present some of the facts that could help in improving the situation between the parents and the youth.

The answer to the question “How can I get along with my parents?”, will be split into 2 parts:

- Be aware of some facts,
- Take the right measures in your affairs.

(A) BE AWARE OF SOME FACTS:

1. Parents are given authority and responsibility from God.

The Lord granted you these parents and He made them responsible for you. The child is born physically from the father and the mother and after baptism he becomes God's child through the new birth. The parents are responsible, in front of God, for the up-bringing of this baptized child. They have to give

an account on the day of judgement as to how they took care of him/her physically and spiritually.

Therefore, it is out of the Lord's love that He gave you parents who care for you. You should thank God for that. You have to be aware that God gave them the authority to take care of you with unlimited love and faithfulness. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God”, Rom 13:1. Then do not say that your parents have no authority over you because God gave it to them together with the responsibility of caring for your growth both physically and spiritually. Do not consider their advice or guidance as interference in your privacy.

In the circumstances where parents may be unable to show unconditional love towards their child, God will make up for this in His ways.

2. Everything is in God's hands and He has the supreme authority.

Do not fear the loving authority that the parents have on you but you should be thankful to God and your parents. You should also be aware that God has the supreme authority over all beings and no matter what the parents want or not want their capabilities are limited and all things are arranged from above. “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” Matt 6:27.

God can see everything and He is caring and compassionate. “Therefore do not worry saying 'What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? or what shall we wear'. For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” Matt 6:32. If you ask something from your parents and they disapprove of it then know that it is for your good and it is in accordance with God's will. You could ask from God and He might change the situation and you could have what you want.

3. The Father and the Mother are a source of unlimited love and compassion.

The love of the mother and father is so great that even when the son or daughter do them wrong, their love can surpass it. There is a story in the Holy Bible about David and his son Absalom, who wanted to take the kingdom from his father by force and prepared an army to accomplish that

by killing his father [2 Samuel 17]. David's attitude was a true example of the love of a father in spite of the wrong deeds of the son. In order to preserve his kingdom, David put his army on guard and before they leave for battle he asked them, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom" and all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom [2 Samuel 18:5].

Therefore, rest assured my dear youth that your parents love you more than you can imagine and their love is not comparable to your mistakes.

They want all the best for you and hope to see you better than them.

They want to protect you from all evil so do not feel bad when they ask many questions or stop you from a certain voyage or job.

They are doing their best to bring you up and provide for you. The mother spends many sleepless nights and the father works hard in difficult circumstances to support you.

4. The parent's judgement is different than yours.

When the parents judge matters, they do that through their own experience in life and consequently they look for what is beneficial to their children. On the other hand the youth judges matters, it is through their limited experience which is due to their age. Also the youth tend to be more emotional than rational in their judgement which may be influenced by their peers. Therefore, if you look at things from this point i.e. the love of your parents and their experience, it would be easier for you to understand them.

5. Parents are human and they are not infallible.

In rare situations, the parents could be wrong in their judgement due to their limited capabilities as humans. Sometimes they try to save their children from their own defects.

For example, if some parents are smokers, alcoholics, greedy for money or stingy. But, at the same time, they want to spare their children these vices.

Parents are also human in their limited endurance. They could collapse and lose their nerves so you should consider that in your dealing with them, otherwise they could be sick.

6. The serious conflict in the lands of immigration.

- The position of parents in the lands of immigration

The parents face a lot of pressure in adjusting to the new society, to get a proper job by fulfilling the required educational standards especially in their first few years. They also suffer from home sickness and sometimes they have their own personal difficulties to cope with. Therefore the youth should support their parents, be understanding with them and pray for them.

The parents try to follow the teachings of the Bible in the up-bringing of their children in order to make them good Christians. They could also follow the same patterns of their own up-bringing. At this point, the Church undertakes to educate the parents about the ways to deal with their children and not all the tradition that were followed back home are valid in the new place.

The parents could be unaware of the growing phase that their children are going through. For example, the treatment of a 7 year-old is different from that of a 15 year-old. Obviously it is due to his mental, physical and emotional needs there again the church has a role as a guide to its children.

- The position of children and youth in the lands of immigration

The problem of peer pressure: Friends have an influence on our children. At school or at work children meet friends who do not share our Christian values or our family values. As we mentioned in another book about peer pressure, we said that our Nice children should have a leader's personality and not a follower's one. They should choose what is right because "All things are allowed but not all things are suitable". Friendship between the youth in church through the activities is encouraged but with caution. A young man should choose his friends carefully and should not proceed with a decision before praying about it and taking the father of confession's opinion.

The problem of personal freedom: Our children learn what is called “personal freedom” in these western countries. “I do what I want”, “You do not tell me what to do”. They may feel that any advice or guidance from the parents' part is considered interfering into their personal rights. But what the children should understand is that their parents are in a responsible position and they have certain authorities given to them by God to bring them up. Even if they are taught to deal in the society in a certain manner when it comes to parents it should be different and any guidance from their part is not an invasion on personal freedom.

The problem of the social system and the foreign law: Our children learn about the social system and the law in the country in the schools. They are shocked when they find that the parent's behaviour is different from these laws they learn about in the school. They hear from their friends in school that they run away from home when their parents are strict or that they bring in the police to their parents. Once again I say do not apply the ways of the world on yourself. Do not bring in the law between you and your parents who are sacrificing everything for your good. Also, the parents should change the ways of dealing with problems.

The issue of television and temptations: Television in the west is not the same as back home. The channels are numerous, the films are continuous and they contain a considerable amount of violence and sex which have an effect on the youth. Therefore, the television can be a source of trouble and should be either eliminated or restricted. However, there should be a substitute so that the children can fill their spare time either by computer or sports or church activities.

Therefore, the conflict is inevitable but we hope to deal with it throughout the rest of this book.

(B) THE RIGHT MEASURES IN DEALINGS WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE YOUTH AND THE PARENTS:

1. Prayer:

The most powerful weapon to solve these problems is prayer. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Matt 7:7-9. When a young man asks for the

peace at home between him and his parents, the Lord would hear his prayers and suppress all the works of the evil one who creates an atmosphere of struggle and anxiety. The virtue of patience is also needed until peace is restored.

2. Put the names on the altar during Mass

The most powerful weapon to defeat the evil one and to obtain the help of God is the mentioning of the names on the altar during Mass. All our difficulties will be solved as we put them in “the hands of God who takes away the sin of the world” John 1:29. Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to solve all our problems.

3. The youth to be obedient and understanding

If a young man follows two principles of obedience and understanding he will benefit by taking the blessing and everything will go peacefully. St. Luke mentioned these principles in an important incident revealing the obedience and understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ. “His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but thought that He had been in the company they went for a day's journey and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed, and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must look after My Father's business? But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.” Luke 2:41-52.

We notice from this incident that our Lord Jesus Christ applied the principle of obedience in the expression “and was subject to them“ and He was understanding with His parents when he asked them “Why is it that

you sought Me? ...“. He is our true example and He said “Learn from Me ...” and He “Left us an example to follow His steps ...”. If you follow the principle of obedience you would be fulfilling a biblical command “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your Father and Mother “which is the first commandment with promise” that it may be well with you and you may live long on earth”. Ephesians 6:1-3.

A True Story:

There was a family that had one daughter and they lived in a small town. The daughter finished her high school education with excellent grades and had the opportunity to go to the university in a faraway city leaving her elderly parents. Her other choice was to join a moderate college in her town. There was an argument between the daughter and her parents and at the end her father told her “stay with us my daughter because we need you and all what we have will be yours and the Lord will reward you for your sacrifice”. The daughter spent the night crying and in the morning she came and told her parents that she decided to stay and give up her chance in the university and join the college. At the same time the parents told her to go in peace and they will try to come and visit her when they can. But the daughter refused to go away and remained with her parents. She graduated as an assistant pharmacist and her father opened a pharmacy with his own money with another partner. One year later a doctor asked her for marriage and he was a deacon in church too. So, the Lord rewarded her and blessed her because she chose to comfort her parents and obeyed them. The son of obedience receives blessings.

4. Choosing the right time

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what you planted, a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up, a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to gain and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace” Ecclesiastics 3:1-8.

Therefore, choose the right time for arguing or demanding from your parents. Avoid the time they are exhausted or worried for any reason. If you want their approval in a certain issue, do not leave it to the last minute but start mentioning it before-hand because things take time and reaching decisions should not be rushed.

5. Declare your respect to your parents:

- By Speaking: “Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness” Proverbs 20:20.
- By Listening: “Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.” Proverbs 5:7.
- By Looking: “The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.” Proverbs 30:17.
- By Behaving: “My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck.” Proverbs 6:20-21.

When you speak to your parents avoid complaining and being rude but let your words be polite.

6. Earn your parent's trust:

The youth always complain that their parents do not trust their actions. This is due to being untruthful once or more. It could also be due to being irresponsible more than once.

Try to prove to your family your truthfulness not by words, but by deeds. Prove to them that you use reason in dealing with matters. Prove to them that you have principles and value and do not go with the tide. Again, not by words, but by deeds. If you gain your family's trust they will be more cooperative and may give you more freedom than you ask.

7. Declare your love to your parents:

Declare it directly by telling them “I love you”. Invite them to attend your school activities. Visit them in their place of work. Bring your mother flowers on certain occasions or even without any occasion. Wash your father's car without him asking you.

All these actions show your love and to every action there is a reaction. On the other hand if you were affectionate towards your parents, you will not feel guilty when they leave the world and wish you would have given them more.

8. Take the priest's advice:

Sometimes the parents could have serious problems like being alcoholics or greedy for money or nervous. All these problems are part of the priest's responsibilities and he could help by interviewing and mentioning it during his prayers on the altar. Things could turn out well by prayers.

A TRUE STORY

A boy of 14 years was kicked out of the house by his parents after a serious problem. The boy left and had two alternatives, either to go to his friend who lives nearby, or to go to a priest's house. The boy chose to do the latter and he called his priest by phone and came to him crying. In the meantime, the mother was asking about him everywhere, then she called to ask the priest what could she do. The priest told her that her son was with him and asked her and her husband to come over. They came in a hysteric state and after prayers and a long talk they returned to their house in peace. The priest started to work on the father as he had a problem and needed to be solved.

9. Think of the matter from the parent's viewpoint:

Put yourself in their position. Ask yourself how you would act in their place. Do not condemn them because they behave according to their own

experience and out of their love for you. If you truly ask yourself how you would deal with matters if you were in their position, you may find yourself thinking like them in many ways. Discuss the reasons for your disagreements.

10. Restrain your expectations and expect the worst:

Life is not perfect but realistic and you have to learn to accept it by prayers and positive attitude. Most parents would say “No” if you ask for something. Prepare yourself for that. They want your behaviour to be perfect but they are not perfect themselves. You should expect that because life is not perfect. Pray hard and work hard and do not mind if the parents were not perfect.

CONCLUSION:

- ✠ Pray constantly for your family and for the solving of problems. Pray for the peace of the Lord at home and for the power of love and endurance.
- ✠ Involve your father of confession follow his advice and ask for the names to be mentioned on the altar.
- ✠ Obedience and understanding together with patience to give things time to be solved. The parents are responsible in front of God and have the authority to bring up their children with love.
- ✠ Do not mix matters. The social life is something, what we hear from friends is another thing but what we should do as children of God according to the commands in the Bible is another matter.

PRAAYER

My dear Lord Jesus, Who truly loved the youth and called them especially to share His love at an early age when He said “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth”. You, my Lord can keep your sons and daughters from all the things that disturb them. Keep them from the evil one and give them the strength they need until they grow in wisdom and blessings. Grant the parents, O Lord, the patience and endurance to fulfill the duties you gave

them in bringing up their children. Your people and Your church appeal to you to have mercy on them and to guide those who are weak.

Remember us, O Lord, with your mercies through the intercession of Our Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, St. George and St. Rueiss and all your saints and through the prayers of our loving father His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and your humble servant.

THANK YOU MY LORD JESUS



DATING FROM A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons on the subject of dating. Dating can be very harmful. Let us see why.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And do not be conformed to this world ..."

Rom. 12:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. INTRODUCTION

If you asked any Christian, they will tell you dating is wrong. Priests, parents, Sunday school teachers and Christian youth; all will tell you dating is wrong. Dating is a dangerous threat to our young peoples' physical purity, emotional stability and spiritual growth.

It is very important before we proceed, to define what we mean by dating. One may define dating as "A temporary romantic relationship focused on current enjoyment". We can then say dating is:

1. Temporary rather than permanent.
2. Romantic (often only slightly at first) rather than platonic.
3. It is focused on current enjoyment rather than future matrimony.

C. Dating is foreign to the scriptures:

In scripture, dating is a violation of God's design for male-female relationships. Let us mention two examples:

1. Samson is a sad example of a man with a dating spirit, reaping its disastrous consequences (Judg 14-16)
2. Dinah is another sad story of a girl with a dating spirit, reaping its disastrous consequences (Gen. 34:1-3)

Dating has become the norm in Western culture and the phenomenon is escalating.

Why is dating increasing rapidly?

1. The rise of feminism encouraged young women to leave the loving protection of their father and, for the first time in history, enter the workforce where they could meet young men.
2. Co-ed universities permit young women to live on campuses with young men, a major historical shift.
3. Media: TV, Internet, magazines ... etc.
4. Increasing urbanization crowded more people into closer living situations with inadequate parental supervision.

1. Dating creates an atmosphere of temptation

Please refer to the two stories mentioned above: the story of Samson (Judg 14-16) and the story of Dinah (Gen. 34:1-3). In both stories the outcome of dating was fornication and emotional attachment.

Whereas marriage helps avoid fornication, dating promotes it.

The Heavenly Father taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation."

St. Paul also said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." 1 Cor. 7:1-2.

2. Dating distracts from the commandment of God

Dating takes charge over our emotions, feelings, affections, energy, time and love and directs them towards the boy-girl relationship not towards God.

Dating tempts the youth to forget about God. The Bible said "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:2).

Dating often push God out of the heart of a youth at the time when they need God the most “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth ...”
Ecc.12:1

3. Dating wounds the spirit of those involved

What boy or girl who dates has not been hurt by “breaking up”? This emotional devastation can be avoided by avoiding dating altogether. Youth are not mature enough to cope with these relationships. In particular they are very sensitive to the hurt their spirit feels when “breaking up”. Dating youth often experience depression when an unwise relationship terminates. On some occasions we hear of suicide.

Is it Christian to hurt people? Avoid dating, avoid hurting people. If we love them as brothers and sisters in the Lord we will help people, not hurt them.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

Dating is a dangerous threat to the youth’s physical purity, emotional stability and spiritual growth.



DATING FROM A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons in the subject of dating. Dating is just wrong. Let us see why?

MEMORY VERSE:

“And do not be conformed to this world ...”

Rom. 12:2

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing the previous lesson and then proceed with the further points to answer the question: What is wrong with dating?

1. Dating distracts from study and career:

At the time when the youth would like to do his or her utmost best to get the highest possible marks, dating can become a disastrous factor that is very negative to studies. Remember that a true Christian must be also a successful individual. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”

(3 John 1:2).

The distraction of dating often leads to low marks which can have negative impact on your career, which can last for the rest of your life. What a big loss. It cannot be corrected anymore. If the individual has a bad career that is not satisfying, does not pay well, and does not suit the talent of the individual, the result is unhappiness for the rest of one’s life.

Dating is not worth it.

2. Dating distracts from the love of others.

Remember the commandment of God "... you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matt. 22:39.

Usually the formation of a clique by two people (boy-girl friends) results in the exclusion of others. I have seen dating disconnect youth from their parents, friends, neighbors, relatives, teachers, priests and common sense. They become overwhelmed with a spirit of self-centeredness that ends up being very destructive.

Those who date become disoriented and disassociated. God's work is to love your neighbor as yourself.

3. Dating distracts from the will of God.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom 12:1-2)

Our bodies are to be presented to God. God expects the presentation of our bodies to be holy, acceptable living sacrifices. It is all part of God's plan for us to find His perfect will for our lives.

Dating distracts from eternal issues. It focuses on temporal issues.

4. Dating violates emotional innocence.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:19-20)

We are to glorify God in our body, because it has been purchased by the blood of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also to glorify God in our spirit (human emotions). The human spirit includes the mind, will and emotions (feelings) of a person.

Dating involves the giving away your spirit, which belongs to God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Do not date. Save your time and energy for your spiritual and career growth.
2. Do not date. Save your emotions for your husband or wife later on in life.
3. Do not date. Keep your body and spirit pure for God.
4. Do not date. Stay on track for eternal life.



HOMOSEXUALITY: THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE *

PLEASE READ: the attached article entitled “Coptic Orthodox Church formally condemns Homosexuality, Ordination of Homosexuals and Same Sex Marriage”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

These two lessons about homosexuality will be presented in the form of question-answer format.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Homosexuality is the manifestation of sexual desire toward a member of one's own sex or the erotic activity with a member of the same sex. (The Greek word homos means *the same*). A lesbian is a female homosexual. More recently the term "gay" has come into popular use to refer to both sexes who are homosexuals.

If we accept God's Word on the subject of homosexuality, we benefit from His adequate answer to this problem. We are concerned only with the Christian or Biblical view of homosexuality. The Bible has much to say about sexuality in general.

Homosexuality is condemned in Scripture. The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares that homosexuals "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9; 10). Now Paul does not single out the homosexual as a special offender. He includes fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous persons, drunkards, revilers and extortionists. And then he adds the comment that some of the Christians at Corinth had been delivered from these very practices: "And such were some of you: But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God" (I Cor 6:11).

* **Christian Online Magazine**

All of the sins mentioned in this passage are condemned by God, but just as there was hope in Christ for the Corinthians, so there is hope for all of us.

Homosexuality is an illicit lust forbidden by God. He said to His people Israel, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev 18:22). "If a man also lieth with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev 20:13). In these passages homosexuality is condemned as a prime example of sin, a sexual perversion. The Christian can neither alter God's viewpoint nor depart from it.

In the Bible sodomy is a synonym for homosexuality. God spoke plainly on the matter when He said, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel" (Deut 23:17). A sodomite was not an inhabitant of Sodom nor a descendant of an inhabitant of Sodom, but a man who had given himself to homosexuality, the perverted and unnatural vice for which Sodom was known. Let us look at the passages in question:

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house around, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, "Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them." And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. (Gen 19:4-8)

The Hebrew word for "know" in verse 5 is used frequently to denote sexual intercourse (Gen 4:1, 17, 25). The message in the context of Gen 19 is clear. Lot pled with the men to "do not so wickedly." The way the Sodomites treated one another was with great wickedness and must be recognized as such. Of course, we cannot generalize the aggressiveness of the Sodomites to all homosexuals, but nevertheless it is not according to God's will. At creation, God created man and woman specifically for each other to fulfill each other's needs in their unique way, emotionally and physically. This bond is sacred, we must respect the sacredness of our sexuality given to us by God.

To call a union of two persons of the same sex a "marriage" is a misnomer. In the Bible, marriage is a divinely ordered institution designed to form a permanent

union between one man and one woman for several purposes, a couple of which are procreation and bringing one another closer to God. That was God's order in the first of such unions (Gen 1:27, 28; 2:24; Matt 19:5). If, in His original creation of humans, God had created two persons of the same sex, there would not be a human race in existence today. The idea of two persons of the same sex marrying is unacceptable. A clergyman might bless a homosexual marriage but God will not.

Q. Are there other Scriptures in the New Testament which deal with homosexuality?

Yes. Romans 1:24-27; I Timothy 1:10 and Jude 7. The Romans passage is unmistakably clear. Paul attributes the moral depravity of men and women to their rejection of "the truth of God" (1:25). They refused "to retain God in their knowledge" (1:28), thereby dethroning God and defiling themselves. Because of their rejection of God's commands He punished their sin by delivering them over to it.

The philosophy of substituting God's Word with one's own reasoning commenced with Satan. He introduced it at the outset of the human race by suggesting to Eve that she ignore God's orders, assuring her that in so doing she would become like God with the power to discern good and evil (Gen 3:1-5). That was Satan's big lie. Paul said that when any person rejects God's truth, his mind becomes "reprobate," meaning perverted, void of sound judgment. The mind which rejects God's truth, is not capable of discerning good and evil.

In Romans 1:26-31 twenty-three punishable sins are listed with homosexuality leading the list. Paul wrote, "For this cause God gave them up into vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (Romans 1:26, 27). These verses tell us that homosexuals suffer in their body and personality the inevitable consequences of their wrong doing. Notice that the behaviour of the homosexual is described as a "vile affection" (1:26). The Greek word translated "vile" (*atimia*) means dishonorable. The word "affection" in Greek is *pathos*, used by the Greeks of either a good or bad desire. Here in the context of Romans it is used in a bad sense. The "vile affection" is a degrading passion, a shameful lust. Both the desire (lusting after) and the act of homosexuality are condemned in the Bible as sin.

We have not done much research in this area, however, studies made by others showed varied deviations from the average or normal parent-child relationship. For example, clinical cases show that some homosexuals have not had a normal or natural relationship with the parent of the same sex. In some instances there has been a wide gap between father and son. There are those boys who have been neglected by their unaffectionate fathers. The boy who has not had a good and wholesome relationship with his father could have an unfulfilled need for a father relationship with a man. Now that need will not start out as a sexual one, but there are cases on record in which the sexual relationship has developed. I know one case of a homosexual adult who seduced a 13 year old boy whose father had forsaken him. Before the boy's contact with the older man he had no knowledge whatever of homosexuality. The older man seduced the boy.

Lesbianism has been known to follow this same pattern. Some mother-daughter relationships are not conducive to a normal social and sexual development. One young woman came to her pastor seeking help. She had gotten involved with a lesbian in the community where she lived, a woman twenty-one years her senior. The girl's parents had a defective marriage which ended in divorce when the daughter was ten years old. Her mother became bitter and resentful against all men. She convinced her daughter that men were not to be trusted, and that man's one goal was to exploit women sexually. The daughter grew up with a fear of men, a fear totally unwarranted. She was an easy victim of the seductive older lesbian. The good and wise pastor showed the counselee from the Bible that homosexuality not in accordance with God's creation of a sacred bond between man and woman. She confessed her sin to God and received Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord. Today she is happily married to a fine Christian man.

In Old Testament times in Israel God dealt severely with homosexuals. He warned His people through Moses, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev 20:13). God hated the act of homosexuality to the extent that He considered it worthy of punishment by death. Now God loved His people Israel dearly, and it was from His great heart of love that He chastened them. The Epistle to the Hebrews says, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb 12:7). When God issued His law forbidding homosexuality, and the punishment for those persons who violated that law, He did so in order to prevent them from sinning. However, when anyone broke the law, the offender paid the penalty due to him. God is a holy God who hates and judges sin. Parents who love their children will

not refrain from warning them of prevailing evils, nor will they fail to chasten them when they disobey. The church today not only tolerates sin but in some instances condones it. God does neither.

In the New Testament the principle of discipline was applied with apostolic authority. In the church at Corinth the young man who was committing fornication with his step-mother was excommunicated. Paul instructed the church to take that action "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and with the power (i.e. the authority) of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor 5:1-8). In Romans 1:21-32 where Paul shows the Gentile world in its downward plunge into sin, including the sin of homosexuality, verse 32 concludes with the words, "who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death . . ." Worthy of death, yes. But today we are not under law but under grace. People used to hear and heed the Gospel-truth, the message that God is holy, man is a sinner, and that through faith in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, sinful people can be born again and thereby delivered from the guilt and penalty and practice of their sins.

Nothing is more foundationally essential for the church and the world than a return to the truth. Recently we read that someone said we are suffering from a famine of the worst kind, "a truth-famine." Our modern culture is in a degenerating, deteriorating stage caused by a departure from the truth. And we must say unequivocally that truth does not exist independently of God, and His written Word the Bible, and His Son Jesus Christ. Truth is in no sense of man's imagination or contrivance. Man in his fallen state does not know the truth, and that is why he continues to distance himself from God. Every ancient civilization that ignored God and His laws has crumbled. We cannot survive independently of God and His Word.

The Church must return to the truth, the whole truth, the sum total of truth founded and grounded upon Him Who said, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). In our Lord's high priestly prayer for His own He prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). There must be in our churches the clear exposition of the Scriptures and a continuing exaltation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ if our civilization is to be saved from the disasters that overcame past civilizations. Any civilization with a philosophy or a doctrine which denies the truth cannot survive.

We must always keep before us the fact that homosexuals, like all of us sinners, are the objects of God's love. The Bible says, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Jesus Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (I John 2:2). The Christian who shares God's love for lost sinners will seek to reach the homosexual with the gospel of Christ, which "is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16). As a Christian I should hate all sin but I can find no justification for hating the sinner. The homosexual is a precious soul for whom Christ died. We Christians can show him the best way of life by pointing him to Christ. Our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We are obligated to take the Gospel to all.

We can help them by seeking to draw their attention to what God says in His Word in a kind and loving spirit. However, the homosexual must admit to the fact that he is living in discordance with God's will, and that he has the desire to be made free from it. The homosexual must ask himself, "Is the temporary gratification of the flesh worth separation from my God?"

Coptic Orthodox Church Formally Condemns Homosexuality, Ordination of Homosexuals and Same-Sex Marriage

COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH PRESS RELEASE
FOR RELEASE TO PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Coptic Orthodox Church Formally Condemns Homosexuality, Ordination of Homosexuals and Same-Sex Marriage

August 26, 2003

BOSTON, MA (USA)--During its Annual Clergy convention, the leaders of the Coptic Orthodox Church discussed recent issues related to homosexuality. The convention was presided by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. In attendance were twelve Bishops from North America, Egypt, Australia, Europe; and 180 priests from America, Canada and Australia. The issues discussed included: the legalization of same-sex marriage, the ordination of a homosexual Bishop in the Episcopalian Church in New Hampshire, and the vote of the Uniting Church in Australia to allow the ordination of any homosexual clergy.

Based on the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and teachings of the Old and New Testaments, the clergy strongly condemn such activities.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke against homosexuality when He made reference to the abomination of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 10:12; Gen. 19:24; Jude 7). Similarly, St. Paul warns, "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves... will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1Cor. 6:9,10. See also Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-32).
2. Same-sex marriage is against the Divine Plan for marriage and its purpose of procreation. "But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (Mk. 10:6,7. See also Eph. 5:31; Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6).
3. Therefore, those who are ordained for church ministry must uphold the teachings of the Holy Bible. They should be: "...blameless... of good

behavior... able to teach..." (1 Tim. 3:2). Consequently, we disapprove of and condemn the ordination of homosexual clergy, active or not.

These movements not only contradict Biblical teachings, but also pose a serious threat to the stability of the family unit, the morals of society, the purity of the Church, and the future of ecumenical unity. While we condemn homosexuality, we invite those who are under this sin to repent out of concern for their eternal life.

We applaud the courageous voices of those who oppose such activities both in and outside those churches, and call on all churches to obey the Biblical teachings without compromise or change.



LOVE, DATING AND MARRIAGE (I)

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons about Sexuality. In this lesson we compare sexuality from God's point of view to the world's point of view.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Sexual Life According to God's View versus the World's View:

- † St. Paul the Apostle says "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom 12:2. Why do the Apostles say "do not be conformed to this world"? Because in the world, there is an invasion regarding many aspects of a youth's intimate life; one of these is sexual life. The youth hears about sex from the media services, T.V., radio, magazines, etc ... The problem is that all these forms are commercial. They work to promote information that comes from the evil one and its result is evil and death. Through these media youth learn expressions like "Love from first sight" ... "Falling in Love." His heart is filled with emotions and feelings...however, note, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire is conceived it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown brings forth death." Jas 1:14-15.

Therefore desire is followed by sin and the wages of sin are death. But do youth listen to God's decree as it is clearly stated in the Holy Bible? Do youth listen to what the Church says?

Let us speak about God's decree and the world's opinion concerning sexual life.

Sexual Life in God's View

- † Does the Holy Bible speak about sexual life? Yes; God has clarified the understanding of sex in accordance with His love for us. He sets a basic formula concerning this matter.

- † No sexual love is feasible except through marriage and there no marriage except through love. From the beginning of creation “The Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him, ... and the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:18-25).

From this the Church understands the meaning of marriage and that sexual relations must be only through marriage ... and the two become one body. Sex between husband and wife is pure. Sexual relations are a result of love between them (from the passage above: a helper comparable to him). Male and female were created and blessed by God who said to them “Be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth.” Gen 1:28.

Accordingly, sexual relations aim at procreation, as the priest in the pray of matrimony says, “According to this tradition and to this law, so did our forefathers take one woman in purity and virtue for the purpose of procreation.” Also in the prayers of matrimony, “You have been joined in heavenly matrimony and spiritual marriage ... to bring forth blessed children and who will be joy to your eyes.”

- † Regarding the purity of the sexual relation through marriage, St. Paul says, “marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled.” Heb 13:4. The priest says in the matrimony prayers “Guard their bed in purity.”

- † Our Lord Jesus has blessed marriage and the sacrament of matrimony and the pure physical relationship in it by attending the wedding in Cana of Galilee and His changing the water into wine. As we say in the matrimony prayers, “You, who have attended the wedding in Cana of Galilee, bless this matrimony as You have blessed that matrimony.” Therefore, Our Lord Christ Himself, is the founder of sacrament of matrimony and He blessed it. In this aspect St. Paul the Apostle says “this is a great mystery” Eph 5:32.
- † The features of pure sexual love in Christianity are the following: Love is built on co-operation and giving based on reasoning ... not on external instincts but extends its constituents from the mystery of internal love. It is love that makes the sexual relation a sacred matter. It is not a hateful relation in front of God. It is a steady and not impulsive love. It is a realistic love not imaginary. It is a great mystery that man cannot explain but could imagine its effect.
- † According to this sacrament we see the priest praying and the deacons and congregation celebrate the matrimony but the unseen aspect is the Holy Spirit who answers the prayers and unifies the bride and groom together; thus the two become one in the Lord. This is a unity of spirit, mind, feelings and body.

† **Sexual Life in the World’s View**

According to the world and its media, sexual life is composed of lust, desire, passing time, escaping responsibility and commitment. It is the love of the self, making it the center of concern. It is passing of time in desire and momentary enjoyments. It is a challenge to God’s aim in man and his sexual life as we already mentioned.

- † An obvious example from the Holy Bible of this worldly, destructive love is when Delilah betrayed Samson. She did not love him but she had a sexual desire for him and she admired his heroism and his physical power. But she never loved him for himself. Samson too was not in love with her or he would have had the mature, patience and the insight to discover the meanness and selfishness that she was

filled with (you can read this incident in Chapter 16 in the book of Judges).

- † We have another example from the Holy Bible, when Amnon had a strong desire for Tamar the sister of Absalom. After he sinned with her, it is said, “Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he loved her” 2 Sam 13:15. This explains the difference between adulterers and the married. Adulterers are brought together by lust, but the married person’s relation with his wife is an expression of deep love.
- † Another point is that the world pictures physical love as the depth of pleasure. The fact is, however, that this desire will not satisfy man. Like the Samaritan woman who had five husbands but was not satisfied. All who drink from the water of physical desire will thirst but he who drinks from the water of true love will never thirst. This is because the human being is not only body but his spirit remains in isolation and the inner self in destruction, while the real love, which is in the sacrament of matrimony, is fulfilling and delightful because it is connected with the body and soul and in it the physical excitement is the result of spiritual harmony.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Sexuality is only to be expressed through marriage. No marriage should exist without love.
- (2) The Lord Christ blessed marriage, love and sexuality within marriage.
- (3) The world’s view of sexuality is only for temporary pleasure and it does not bring actual happiness in the person’s life.



LOVE, DATING AND MARRIAGE (II)

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons on sexuality. In this lesson we will learn what is wrong with premature individual dating.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing the previous lesson and then discuss with the students.

† **What is wrong with pre-mature individual dating?**

The Holy Bible clearly shows that dating can corrupt one's life. It results in sin, psychological and physical illness. It results in the failure of a person to build his educational and social future. In addition, if one does not repent of this sin, it angers God.

Let us mention some of the words from the Holy Bible regarding this matter

- † “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Tim 2:22).

Dating is a chance for the evil one to change the natural instinct that God created in man for good into a desire leading to sin and corruption.

- † Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two” He says “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is in one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality.

Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom

you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor 6:15-20).

- † One could ask, why do we suppose that dating leads to adultery? As mentioned before, it is the evil one who takes this opportunity to make man sin. Practical experience has proven this, no man is immune to temptation. The temptation to sin is strong and even those with a strong spiritual life may fall.
- † The Lord Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, which is the law of Christianity, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'you shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matt 5:27-28.
- † "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that nor fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph 5:3-5).

Accordingly, if dating leads to adultery, the result is also to be deprived of the Kingdom of Heaven unless a person truly repents, confesses and washes his sin with the blood of Christ in the sacrament of The Eucharist. "Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobediences." (Col 3:5-6).

Obviously our loving, patient, and merciful God can be angry with man's disobedience if he does these things and does not repent.

- † **The question now is: are there any successful gatherings or do all gatherings lead to desire and sin?**

When three or four youth meet it could be beneficial, especially if they are children of God. These meetings could help in exchanging information and experiences leading to psychological, social and

spiritual growth. In contrast, dating, even for a short period, has been proven to lead to desire and sin.

† **How do I control my feelings toward the opposite sex which lead me to want to date?** The immediate answer is to stop these feelings before they are formed. If they have already developed, I should discontinue them before they grow. I should also bring them under mental control not allowing them to take over my actions.

† **How can I stop these feelings from developing?**

Rely on God, the giver of all blessings and ask for these blessings in my prayers, “Create a pure heart in me, O God.” Read the Bible and it will purify your heart, “You are pure because of the words I told you ...” Partake of the Holy Body and the Blood of Christ, “He who eats my Flesh and drinks my blood shall be in Me and I in him.”

Stay away from all tempting scenes shown on T.V., in magazines or in other media outlets. If you control the scenes and information that reaches you, you can with the power of Christ, control your feelings too.

† **Could a marriage succeed without dating? How?**

One would be amazed to find out how God brought thousands of people to marriage and formed successful families, without dating and acquaintance periods. In Genesis 24 we read how God brought Rebecca to Isaac, Abraham’s son, through Abraham’s servant, who totally depended on God in his choice. The Holy Book says about Isaac, “He then took Rebecca and she became his wife; and he loved her” Gen 24:67.

† The basic idea is faith in God and depending on Him. Then the necessity for dating and pre-marital relations lessens. We should have more faith in God’s plan for us. Marriage is a holy sacrament and a gift from God that is given at the appropriate time and manner.

† As a person practices obedience toward God and listens to His voice in all matters, he or she becomes less dependent on his or her own

choices. Also, he should not use marriage as an excuse to dating, which could lead to sin, just to know each other better for marriage.

If, after a lot of prayers, and approval from the father of confession and family, it seems like marriage could be a possibility, courtship may be allowed. This is only allowed within what the father of confession approves of, knowing the spiritual level of each individual. These dates may be in the presence of a relative if they agree with the father of confession's advice.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- (1) Let us all pray to God to protect the youth, boys and girls from all the temptation of the devil.
- (2) Premature dating leads to lust and sin.
Limited dating may be acceptable if allowed by the father of confession when the couple involved are preparing for marriage.

SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY TOPICS



**SCIENCE AND FAITH ENEMIES OR ALLIES
BY HUGH ROSS**

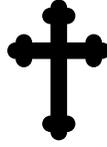
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http://youtu.be/K_tvp6VnvA4**



CREATION AND EVOLUTION: LIFE

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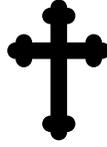
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CREATION AND EVOLUTION: CHEMISTRY OF LIFE

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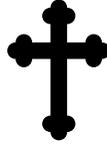
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CREATION AND EVOLUTION: ORIGIN OF LIFE

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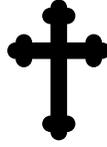
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**REACTION AND EVOLUTION: GENESIS 2 AND
SCIENCE**

Please watch the following video:

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CREATION AND EVOLUTION: MAN CREATION

Please watch the following video:

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CREATION AND EVOLUTION: SCIENCE AND FAITH

Please watch the following video:

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CREATION AND EVOLUTION: FRIENDS OR FOES?

Please watch the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Couo9Let5W0>

OTHER RELIGION TOPICS



WORLD RELIGIONS (I)

Judaism & Islam

INTRODUCTION

The world is no longer a group of nations, each of which having its own language, culture and religion. Migration and travel from one place to another have resulted in a diversity of languages, cultures and religions all co-existing in the same country or even within the one city.

The aim of this booklet is to try to outline, with absolute impartiality, the basics of the Jewish as well as the Islamic religions. The benefit of this attempt is two-fold:

Firstly, to enable the Christian youth to grasp the fundamentals of the other religions around them so that, with a discerning eye and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they would be capable of socializing with their friends of other faiths without bias of fanaticism.

Secondly, with an insight into the principles of other religions, the Christian Youth would be able to understand, more intelligently, the motives behind the behavior and way of thinking of friends belonging to a different religion. It is now an established fact that the religion and belief of the individual play an important role, though in varying degrees, in the molding of his or her personality and in his or her attitude towards their compatriots and those of other nationalities.

JUDAISM

INTRODUCTION

Today, the Jewish population is very small. But they have the most ancient religious belief, which is considered by many to be the parent of both Christianity and Islam. The present estimate of the world's Jewish population is thirteen

million. Of these, five million are in North America, a similar number is in Israel and the rest are mainly in Europe.

What is he Jewish belief?

- 1) The Jews believe that there is only One God. “SHEMA” is the prayer they recite many times, especially in the morning and evening service. It is the opening word in Hebrew of their confession, which says: “Hear, O Israel!: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.” (Deut 6:4). It is very true indeed that “Monotheism” (the belief that there is one supreme God who contains all the attributes and characteristics of divinity) is the greatest contribution of Judaism to the human culture.
- 2) For most Jews, the name of God “YHWH (Yahweh)” is very sacred, be it in pronunciation or in writing. Hence they refer to Him by another name: “Adonai”, or “Lord”.
- 3) The Jews believe that God created the world. He created man in His own image and after His likeness, hence man has his won free will, he is responsible and of high value. They do not believe that the first sin committed by the first Adam was inherited by and transmitted to subsequent generations. They believe that man is God’s creation, and therefore he is good and free from sin. Their concept is that people were created to preserve God’s creation, and are required to lead a holy and undefiled life, taking their message throughout the world to propagate the improvement of others.
- 4) They believe that God made covenants with man, and in every covenant, it is God’s promise to His people that he will be their God and will guard them if they adhere to His commands in the following aspects:
 - ✠ God made a covenant with the entire human race and with all His creation through Noah (Gen 6:9).
 - ✠ God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (the Jews) to bless everything for them (Gen 15-17).
 - ✠ God renewed His covenant with the Jews by giving them the “Torah” through the prophet Moses (Exo 19 & 20). The most important covenant between God and the Jews was the “Ten Commandments”, in which God says: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (Exo 20:2). Therefore, every Jew is required to adhere rigidly to the Ten Commandments as written in Exodus 20:3-17.

- 5) The Jews believe that they are the chosen people of God. He endowed them with special gifts and talents, and entrusted them with certain responsibilities. In return, He made it incumbent upon them to persevere in sufferings and afflictions for His sake.
- 6) The Jews reject and abhor that Jesus Christ is “God manifest in the flesh”

JUDAISM AS A WAY OF LIFE:

Judaism is a defined way of practical life rather than a mere belief and theology. A Jew is recognized by his or her way of life, more than by his or her beliefs. For example there is not a defined concept concerning eternal life. They still live in the hope of the coming of a Messiah, but they disagree as to the manner in which he will come. Some believe that his coming will be like a person, but most believe that, in the messianic era, the world that we live in will be renewed, and all people will live together in peace.

Jewish Holy days and festivals:

- 1) Jews celebrate in various ways and observe certain periods as holy. First and foremost is the “**Sabbath**”. They uphold the belief that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. One of the commandments of God to the Jews is to “keep” the Sabbath and celebrate it as a day for rest and worship. From sunset Friday till sunset Saturday, the Jewish people perform no work. The definition of “work” differs from one Jew to another. But all agree that no work should be done on Saturday. It is the day for worshipping God in their synagogues.
- 2) **Passover or “Pesach” and Feast of Unleavened bread:** It is a seven-day spring festival, commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from the slavery in Egypt by the power of God. It is the greatest of the Jewish festivities.
- 3) **The “Fifties” or “Feast of the Weeks”** is a spring harvest festival.
- 4) **The New Year’s feast** known as “Rosh Hashanah” (meaning ‘head of the year’). This occurs in autumn, preceding “Yom Kippur” (The Day of the Atonement) by ten days. On this day the Jews repent and ask for God’s forgiveness, as they also forgive one another. It is the season for improvement through spiritual rebirth. Following “Yom Kippur” is the Feast of the Tabernacles, known also as Feast of Booths. It is primarily a feast for the fruit harvest.
- 5) **Hanukkah:** (Festival of Lights). This is celebrated in December. The popularity of

this feast has been on the increase. It is the feast of freedom and commemoration of the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem after having been destroyed by the Romans in the Second Century A.D.

- 6) The life of the Jewish individual is marked by personal celebrations: At thirteen years, a ceremony is held for the boy, called “Bar Mitzvah”, when he becomes a Son of the Commandment, i.e. a full member of the Jewish community. A ceremony is also held for the girl at thirteen, called “Bat Mitzvah”. On this occasion, the family celebrates their son or daughter reaching the age of legal maturity and thereby becoming obligated to observe all the commandments as an adult. Other occasions for personal celebration are: The birthday of children, male-circumcision at eight days of age, wedding anniversaries, requiems for the deceased.

The place of Worship and Study:

The Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire since the first century A.D. Their temple in Jerusalem, which was the main place for offering sacrifices, was destroyed and they were deprived of their Promised Land. As a compromise for the Temple of Jerusalem that had been desecrated, Jewish synagogues were established in numerous locations in the world, becoming the center of Jewish life. At these synagogues, the “Rabbi” (meaning ‘My master’) was the responsible religious teacher and interpreter of the TORAH and Talmud. Since 1948, however, the State of Israel became the centre for all the Jews worldwide.

The Jewish Tradition and Cultural Evolution:

With the participation of the Jews in present-day activities, a question poses itself: “Is it practicable for a Jew to live in this modern world while upholding the tradition and rituals of the Torah and Talmud?” Throughout the world today, there are three distinct groupings of Jews:

- 1) “Orthodox Jews”: They adhere strictly to the teachings of the Torah and Talmud. In their synagogues, they use only the Hebrew language in conducting the service of worship.
- 2) “Liberal Jews”: They regard the Torah as a symbol, but do not adhere literally to its teachings. They take from the Torah the principles and values, and they use the English language in conducting the service. They now ordain women rabbis.

- 3) “Conservative Jews”: These take a middle stand between the two groups mentioned above. They neither adhere strictly to the teachings of the Torah, nor are they on the Liberal side. They use both the Hebrew and English languages in conducting the service in their synagogues. Recently, they started ordaining women as rabbis.

The relation between Judaism and other religions:

- 1) The Jews consider that they have a uniquely special relation with God through the Covenant. However, they do not object to others having a relation with God as well.
- 2) Judaism is an Ethnic Religion. The Jews make no attempt to entice others towards their grouping. They do not oppose other religions nor do they express an opinion. They demand, however, freedom of worship and they detest any encroachment or interference.
- 3) It is difficult to understand a great deal about Judaism as a central authoritative body does not exist, neither does a definition of Judaism that is recognized by all the factions.

ISLAM

INTRODUCTION

Islam is one of the major religions in the world. Its followers are estimated at three-quarters of a billion. The origin of Islam is attributed to the Middle East, where it started. Most of the people of the Middle East are Muslims. Great numbers are to be found also in Africa and Asia. Indonesia has the largest Islamic Population, and in certain countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, almost 100% are Muslims. In addition to the above countries, Muslims are also found in East Europe, India, China, Philippines and in Republics of the previous USSR.

The origin of Islam:

3. Islam is considered by the Moslems as both modern and ancient. It is considered as modern because it started as late as the Seventh Century A.D. and ancient because it started since the creation of Adam, who is considered by the Muslims as a prophet.

6. In Islam, the name given to God is “Allah”, which is the Arabic translation. The word “Islam” means complete submission of every person to the true God “Allah”.

1. Muslims emphatically reject the Christian belief of a “Triune God”. They believe that Jesus was a prophet like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.

5. They strongly believe that Mohamed was the last prophet to be sent by God, and that the Koran is the final book of God. Mohamed is a Prophet, not a God or Son of God. Prophet-hood was consummated and finished with him.

Mohamed’s life:

Mohamed is the founder of the Religion. He was born in 570 AD and died in 632 AD. He lived between the cities of Mecca and Medina, in what was called at the time “The Arabian Peninsula” (present-day “Saudi Arabia”). He became an orphan at an early age, and was brought up by his uncle. After he married, he became manager of his wife’s trading business which she had inherited. He spent most of his time in prayer and meditation. At the age of 40, Mohamed felt that God was calling him to be His prophet. At this stage, he had a revelation of the Koran in a vision and this continued throughout the rest of his life at the hands of Archangel Gabriel.

Mohamed started his mission by preaching in Mecca, proclaiming that there was only one God, without a partner, warning of torment for those who followed a religion that believed in many gods. This angered the leaders of Mecca, so he was obliged to leave for Medina in the year 622 AD. (This event - the “Higra” - marks the start of the Islamic Calendar). In Medina, he formed the first Islamic grouping (The Ummah) and gathered around him sizeable forces. Prior to his death, he had taken the whole of Mecca and instituted the Pilgrimage as one of the basic principles of Islam.

Muslims believe Mohamed to be:

2. The last prophet sent by God. There will be no prophet after him.

3. The means for imparting the Koran to the world. All prophets performed miracles, but Mohamed’s miracle was the Koran, which, according to the Muslim belief, is the last book sent by God.

‡ The first founder of an Islamic nation at Medina, which he ruled for ten years.

‡ The highest example, by his deeds and words, for the Muslim life. Mohamed's life, his sayings and his acts are known in the "Hadith" which is the body of traditions based on what the prophet said or did regarding various issues and memorized by the closest of the advocates of Islam.

Islamic Beliefs:

There are six and can be summarized as follows:

- 1) There is only One God – there is no partner with Him.
- 2) Believing in all the prophets sent by God.
- 3) Acknowledging that there are angels who carry God's messages.
- 4) Accepting all the books that were given by God.
- 5) The Last Day of Judgment.
- 6) That the destiny of everyone is in God's hand.

NOTE: Similarly important in a Muslim's life is that he believes his actions, deeds and way of living should be according to the law based on the teachings of the Koran (which is known as 'Sharia').

The question that poses itself now is: What are the prerequisites for the life of the Muslim?

- 1) To declare the Profession of Faith (the Shehadah): "There is no God but Allah, and Mohamed is the Messenger of God", which, when professed by the tongue and with full assent of the heart, makes the person a real Muslim.
- 2) Muslims pray five times a day, at fixed times. When praying, they must face Mecca. They must kneel down, put their forehead to the ground, and recite certain verses from the Koran. The person may pray alone, with his family, within a group, or at the mosque. At noon on Fridays the Muslims congregate at mosques for communal prayer and for listening to the sermon.
- 3) Giving alms to the poor or paying 2.5% of their income into the fund of "Zakat".
- 4) Fasting for a month, which is the month of "Ramadan". They abstain strictly from

eating, from sunrise till sunset.

- 5) Muslims who have the financial means must go to Mecca for the Pilgrimage (Haj) at least once in a life-time.
- 6) The “Jihad” or “holy war” is the sixth pillar of a Muslim’s personal life. This issue is the subject of controversy-and enmity between some Islamic Groupings and Western countries. “Jihad”, in the strict sense, implies the striving of the individual against his personal evil inclinations. Muslims also interpret it as the struggle in their opposition against any evil action committed by another nation or group of nations against Islam. The Westerners believe that a certain proportion of Muslims use the pretext of “Jihad” to become terrorists and assassins in many places. Many Muslims, however, disapprove of the use of armed force, of “Jihad” or terrorism in settling differences.

Islam as a way of life:

Many research scholars believe that Islam is a way of life rather than merely a religion. The Muslim must, of necessity, obey the Koran (i.e. the word of God), and the Sharia (i.e. the law of God), in all his personal, family, social and economic affairs.

In Islam there is no “priesthood” or “sacraments”. There are festivities, such as the one following the “Ramadan” fast and others.

There are rules in Islam that must be strictly adhered to, such as refraining from:

- 1) Eating or touching pork.
- 2) Drinking or handling alcoholic drinks.
- 3) Gambling.
- 4) Borrowing or lending money against usury (interest). However, profit sharing is permissible.
- 5) Keeping more than four wives at a time.

Present Muslim Sects:

Islam has spread over to many countries of the world. The unchanging principles, as already stressed before are: One God, Mohamed is the Messenger of God, and the Koran. These principles unify the entire Muslim world, and are used to illustrate Muslim unity. In spite of this, however, there are sects and factions within Islam, which may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Nearly 85% of the Muslims of the world are “Sunnis”, denoting the “Orthodox” Muslims who adhere to the traditional teachings (of the four rightly-guided caliphs).
- 2) The “Sufis”, follow the path of the mystical movement of pious Muslims and are faithfully dedicated to it. They believe that through ascetic practices, the knowledge of God and communion with Him would be directly achieved by the soul that loves God. “Sufis” can be found in various parts of the world.
- 3) The “Muslim Brotherhood” (The “brotherhood” movement), existing mainly in Saudi Arabia.
- 4) The “Shiites”, who believe that Ali, the cousin of the Prophet Mohamed, ought to have succeeded after his death (being a blood-relation). The Shiites exist mainly in Iran.
- 5) The “Ismailis”, who are a branch of the Shiites, are considered more radical, and are regarded as extremist Muslims. They are to be found in several countries in Asia and North Africa.

PRAYER

O my Lord and my Savior Jesus Christ, Who loves me, You were made manifest to me on the Wood of the Cross. You, Who came down for my sake, to rescue me. Not to an angel, nor an archangel, nor a patriarch, nor a prophet, did You entrust our salvation, but You Yourself, without change, was Incarnate and became Man for me, the undeserving of this great love. You bestowed on me the riches of Your Grace. You did not hold back anything from me, having made me into a Son of Yours, making me worthy by virtue of instilling Your Holy Spirit within me.

My Lord, I thank You, forgive me for every sin, draw me to Your pursuit, and abide within me. So that I may live through You, by You and with You, through the intercessions of the Virgin Mary, the Great Martyr St. George and the Great Saint Anba Rueiss, and the prayers and supplications of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II. Amen.

THANK YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST



WORLD RELIGIONS (II)

HINDUISM

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the religion of about eighty-five percent of the people in India. Hindu is actually a name given to the religion by people who are not Indians. The people of India usually refer to it as Sanatana Dharma or Eternal Truth. As Eternal Truth, the religion is universal. Anyone who seeks the Eternal Truth is Hindu, no matter what his or her religions or rational affiliation. However, the two most common criteria for identifying a Hindu are these: He or she accepts the authority of the sacred scriptures known as the Vedas, and he or she belongs to one of the castes of India.

To be a Hindu:

Hinduism is less of a religion and more a way of life that has no historic founder and has flourished in India for thousands of years. Hinduism and Indian culture are so inextricably intertwined that it is almost impossible to differentiate between them.

Hinduism is not a missionary religion, and it is difficult for a person who is not an Indian to become a Hindu. Hinduism has undergone many changes in its history, but it is still a strong and growing religion among the people of India. Hinduism has no central church, authority or creed. Hindus have many different beliefs, and they worship different gods and read different scriptures. However they all affirm that the highest calling of all Hindus is to fulfill their social role to the best of their ability, to strive for their liberation in the way appropriate to their disposition and needs, and to grow ever closer to the Eternal Truth.

The Concept of God:

Most Hindus believe in a god, but the word means different things to different people. For some philosophical mystics, God is the highest reality and the deepest truth. God is impersonal and beyond name and form. These philosophers

call God Brahma. For others, God has a name, form, and personality.

Some of the most popular gods are Brahma (creator), Shiva (destroyer), Vishnu (Sustainer) and the mother goddess Shakti, all of whom appear in many forms. Shiva is a powerful, but loving god. Vishnu appears in the world in many forms for the purpose of preserving good and destroying evil. The best known human forms of Vishnu are Rama and Krishna. Rama is the ideal human being and Krishna is portrayed as an infant, a boy, a handsome youth, a husband, and a prince. Hindus worship god in female form as the goddess for they believe that god is greater than human ideas of gender. Additionally, some forms of God are animals. The worship of God is called puja. In worship, a priest chants scriptures; the devoted offer gifts of food and flowers, they also dress and decorate an image of a god. Though they express devotion to a variety of gods, Hindus realize that all the names and forms of the god they worship are really expressions of the one true reality (Brahman), which is beyond name and form.

Ultimate Reality, Karma and Salvation:

Hindus do not believe in one creation and destruction of the world; they believe in endless cycles of creation and destruction. Each cycle begins with creation by the god Brahman. The god Vishnu maintains the universe; however conditions gradually decline until finally when it is beyond repair, the god Shiva destroys it. Then another creation occurs and the process starts all over again. The cycles have no absolute beginning and will have no final end. Hindus believe that Ultimate reality is one, eternal, and changeless. In the universe, the ultimate reality is called Brahman (world soul). The reality in every being is called Atman (individual soul). Hindus affirm that Brahman and Atman are not different. That is, the essence of each living being is the same as the essence of the universe.

Hindus believe that the Atman lives in a body and that a person's Atman is reborn again and again according to his or her past Karma. The cycle of rebirth is known as the transmigration of souls (not as reincarnation, since incarnation generally refers to the various forms taken by gods and goddesses). Hindus believe that in the cycle of rebirth their present condition is caused by their previous actions and that their future will be determined by their present actions. The total effect of a person's action is known as Karma and determines his or her destiny. The ultimate goal of Hinduism is to attain moksha (freedom), when a person's karma is perfect (all good works and no evil), he or she leave the wheel of life. In salvation, the Atman is set free from all limitations to be one with Brahman again. Moksha can be pursued in various ways or margas. Often the ways are meshed.

People choose the way or ways that best suit their temperament and needs.

The Way of Activity: KARMA MARGA

Activity, or doing good works, is practiced daily by millions of Hindus. The way of activity centers chiefly on offering gifts and sacrifices to the gods, goddesses, or spirits, through worshipping (puja) in the temple or at home shrines.

The temple contains the stored power of the gods. The priest or Brahmin is in charge of temple ceremonies that feed, bathe, decorate and commune with deity. Brahman can set free the power of the deity. Wealthy Hindus may build their own ornate temples as signs of devotion; thus aggregating greater works or merits.

The Way of Knowledge: JNANA MARGA

The way of knowledge is a more difficult path than the way of activity, for it requires a single-minded devotion and great sacrifice to attain the final step of becoming a holy man.

A Hindu man's life has traditionally been divided into four stages: student, householder, forest dweller, and, for a few individuals, a holy man. Virtually all Hindus will take the first two steps, but the man who pursues the way of knowledge is required to take the third and fourth steps as well. The stages that are on the way to knowledge are somewhat blurred today, although there is still a sense in which each stage of life defines a person's attitude. The duty of a student is to study and learn the sacred literature, while the duty of a married householder is to be a responsible husband, father, and citizen. The third stage, forest dweller, is not a duty, like the first two stages, but a choice. If a man continues on the way of knowledge, he leaves his home, business, and family in the care of his sons and becomes a forest dweller.

He becomes the disciple of a guru and leads the meditative and ascetic life. The fourth stage is becoming a holy man, using the meditative techniques (yoga) learned from the guru. One of the techniques of the ascetic life is self-mortification, such as lying on a bed of thorns. Self-mortification helps the Hindu man achieve the necessary concentration for yoga. Through his intense

concentration, he hones the virtues needed to attain the final level of holiness that will lead to salvation or moksha. Since the way of knowledge is so intense, not many choose to follow it.

The Way of Devotion: BHAKTI MARGA

The third way is through devotion and is the most popular pursuit of moksha. One need not build a shrine or enlist the aid of a priest to offer devotion. The Hindu chooses one of the gods or goddesses as his personal deity and the object of his love and devotion. In return, the gods offer grace to provide good karma, which then breaks the cycles of transmigration of the souls. Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, and Krishna (or one of their incarnations) are the gods most often chosen.

The Caste System

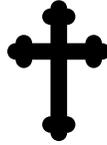
For centuries in Hindu society, the caste system has been the basis of how social relationships, contact between members of different castes, or social classes, are strictly controlled.

At the present time, discrimination on the basis of caste is illegal in India. In the urban areas and among more progressive Indians; caste is of little importance. However, in the rural villages of India and among the more traditional people, the caste system defines the way people relate to one another, especially those in intimate relationships, when people eat together or marry.

Caste also plays a significant part in the Hindu pursuit of moksha. Hindus believe that in the transmigration of the soul, a person's karma determines his or her caste. There are five castes or classes in Hindu society. The most privileged is the Brahmin or priest. The second is Kshatriya, the warrior or governing class, followed by Vaisya, the middle class of merchants and tradesman. The fourth caste is Indra, the peasantry, farmers and normal labourers. The lowest caste is outcastes or untouchables, who perform the lowliest occupations and have no access to the rituals of the other classes.

Being in one caste or another is not unjust; a person's karma determines his or her social standing. And while there is no intermingling, a faithful Hindu, through the pursuit of Moksha and the attainment of good karma, may reach a

higher caste in the next transmigration of his or her soul.



BUDDHISM

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is a religion that is found primarily in Southeast and East Asia. In the Twentieth century, Buddhism has suffered from the advancement of Communism, especially in China, Tibet, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. At the same time, Buddhism is growing in North America because of refugees from Tibet and through the work of missionaries from other Buddhist countries. Many Theravada, Zen, and Tibetan monasteries, temples and meditation centers have been established in North America, bringing the number of Buddhists in the world to over three hundred million.

The Three Divisions of Buddhism:

Buddhism is divided into three main groups:

- 1) Theravada
- 2) Mahayana
- 3) Vajrayana.

Theravada means the way of elders or monks, and it offers salvation to monks alone. People in this group see themselves preserving the true teachings of the Buddha and transmitting them faithfully from the time of Buddha until today, 2500 years later. Theravada is located primarily in Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Thailand. Theravada is the older form of Buddhism, and it is known as the little vehicle.

Mahayana, which is also known as the Great Vehicle, was developed around the beginning of the Christian era. It incorporated new beliefs and practices, added more writings to the scriptures, and expanded the community to include laity as well as monks. Mahayana elevated the figure of Buddha to a transcendent and divine being and affirmed the presence of many Buddhas beyond the earthly

Buddha, Gautama. Mahayana developed the human ideal the Bodhisattva, a being whose life is characterized by wisdom and compassion and who remains in the world, forgoing Nirvana, to save a suffering humanity. Mahayana is found primarily in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Zen is popular school of Mahayana Buddhism.

Vajrayana is the most recently developed form of Buddhism, and it emphasizes elaborate rituals and rigorous meditation. It is found mainly in Tibet, although its leader, the Dalai Lama, now lives in exile in India. Although the three forms of Buddhism are quite different, they all believe in the Buddha, his teachings and have a community of monks and nuns.

The Beginnings of Buddhism

Who is the Buddha? His name was Siddhartha Gautama, and he lived from about 563 to 483 BCE, in the northern part of India. He grew up as an Indian prince in privileged and sheltered circumstances. But as a young man, he ventured out and saw the negative aspects of life, such as sickness, old age, and death. He also learned about people who renounced the world in order to search for an answer to the problems of human suffering.

Gautama was well acquainted with the precepts of Hinduism and eventually reformed it into a new movement under his leadership. At the age of twenty-nine, Gautama decided to follow the Hindu course of renunciation. Leaving his wife and young son, he spent six years wandering, begging, fasting, studying, thinking, and meditating. Finally, after great struggle and temptations and after rejecting as unsatisfactory some of his Hindus beliefs, he became enlightened; he woke up. (Buddha means enlightenment or one who has awakened). After his enlightenment, he gathered followers and taught them until his death at eighty years of age.

Buddhists believe that because of this enlightenment, he was not reborn but entered into a state of peace called Nirvana. Buddha was a pathfinder, an example, a teacher, and an inspiration, but he was not a god or a Savior. The most holy pilgrimage sites of Buddhists are the places in northern India where the Buddha was born, where he was enlightened, where he preached his first sermon, and where he died.

The Teachings of Buddhism

Buddha's teachings are contained in the scriptures called Tipitaka (three baskets). Buddhism is known as Middle Way, the avoidance of extreme asceticism

and self-denial on the one hand and of luxury and self-indulgence on the other.

Central to the teachings are The Four Noble Truths

These truths describe Buddhism's view of the world. The first is that life in this world is precarious, undependable, changing, decaying, and temporary; it has no eternal essence. In short, life is full of suffering. Buddhists believe in seeing life realistically. The second is that people suffer because they desire something that life cannot give. They became attached to the things of the world, which are unreliable, so people are always disappointed. The human problem is that we always want what we cannot have; and if we could have what we want it would not satisfy us.

The first two truths are the bad news, but the third is good news. Giving up desire and attachment to the things of the world can end suffering and bring about joy. Nirvana is the state of bliss brought about by the end of suffering. Nirvana is not a place like heaven it is however the absence of desire, attachment suffering, greed, anger and delusion.

The fourth Noble Truths explains that by walking the Noble Eightfold path a person can resolve suffering and attain Nirvana. The Noble Eightfold Path is divided into right beliefs or resolves, the moral life, and the mystical or meditative life.

The Eightfold Path

Right Belief:

- 1) Right Understanding: which is knowing the truth, seeing the world as it really is.
- 2) Right Thought: which is purity of mind with no thought of hate, lust, jealousy, or delusion. They are positive thoughts of love and truth, which break the wheel of becoming.

Right Morality:

- 1) Right Speech: which is purity of words and speech avoiding lies, gossip, and meaningless chatter. (If you do not have something good to say, do not say anything).
- 2) Right Action: which is purity of behaviour and involves following the five moral and ethical precepts. Do not kill (respect all life). Do not lie (speak only the

truth). Do not steal or take what does not belong to you). Do not misuse sex. Do not use intoxicants.

3) Right Livelihood: which is purity of vocation and involves making sure that your job or career does not cause you to harm anyone.

Right Meditations:

1) Right Effort: which is setting goals and striving for them with energy.

2) Right Meditations.

3) Right Concentrations: which means, right meditations, purifying the mind, controlling and disciplining the mind, focusing the mind and becoming fully attentive to everything that you do.

By following the Eightfold Path, a person can increase in wisdom, morality, and meditation and thus move closer to the experience of Nirvana. Otherwise, he or she will continue in the endless cycle of death and rebirth. Perhaps the simplest statement of the Eightfold Path is this: Avoid evil, do good, and purify your mind. As people mature in their progress on the earth toward Nirvana, Buddhism calls them to four kinds of love: (1) Loving kindness for all creatures (human, animal, and otherwise) and wishing well-being for all creatures in all things, (2) Compassion for those who are less fortunate than they are, (3) Joy and respect for those who are more fortunate than they are, and (4) Equanimity in the face of upsetting and troubling situations.

Buddhism as a way of Life

Buddhism is not so much a formal religion but a way of life, which is open to anyone who experiences suffering and wishes to find peace of mind. An adherent of Buddhism does not join an organization; he or she chooses to walk the noble path and to conform to the discipline of the Noble Truths. Buddhism does not believe in an almighty creator or god to whom one prays for benefits. The problems people experience are their own problems; they caused them, and they alone can solve them. Buddhism believes that things happen as a result of person's past actions (karma); not because of God's punishment and not because of fate. In addition, a person's future is determined, at least in part by his or her present actions, not by the grace or the wrath of God. Buddhism is a radical way of self-help in which a person depends entirely on his or her own efforts to stop personal suffering.

Buddhism in the Community

There is also in Buddhism the community of monks and nuns (primarily

monks today), who have given up their lives from worldly involvement (marriage, family, career, position, and wealth) and have taken upon themselves the monastic life. They have vowed to live a disciplined life dedicated for their own spiritual growth as well as to teach and serve the laity. Because of their separation from worldly activities, they are dependent on the laity for food, shelter, clothing and medical care. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the dedication and sacrifice of becoming a monk, one of the most meaningful events in the life of a boy and his family is his entering the monastery. He may become a monk for a short period of time or for his lifetime. The event is like an invitation into manhood, and it brings great merit on the family. Most Buddhist festivals celebrate events from the life of the Buddha. For example, in Southeast Asia, the celebration of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha is on the day of the full moon in May.

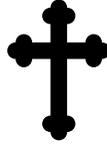
PRAYER

O my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Whose love for me, You made manifest to me on the Wood of the Cross. You, Who came down for my sake, to rescue me. You did not entrust this task to an angel, or an archangel, or a patriarch, or a prophet. Instead You Yourself, without change, was Incarnate and became Man for me, undeserving of this great love. You bestowed on me the riches of Your Grace. You did not hold back anything from me, making me into a Son of Yours, by virtue of instilling Your Holy Spirit within me.

My Lord, I thank You, forgive me my sins. Draw me to pursue You, and abide within me, so that I may live through You, by You and with You; through the intercessions of the Virgin Mary, the Great Martyr St. George and the Great Saint Anba Rueiss, and the prayers and supplications of His Holiness Pope Tawadros The Second. Amen.

THANK YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST

ANSWERING THE ATHEISTS TOPIC



THE PROBLEM OF ATHEISM

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show what atheists believe and, how can we prove to them that God exists.

MEMORY VERSE:

**“WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED
MUCH MORE”**
Rom 5:20

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

People differ in the way they perceive the age in which we live; some see that it is devoid of crises or problems while others believe the world has become like Sodom and Gomorrah. A third group contends that Christian life is possible regardless of the conditions of the era in accordance with God’s blessed promise “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20).

However, there are certainly some problems that have arisen as a result of changing circumstances, modern developments and the new scientific and development advances. All these things are in the hands of people many of whom have very little spiritual depth. One of these problems is Atheism.

The word “Atheism” comes from the negative “a” which means “no” and “theos” which means God. Hence, atheism is a term which means “no god”. Basically, atheism is the lack of belief in a god and/or the belief that there is no god.

Modern Atheism

Rapid scientific progress has bewitched people. It has driven them, unnecessarily, to a kind of modern atheism. They:

- (1) Reject God or the devil
- (2) Reject any such thing as sin
- (3) Believe that ethics and morals are relative

Man is filled with admiration for himself when he is filled with wonder at scientific progress. Waves of atheism and atheistic existential thoughts began to be widespread among youth. In actual fact, however, scientific progress is not the cause of atheism! It is an individual problem that is built on man's adherence to certain devious behavior that disturbs the conscience in order to deny God's existence.

It is an attempt to get rid of God's voice which calls us to repentance! The scientific and economic developed societies give us the greatest proof of the importance of faith for the human spirit. In spite of their progress we see a steady increase in psychological diseases and in nervous disorders. Here is spiritual and psychological emptiness which can only be filled by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The deep rooted secret behind the spiritual and psychological peace of man is the existence of the Lord in our lives, for Christ is "our peace" (Eph. 2:14).

Four proofs of the existence of God

Is it possible to prove the existence of God? Or is it ultimately a matter of personal faith? The Holy Bible does not ask us to accept the existence of God blindly. Instead it shows us how God by His Spirit, has revealed Himself to us – both in the past and in the present.

(1) GOD REVEALED THROUGH CREATION

No one can deny that our complex universe is an astounding, majestic marvel. The mere contemplation of its vastness and grandeur causes our heads to spin. Yet how did it get here? Can it be, as some scientists contend, that this all happened

because of an enormous explosion? Or did it come about as the result of the careful design of an infinite God?

Let us look briefly at two Bible passages that speak of God's revelation of Himself through nature.

(a) **Job 38:**

After a long period of seeking answers to his questions about God, Job finally heard directly from Him. Speaking to him out of a whirlwind, God told Job that to see Him he should look beyond his immediate difficulties and observe nature and the world around him.

- † The wonder of the world's formation (vv. 4-6)
- † The wonder of the heavens (v.7)
- † The wonder of the ocean-land balance.
- † The wonder of a new dawn (v.12)
- † The wonder of the ocean depths (v.16)
- † The wonder of the life-death cycle (v.17)
- † The wonder of the origin of light (v.19)
- † The wonder of the an electrical storm (v.24)
- † The wonder of the wind (v.24)
- † The wonder of the hydrological cycle (vv. 25-30)
- † The wonder of animals nurturing their young (vv. 39-41)

- (b) Many of the Psalms also testify that nature gives us evidence of the existence of God: "The heaven declares the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge." (Ps 19:1-2)

Note:

- (1) If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then a person is to be called a fool.
- (2) St. Paul said "By faith we understand that the world was framed by the Word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. (Heb. 11:3)

(2) GOD REVEALED THROUGH OUR CONSCIENCE

Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22,23).

Paul then took the opportunity to introduce these idol-worshippers to the one true God. The interesting thing to notice here is that the Athenians had such an innate knowledge of God that along with all their pagan idols they also worshiped an "unknown" god just to make sure no god was missed. They didn't have to be convinced of the existence of God; they just had to be directed to the true God.

Earlier in Romans, Paul addressed this question of a basic inborn knowledge in the hearts of all people. As he talked of the Gentiles, he said they had "the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (Rom 2:15). Paul implied that all people understand to some degree what is right and wrong because God has given them this knowledge. Even people who have never been schooled in the regulations of the Old Testament, specifically the Ten Commandments, have an innate knowledge of these basic ideas. This, according to Paul, is a God-given knowledge. The universal presence of awareness of proper behavior, then, is evidence of God's existence.

Romans 1:18-32 gives strong evidence that every person possesses an innate knowledge of God. For example, consider the following verses:

- "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (v.18).
- "What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them" (v.19).
- "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God" (v.21).
- They "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (v.25).
- ". . . they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (v.28).
- Although they knew "the righteous judgment of God," they continued to do evil (v.32).

Everyone has an inner knowledge of God. Paul said that "what may be known of God is manifest in them." However, even though all humans have an inborn witness that God exists, some will not admit it--they "suppress the truth."

(3) GOD REVEALED THROUGH COMMUNICATION

That's why it is essential that we look at a third way God chose to let us know of His existence. Throughout the thousands of years it took for the events of the Old and New Testament to unfold and for the men inspired by God to record those events, God communicated with mankind in special ways. It is through this special revelation that we find out what God is like and what He expects from us.

The Bible makes it clear that the trail of evidence for special revelation goes all the way back to the beginning. For instance, God spoke directly to Adam in the Garden of Eden. He met with Adam every evening to converse with him. God told him about the one tree that was forbidden to him. Then, when Adam and Eve disobeyed the command, He audibly pronounced His judgments on them.

God continued to communicate with various men after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. Cain heard His voice. And so did Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was obvious to these ancient men that God existed. They had heard from Him in a way that made His existence undeniable.

God's special revelation to mankind also took on another form. In addition to speaking audibly and directly to those mentioned above and to others, He also communicated in a more indirect, yet equally valuable way. Through the inspiration of His Spirit, He caused certain men to write down a series of documents we now call the Bible.

For demonstration of the Bible's claims that God spoke directly through its human authors, we can turn to some verses in the New Testament. In 2 Peter 1:21, the Apostle said:

“Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Here is the claim that the Old Testament writers who spoke of things such as God's judgment, future events, the coming of Messiah, and God's dealings with Israel were not speaking for themselves. They were spokesmen for the Creator-God.

Another verse that speaks of special revelation is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, where Paul said:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Again the claim is made that God specifically revealed Himself through the words of Scripture.

These verses in 2 Timothy indicate that by reading and obeying those words, a person can become so familiar with the mind of God that he can be the kind of person God wants His people to be.

But can we see any evidence--other than what the Bible says about itself--that this book is different from all other religious books? Is it significant enough to be trusted as a special communication from God? A look at the uniqueness of the Bible suggests that it is not a selection of random scribbling by common people. Instead, it is a carefully orchestrated collection of documents that have been accurately and amazingly preserved for thousands of years. It has the marks of something that was miraculously conceived and safeguarded.

It is unique among literature for many reasons.

- A single story is woven throughout the books, although the men who wrote them had no way of collaborating.
- The Old Testament books predict, and the New Testament books proclaim, the coming of a Messiah-King.
- When the Bible speaks of scientific matters (even those about which the authors could have no empirical evidence) it is accurate (Job 26:7-12, Isaiah 40:22, 1 Cor 15:39).
- The historical facts and names contained in the Bible are being continually verified by historical studies and archeological findings.
- The documents from which the Bible was translated were preserved in miraculous ways, giving us an accurate record of what the biblical writers recorded.
- The writings claim to be of divine origin (Jer 1:2; Ezek 1:1-3; Zeph 1:1).

It is not presumptuous, then, to conclude that through special means of communication, God has revealed to us more than just His existence. He let us

know about His nature, His will, and His love for mankind. That's why the Bible is so important. It tells us how we can find peace with the Creator-God and how we can live in a way that pleases Him.

(4) GOD REVEALED THROUGH CHRIST

Even if we knew about God through nature, realized that He exists because we have inner knowledge of Him, and have read about Him in the Bible, those factors alone would not give us a complete revelation of God. To know God as completely as possible, we need to be able to see Him as He interacts with mankind. We need to see that He can fulfill the predictions of the Old Testament prophets. This can happen only when we see God as He is revealed in Christ.

Although we often think of it this way, the revelation of God through Christ did not have its beginning in a Bethlehem manger. In the Bible, Jesus is identified as the Creator of all things (John 1:1-3). Therefore, He is more than an important Jewish baby lying in a Judean stable. He is the One who originated all the evidence for God that can be found in creation, conscience, and communication.

Also, as Jesus lived his 33-year earthly life. He revealed the personality and character of God to man. Jesus said that to look at Him was to see the Father (John 14:9) . In addition, the apostle John declared, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

One passage indicating that God specifically revealed Himself to mankind through Christ is found at the beginning of Hebrews:

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb 1:1,2).

The fourth way, then, that God has revealed Himself to mankind is through the coming of Christ to earth. Jesus is the flesh-and-blood proof that there is a God. In fact, Jesus' coming into the world as a member of humanity was the ultimate revelation of God because Jesus Christ is God.

In Romans 9:5, Paul said, "Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God." John, writing in his first letter, made this claim: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true: and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God

and eternal life" (5:20). And in Hebrews 1:8, the Father says to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."

Yes, the One who walked the dusty roads of Galilee healing the sick, raising the dead, and teaching kingdom truth was God incarnate. When He spoke, it was God speaking, when He acted, it was God in action. The Bible identifies itself as the written Word, and Christ is called the living Word of God (John 1:1-14). Consider what it means that Christ is the ultimate revelation of God. If you want to know God's response to those in deep physical need, look to Jesus as He responded to the multitudes with compassion. If you want to know God's attitude about legalism and self-righteousness, look to Christ's relationship to the Pharisees. If you want to know God's feelings toward the penitent, look to God's Son as He forgave the truly repentant. If you want to know God's relationship to those who believe in Him, look to Jesus in His tender leading of His disciples.

Therefore, if you want to know God, look to Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus' coming in the flesh that a way was opened for those of us living on this side of the Old Testament to become acquainted with God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We believe in one God, Who is: Perfect, Eternal, Immutable, Immortal, Self-existence, Unified, Spirit, Omnipresence (present everywhere), Omniscient (all-knowing), Omnipotent (all powerful), Love, Grace, Mercy, Holiness, Truth, Righteousness, Just, Goodness, Sovereignty, Freedom, Infinite, Life Giver, Incomprehensible, Incomparable, and Wisdom itself.
2. God is revealed through creation, conscience, communication and Christ.



THE EFFECT OF ATHEISM ON OUR PRESENT GENERATIONS

Atheism is an attempt to deny the truth of God's existence. It is an ancient yet modern phenomenon that shows up now and then with its dreadful characteristics. "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." " (Psalms 14:1 ; 53:1).

A) Effects of Atheism

Why is it important to discuss the subject of atheism in our current days?

- ✚ Currently, many are professing their beliefs of atheism and declaring them openly.
- ✚ Religion's interference in politics and its ignorant thoughts that are setting back our society are making numerous people reject religion as a whole.
- ✚ Social network websites are freely spreading atheism by glorifying science and elevating knowledge but associating religion with ignorance and lack of knowledge.
- ✚ Such websites also support civil marriage and encourage total freedom for youth.
- ✚ Many of our Christian youth started asking in churches about proof of God's existence.

Atheism is a universal phenomenon and the number of atheists around the world is increasingly dramatically. In the year 2005, the worldwide rate of atheists was 2% but by 2011 it was 13% or 900 million. This statistic does not include those who don't have a religion, Hindus, etc.....

B) Types of Atheism

What are the different types of atheism?

1) Strong Atheism

Strong Atheism is the denial of the truth of God's existence. It proclaims that there is no real presence of a god but only a delusion of human imagination. This type of atheism is built up on scientific theories such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution and the mental approach that whatever we can't see is not real. Therefore there is no creator for the universe - if

everything happens by chance. It also follows the mistaken idea that matter is everlasting and that a human being has evolved from one cell organism.

2) **Modern Atheism**

Modern Atheism doesn't conflict with the existence of God as much as it conflicts with the idea of any association between God and humans. It is the rejection of God more than the denial of His existence. It would not matter for a Modern Atheist whether God exists or not but what matters first is that God's existence does not disturb his presence, restrict his freedom, be a reference for his actions or limits his authority in any way.

Modern Atheism finds that the existence of God threatens the existence of humans. Therefore, the ideology of the existence of God must die for humans to live. This type of atheism takes the evil in the world as their justification for rejecting God. They believe that if God existed, there will be no evil, poverty, injustice or illness in the world.

C) **Reasons for Atheism and its Roots**

What are some common causes of atheism?

In most cases, a growth in atheism follows a shock, whether it's a scientific shock, a psychological shock, a spiritual shock, a mental shock, or a self- shock.

1) **Scientific Shock**

Atheism began as a scientific phenomenon with the beginning of the European Renaissance (14th - 17th centuries) and Gutenberg's invention of printing press. As a result of Gutenberg's invention, the fields of science and knowledge grew enormously. Great discoveries were made that opened the eyes of man to many unknowns which made him glorify science and be captivated by knowledge. After this followed the theory that religion is a human-made idea created by the ignorant who couldn't find explanations for the phenomena happening around them. They invented an imaginative figure and called it God using Him to explain all the unknowns.

As science became unable to explain all truths, man started inventing theories that explain the universe and the existence of human beings such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Darwin's Theory states that living organisms originated from nothing, and were made by chance. Also, these living organisms have their origin in inanimate material.

In addition, all the scientific achievements attained by man in all fields of life made him believe that he has no need of a god as he can accomplish anything he wishes. This led to the degradation of religion as people increasingly rejected God or denied His existence.

2) **Mental Shock**

The human mind was eliminated and put in darkness for long periods of time throughout the history of mankind but especially during the middle ages in Europe. When the human mind started to be liberated from all the ignorance and lack of knowledge, its reaction was intense and fierce to the point that for many, their mind was their only tool of judgment on whether things exist or not. They became solely dependent on the idea that whatever can't be seen, heard or physically touched can't possibly exist. Since God's invisible and unlimited nature exceeds man's brain capacity to understand and is beyond his weak senses to feel, a mental shock occurred causing him to reject the truth of God's existence, considering him only an imagination and likewise denying the presence of heaven and the afterlife.

3) **Self- Shock**

Why can't man be his own god! Then, there will be no need of a god. With the same logic, the Humanist Movement began preaching of creating a society free from God, affirming that man is sufficient and does not need God.

4) **Spiritual Shock**

Atheism is not a modern phenomenon but rather an ancient one that appears from time to time. It disappears then reappears again mostly during unstable religious periods. Atheism started as a universal phenomenon during the middle ages when the Western Church had control over political movements, engaging itself in battles and wars. For instance, the great battles between the Protestants and Catholics killed thousands of people in Europe. As result of such encounters, people started rejecting religion as a whole, considering it the cause of wars and deaths of many innocent people.

5) **Psychological shock**

In many cases, atheism can be related to early psychological problems such as bad experiences during childhood that distorts the image of God as an unjust or cruel god. Sometimes atheism can be caused by a psychological crisis and in other times, it is a result of injustice or evil experienced such as poverty and hunger that make many wonder that if God exists, then why does all this cruelty exist in our world?

D) **Tools of Atheism**

By what means is atheism being spread through our society and among our youth?

1) **By using intellectual questions**

Atheists tend to use what seems as intellectual and logical questions to support their views. Some may say: “If we assume the existence of God, then who created Him? And, how can I believe in a god I can’t even see?” Such people tend to forget that their eyes can’t see many things and their brains are unable to comprehend even more things yet still they don’t deny their existence. Our brain is too small to fully comprehend God. A god that can be fully comprehended is not God.

2) **By using the scientific method**

Many use scientific theories to explain the origin of the universe and human beings considering them to be pure certainty forget that such theories are only experimental theories subject to flaws and errors. There is no actual contradiction between science and Christianity.

3) **By focusing on the flaws of the religious community**

They display the imperfections of religious people and use it as an opportunity to propose their atheist poisonous beliefs.

4) **By creating misconceptions about God**

They create misconceptions about our faultless God that He restricts humans’ freedom and is against human creativity and their independent reasoning. They spread lies that God’s purpose is to control humans using a

set of rules and instructions and whoever does not follow them will receive harsh punishments for eternity during the afterlife.

5) **By using media**

They use their strong media connections to destroy religious thoughts, cause doubts in the truth of the Holy Bible, and spread fear and depression among youth.

E) Protecting our children from Atheism

How should we face atheism?

- 1) Rooting of Faith
 - Establishing the roots of our practical faith in the hearts of our children

- 2) Belonging to the Church
 - Increasing the sense of belonging to the church among our youth and children

- 3) Having Constructive Conversations
 - Using constructive conversations to clarify any misconceptions about God and religion, the relationship between science and religion and the limits of our brain.
 - Presenting the truth of our God through the person of Jesus Christ.

- 4) Having Constructive Media
 - Using organized media systems to benefit and inspire our youth's brains

- 5) Having Good Role Models :
 - Being the role models for our youth that are in need of encouragements and unconditional parental love despite any conflicts that may occur.



THE TRUTH OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

A Conversation with an Atheist (I)

Faithful: The truth of God's existence is embedded in man's own conscience, experienced by human kind throughout the millions of years and still experienced today.

Atheist: So you are saying that God actually exists!! Why do you want to convince me with such delusions and unrealistic superficial! I don't build my beliefs on what people just tell me. If God really exists then show Him to me. If I can't see Him then indeed He does not exist for I don't believe what I can't see.

Faithful: So does that mean you follow the scientific and intellectual approach when it comes to the existence of God? And you don't believe in anything invisible, solely counting on your senses to believe whether something exists or not?

Atheist: Yes indeed. I follow the approach "If...., then....", and only believe what's based on experiments and intellectual reason.

Faithful: Let me clarify to you two very important points in this matter:

- 1) Your approach cannot be applied to God. God is not a theory or a mathematical problem for you to use your scientific approaches to try to explain. He is not a creation but the Creator, and therefore beyond the bounds of time or place and human understanding. Although our mind is our best human feature, it is still very limited compared to God. Thus, what's limited cannot be a tool of measurement for what is unlimited. The human mind can only understand what this physical world contains (although we still can't understand many things in it) but beyond our world, the human mind becomes incapable of comprehension. As Jen Danilo said, "God can't lay within the limits of comprehension because God is the one who created comprehension."

- 2) It is ignorant to believe only what we can see and feel with our senses. It is neither logical nor scientific. Humans can only see a very small portion of the reality around us. There are many things in our universe that we are unable to see, hear or touch but they certainly exist. Human senses are very poor, deficient and in many cases deceiving and misleading. So how can we depend on them to determine whether God exists or not?!

Let me give you an example: Human vision for instance is only limited to the visible light in the electromagnetic spectrum, but all the other types of light are invisible to our eyes such as Infrared Rays, Ultraviolet Rays, Gamma Rays and many others. Our eyes are incapable of seeing all these radiations but that does not mean they don't exist. Additionally there are also visual illusions such the refraction of light on objects in water so that they seem bent when they are actually not or the mirage phenomenon in the desert, as we see water from a great distance but as we come closer this image of water disappears.

This is an example of only one sense, and what applies for vision can be applied to all the other senses. Therefore, the principle of only believing what can be seen or felt by our senses is invalid as our senses are weak, insufficient and often deceiving. Therefore we can't depend on them on determining the existence of things.

But then, what can be used to determine the existence of God?!

A CONVERSATION WITH AN ATHEIST

Atheist: I believe that matter is everlasting and eternal and that the universe occurred by coincidence.

Faithful:

Your **first point**, the everlasting and eternal matter contradicts all logic before it contracts science. There are two principle questions to all who support such a theory:

- 1) **First question:** What is everlasting and eternal and who created both? Is it real or superficial? So if it is superficial then does that mean we live in a superficial unrealistic world? And if it is real, then an everlasting and eternal God must exist, one who was present before all things and after all things.
- 2) **Second question:** What is matter? Scientifically matter consists of atoms and an atom consists of protons, neutrons and electrons. Therefore, an atom is subject to change since it is made of other smaller particles that are also subjects of change. Something subject to change can't be everlasting. Also, there are questions such as who created atoms and made their very detailed and organized structures. Is it possible for matter to create itself?! All logic directs us to believe in an everlasting and eternal powerful force that created the universe and continuously guides its precise function- God.

As for your **second point** that the universe occurred by coincidence.

Well first, the term "by coincidence" is not accepted scientifically nor logically and the proofing evidence are many. For instance, a built castle can't exist without an engineer who designed it nor can an invention occur without its inventor, etc

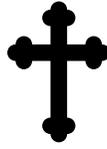
Is it reasonable that as a result of a great explosion in a printing facility, a dictionary enriched with vocabulary was produced? If we took a set of random letters and threw them in the air, and repeated the process a thousand times, would they ever land forming a short story or even a couple of meaningful sentences! It is simply not logical.

Coincidence is incapable of creating an entire world full of highly precise rules which if slightly changed would cause our universe, as we know it, to entirely collapse. Planets rotate in specific orbits; drifting an inch from their orbits can cause them to collide with one another ending in their destruction.

Also, the air that we breathe has a specific percentage of oxygen that will ensure our survival. This is the same for the water that our life depends on. If its structure is slightly changed, it would not be water and our survival would be impossible.

Evidently, there must a powerful force beyond humans and their physical world that can keep this entire universe in such precise structure and guide its everyday function with all it contains: galaxies, stars, humans, animals, birds, etc.

Therefore, all evidence supports that God must exist for our universe to exist and function.



THE CASE FOR A CREATOR

Science declares the existence of god

The Case for a Creator

Dr. Jerry Coyne

- Professor of Ecology and Evolution – University of Chicago

“Science and faith are fundamentally incompatible... Science helps religion only by disproving its claims...”

But is that true? Does science point away from a Creator? I listened to a talk by Lee Strobel, who used to be an atheist just like Dr. Coyne was an atheist. But after his **investigation of the evidence**, he came to a **far different conclusion** about the compatibility of science and faith. He concluded that science, when done RIGHT, points **powerfully** and **persuasively** towards a Creator who happens to look a LOT like the God of the Bible.

1. Cosmology

- Asks "where did the universe come from?"
- ~~Universe always existed~~
- Universe is expanding = had to have beginning



He believes that the evidence affirms this statement.

For centuries, scientists believed that the Universe always existed – that it was eternal, always there. But thanks to persuasive scientific discoveries over the last several decades, most scientists are now convinced that the universe had a sudden beginning at some point in the distant past.

Even though other models of the universe are proposed every now and then, scientists generally agree with the theory that any universe which on the average is expanding like ours, had to have a beginning.

1. Cosmology

- Dr. Alexander Vilenkin – Head of Institute of Cosmology at Tufts University:

“With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape. They have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning”

Why does he say that’s a problem? Well, it’s only a problem if you’re an atheist, because if there’s a beginning to the universe, it leads to a very powerful argument for the existence of God. This argument is called the Kalam cosmological argument, and it has 3 simple points:

Kalam Cosmological Argument

1. Whatever begins to exist has a **CAUSE**
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universe must have a cause.



Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

- † Can you think of ANYTHING that started to exist without having a cause behind it? Even David Hume, a famous skeptic said that he'd never assert such an absurd proposition that something could arise without a cause.
- † So the first point is that whatever **BEGINS** to exist has a cause.
- † Virtually all scientists now agree that the universe and time itself had a beginning.

So if whatever begins to exist has a cause, and the universe began to exist, therefore the universe must have a cause.

So what kind of a cause, what kind of a thing could cause a whole universe to come into existence? Well, it must itself be UNCAUSED, it must be immaterial (or Spirit) because it existed before the material

What Could have Caused the Universe?

Whatever it was, it must be:

- **Immaterial** (or Spirit) – existed before the material world
- **Eternal** – created time
- **Very smart and powerful** – precision and power needed to create the universe
- **Personal will** – decided to create

Seems like we are describing God



world, it must be eternal because it created time, it must be very smart and very powerful because of the precision and the power with the creation of the universe. It must have a personal will, because it needed to make the decision to create. So let's think about this.. we have an:

-uncaused

-immaterial (Spirit)

-eternal

-very smart and powerful

-personal

Creator. That's a really good starting point for the description of God.

Dr. Arno Penzias

- Nobel Prize winning Physicist – helped show that the universe had a beginning

“The best data we have (about the origin of the universe) are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Bible as a whole.”

In other words, this world-renowned physicist, if he only had the bible, he would have predicted exactly what science has told us.

So cosmology goes a long way toward showing that there is a Creator.

Objections:

Who created God?

-argument was never that whatever existed had a cause. It is whatever COMES to exist has a cause behind it. God, by definition, has always existed.

-In fact, before God there was no such thing as time. God existed before Time and Space.

2. Physics

- Study of matter and energy

The Universe is **Finely Tuned**– the laws and numbers that **govern** how the universe **operates** work together in a **STRIKING** way to allow for life.

- Impossible to say that life on earth is a product of chance

There are about **50 parameters** that govern the operation of the universe. Each of the 50 parameters has an enormous number of **settings that it can be set at** – **trillions** of settings for each of the 50 parameters!

Fine Tuning

- **Gravity** – one-inch increment change?
- **Cosmological Constant** – fancy term for the energy density in space.
 - Finely tuned to 1 part in a 100 million billion billion billion billion billion billion!
 - Dart from the Moon



How finely tuned is it? If you were to imagine a **ruler that stretched across the ENTIRE UNIVERSE, 15 billion light years**, this ruler, and it was broken down into one-inch increments, this would represent the **whole possible range of settings** that Gravity could be set up on anywhere along that ruler. It happens to be set at the exact right place so that life can exist.

What if we changed the setting of gravity just one inch compared to the 15 billion light-years width of the universe? One inch? If you were to change it that much, **intelligent life would have been impossible anywhere** in the universe. That's how finely tuned gravity is!

Fine Tuning

- **Universe's Rate of Expansion** – smaller by one part in hundred thousand million million?



- **Nuclear Force** – force that binds the nucleus of an atom.
 - Decrease strength by 1/ 10 thousand billion billion billion billion = only HYDROGEN in the universe.

Fine Tuning

- 50 parameters finely tuned to impossible precision
- Dr. Vera Kistiakowski – Professor from MIT
“the exquisite order displayed by our scientific understanding of the physical world calls for the Divine”

i.e. there is no explanation but God!

3. DNA

- Set of chemical instructions inside each cell in our body that contain the blueprints for life.
- President Bill Clinton, on the Human Genome Project:
“Today, we are learning the language in which God created life.”

DNA – a Chemical Language

- English uses a 26-letter alphabet
DNA uses a 4-letter chemical alphabet
- Spell out the assembly instructions for all the proteins in our body that make us!
- Nature can produce **patterns, not information**
-windy day on the beach



Look at it this way:

Nature can produce PATTERNS. For example, if you go down to a beach and it's been windy and you see ripples in the sand, based on that pattern you would say oh the waves were somehow creating these ripples in the sand, because nature can create patterns like that.

But if you kept walking down the beach and you see in the sand the words "Eva and Mary, bff!" with a heart around it and an arrow through it, you would never think that the waves made it.

Why? Because nature can produce patterns, but it cannot produce information.

Whenever we see information, whether it's in a book or in a computer program code, or a magazine or whatever, we know always there is an intelligence behind it.

Romans 1:20

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”



THE SEVEN EVIDENCES OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

by H.G. Bishop Moussa

Some people today try to renew the idea of atheism that denies the existence of God or rejects His existence. It is known that believing in God is an instinct that a person is born with in his/her heart. “Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” Ecclesiastes 3:11. Yet, this is a summary of some of the evidences of the existence of the glorified God.

First: Our belief as it relates to the existence of God

We believe in the existence of God as seen evident through the human brain, nature, conscience, human spirit and finally through His incarnation. Through studying the human history, we sense the existence of God. Not only that, but I invite my dear reader to know more about this subject in the pages to follow.

Second: People’s belief as it relates to the existence of God

Believing in God exists in every nation even for those who belief in Idolism. Yet they are mistake of Who is the True God. In fact, they reached the level where they believe in many gods! Others believes that there is a god for every godly virtue. These nations also got to know the prayer and sacrifices that they offer to their god.

Third: believing in God is an instinct

Believing in God is instilled inside everyone even children. Therefore, if you speak to a child about God, he does not question you “Who is God”? Nor he argues you when you tell a child to do something in order for God to be pleased. That child believes in God by instinct and that faith is not shaken in his mind or heart except through outside doubts that affects him. These doubts can be either Satanic war or other people’s thoughts. This only comes when the child gets older and enters the age of doubt!

Fourth: Atheism has many reasons

1. Religious reasons which are as a result of:
 - a. The vicious attacks by the media in criticising the Bible. A person who does not know his faith can get affected by these thoughts.
 - b. Friends and their peer pressure effect
 - c. Economical reasons
 - d. Fashion effect and the search for everything that is strange and looks astounding
2. Political reasons. For example, atheism in the communist countries was a direct result of the wrong political education coupled with the government pressure as well as the nation's fear. When the fear factor was removed because of the political pressure removal, millions of people believed in Russia, Romania, Poland, and many more. They declared their faith although they used to hide it fearing the government's oppression.

Fifth: Atheism types

1. The Marxism atheism: some writers described it as it is the rejection of God as oppose of denying the existence of God because of economical reasons and due to the poverty that many lived under while the wealthy lived in luxury and lavishness. Therefore, those atheisms believed that God lives in a tall Ivory tower and that he does not care about the poor and working class. Hence, they rejected God and starting accusing religion of being the drug that numbs the people so that they will not feel the miserable lives they live.
2. The Existentialists atheism: Those that want to indulge in their sins that the Lord would otherwise forbids them from doing so. That is why you find them saying "it is of good god does not exist so that we exist"! Meaning that we can feel our power in fulfilling our lusts! That is why they mocked the Lord's prayer by saying "Our Father Who art in heaven" Yes let him stay in heaven and leave the earth to us! Therefore, it is not a belief that is based on anything, but it is rather a belief to reach towards achieving the lusts that they want.

Sixth: How to comprehend the existence of God

1. As human, we are unable to study anything without using the means by which it agrees with the matter we want to study. For example, the idea requires the mind to understand it and substances require the senses to study them. Our Lord is a great God that is a Spirit. Therefore, we cannot comprehend God except with our Spirit. We need an open heart to achieve spiritual experience. We need a humble soul that longs for truth and holiness in order to understand God.

Would it be logical to study geography with the tools that chemistry offers?! Would it logical to look into and study mathematics with a microscope?! Or study germs with mechanical science?! We make a huge mistake when we think to ourselves that we can comprehend Divinity with our mind and senses. God is not a thought for the brain to comprehend. He is not a substance for the senses to understand and realize. God is a Spirit that is understood by the spirit.

2. There is absolutely no contradiction between the mind and faith. Everyone heard of Augustine of Hippo's famous words "I believe so that I may understand" And rather, St. Paul expression "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." Hebrews 11:3
All that is, faith is the microscope that is used by the human eye to understand what goes beyond its limits. The microscope makes it possible for the naked human eye to get closer to what it cannot see despite its existence.

Faith is not an oppression of the mind. However, the mind that is enlightened with the Holy Spirit is accepts comfortably to hear the faith's facts just like how the limited eye accepts the science of Bacteriology after getting the help of the microscope.

Seventh: Evidence of the existence of God

First evidence

The agreement between science and the Holy Bible

We believe that the Holy bible is not a scientific book, but rather one that defines the relationship between God and man. Despite that, is it permissible for a Christian to leave or ignores the scientific references?! Is there no agreement between science and the Bible? Has modern discoveries in science been able to

steal from the Christian man his ability to reconcile faith with this enlightened-age of science?

It should be pointed out that most of the scientific theories were merely attempts (guesstimates). A theory appears and then after some time comes another theory that cancels the first one. For example, a phrase contained in one of the scientific references that attacked the Bible. After the author elaborated on the origins of the earth, we find him saying: "Our own galaxy is a trivial part of this universe that may have existed for millions of years before." Progress in scientific studies took place to explain how and when the sun and its nine planets existed.

Studying the solar system gives us at least a key to the origin of that part of the universe that we live in, Earth. The generally accepted explanation is that the theory that assumes that our solar system was born from the Sun, as a result of a giant star approaching it, removing huge mass of flaming gas of the Sun through the effect of the Law of Gravity. These gas masses gradually cooled, crystallized, and became planet. So Earth reached its present state very slowly.

Therefore, these are just attempts to explain some progression which gives us at least a key that makes us assume a theory ... We simply guess.

The scientific reference then goes on with decisive words about "the events of the deep past"

But let us continue in our analysis to reach the depth of this first proof of the existence of God. At the beginning of the attempts, keys and guesses, the scientists first assume that there is a "solar system", there is a "huge star", the law of gravity and masses of burning gas. Then, scientists say that these began to cool, crystallized and continued to rotate around the sun as a result of its gravity.

What a beautiful conception of the universe: a supernatural system of a huge star, specific laws that do not change. This is a clear assumption of a great power of a huge mind.

Think about this with me then - these millions of laws of heat, light, energy, motion, orbits and gravity require that each body turn into a circular shape as shown in this described picture ... and millions of other existing laws. What is the meaning of all that?

Let's come back to the depth of the subject. Is the problem just the realization of our solar system? Of course not! Scientists say that our solar system is just one of many systems in the Milky Way, a galaxy that we inhabit. This is one of the millions of galaxies, which in turn form a small part of this vast universe.

Have you started to notice through which law a star approaches another one? And through which law the hot blocks cooled off? By which law does the attraction of planets occur? By what law does gravity work?

The mere contemplation of scientific theories shows us a universe that speaks of the fact that it is connected and governed by laws.

Therefore, the existence of a fixed, unchanging, invisible, but effective law requires the existence of a creator: "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" James 4:12. He is God the creator of the universe and everything in it. The author of this law is God.

Second evidence

The theory of evolution:

Evolution is a process of gradual growth from a simple, irregular and primitive material, to this complex structure of the natural universe. With the same token, that gradual branching from the beginning of organic life on our inhabited planet to the many forms of creatures in the animal and plant kingdoms.

Note that evolution presupposes a life organic start that lives in advance! It does not talk about how life comes into existence!

The theory of evolution (theory = we assume) decided that all the forms of life that we see today, including humans and all kinds of planets and animals (with their very many kinds), have gradually evolved from very simple forms into complex forms that depend on each other as we see them today. Each has a life cycle Special and appropriate propagation method.

The theory of evolution, then, determines that life evolved in a "gradual process" by "existence forces" until it reached this complex form.

Let us get to the bottom of the matter. Scientists of evolution, genetics, biology and all other fields have not been able to provide one evidence that life can exist from something that is not alive.

Indeed, some laboratory experiments have revived life in dead cells by certain chemical compounds, but this is quite different from "autologous or spontaneous reproduction".

There is a dividing line and a big gap between life and death. Between non-existence and existence, and evolutionists are straining themselves in assumptions, guesses and ambiguous theories to explain how life originated.

On the other hand, there is a clear scientific law that gives us important evidence of the existence of God the giver of life! It is the law of the origin of life that simply states that life begins only from life and non-living does not give birth to the living.

Perhaps scientists do not have a well-known law that can be decisively and clearly contested as this law. The existence of life requires the existence of a giver of this life! This is why the scripture says: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" Genesis 2:7

God Almighty, who exists, is alive and giving life. He existed before everything. He gave life to the first man, and gave all beings the possibility of multiplication according to certain laws. Indeed God is the giver of life and no other.

Third evidence

Substance has a begging and an end.

At the beginning of their theory, geologists relied on the fact that universe that is organized. They also depended on the existence of substance. Just like the theory of evolution was based on matter, laws and simple life. So what is the a substance? A substance occupies a vacuum and has a weight, but we do not need to see it, because some gases and even the air we breath are all substances.

Until recently, scientists were talking about the " The law of conservation of mass", but the discovery of nuclear nature and the experiments of Madame Kori on radium demonstrated the possibility of decomposition and disintegration. This shift in matter is a scientific fact, and uranium (238) slowly decomposes to lead (206) through several intermediate phases. Thus, it takes radioactive uranium many long years to turn into lead, giving energy during its radiation. We do not see any new uranium coming into this presence.

Science then proves today that Earth is going to disappear. Therefore, in as much the mountains go higher, they erode! And the low riverbed rises gradually to for all things will become - if this process continues - in one level! This - in addition to the subject of turning uranium into lead - shows us how the world is going to an inevitable end.

Thus science confirms that matter itself is not eternal! Matters came into existence at some point in time and since it is not eternal; then it has a starting point and permission. Creation and the beginning of the material world necessarily requires the existence of its Creator, and all things that were made must have a Maker.

The whole universe is like a huge clock that was loaded one day and is now spinning and offloading. To date, we do not know of, or noticed, any way to refill/reload this clock. As if man appeared in the picture amid the a universe that organized and is slowly moving towards the inevitable end! Note the fields, mountains, valleys and other monuments around you!

The geological scientist, "John Powell" observed the invasion by many rivers. He concluded that after enough time the water will sink all the land, however high it may have been, so that all reach the general bottom level, the bottom of the ocean. Surely substance/matter was made and did not come into existence by accident, and it is not eternal. This is a third evidence: Creation requires the existence of a Creator.

Fourth evidence

Comparative embryology

"Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. 25 And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."(Genesis 1: 24-25)

Scientists have tried to prove the idea of evolution using the science of "comparative embryology" as well as using the practice of selection of breeds and genetics and all aspects of the science of natural history. We will touch base on this subject slightly without elaboration. The point is that there is a fixed, conclusive and non-variable law that makes transcending from one type to another impossible.

There are hundreds of varieties in one species; however different in size or shape, they are all one type. Comparative embryology attempts to show that embryos of fish, animals and humans are very similar. Indeed that is right! But not an evidence of evolution; it is the strongest proof of the existence of God! Scientists have been unable to convert the fish embryo into an animal or a human being, as the embryo has grown into the same fish from its egg. The experiments of selection, purification and vaccination of breeds do not prove evolution but rather prove that there are established laws governing the reproduction of animals and humans. And that these laws operate within limits that can not be challenged or exceeded.

Although we can now devise new strains of some kind. But it did not go beyond its kind and did not turn into another kind.

The simple farmer on his land knows the idea of selection of breeds. Scientists who specialize in their labs can determine the exact picture of the work of genes and chromosomes and their interactions in humans, in terms of: color and many other characteristics, and they can be predict the image of the offspring. This confirms the wisdom of God and His power. By setting these laws and still keeping them, our God said, " Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind" (Genesis 1:24). The Lord kept his law as a fourth witness of His existence. In comparison to the great structure of the Chimpanzees, Gorilla and Man, scientists tried to confirm the origin of all comes from one origin. But this is a super myth! But this similarity proves the existence of God too! This is actually a "design unit" as proof of one engineer's planed and designed this universe! This is just a functional similarity, but our God is the Creator of the living and effective laws, and He also preserves them.

The Fifth Witness

Life cycle:

We live in a very complex universe, and it is miraculously designed! The sunrise is always cheerful, the deserts, the mountains and the rivers mesmerize all in super beauty, unless you touch it with a human hand! Nothing lives for itself and dies for itself. The forms of life depend on each other! The traditional question of evolution is: What came first the spike or the grain of wheat? Has the grain evolved slowly through millions of years apart from the trunk that derives its life from?

Have flowers, grasses and trees evolved very slowly over millions of years independent of the small seed that is the basis of their lives?

These questions cannot be answered by science of evolution. Just like the old question: What came first: the egg or chicken? The world accuses this question of triviality, and the reason - simply - that it does not know the answer, so it turns this question into a funny joke to escape the answer.

This complex interplay of the forms of life proves the existence of a beginner and an engineer. He is the great designer that this universe stands in front with all its complexities, giving it the possibility of existence.

Nothing lives and dies for itself. Plants and animals get dissolved after death to feed other organisms to live. The tree grows and then dies, and falls and becomes part of the forestland feed Small bushes with essential elements of life.

This complex and great universe, and this complex land on which we live on and breath its air is made by a great designer.

The characteristics of minerals; the wings of birds and flies, the beauty of sunrise, the beautiful crystals and above all the amazing structure of the human body, all speak out about the Eternal Designer.

Indeed, the system in the universe declares the presence of a great and capable Designer. That is God.

The sixth witness

God's declaration of Himself

1. Prophecies of the Old Testament:

Almost a third of the Bible is prophecies. Although much of it speaks of what is coming, but much has already took place or is happening.

God sent His prophets hundreds of years ago to great cities: Babylon, Akron, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Tyre, and Sidon. These ordinary men had predicted the destruction and fall of these cities, and in the specific form accompanying this destruction. These prophecies have been fulfilled precisely, and as in the time set by God. Indeed, God knows the future and announce it through the prophecies that take place!

2. Declaration of God for himself:

- A. Through a verbal words to human beings or through a dream/prophecy
- B. Through a vision while a man is in the absence of complete body senses
- C. Through a vision while the man uses some or all senses.
- D. Through a special revelation to Bible writers.

- E. Through miraculous miracles of the laws of nature.
- F. Through the Son of God, the Word in the fullness of time.

The Seventh Witness

Answered prayer:

Perhaps this is the most important evidence for us as Christians. It is: "Answering Prayer". Because atheists and skeptics never prayed, they did not experience the answered prayer and so they are skeptical.

There are many examples in the Bible, ecclesiastical history, and everyday life, about God's response to the prayers of His children. These are examples that exceed the limits, and their fields are open to all believers: "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11-24)

Some may think that the response to prayer is just the same as the result of focusing on something, but in fact it is a direct intervention of God in a miraculous way, declaring His capable hand as the fruit of obeying the laws of God, acting according to His will, and believing in His times.

ANSWERING THE RECENT HERESIES



THE DANGER OF BEING NON-DENOMINATIONAL

by H.E. Metropolitan Bakhomious

Today the church faces a new and huge danger that is the nondenominational heresy. It is a new sect that lures many of our innocent young generation. This is not a form of hate or discrimination, but rather we present reality. The non-denominational heresy is a form of the little foxes that spoil the vine.

The danger of non-denominational:

- 1) Departing from the important dogmas and beliefs that we have in our Orthodox church as in the believing in salvation, the Trinity, baptism and the church sacraments. The meaning of non-denominational is to leave these beliefs and ignoring them as well as not talking about them. This is similar to commercial advertising where a product is being marketed everywhere we go while the other product is being ignored and not talked about. When a child visits a non-denominational place that has no holy bread, icons, priests and incense carrier, the child will not be attached to the Orthodox Church.
- 2) One of the dangers of non-denominational is to ignore the traditions that we received from our fathers the saints. An example of these traditions would be the saints' traditions, and the first fathers' sayings and interpretations. Other traditions include: all of the church's traditions that carry lots of blessings as in martyrdom and the monastic life, the early church history and especially the first five centuries. It is without a doubt the non-denominational makes our children forget these traditions.
- 3) Orthodoxy embeds the feeling of attachment and belonging inside us. On the other hand, non-sectarian leads to no sense of church-attachment where a person becomes of no identity. Non-sectarian means the dissolution of everyone. The Orthodox church is the mother church and home church. Foreign missionaries came to Egypt in special circumstances in the 19th century. It is of utmost importance that our young generation belongs to our Coptic Orthodox tradition. We would not have been Christians had not been for the blood of the martyrs and the Alexandria School's fight for the faith.

- 4) The non-denominational ideology is to trick the simple Christians through claiming that we are all one in Christ. These non-denominational groups (e.g. Salvation Souls Society), claim that they shepherd the flock of all Christian denominations rather than allowing these souls to vanish in vain. In addition, fooling these souls comes as a result of publishing unrealistic reports indicating that many people have left Christianity and so this is the reason why these groups try to shepherd the flock instead of leaving them die in vain.
- 5) One of the non-denominational danger is that it makes a person falter between two opinions. Many of the youth attend our church and also go to these non-denominational meetings or to these protestant locations to hear a fulfilling sermon. The biblical principle is clear and that a person cannot falter between two opinions or sides. Non-denominational is a form of faltering between two sides as the person attends the church and learns how to pray through the Agpeya and the intercession of the saints, then that person goes to these protestant meetings and pray according to the Pentecostalism's way.
- 6) Non-denominational makes us not pay attention to the divine thoughts and so many heresies enter into our lives and make us forget the true Christian faith. Can you imagine if the non-denominational belief entered into our lives during Arius' time? Is it possible for the people who follow Arius or Jehovah's witnesses or the Adventist (Seventh-day followers) to be saved? Can we all say that we are one in Christ, yet refuse to talk about Christ the saviour? Arianism would have become the norm, hadn't not been for St. Athanasius of Alexandria. How can we not mention the fierce fight by St. Athanasius against Arianism!
- 7) The non-denominational belief depends on emotions, which in general change from time to time, and from an effect to another one. On the other hand, traditions do not change based on time, place or circumstances. Therefore, we ought to build our behaviour on traditions that do not change.
- 8) Non-denominational has plenty of names under the umbrella of protecting human rights, which is based on human principle as opposed to a divine one. This is in a similar fashion to the women priesthood subject which is based on the principle of human rights and not a divine thought given that Virgin Mary herself was not a priest.

- 9) The non-denominational belief destroys the Christian societies and make them lose their unity and the unity of the tradition. It also ignores many of the biblical references (the ones that relate to the Holy Communion, Baptism and Sacraments). The Lord Jesus deals firmly and rejects those who discard the biblical verses (unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you AND unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God)

If we are to save our children from the deception of non-denominational then we are to face three important items:

1) The Effective Sermon

An effective sermon has to be part of every liturgy. It has to be prepared very well and it ought to be fulfilling as well useful and effective. That is because many of our youth go to these other denominations based on an invitation to hear a fulfilling sermon. As a result, the sermon should contain a divine aspect, the spiritual aspect and the effective aspect within the orthodoxy frame. We have a great role model being the sermons of Pope Shenouda III

2) The Effective Spiritual Song

Spiritual Songs are beautiful, fulfilling and provide convenience to the human being. Spiritual songs meet the need of human beings and reflect the inner feelings. That is why we have to provide attention to the effective spiritual songs in our spiritual meetings and conventions. Spiritual songs should be orthodox; meaning that, it should contain our orthodox beliefs.

3) The Effective spiritual Care

Many of our youth left the church because of a weak spiritual care of inexistence. The spiritual care and attention should be very effective in three aspects: spiritual care, social care and physical (money-oriented) care. It should be inclusive of every member, all ages, and every place, street and village.

It is without a doubt that the effective care seek the lost sheep and bring him back. It pays attention to everyone to save him/her. That is why there is a huge need to having a greatly focused spiritual care.

In the end, the spiritual structure and Christian virtues must be built on the traditions' foundation. It is well known that the orthodox churches were established on the principles of the church traditions and orthodoxy lasted for

many generations unlike the other sects that left the traditions. The church is full with plenty of talents and energy that we have to use to go and preach, give care, and serve every soul in every place. However, we have to present the sacraments and church services in an effective way within the orthodox frame.

Here is a bible's command for us to face the danger of the nondenominational belief that ignored many of the biblical verses.

+ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them (2 Timothy 3:14)

OTHER CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TOPICS



HALLOWEEN IS SATANIC

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that Halloween is satanic and not wholesome fun. We as Christians must not participate in Halloween according to God's commands to shun pagan practices.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

A. Halloween Celebration in our Society Today

In the Western society today, Halloween is one of the most important occasions after Christmas. Many consider it a fun time for children and adults. On this occasion children dress up in scary costumes, like vampires, ghosts, devils and witches and go around trick or treating. They call it frightening fun.

Public schools are one of the biggest promoters of Halloween. They hold dances, costume contests, carnivals, and arts & crafts. Educators admit that more effort is put into preparing for Halloween than any other holiday including Christmas and Easter.

Halloween is a big business in North America and Europe through the sales of candy, costumes, pumpkins, decorations and horror movies.

B. The Origin of Halloween (Pagan New Year's Feast)

Most of the Halloween customs are reminders of pagan superstitions related to Samhain (pronounced Sameen), the Druidic New Year. The Druids were the influential priests, magicians and sorcerers of the nature religions that prevailed in early northern Europe. Twenty centuries before Christ, the Celts and priests, the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland observed the festival of Samhain on October 31 (Samhain is their god, lord of the dead). This marked the eve of the Celtic New

Year, which began on Nov 1st. It was at this time the full harvest was complete and winter was creeping in. The Celts believed that the power of the sun was fading and for the next few months, darkness would prevail. They also believed that during Samhain the veil separating the living and the dead was at its thinnest. They believed that on the evening of October 31, evil spirits and souls of the dead passed through the barrier and entered the world of the living. They also believed that departed family members would revisit their earthly home. Today a revival of the practices of druidism with various forms of witchcraft and nature worship is sweeping across Europe and North America. The Celts believed that these spirits and dead souls could torment the living. Crops might be destroyed, babies kidnapped, or farm animals killed. But this was also an opportunity to commune with spirits, and divine the future. The devil, the lord of the darkness was ordinarily feared, but during Samhain, his power would be called on to foretell the future. Samhain was one of the major five festivals of the Celts. At this time the Druidic priesthood led people into diabolical worship ceremonies in which they would sacrifice animals and humans in ritual killings. The ancient Druids worshipped Baal, one of the most powerful demon kings. The most sickening of the Druidic New Year practices were human sacrifices that took place at midnight. Adults and children would be thrown into huge fires while celebrants danced around them in demoniac fits. By morning's light, only ashes and bones would remain. These were called bonfires, which is where we get the traditions of bonfires today.

Huge Samhain bonfires were lit to guide the way of the spirits. Various sacrifices, including human were performed to assure a good year. Like many pagan cultures around the world, the Celts left out food for the spirits, hoping that a "treat" would prevent an evil "trick".

Centuries later descendants of the Celts continued to observe the Samhain festival by dressing as evil spirits. Just as people once offered gifts of food to the spirits, people today offer treats to the children who represent them. The lighted Jack-O-Lanterns, the children carry, are really a symbol of fires and torches of former Halloweens of the ancient Samhain.

In the seventh century, the Roman Catholic Church set aside a day in May in memory of the early Christians who died for their faith. It was called All Saint's day. By the year 900 the date was changed to November 1st. Another name for All

Saints' Day was All Hallows'. October 31 was known as All Hallows' Eve, which was later shortened to Halloween. The reason for the change of date was an attempt to encourage people to replace this evil celebration with a holy feast. Instead of its replacement, it became a mix up of evil things, Saints, and fun. Halloween with its customs arrived in America in the mid-1800's with the Irish immigrants.

The Coptic Orthodox Church does not mix things up. There is no mixing of light and darkness, or between God and the devil.

People today might be innocently imitating the ancient Celtic customs, but in an indirect way they are participating and celebrating something evil. They are just thinking of it as fun, and they say, why deny children their fun because of the past history? It is not only bad history, but also breaking the commandment of God.

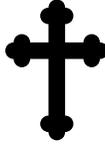
“When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spirit, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.” (Deut 18:9-12)

“And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft, and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.” (2 Kings 17:17)

Please also read Galatians 5:19-21, Revelations 21:8, and Micah 5:12-15

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

By practicing the customs of Halloween, whether for fun or in ignorance, we are continuing practices which have been consecrated to Satan. We should discard these traditions and not make compromises.



TO EVERYTHING THERE IS TIME

PLEASE READ Ecc. 3:1-8, Eph. 5:15-20, Luke 12:16-21 and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To understand the value of time from a Christian viewpoint, the need for time management and the need for dedicating time for your spiritual practices.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Eph. 5:16

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

The dictionary might describe time as "a stretch of duration in which things happen". But a better definition can be found in Ephesians 5:16 "Redeem the time" which shows that time is an opportunity.

Time can be lost. It cannot be hoarded or postponed. It must be spent. How do you spend your time? Do you allow enough time for God?

B. Equal Opportunity

Time is an opportunity given by God to all humans. He gave all people the gift of time. It is up to people to use their time wisely or unwisely. Our life on earth is brief. If used wisely, it will be a good preparation for eternal life. In the downtown of a large city, there was a big clock. Underneath it, there was a saying written "cannot come back".

C. Lazy people have no time.

When you hear someone saying I have no time to do anything, it may indicate that the person is actually lazy. However, it is important that we are not busy with unnecessary commitments, and learn to prioritize our commitments appropriately. Therefore, we have to be active and will find enough time to do the things which we need to do. Remember that God created Adam and Eve and advised them to work. Also, St. Anthony the great, the first monk, was advised by God through an angel who appeared to him to work sometimes and pray sometimes. Being active is good for us mentally, physically and spiritually. It is also a good use of our time.

D. Priorities and time management.

Life is filled with goals: short-term and long-term goals. A Christian must set-up for himself a set of good goals according to the direction of the Holy Spirit in him or her. So, we must pray, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must also assign priorities to our goals and allocate suitable time to achieve each goal. For example, I have a take home exam to submit the next day. I have to study my regular courses and I have to read my Bible and pray. First, read the Bible and pray before doing anything. Second, focus on your take home exam to be submitted the next day and finish it to the best of your ability. If you still have some time left, study for your regular course. Pray also in between doing things so that God will bless your time and make you understand things faster. So, according to our goals and priorities we should spend our time. “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven ...” (Ecc. 3:1-8). A successful person is a person who manages his/her time and knows when is the proper time to:

1. Pray
2. Work/study
3. Rest/sleep
4. Speak etc.

E. The Tithes of our time:

In the book of Malachi 3:7-10, God asked us to give the tithes (10%) of everything. As we mentioned before God gave us time as a gift for us. We must give our tithes back to Him (i.e. 2.4 hours). Are we giving our tithes to God? Prayers, meditation, reading of the Bible, serving the church and serving the needy.

F. Procrastination Our worst enemy:

Procrastination is our worst enemy. It makes a person become a last minute person which is very bad. A last minute person is not ready to handle any unexpected contingency, cannot have enough time to review things and improve on them.

Procrastination is very dangerous in our spiritual and daily life. Procrastination in repentance could lead the individual to lose his/her eternal life. The prodigal son said "I will rise and go to my father." Luke 15:18.

G. The Fullness of time.

We must never rush things. Think, study the matter, and then, act. Act only when you know all things related to the matter you are concerned with. Be patient. Even the coming of our Lord Jesus was based on this principle "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" Gal.4:4. God came to our world after all the prophecies came to be fulfilled, the darkness of sin in the world was at its peak and our Lady Saint Mary the Virgin, who was so humble, was chosen by God to come to our world.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Use your time wisely after you set your goals and priorities.
2. Procrastination is bad, taking actions according to the principle of the fullness of time is good.
3. Start planning and manage your time wisely.
4. Take time out from the world and dedicate it to God for your spiritual growth.
5. We need to set aside time to care. How can we serve God, our church and our family more?



PATIENCE IN A SPEEDY WORLD – (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson one in a series of two lessons about the need for patience in the speedy world that we live in. In this lesson we learn about the social gains that we get as a result of being patient.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

We are now living in a fast pace world. Most people act fast, talk fast, drive fast and they want to achieve their targets in the least possible time. As a result of this speed, we hear loud cries from people saying “if we were more patient we could have avoided a lot of problems with others or a lot of accidents.” A car accident happens in a few seconds but the consequences are unpleasant and have a long lasting effect. What we need nowadays is to think before we speak or take action. What we need is patience in enduring trouble without boredom or violence against others. In this speedy world we forget that God, who created us in His own image, does not do anything hastily but His actions are done always in wisdom; and He wants us to be like Him too.

A TRUE STORY

One of our youth once told me that he was standing in the bus on a very hot day. The bus was full of people and the heat was too much. This person felt a sharp object pressing on his back in a systematic movement which made him very upset. He thought that the best thing to do is to hit back with his elbow so that the person responsible for this action gets the message. As he was about to hit back, an inner voice prompted him to see what was causing this pressure on his back? And who was causing it? He took a quick look and found a lady standing behind him and the edge of her handbag was pressing on his back while she was putting her hand up and down in the crowd. His eyes met hers and she noticed what was going on;

she stopped immediately. What would have happened if he hit her with his elbow? Things could have developed differently.

What is patience or Endurance?

Patience is forbearance of the troubles that happen to the person from things surrounding him or from others for a certain time; the acting positively in a loving way. Following a policy of patience is beneficial in the long run by solving problems, and the results are much better than hasty ways.

The Need of Patience from the Holy Bible

Our Lord Jesus Christ talked to his disciples saying “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 10:22).

In the Gospel according to St. Luke, Our Lord Jesus Christ says, “And you will be hated by all for my Name’s sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls”. Luke 21:16-18

Therefore, being patient when others cause us trouble without hating them or punishing them, results in our reward of heavenly care, “A hair of your head shall not be lost”, and the reward of salvation, “He who endures to the end will be saved”.

Our Lord and Saviour has not only spoken about patience and endurance, but applied it all His life on earth. He accomplished a Holy level of patience because He is the incarnated God. He endured the pressure from all sides: at a certain time His friends said that he was not stable (mentally) and the disciples thought that He acted foolishly by losing the opportunity to be king on earth. His followers wanted Him to pass all His time working miracles and leading the different sects of the Jews who wanted to kill Him because they were jealous and could not see salvation through Him. Only a minority accepted Him. In spite of all this pressure, Our Lord continued His way with steady steps to lead the humanity to salvation. He endured the hatred of King Herod, who wanted to kill Him since His childhood. Our Lord escaped from him following a pattern of endurance and forbearance rather than destroying Herod, which He was fully capable of. He endured those who crucified Him. He endured Peter’s betrayal to the servant girl who said to Him before, “even if all betray you, I will not”. He endured Judas’ betrayal and told him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” Luke 22:48

This is definitely a standard of patience above all normal human measure. It is a Holy standard towards which the children of God are drawn through the work of the Holy Spirit within them as St. Paul says “But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”. Gal 5:22-23

Accordingly there are two completely different values for patience and endurance:

- 1- Social values for the normal person.
- 2- Spiritual value for the Christian person through the work of the Holy Spirit.

When we speak about any characteristic in a person which is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, then we talk about a holy work and a holy power within the person which cannot be easily explained.

- ✚ Christian love, for example, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in the human being ... is very deep and incomparable to social love.
- ✚ Joy and peace, for example as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in a human being ... are much deeper and far superior to the joy and peace that the world gives to a normal person.
- ✚ Likewise, Christian long-suffering as a fruit of the Holy Spirit is a work of God which gives to man much more than the long suffering that he learns from his social experience in daily life.

The Human Standard of Patience and its Social Motives:

- ✚ The patient person is socially successful and admired by others. But the amount of patience differs from one person to another from the social point of view:
 - 1- The standard of patience in people who do not give the speaker a chance to complete his sentence, but interrupt him nervously is not the best. They lack handling matters without anger and excitement. These are very impatient people.
 - 2- The standard of patience in people who wait to hear the question from the speaker and understand it well before answering, but cannot endure any word that could touch their dignity.

- 3- The standard of patience in people who endure injustice and avoid aggressive reaction because the person involved has power over them e.g. the boss at work, or the teacher in school. The same people cannot endure anything from those living with them at home or who are close friends.
- 4- The standard of patience in enduring harsh words or actions from any person and not answering back until the reason for doing so is clear.
- 5- The standard of enduring pain and sorrow and the problems that come in life differs in many ways. There is a standard of those who get impatient and depressed from the slightest pain or trouble while another type could get adjusted and endure more but up to a certain level and then start to collapse. In fact, no one knows to what extent a person can endure sickness because he could be hiding his feelings and showing strength at the time of his internal disturbance.
- 6- The standard of showing patience and slow action in certain matters with the excuse of long-suffering. The main reason could be a negative attitude towards matters. An example for that is the type of people who delay keeping away from a certain unethical group because they are giving them extra chances to change. This is wrong because the bad company could spoil good morals and the person should keep himself away from these people without delay. This does not contradict what we said about patience.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We need to be patient during unpleasant situations without being angry or aggressive.
2. We win our salvation by being patient.
3. We win the respect in the society we live-in by being more patient.



PATIENCE IN A SPEEDY WORLD – (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

This is lesson two in a series of two lessons about the need for patience in the speedy world we live in. In this lesson we learn that Christians have a much higher level of patience than the people of the world as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Start by reviewing the previous lessons and discuss with the students.

The Spiritual Standard (or the Christian) of Patience as a Fruit of the Holy Spirit in a Human Being.

- ✚ The quality of patience and long-suffering in a Christian person is an example of God's patience and long-suffering that was clear in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ the God incarnate. In this type of patience we should not differentiate between people with whom we are patient, as patience and endurance should be with everybody not those we fear. There is no negative attitude in this type of patience but rather going slowly and making a specific plan in facing problems lovingly in the pursuit of winning others and not causing them to sin. We can achieve the best results even by taking longer steps and more time.

- ✚ If we go back to Our Lord Jesus Christ, our ideal for patience, we find Him being patient with His disciples while teaching them and showing them His miracles. He endured their weakness when they thought His kingdom was Earthly and asked who was greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. He went with them step by step while they obeyed humbly until they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost. This Spirit Himself gave them the power to obtain patience and endurance as a natural fruit of the Spirit of God within them. "But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering..." (Gal 5:22-23). St. Paul said about the power of this patience, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” Rom 12:10-13.

We notice here that patience is an internal power in the person which springs from his love of God and others. It also originates from an internal joy i.e., it is not an external patience while there is disturbance within. St. Paul expresses this power of endurance that he had by saying, “But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God; in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting”, (2 Cor 6:4-6). In all these problems, the heart is full of joy, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things”, (2 Cor 6:10).

✠ St. Peter the Apostle defines the type of patience that is acceptable to God as a virtue and as a Christian deed by saying, “For this commendable, if because of conscience toward God one ensures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps, “Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth, who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet 2:18-23).

✠ Here we should notice that all the saints had the virtue of patience and endurance as their Master and Lord Jesus Christ. If you face one of the saints by saying that he has the virtue of patience and endurance, he will answer saying that he lacks it and has a long way to go.

A TRUE STORY:

Some monks went to the great St. Macarius in the wilderness to complain that one of the monks has a lady visiting him in his cell and he committed sin with her. St. Macarius took his time and told them to go away and asked them to pray for that monk. A few days later the same group came to St. Macarius and told him that the lady was in the cell of the monk at that late time of the night. They asked him to go with them and investigate the matter. He went with them to the cell of that monk. He knocked at the door and called him by his name. The monk knew and he quickly hid the lady under a table in the cell. St. Macarius went in calmly,

greeted him and sat on the table and said to the monk “My dear, judge yourself before others judge you”. When he was going out he heard a voice saying, “Blessed are you Macarius because you had a resemblance of your master Jesus Christ by covering up other people’s sins.” In this true story, St. Macarius did not scold the monk or rebuke him but won him over by long suffering and this monk truly repented and came back to Christ. The point to be mentioned here is that no matter how far a person grows in the virtue of patience, he will not reach perfection but the deeper he goes in considering this virtue the more he feels he lacks more.

✠ We should understand that with patience, longsuffering and endurance there should be a practical action in the appropriate time to solve the problems. Our Lord Jesus Christ, preached to the Jews, the Pharisees and Scribes, but they did not listen to Him even after watching the miracles He performed. Instead, they insulted Him and planned to kill Him. Then the time came when the Master proclaimed His judgment and made it clear to everyone that their actions were not right, and said, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” He continued counting out their actions as written in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 23:13-33

Therefore, after patience and prayer one should take a true, positive action after clarifying all the angles concerning the problem i.e. act in the fullness of time, and about this St. James the Apostle said, “But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (Jas 1:4)

St. James goes on to say that patience and perseverance have their reward and good fruits; “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and later rain. You also be patient. Prepare your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”. (Jas 5:7-11)

Job is the perfect example of patience as he endured endless pains without blaspheming the name of God. The end of patience and endurance is always very rewarding.

“And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed ... The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.” (Job 42:10). In every century the saints were rewarded for their endurance and patience. St. George the Martyr was tortured by the cruel rulers for 7 years with all kinds of torments. He endured everything with complete patience without uttering a word. Truly he deserved to be called the Prince of Martyrs for his patience and they could not change his mind or faith or his great love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise, all the martyrs, hermits and cross bearers have reached great depths in their endurance of pain, driven by strong faith and love.

How Could a Person Obtain the Virtue of Christian Patience?

Like any other Christian virtue that a Christian person attains, patience is a gift or a blessing that God provides; “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (Jas 1:17).

Through the Holy Spirit within the Christian person, the gift of God is given to whoever appreciates it and asks for it constantly. It is not given to the person who seeks it and does not truly appreciate it. There is a saying “Without God, man cannot work, and without man, i.e. his efforts and demands, God does not want to work”. What could man do to attain the virtue of patience and grow in it?

First of all: he should be convinced that this virtue is good for him and very close to his salvation and that of others. If he is convinced that he needs more depth in patience, he should entreat God in his prayers continuously to give him the strength of patience to face life without despair and face others without sinning or causes others to sin.

Secondly, man should start by taking a break before any action or speaking and before making any decision until he gets used to hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit within him. Then he can move and take a step if he feels that this action is in the fullness of time and all matters concerning this action have been made known and fulfilled. Therefore, a person should act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

– the Holy Spirit is calm and gentle – the Holy Spirit is simple and He should act without insults and hurting others or complicating matters.

Thirdly, a person should be calm and patient if his thoughts are stable and he solves the problems that cause him trouble. These interactive problems irritate the nerves and too much thinking about them is disturbing and could make the person impatient. Here comes the role of prayer and the role of the Father of confession in solving problems and using these open doors and reaching a solution for them.

Fourthly, a person should get used to thanking God all the time for His plentiful blessings, then God will multiply His blessings, and His gifts. St. Isaac the Syrian said “there is no blessing without multiplication except for that without thanksgiving.”

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. We must pray for patience.
2. Patience provides Christians with an inner power to endure various sufferings while being calm from inside.
3. Let us train ourselves to slow down before we speak or take an action and before we make an important decision.



SLEEP – “THE NEGLECTED REMEDY”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that having “enough” sleep should help the individual to function well in this stressful life. Having a real relationship with God will help the person to have enough sleep under stressful situations.

MEMORY VERSE:

“I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.”

Ps. 3:5

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

- ❖ “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” Ps.3: 5.
- ❖ “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” Ps.4: 8.
- ❖ “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.” Ps.127: 2.
- ❖ “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.” Proverbs 3:24.
- ❖ After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me.” Jer. 31: 26.

C. Sleep of the Lord Jesus

The Holy Bible stated clearly that our Lord and Master Jesus Christ slept. Therefore, He blessed our sleep as well. Please read: Mt. 8:24, Mk. 4:38 and Lk.8:23.

D. Common causes of loss of sleep:

1. Stress

We can clearly see that when an individual is under a lot of pressure, he or she cannot sleep. In the next day or days after lack of sleep, the individual will be extremely tired and unable to function. An example of this is in the book of Esther: it was mentioned that the King being under stress lost his sleep. “That night, the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the Chronicles; and they were read before the King.” Esther 6:1.

So avoid being in stressful situations.

2. Worries and Sickness

“When I lie down, I say, “When shall I arise, and the night be ended? For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn.” Job 7:4 (worries)

My flesh is caked with worms and dust, My skin is cracked and breaks out afresh” Job 7:5 (sickness)

3. Anxiety about wealth

“The sleep of a laboring man is sweet; whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.” Ec. 5:12

4. Grief and remorse

The king in the time of Daniel the prophet was grieving because he had to put Daniel in the lions’ den.

“Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.” (Dan 6:18-19).

E. Relationship between the spiritual life and sleep

1. The intimacy with God gives the individual comfort under the most adverse conditions. When the individual remembers that God has His eyes on him or her even when they sleep, the person becomes comfortable.

When Elijah the great prophet was fleeing from King Ahab and his wife, he was very much troubled. But when the Lord sent His angel to comfort him, he was able to eat, sleep and to make a long journey.

All the saints live in comfort because they seek and enjoy the mercy of God. God is the only One who can comfort us. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

2. When you suffer from loss of sleep it becomes evident that something has to be corrected in spiritual life. Review your action. Take time out from the world and focus on repentance and prayers. Take time out and speak to your father of confession and tell him everything and listen to his advice.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Manage your time so that you have enough undisturbed sleep. Any time spent watching TV or on Internet or with friends that would result in shortening your sleep, will have dangerous effects on your achievements, health and daily life.
2. Read your Bible daily. A minimum of one chapter per day.
3. Rely on the mercy of God in all your actions.



MONEY FROM A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that money is a gift, which is not essential for life, or happiness, and is to be depended upon or craved but, that one should free from its effects. (**The whole subject is taken from H.G. Bishop Moussa booklet entitled “The family and money”**)

MEMORY VERSE:

“God ... gives us richly all things to enjoy.”

1 Tim. 6:17

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

Although money is a gift from god and has an important role in our lives, it is the root cause of many conflicts at the individual, family, and international level.

The Bible has established basic principles for using money to promote human happiness and serve mankind. These principles have been defined to prevent us from turning money into another god and worshipping it.

Money Is A Gift.

“God ... give us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). So whatever income we get, it is a real gift from God. If God had not given us life, we would not have received this money, and if he had not granted us scientific, professional, and artistic abilities, we would have been unable to achieve anything. In addition, if God had not granted us health, we would not have

been able to use our different members in acquiring this money. For example, the artist uses his hand, the engineer uses his sight, and the athlete uses his feet, and so on.

Therefore, the Holy Bible teaches us to talk to God when we are offering charity to a poor individual or to the church saying: “All things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.” (1 Chron. 29:14).

1. Money Is Not Essential For Life.

The Lord said: *“One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15), and He also said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Mt. 4:4). “For in Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28).*

Hence life and health is a gift of God. All our efforts to live or to enjoy good health can fail, for whatever we spend or however far we travel to achieve these goals, life is from Him and health is from Him. We strive within our limitations to have a good life, but we are sure that money cannot give it to us.

2. Money Is Not Essential For Happiness.

*“Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife.”
(Prov. 17:1).*

Happiness is a spiritual and psychological quality which comes from enjoying a living relationship with God: a soul at peace, a mind at rest, knowing God’s forgiveness and a genuine love for people whoever and whatever they maybe.

Hence, we ask: “Can we buy happiness with money?” This is impossible, on the contrary, too much money has often caused the unhappiness of its owners. They worry about how they can keep it, invest it, and use it to make themselves happy with a false happiness, so they end up doing what is wrong.

3. Money Is Transitory.

St. Paul says: *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God.” (1 Tim.*

6:17) This is a fact; money is uncertain. It may come today and go tomorrow. A man may make a fortune today and lose it for various reasons at the same time. A man should not rely on it or depend on it, so that he does not come crashing down.

4. Money Is A Talent

The Bible commands those who are rich to ***“Do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come”*** (1 Tim. 6:18-19)

So what is required is that we invest the money to the glory of Jesus Christ and in the comfort and salvation of our fellow human beings, especially those in the faith. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35). The more we give, the more blessings we have. “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.” (Prov. 11:25). In fact, many who were rich were also rich in faith and good acts and rendered humanity innumerable services.

We are stewards over: an unrighteous mammon (Lk. 16:1-15). This means that money does not belong to us but is a gift of God exactly like the money that the unjust steward used to buy friends with. It was not his money but belonged to his master and he used it to purchase friends. Although what he did was wrong because he took what was not his, the Lord asks us to learn from the “sons of this age” how to invest what is the Lord’s in gaining friends who will pray for us. The Lord has entrusted us with this money so let us use it wisely and conscientiously. We take out of it what we need and leave the rest to God to use as He sees fit, maybe to serve someone who is needy, or to meet an emergency.

The Lord forbids our extravagance: “The drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty” (Prov.23:21). He encourages us to take up the pieces left over to serve others (Mt. 15:37).

5. Money Is Not To Be Depended Upon.

To depend on money is to deny God. The Lord said: ***“How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!”*** (Mk.10:24), or as Job said: ***“If I had made gold my hope or said to fine gold ‘You are my confidence’... I would have denied God Who is above”*** (Job 31:24-28).

The problem lies in considering money as a pillar in life and a support for the future. This doesn't mean that we should not save, because saving is different from depending on money. Saving means keeping excess money aside and offering it to God to use as He wills, either for service or in an emergency.

We must believe that God is essentially our sole supporter while money is not, for ***“He who trusts in his riches will fall” (Prov. 11:28).***

6. Money Is Not To Be Craved.

The people who love money fall into diverse evils: theft, embezzlement, and illegal actions because they want to become rich. ***“Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Tim. 6: 9-10)***

When God said: ***“No servant can serve two masteryou cannot serve both God and mammon” (Lk.16:13)***, He meant that the love of money is opposed to the worship of God.

7. Enough is Enough!

People are always trying to improve their personal income. They keep changing jobs in the search of a higher income, but their main aim is to have enough, not to be wealthy or to live luxuriously and extravagantly.

There is a vast difference between the two things, for : ***“Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6); Be content with such things as you have” (Heb. 13:5). “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work (2 Cor.9:8).***

Having enough should be the norm: “Give us this day our daily bread.” This is a content comfortable life lived to the glory of God. God wants us to be happy, not miserable. He gave us the right to have enough. But as for pleasure, ***“She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6).***

As for what people admire and pursue, “all that is in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it (1 Jn. 2:16-17).

8. Planning a Budget

A Christian must plan the family budget. A couple must put their money together with honesty, and then budget their needs in agreement with their priorities:

- ✠ For God: the 'first fruits', the tithes, and the vows.
- ✠ For each partner: a suitable sum of money for personal expenses.
- ✠ For the family: its daily and monthly expenses.
- ✠ For the children: a family must plan a better future for its children.
- ✠ For the parents: when they have a special need.
- ✠ Savings: we must allow God to act according to His will either for the family or for others.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. Money is a gift from God which is not essential for life or happiness and is not to be depended upon.
2. The spirit of understanding, generosity, love, and justice must prevail in the subject of money. Many families have broken up because of money, even though it should not have so much weight in our lives.



EUTHANASIA: SPIRITUAL & SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To show that our church is very thorough when it comes to her view of social issues. The church does not approve of euthanasia under any circumstance but teaches us a respect for life.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

† INTRODUCTION

Euthanasia, formerly called, “mercy-killing”, refers to the act of intentionally killing someone in order to relieve their pain and suffering. Throughout its history, the Orthodox Church has dealt with controversial issues through a process that addresses the, “Mind of the Church.”. When an issue arises for which there is no widely or readily acknowledged response, and over which there is an honest divergence of opinions regarding the doctrine of the Church, an official process begins that may eventually lead to the formulation of a new and appropriate Church ordinance.

An illustration of the Church’s protocol on the issue of euthanasia would be made clearer only with a comprehensive evaluation of the contrasting scientific perspective. The subsequent discussion examines the issue of euthanasia using the following definition: “...the intentional killing by act or omission of a person whose life is felt not to be worth living.”

† Types of Euthanasia

It has been suggested that nothing shows the moral bankruptcy of a society more than disregard for the sanctity of human life. All cultures have traditionally considered the taking of another human life to be a serious offence, which is reflected in the criminal penalties.

In a war of ideologies, the first casualty is often the definition of terms. Euphemisms are extensive as people resort to deceit in order to convince others. A lethal injection for a terminally ill person is called an “aid in dying,” or “shortening of the dying process.” Denying someone’s permission to undergo assisted suicide becomes, “cruelly prolonging the suffering of a dying person.” Some people distinguish between *active* euthanasia (such as administering a lethal injection) and *passive* euthanasia (such as withholding medical treatment and/or nutrition). However, in some cases, withholding treatment can be good medical practice and, in these circumstances, the action may not be designated as euthanasia.

The distinction between euthanasia and good medical practice rests on the intention with which the treatment is either given or withheld. Indisputably, the intention of euthanasia is to kill. Conversely, in good medical practice, the intention is to maximize the quality of life experienced by the patient by minimizing the suffering. Thus, it may not always be necessary to do absolutely everything technologically possible to prolong life simply because the facilities exist. Accordingly, it would not be wrong to give high doses of powerful painkillers to patients with terminal cancer, even though this may indirectly shorten life, as long as the prime purpose is to ease the suffering. However, an act or omission whose sole purpose is to hasten death is euthanasia. The key ethical and legal point is the intention- the motive behind the act.

† The “right to die”

The second widespread definition is, “...the deliberate ending of a person’s life with the intent of reducing that person’s suffering.” The more common phrase is, “the right to die”, which is really: the right to be killed. In order for such a “right” to actually exist, our society would have to somehow agree on a “benefactor” to provide the service. The other prevalent term, “death with dignity”, is merely a euphemism for avoiding dependence by giving up before your time. However it may be phrased, proponents of Euthanasia are seeking to redefine what is now rightfully a form of homicide, calling it an acceptable - and ultimately a **standard** - medical practice.

† Respect for Life:

Natural death, which results from illness or from degenerative processes, is the opposite of euthanasia. Even when someone requests that life not be prolonged,

death results from the underlying illness, not from the withdrawal of the care itself. Withholding medical treatment is ethical as long as the treatment is disproportionately burdensome (if the treatment is more arduous on the person than the disease), as well as if it is relatively ineffective. Despite the aforementioned ideologies, unanimity dictates that all effort should be made to prolong human life and kill the pain, not the person.

Various cases occur when members of the congregation become very ill and live in much pain. God, as a loving and merciful Saviour, relieves these people from tribulation at His will. We, as equal human beings, do not have the right to take anyone away from this world, even if it's for their own good (as they imagine). Many stories from the Holy Bible confirm the notion that God has His reasons. An example is the man who was born blind. Everybody questioned why that man was born blind; they asked if fault lay with the parents, but His answer was no. The reason was so that God could show His power in front of His people and lead them to believe in Him.

Many sick people are also cured through the intercessions of the saints. How can we deprive the ill and suffering among us from this blessing? Many people say that if you love a sick person, you won't let them suffer. The response is that God loves them more than we do and won't let them suffer beyond their capabilities. Accordingly, instead of killing these people, pray to God so that He will help them and save them. In summation, God taught us to love one another and in this case, His love is much greater than ours. This is why we should simply pray for these people and leave everything else to God.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

- 1) Let us pray for the whole world to respect life and not to interfere with things that are in God's hands (such as life and death).
- 2) We must pray for the sick and not use any authority over them to end their life.



ABORTION AND RESPECT FOR LIFE (I)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To learn why our Coptic Orthodox Church defends the right to life of each person from the moment of conception, using Biblical and patristic sources. (The second lesson in this series will focus on equipping students to present the pro-life case in a secular environment where the biblical and patristic underpinnings of the right to life would be ignored or rejected.)

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

INTRODUCTION

This week, we will look at the Biblical and patristic case for the right to life of each human being from the moment of conception. It is essential for us as Christians to have a clear understanding of this issue because this is literally a life and death issue for millions of unborn children around the world. For example, in Canada alone, over 100,000 babies are aborted each year – so, one in four pregnancies ends in surgical abortion, let alone those ended by abortifacients¹. At that rate, there are a great many people – born and unborn – who are affected by abortion.

¹ In 2002, the most recent year of available statistics in Canada, there were 443,355 pregnancies, 328,802 live births, 105,154 abortions, and 9399 fetal losses (still births etc). Abortions/pregnancies = 0.2371 = about 1 in 4. Therefore, approximately 1 in 4 pregnancies end in abortion. This does not include the morning-after pill or other abortifacient drugs or products. The source of these statistics is: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Birth Database and Stillbirth Database; Canadian Institute for Health Information, Hospital Morbidity Database and Therapeutic Abortion Database. The Statistics Canada publication Reproductive Health: Pregnancies and Rates, Canada, 1974-1993 (Catalogue no. [82-568-XPB](#)) and CANSIM, table [106-9002](#) was a major source of data for the years prior to 1994.

Our Coptic Orthodox Church is “pro-life”: we believe in the right to life from the moment of conception until natural death. Those who believe that abortion should be legal or a matter of personal choice for the mother call themselves “pro-choice” (but in fact, advocating free choice on the matter of whether the unborn may be killed or not amounts to advocacy for abortion, not advocacy for the right to life).

† **What is Abortion?**

Abortion is the killing of an unborn human being. This can be done deliberately by surgical means (suction, dilation & extraction, saline solutions, etc. at a hospital or clinic), by taking or using abortifacient drugs or products, or (as it has been done in times past without drugs or surgical tools) by deliberately trying to exhaust or strain oneself during pregnancy to have the unborn child die.

It should be noted that there is a huge moral difference between miscarriages that happen naturally (that is, without human intervention or interference) and abortions. The one is a tragic natural occurrence that is not a sin because there was no human involvement bringing about the loss of life, but the other is quite another matter, as we shall see.

† **When does life begin?**

Life begins at the moment of conception, also known as “fertilization”, that is, when the sperm joins the ovum. (Again, in the next class we will get into more detail about terminology and science, but for now we will note that at the moment of conception, the human is called a “zygote”; up to 8 weeks after conception, he or she is an “embryo”; 8 weeks until birth, he or she is called a “fetus”, and thereafter they are an infant, toddler, teenager, etc.). At the moment of conception, the zygote has his or her own unique genetic identity, different from any person who ever existed and will ever exist. The sex, eye colour, hair colour, and many other characteristics are present at the time of conception: nothing is added to the zygote; he or she just needs time to grow and develop all of those characteristics.

Our Church also teaches us that God is the Giver of Life, as we say in the Creed and in the liturgy. It is by His awesome power that the genetic material of two separate people joins to become a new, distinct human being with a physical entity and soul at the moment of conception.

The Holy Bible shows us that God is the Giver of Life, and that life does not begin at birth as abortion advocates would have us believe. Just some of the verses that illustrate this are:

1. "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. (Gen. 1: 26-31)
2. "And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Gen. 30:2), and "Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb." (Gen. 30:22)
3. "Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." (Zech. 12:1)
4. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Ps.51: 5). [This cannot make any linguistic or grammatical sense if life begins at any time after conception.]
5. "Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Oh, that I had perished and no eye has seen me." (Job 10:18) [Again, this makes no linguistic or grammatical sense if life begins at birth.]
6. "Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb? (Job 31:15)
7. " From my mother's womb You have been my God." (Ps.22:10)
8. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Ps. 58:3).
9. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward." (Ps. 127:3)
10. "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb." (Ps. 139: 13)

11. "Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant...'" (Is. 44:2)
12. "The Lord has called me from the womb. From the matrix of my mother He has made mention of my name... And now the Lord says, 'Who formed Me from the womb to be His servant.'" (Is. 49:1&5).
13. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to nations." (Jer.1 : 5).
14. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1:15-16)

These are just some of the verses from the Holy Bible that show that God is the Creator of every human being and that life begins when someone is conceived, not born.

Furthermore, when God chose someone to welcome the newly conceived Babe within the Virgin St. Mary, He chose an unborn child – St. John the Baptist – to do so. The unborn Baptist "leaped" in his mother's womb when the voice of St. Mary came to his mother's ears (see Luke 1:39-45). And then St. Elizabeth referred to St. Mary as "the mother of my Lord"; this would not make sense if St. Mary was not already a mother, albeit of an unborn Child.

It is important to note that in addition to what we see in the written Word of God showing us that to God all human beings are intrinsically valuable by virtue of their humanity even before birth, we see in the liturgical life of our Coptic Orthodox Church the same thing. After all, we celebrate the Feasts or commemorate the Conception of St. John the Baptist, the Conception of our Lord, and the visit of the Virgin St. Mary to St. Elizabeth. And when the Church came to put our Faith in writing in the form of the Nicene Creed, She included the belief from the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition that God is the "Giver of Life".

Therefore, when we realize that abortion takes the life of a defenceless, distinct, unique human being created in the Image and likeness of God from conception – whether by surgical means at a hospital or abortion clinic, or whether by the administration of drugs/herbs/devices that are abortifacient, or by any other means – we should take heed to remember the words of our Lord: "Assuredly, I say to

you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matt 25:40). Conversely, if we were to disrespect the right to life of a zygote, embryo, or fetus, we would be like those to whom the Lord said this. "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it (deeds of mercy) to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt 25:45-46).

And who amongst the members of the human family can be “lesser” than a zygote at the moment of conception, or an embryo a few weeks later, or even a fetus before birth? No one. The unborn child is the most vulnerable member of the human family because of its unique small size, level of development, peculiar dependancy on his or her mother for viability, and indeed its very presence inside his or her mother. Perhaps it is this extreme vulnerability amongst all other human beings that one of the Church’s Fathers, St. John Chrysostom (347-405 A.D.), says that abortion is “something even worse than murder” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on the Epistle to the Romans* (PG 60:626-27)).

† **Why Might a Woman or Family Seek an Abortion?**

Women in crisis pregnancies may often be pressured into aborting by those around them, or may insist on aborting themselves for a variety of reasons, some of which may be to:

- (1) To cover up sin (fornication or adultery);
- (2) To maintain her freedom or limited responsibilities without a child (or another child) in order to advance or maintain her lifestyle, education, career, etc;
- (3) To maintain her physical figure;
- (4) As a form of euthanasia should the family know before delivery of a probable sickness or distortion befalling the embryo or fetus; and/or
- (5) As a form of birth control.

† **The Holy Bible on Abortion**

While the Holy Bible does not use the word “abortion” *per se*², both testaments of the Holy Bible confirm that the shedding of innocent blood is strictly forbidden. It is considered an excessively horrendous and capital crime punishable by death and

² Scott Klusendorf, *Dead Silence: Must the Bible say that Abortion is Wrong before We Can Know that it's Wrong?*
<http://www.prolifetraining.com/Dead-Silence.htm>

deprivation of the Kingdom of God. The following are some Biblical references to show this:

1. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man." (Gen. 9:6)
2. "...do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked." (Exodus 23:7)
3. These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood..." (Prov. 6:16-17)
4. "You shall not murder." (Ex.20: 13)
5. "Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death ... Whoever kills a man shall be put to death." (Lev.24: 17&21)
6. "The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city." (Matt. 22:7)
7. "...And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (I John 3:15)
8. "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Rev. 21:8)

The Holy Bible even talks about penalties regarding harming the unborn, even if unintentionally, this way. These penalties demonstrate the value of the unborn:

"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (Ex. 21:22-25).

The Church Fathers and their Contemporaries on Abortion

Although we are covering the abortion issue in a “Contemporary Issues” book, the fact of the matter is that abortion has been an evil idea around for many ages. The Church Fathers and their contemporaries consistently condemned such practices as being murderous, as we saw in St. John Chrysostom’s writings.

- The 2nd century Father, philosopher and scholar Athenagoras says this in his book *In Defense of Christians* (176 A.D.): "Those women who use drugs to miscarry/abort a baby commit a murder. They will be held accountable for this crime before God because one ought to consider a yet to-be-born baby as a human being and, hence, a creature being taken care of by God. Should the baby come out to life, then one has absolutely no right to kill it or endanger its life." (chapter 35).
- The 2nd-3rd century scholar Tertullianus says in his book *Messages in First and Second Marriage*: "...suppose that, even though you are not satisfied with having children, your wife becomes pregnant. What would you do? Would you disrupt her pregnancy through drugs? My concept and conviction is that it is not in our authority to kill a child whether before it is born or thereafter." (Tertullianus: A Sermon on Chastity, chapter 12).
- The second law of Saint Basil the Great (329-379 A.D.) stipulates that a woman who performs an abortion on herself is considered to be a murderer of herself and her baby. If such a woman survives and her baby dies, then the church would punish her in terms of being dead as well (in the Church’s eyes), as many women die as a result of abortions. He nevertheless said that at the end of the ten-year period, the Church should deal with the woman on a case-by-case basis to determine her re-admission to the Church.
- Saint Euronemous, (otherwise known as Saint Jerome), of the fourth and fifth century fathers (342-4520 A.D). reports in some of his messages that some Christian women committed adultery and became pregnant. Therefore, they used poison to miscarry themselves. Often times, this resulted in their death, thereby they descended into Hades, committing three crimes: suicide, adultery, and murder (message 22:13). It is evident here that by murder Saint Jerome means the destruction of the unborn. As for the woman killing herself, this applies to the first crime, which is suicide.

† **Ecclesiastical Laws on Abortion**

The Church says that abortion is absolutely illegal, unless a life-threatening risk is facing a pregnant woman.

His Grace the late Bishop Gregory points out in his book *Christianity and Abortion* that the “Ancyra Council [banned] abortion and [set] up a penalty against a woman who performs an abortion on herself.” This Council held in 315 A.D. set up an ecclesiastical penalty whereby those women would be deprived of church membership for a period of ten years, during which they would be treated as non-Christian. It turned out that this penalty was lenient compared to the one prevalent prior to that council, which was excommunication for life. The ten-year period was split into four sub-periods: the first two among the weepers, the second of three years among the hearers, the third of four years among the kneelers, and the last of one year among the faithful Christians but would be denied access to the sacrament of the Eucharist. Should her repentance be acceptable, she would be welcomed back to the church.

Today, the Church is very merciful and the mother (and father, if he was aware of the pregnancy) of the aborted unborn child are each deprived of the church membership for a period of no less than one year. (The Church does not specify exactly what the penalties are because as H.H. Pope Shenouda III once said when asked about this, “...I do not want to specify or determine this penalty now, lest another woman should say this. "Now I got it! I know the way out of this predicament! I would abort my baby and then go through the prescribed penalty!".) During this period, they are to undergo a status of tearful repentance associated with a follow-up from the father of confession who may allow them to partake of Holy Communion if he believes their repentance is authentic.

† **Civil laws and abortion**

Tragically, the laws of many nations, especially in the West, have turned from their original purpose of maintaining civility, fairness, decency and order in society to allowing for the stronger to have more rights than the weaker by virtue of their strength, making abortion legal. St. Timothy writes this about the law:

“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for

fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine..." (1 Tim. 1: 8-10)

Unfortunately, the combination of the radical feminist philosophy and the significant economic interests involved in the maintenance of legal abortion in these countries has led to a situation in which societies claim to give an importance to human rights and equality, but then exclude an entire sector of the human family from that protection. As Christians, we must realize that our first obligation is to please and follow our Lord, not men (Acts 5:29). God tells us, "I have set before your life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, which both you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30: 19).

We must uphold the right to life in our own personal lives and seek to witness the Truth and be a light to the societies around us immersed in the darkness of sin by their lack of respect for life by defending the right to life in the medical, legal, educational, and political spheres. We should never participate in or support, directly or indirectly, the barbaric status quo of legal abortion on demand. The one thing we must never do is resort to violence against abortionists or others who participate in this great evil because even though they deprive innocent people of the right to life, they themselves have a right to life, which we must defend.

✠ **Do we have the final say as to what to do with our bodies?**

The "pro-choice" camp claims that women have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. We will see in the next lesson, using logic, how the unborn are not actually part of a woman's body, but it is still important for us as Christians to canvas this point of personal autonomy. The Holy Bible tells us that God is our Creator (see above), and that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Cor. 3:16-17). In fact, in the sacrament of Chrismation, we became consecrated unto Him. That means we cannot do just anything we please and we cannot use our bodies to harm others or ourselves. (Abortion has caused many well-documented emotional, physical, and psychological effects on the women who have them in addition to the loss of life of the unborn children that are killed. Extensive meta-physical analyses performed since the 1950s has consistently shown that abortion can double a woman's individual risk of breast cancer³, but for political reasons, most women are not told

³ <http://www.abortionbreastcancer.com/start/>

this information before they choose abortion, calling into question the whole idea of “informed choice” amongst other things.)

‡ **Would it not be Merciful to Prevent the Birth of Disabled Fetuses?**

God is the Creator of everyone, including unborn children who have disabilities. The reasoning and penalties listed above apply equally to both healthy and disabled unborn children. As Christians, we need to care about all members of the human family, not just the healthy ones. Not that the ability to “contribute” to society adds to a person’s value to God, but many of the most famously gifted people in history have been disabled in some way. For example, Beethoven had a hearing disability yet he became a genius in music. Didymus the Blind was visually impaired, but he was able to invent embossing writing; he was one of the greatest theologians of his time, so much so that Saint Athanasius the Apostle entrusted him with running the seminary.

‡ **What about using Abortion to “Help” People Suffering from Diseases?**

The Coptic Orthodox Church opposes any research that necessitates the destruction of the human embryo, no matter what the results that such research may have, because such research kills innocent unborn human beings created in the image and likeness of God, as discussed above. We cannot kill some people to cure others. All of our research must be done ethically. As it happens, there has yet to be anyone successfully cured by the use of embryonic stem cells, but many who have been treated by the use of adult stem cells (that is, stem cells derived from adults themselves or umbilical cord blood, which do not require the killing of anyone). Even if we did not have an ethical alternative to embryonic stem cells, this research would be morally wrong for any Christian to participate in or support because it aborts innocent human beings.

‡ **Permissible and Prohibited Birth Control**

Of course, the issue of birth control is only relevant to those who are married since the Holy Bible clearly states that sexual relations outside of the union of husband and wife are sinful and prohibit entry into the Kingdom of Heaven if they go unrepented. The Coptic Orthodox Church allows married couples to use methods of birth control that do not interfere in any way post-conception. Abortion of any unborn child, regardless of how young, is not allowed for all of the biblical reasons listed above. For our purposes, since the students are not at an age for marriage and should be keeping themselves chaste before marriage, it is neither necessary

nor appropriate to discuss any more details about how to avoid conception. When they are at a stage to marry, they can, with their spiritual father, investigate the non-abortive and non-abortifacient methods of birth control that they may use.

† **How Can We Help the Unborn?**

1. Praying and fasting for their well-being.
2. Being chaste in order to avoid the situations faced by out-of-wedlock pregnancies, which can be agonizing for so many involved, and often end in abortion to hide sins or meet the needs of the woman and her family.
3. Encouraging and informing friends, relatives, colleagues, or others contemplating abortion about its reality, and even helping them find a pro-life crisis pregnancy centre to help them choose life.
4. Supporting our local pro-life crisis pregnancy centres who help girls and women considering abortion.
5. If practicing a profession in which abortion is an issue, by not participating in it at all, directly or indirectly. We must use our education and our professions for the glory of God and obedience to His commandments, not for evil.
6. Express concerns to your local government officials regarding the need for pro-life measures. Give weight in your assessment to pro-life candidates.
7. Not supporting destructive embryonic stem cell research financially, politically, or otherwise.
8. Not counselling others to have abortions.
9. And, of course, not committing abortions ourselves.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FORM THIS LESSON?

1. Abortion is a sin of murder and cruelty on the part of the pregnant woman and all who participate with her in the act, or encourage her to abort. The Holy Bible and Holy Tradition show that God is the Creator and that all

human beings are valuable to Him from the moment of conception. The Church forbids abortion except when there is certainty that the mother will lose her life if the pregnancy continues.

2. Abortion carries with it eternal penalties if a person does not repent of it because it is murder, and there are ecclesiastical penalties here on earth.
3. Our bodies are temples of God's Spirit, so we may not "control" them as we please in accord with "pro-choice" ideology.
4. The disabled are just as much children of God as those that are not, and therefore, abortion of disabled unborn children is not permissible.
5. Abortion cannot be used as a means to "help" others, even if they are ill. Therefore, the Church opposes destructive embryonic stem cell research.
6. No form of birth control that interferes with an already conceived human being is permissible.
7. We must do everything we can to support the right to life of every human being, including abortionists, from the moment of conception because of the Biblical and ecclesiastical reasons already noted.



ABORTION AND RESPECT FOR LIFE (II)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

To appreciate the importance of the abortion issue and equip students with the arguments⁴ they need to defend the pro-life ethic in a secular setting such as school or work.

PLEASE EMPHASIZE:

It is vital for us to learn about how we can present a calm, well-reasoned defense of life. We must, after all, learn to be as our Lord taught us: "wise as serpents and gentle as doves", and know when to show our pearls and when not to throw them in the face of those that may not appreciate and even desecrate them. A teacher, professor, or colleague who does not believe in God will not be persuaded by your Biblical evidence that abortion is morally wrong. But it is nevertheless your responsibility to offer an effective defense of life because the stakes are very high for the unborn: one in every four pregnancies ends in surgical abortion (let alone those lost to abortifacients). That amounts to over 100,000 abortions *per year* in Canada alone (with other industrialized nations having similarly staggering statistics comparable to their populations)⁵. Therefore, let us now learn how to be

⁴ This lesson is based on the award-winning writing and speaking materials of Christian pro-life apologist Scott Klusendorf, the President of Life Training Institute, an institute dedicated to equipping people who are pro-life to defend the right to life in the marketplace of ideas in the world. The main articles referenced for this lesson are: *Toddler Tactics* <http://prolifetraining.com/PDFFiles/Prolife-tactics.pdf> , *Teachers: Classroom Resources* <http://www.prolifetraining.com/teachers.htm> , *Abortion Debate: A Short Defence of the Pro-Life Position* <http://www.prolifetraining.com/abortion-debate.htm> , and *Five Bad Ways to Argue about Abortion* <http://prolifetraining.com/PDFFiles/abortion-arguments.pdf> .

⁵ In 2002, the most recent year of available statistics in Canada, there were 443,355 pregnancies, 328,802 live births, 105,154 abortions, and 9399 fetal losses (still births etc). Abortions/pregnancies = 0.2371 = about 1 in 4. Therefore, approximately 1 in 4 pregnancies end in abortion. This does not include the morning-after pill or other abortifacient drugs or products. The source of these statistics is: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Birth Database and Stillbirth Database; Canadian Institute for Health Information, Hospital Morbidity Database and Therapeutic Abortion Database. The Statistics Canada publication *Reproductive Health: Pregnancies and Rates*, Canada, 1974-1993 (Catalogue no. [82-568-XPB](#)) and CANSIM, table [106-9002](#) was a major source of data for the years prior to 1994.

ready to offer up the reasons for our Christian respect for life to the world, to save as many precious lives as possible.

We can effectively defend the right to life using non-religious arguments by doing four things:

1. Clarifying the Issue: "Daddy/Mommy, can I kill this?"
2. Using Pictures
3. Using Science
4. Using Philosophy

Clarifying the Issue: "Daddy/Mommy, can I kill this?"

Ask the students to imagine that it is a few years down the line and they are happily married and that they are standing at the sink washing the dishes after dinner one night, with their back towards their four-year-old child. (While this may seem like an unusual way to begin a talk about abortion, it is a good way to do so because it shows that the abortion issue is not a complicated one at all, contrary to what abortion advocates would like us to believe.) Their child asks them, "Daddy/Mommy, can I kill this?" Remember that the parent's back is to the child. How can the Daddy or Mommy answer that question? They must first ask, What is it? This question must be asked because the answer to the other question will depend very much on whether the four-year-old is referring to a spider, a stuffed animal, or their newborn sibling. Therefore, to answer the question, Can we kill the unborn; we must first ask the question, what is the unborn?

To so-called "pro-choice" advocates, elective abortion (which must be distinguished from "spontaneous abortion", also known as "miscarriage", when the unborn dies without human interference of any kind) is nothing more than a woman's choice to control her own body because, they claim, life begins at birth, and prior to birth, the unborn is merely tissue that forms a part of a woman's body. People who are pro-life say that abortion is the intentional killing of a defenseless unborn human being. So who is objectively correct? The most important thing we need to learn as pro-life advocates is how to clarify the issue for those opposing life. Show that there is only one question to be answered: what is the unborn?

Help the students clarify the issue by asking them questions about whether the killing of toddlers or other human beings is justified in the following circumstances, using Klusendorf's "trot out the toddler" technique below.

When someone defends legal abortion by insisting that women have the right to make their own private decisions, trot out the toddler.

Pro-lifer: So you are saying that the issue here is privacy. So, if I have a two-year-old child, may I kill him or her as long as it's in the privacy of my own home?

Abortion advocate: Of course not! But that's totally different!

Pro-lifer: Well, why not? How is it different?

Abortion advocate: Because your two-year-old would be a human being.

Pro-lifer: So, if the unborn were human beings like the toddler, then it would be morally wrong to kill them because killing defenseless human beings in the name of privacy is wrong. An unborn human should not be killed any more than a toddler should in order to safeguard privacy.

Abortion advocate: No, that's not what I'm saying or comparing. I'm not comparing apples to oranges here. What you're comparing are two unrelated beings - one human, the other not. Killing a fetus and killing a human are two totally different acts!

Pro-lifer: Ah - but are they? That is the issue, not privacy. The issue is whether the unborn are humans or not. *That* is the pivotal issue here.

Abortion advocate: But what about poor women or poor families? Not all women or families can afford having another baby or *any* baby for that matter!

Pro-lifer: So, are you saying that when human beings get expensive we can kill them? Let's go back to my toddler example. What if a family that's struggling financially decides to quietly dispose its youngest two kids to help their family budget. Would that be alright?

Abortion advocate: Of course not! But aborting fetuses is not the same as killing little kids!

Pro-lifer: Then the issue is, again, what is the unborn? The financial problem you posed comes down to the same question: are embryos or fetuses human beings?

Abortion advocate: You're being too simplistic. This can't just come down to one question. This is a very complex issue. The women in circumstances where they're considering abortions are making agonizing decisions taking into consideration many aspects of their personal lives.

Pro-lifer: I agree that women may be facing decisions that are *psychologically* complex. But they are not *morally* complex. That is, the rightness or wrongness of the decision to abort is not morally complex. If black kids are denied schooling or other community services, we don't spin tales about the complex and agonizing nature of the decisions for white people in power, do we? No, we condemn the evils of racism.

Abortion advocate: Again, you're comparing apples to oranges: aborting a fetus is not the same as discriminating against someone because of their skin colour.

Pro-lifer: So we agree then: if abortion does kill a defenseless human being, the issue is not morally complex at all. Therefore, the question is still this: what is the unborn?

Abortion advocate: You're talking in very abstract, philosophical terms. Really now, do you honestly believe a woman should be forced to bring an unwanted child into the world?

Pro-lifer: The homeless are unwanted too. May we kill them?

Abortion advocate: No, of course not! But it's just not fair to bring a child into the world when he is not wanted. It would be better for him if he hadn't been born.

Pro-lifer: But again, suppose the toddler from our example before was unwanted. Let's even say that by the time he's six years old, he's been abused and neglected. Should we be able to legally kill him to spare him any more trouble?

Abortion advocate: No, certainly not.

Pro-lifer: Why not?

Abortion advocate: I see what you're trying to say, but it's just not the same thing. Toddlers and fetuses (let alone embryos) are not the same.

Pro-lifer: Ah, but that's the issue, isn't it? We're back to that same question: are the unborn the same as humans? If the unborn are human like the homeless or like a neglected child, we simply cannot kill them to get them out of the way. So, we're back to the first question: what are the unborn?

Abortion advocate: What about disabled fetuses? Medical technology is such that we can detect disabilities and genetic defects before birth. Why should we bring a damaged human being into the world when we know he or she will suffer because of their disability or would even die shortly after birth?

Pro-lifer: Sure, we should be able to kill the unborn - including the disabled unborn - **IF**. If what? If the unborn are not human. So, again, I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but the question that remains is, what is the unborn? Let's trot out the toddler again and see if your disability argument works with a three-year-old. Suppose I have in front of me a little three-year-old girl who is mentally disabled - unable to speak or understand most of what we're telling her, looks a little bit strange, and isn't very bright for a kid her age. Would it be morally permissible to kill her because, she's as you put it, a "damaged human being"?

Abortion advocate: No, of course not. A damaged human isn't a non-human. We shouldn't look at disabled people's disabilities and discriminate against them and treat them poorly because of their needs.

Pro-lifer: I agree - but if the disabled unborn are human, like the disabled toddler in our example, then we should not kill the disabled unborn either for not meeting some standard of perfection. So we're back to that same question again: what is the unborn?

Abortion advocate: I see your point, but you really shouldn't be forcing your morality on women. What may be wrong to you is right to someone else. Every woman has the right to choose what is right and wrong for

herself. When you force your views on women, you show that you don't think they're trustworthy or capable enough to make their own decisions.

Pro-lifer: You couldn't possibly believe what you just said, do you?

Abortion advocate: Of course I do!

Pro-lifer: But you would feel very comfortable forcing your morality on a mother who was physically abusing her two-year-old, wouldn't you?

Abortion advocate: Yes, but you're comparing apples and oranges again.

Pro-lifer: Am I? Why do you think so?

Abortion advocate: Because you're assuming the unborn are human, like toddlers.

Pro-lifer: And *you're* assuming they're not. So the issue is simple, isn't it? It's not about forcing morality; it's not about disabilities; it's not about unwontedness; it's not about economic hardship; and it's not about privacy. It comes down to just one question: What is the unborn? This, by the way, doesn't mean that I'm right about the unborn and you're wrong. Abortion might be morally fine. But we cannot answer the moral question without answering the factual one, that is, what kind of being is the unborn? All that I am claiming here - and it is quite a modest claim - is that we should not assume that the unborn are disqualified from being members of the human family without first making a credible argument.

Abortion advocate: But what about when a woman has been raped? Why should she have to remember something so horrific every time she looks at that kid?

Pro-lifer: I agree with you that rape victims deserve compassion, and that rapists deserve to be punished for their crimes. But I struggle with your proposed solution: that even in a civilized society, we can treat innocent human beings that remind us of painful events by killing them. What if the toddler in our examples was conceived in rape? Would it be morally acceptable for his or her mother to her child killed because she was still dealing with the painful memories of a horrific rape every time she looked at the child?

Abortion advocate: No, it wouldn't.

Pro-lifer: So we both agree about that - but isn't that because we both agree that it is wrong to kill innocent human beings, even if they remind us of painful events?

Abortion advocate: But you don't get how much this woman has already suffered! Why don't you put yourself in her shoes? How would you feel carrying a fetus to term who was conceived in rape?

Pro-lifer: You're right - I don't understand her feelings. There's no way I could, or anyone else. But all I'm asking you is whether hardship justifies homicide. Can we kill toddlers who remind us of painful events? Again, my modest claim is this: if the unborn are members of the human family, like toddlers are, then we should not kill them to make someone else feel better.

USING PICTURES

Unfortunately, the word “abortion” has lost its meaning for most people in our society, including Christians. Quite simply, the debate over partial-birth abortion (a procedure done in the third trimester wherein an incision is made at the back of the baby’s head and their brains are suctioned out before they completely emerge from their mother’s body) has proven that seeing the horror of abortion changes people’s hearts and saves lives – the support for partial birth abortion has dropped. The support for any abortion since 1995 dropped from 33% to 22%⁶.

There is a way to show these pictures from www.abortionno.org or the under ten-minute film “The Harder Truth” (from the same source), and there is a way NOT to show the pictures or film.

- Do NOT spring any of these things on the students.
- Make it clear that viewing is ENTIRELY optional, and that the purpose of having the option is to be able to see for themselves the horror of actions so evil, that whatever words we use will not be able to show the depth of that evil.
- Make it clear that the pictures are graphic because they show the real results of abortion.

Notes to the teacher:

⁶ *Why Pro-Life Advocates Should Use Visual Aids* <http://www.prolifetraining.com/Graphic-Visuals.htm> .

- Teenagers are exposed to graphic visuals almost everywhere they go, so it is hard to object to the use of these pictures based on the idea that they are too graphic for the students to see. At school, they are shown films about wars to make the points about the tragic results of war, so we should try to use visuals for the same purpose here.
- To students who may have been wounded by abortion in any way, we need to remember that if they choose to see the visuals and feel what St. Paul calls “Godly sorrow”, they will be lead to repentance and salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). Ignoring abortion (or the encouragement of a friend to have an abortion, etc.) just leaves people with guilt, not the kind of sorrow that leads them to confess their sins and be cleansed of them.
- After showing the pictures or film, allow the students a few minutes of silence if they need it.

Having seen that there is only one issue involved (whether the unborn is human), and perhaps having literally seen the evil of abortion if the students chose to see the pictures, let us now take them to the science of the matter.

Using Science

From the moment of conception (also known as “fertilization”), that is, from the time that the sperm fertilizes the egg (also known as the “ovum”), the zygote that comes into being is a distinct, living, whole human being, and leading embryology textbooks confirm this⁷. (Please note the terminology used here: abortion advocates like to use the term “implantation”, referring to the time 5-7 days after conception when the embryo begins implanting itself into the lining of the mother’s uterus, interchangeably with the terms “conception” and “fertilization”. This is scientifically inaccurate, but politically useful to them.)

Just as a person contemplating an abortion or support for abortion does not need to be a Christian or have any religion at all to be persuaded by the arguments made above, that the only issue here is whether the unborn is human, so too, any person should be able to look at the science involved here and objectively see that the unborn are human.

⁷ Sources cited in *Abortion Debate: A Short Defense of the Pro-Life Position*: T. W. Sadler, *Langman’s Embryology*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993) p. 3; Keith L. Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Toronto: B.C. Decker, 1988), p. 2; O’Rahilly, Ronand and Muller, Pabioal, *Human Embryology and Teratology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996) pp. 8, 29.

No one disputes that the unborn are alive. If they were not, then there would be no growth of cells, no development, no feeling of urgency to eliminate them before they were born.

Well, the law of biogenesis - and that is a *law*, not a theory like the theory of evolution - says that living things *only* reproduce after themselves. So, cats only beget cats. Dogs only beget dogs. Cows only beget cows. And humans only beget...humans. If we want to know what a living thing is, we need only ask what its parents are⁸.

Some abortion advocates will claim that the unborn are only “potential humans” and, therefore, do not deserve to be treated as everyone else is. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it does not work in a world like our own, where we do not live in a vacuum. A potential X is an actual Y. If the unborn are only “potentially human”, what are they actually? A person claiming a right to destroy the unborn has the onus to answer this question – not you, the pro-lifer - with *absolute certainty* before trying to exercise such a “right”. Otherwise, they would be like an engineer in charge of giving the green light to those behind a wrecking ball; if he or she does not absolutely ensure that there is no one left in a building to be demolished and it turns out someone was inside, they would be guilty of criminal negligence causing death.

Another claim made by abortion advocates is that the unborn are only human biologically in the sense that they carry an entire, distinct genetic code – like every cell of our bodies. The error in this thinking is that it confuses wholes with parts: left to themselves, the unborn are self-integrated humans who just need time to grow and develop into babies, toddlers, teenagers, etc., but left to themselves cells in our body cannot and will not ever develop into a distinct human being. That is because one is a whole; the other is a part of a whole.

Yet another common objection to the right to life of the unborn made by abortion advocates is that since twinning can occur up to fourteen (14) days after conception, the unborn cannot be human. The fact that a being can divide itself (or even recombine) does not mean that the original entity was not a distinct human organism before it split. Any sort of mystery behind exactly how twinning occurs does not challenge the objective fact that the original living entity involved was a distinct human being.

⁸ Gregory Koukl, *Slavery, Abortion, and Inalienable Rights*
<http://www.str.org/free/commentaries/abortion/slave.htm>

Abortion advocates also try to use the high number of miscarriages as justification for their claims that embryos are not humans and that destructive research on embryos (such as for embryonic stem cell research) is morally permissible. However, the fact that nature may *spontaneously* abort embryos (even if in large numbers) does not entitle us to *deliberately* do so. Of course miscarriages can be tragic, but to put it another way, “just because earthquakes happen doesn’t mean massacres are justified”⁹.

Using Philosophy

Some advocates of “choice” where abortion is concerned will concede that the unborn is human, but will then try to differentiate between humanity and personhood in order to deny the unborn their right to life. We can show, however, that there is no moral significance between the unborn and anyone else worthy of denying the personhood of the unborn. At different times in history, societies have chosen morally insignificant characteristics to de-humanize or otherwise deny basic human rights to different people on the basis of the colour of their skin, their sex, their religion, etc. We should all agree that no one should be considered a “non-person” because of any such characteristics. So what are the morally irrelevant characteristics we discriminate on the basis of today, characteristics that distinguish the unborn from other humans? There are four, and we use the acronym **SLED** to illustrate them.

SIZE: Of course the unborn are smaller than newborns and adults, but how is that relevant to anything? Are we really trying to say that large people are more valuable than small ones? If so, how would that fare most women, since most men are larger than most women? Not very well! Men do not deserve more rights than women simply because of their size. So, size does not equal value.

LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT: The unborn are certainly less developed than newborns and adults too, but again how is that relevant? Four-year-olds are less developed, say, in their reproductive capacity than twenty-four-year-olds, but that does not give us the right to kill four-year-olds. Some abortion advocates say that the unborn are not self-aware, so they are not persons worthy of protection yet. But if we were to use that logic, newborns would also be denied the right to life since they do not have conscious memories until nine months after birth¹⁰!

⁹ Andrew Sullivan, “Only Human,” *The New Republic*, July 19, 2001.

¹⁰ Conor Liston & Jerome Kagan, “Brain Development: Memory Enhancement in Early Childhood,” *Nature* 419, 896 (2002).

ENVIRONMENT: Where you are has absolutely no bearing on *who* you are. Your value does not change when you roll over in bed or cross the street. So why would it change on the eight-inch trip down a birth-canal, from non-human to human? If the unborn are not already valuable humans before birth, changing their location cannot make them so.

Also on this point about location, much is made of the fact that the baby is inside the mother's body. Abortion advocates often claim that the unborn is part of the woman's body, and a woman should have total control over her own body. But is it part of the woman's body? If it was, then logically, using the transitive law (not theory, but *law*), every part of the body of the unborn would also be a part of the woman's body (that is, if A is a part of B, and B is a part of C, then A must be a part of C). But this is logically absurd, and a great way to show this absurdity is to point out that a pregnant woman does not have two sets of eyes, arms, legs, organs, etc., and if she is carrying a male child, she does not now have both male and female reproductive organs as part of "her body".

DEGREE OF DEPENDENCY: If viability gives human value, then everyone depending on pace-makers are not valuable and we may kill them. Conjoined twins who share blood type and biological systems would also be denied the right to life.

So, although human beings vary a great deal in their capabilities, accomplishments, and degrees of development, these differences are irrelevant to their being.

Why should the law be concerned with this?

One of the functions of the law of any nation is to set a minimum standard of civility, a code of conduct for the citizens of that country. It is a minimal "creed", if you will, of what a society believes is morally acceptable or unacceptable at a minimum. So what do we make of countries that profess to be concerned about human rights but then exclude a whole class of people from such protections?

Many people shy away from putting the right to life of all human beings – including the unborn – into law because the issue is seen as a religious one, based in Judeo-Christian laws, and they do not want any "mixing" of religion and civil law. However, the fact that we want to be free to worship God, or not worship Him, without interference from the state does not mean that the laws of our land should be void of civility and morality. If we were really to apply this logic, we would have to remove the right to life for born humans, and other crimes such as

stealing, rape, and fraud from the books; so too, the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, also originating in biblical principles, would have to be eliminated. Simply, this is not a way to run a legal system, to say that if it is important to Christians, we must not touch the issue. We have shown through science and philosophy that one does not need to be a Christian or have any other religion to see that abortion should not be an evil tolerated by any just society.

Furthermore, the right to life is a natural one, not a legal one. This means that we have it by virtue of being human. It is not granted by a government like the rights to vote or drive are. Therefore, it cannot be taken away by a government either.

Abortion advocates try to garner sympathy for their position by claiming that if abortion were to be re-criminalized, many women would die from illegal abortions done on themselves. Does this mean that we should make stealing legal to make it safer for thieves to steal? The fact that a law may be broken (and many are routinely, tragically, like those against rape, murder, etc.) it does not follow that we should just remove the law from the books altogether.

What if they say, “That’s just your view”?

We should point out that we have not offered our opinions about what abortion does – kill an innocent, unborn human being – we have shown objective scientific facts to prove their humanity, and used logical reasoning to prove that the four differences between the unborn and other humans are irrelevant to the question of whether we may kill the unborn using the **SLED** test.

What about “imposing morality”?

Abortion advocates often tell us not to “impose our morality” on them. The way to counter this moral relativism is to point out three things:

1. Moral relativism is self-refuting (it cannot live by its own rules because the person saying “you should not tell me what to do” is *himself or herself* telling you what to do *by making that statement!*);
2. Moral relativists cannot say that *anything* is wrong (including intolerance e.g., Mother Teresa liked to help people and Hitler liked to kill them. Using relativist logic, who are we to say one was right and one was deadly wrong?); and
3. It is impossible to live as a relativist (because if my morality said that stealing wallets was morally permissible and a relativist’s morality did not,

that relativist would not be able to tell me that taking their wallet was wrong).

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS LESSON?

1. The abortion issue is not complex. It comes down to only one question: what are the unborn? If the unborn are not human, we should not be concerned about abortion. If they are, then we cannot justify the killing of the unborn any more than we can the killing of any other innocent human beings. Remember the “trot out the toddler” examples to show that this has nothing to do with privacy, poverty, disability, etc.
2. The science of the matter is that life begins at conception (the fertilization of the egg by the sperm) and that living things only reproduce after themselves. Human parents can only beget humans.
3. There are only four differences between the unborn and everyone else: Size, Level of development, Environment, and Degree of Dependency. None of these characteristics are morally relevant to the question of whether it is justifiable to kill the unborn.
4. Therefore, abortion is a great evil – the killing of a distinct, living human being – that should not be tolerated by any civilized society. We should try to curtail this evil at every level of society, including legally and politically, for the safeguarding of human rights for every member of the human family.



INTERPRETING THE DA VINCI CODE

Summary of The Da Vinci Code Novel

The Da Vinci Code novel was published by the American writer Dan Brown in 2003. This mystery novel is complete fiction and is based on false information that is considered to be lies (perhaps here it should be specified who thinks it is false information and lies?). By mixing the truths with the lies and the facts with the imaginary matters in this business production, the novel tries to prove that:

- ✠ The Lord Christ married Mary Magdalene and bore “Sarah” as their daughter, and that Mary Magdalene's descendants are royals and they are still alive today. The novel also tries to prove that in 1099 a religious organization was formed (known as Priory of Sion) to protect the facts and documents that Christians want to hide. One of those well-known people, who was a member of this organization, was the Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Vinci is a small village in Italy to which Leonardo da Vinci roots are from. In 1975, newly discovered documents proved that Leonardo da Vinci belonged to the Sion group. This artist drew the Last Supper without the Holy Grail. He also drew Mary Magdalene on the right hand of Christ. The Sion group claimed that they know the whereabouts of the Holy Grail.

- ✠ Then another Catholic group called “Opus Die” was established to fight the Sion group since the Sion group was trying to reveal the wrong-doings of Christianity. The Sion group claims that ever since Emperor Constantine was baptized, he has changed Christianity tremendously. During his era, the number of followers of Christianity doubled and a struggle started between Christians and Pagans to the extent that a potential division shook the empire. As a result, Emperor Constantine decided to unite all the religious under one through combining the signs and dogmas of the Pagan's religion with the roots of Christianity. Consequently, the result of this combination is the creation of false beliefs in Christianity. This includes the belief that the Lord Jesus Christ is God who was incarnate as a human even though He is a

normal man in original Christianity, and that he married Mary Magdalene before his death. The Sion group followed this belief and they have not been affected by what Emperor Constantine had done and that is what made Christianity take the wrong road that it is on today. The writer continued creating imaginary stories and claiming that the Bible is false with all its contents in addition to referencing some verses from the gospels that the Church does not recognize as being true.

WHO IS THE AUTHOR DAN BROWN?

- ✠ He is an American writer who had not had a famous reputation before his last novel, “The da Vinci Code” although he has been especially known to attack and criticize the Vatican through his novel “Angels and Demons”. In almost all his novels, he claims that there exist secret groups that know the true facts which are contradictory to the official lies. The author has a close and special relation to a Sion group even though he claims he is Christian.
- ✠ The author sees Christ as a prophet whose roots come from King David the prophet and that he is a descendent of the Israel kings. Mary Magdalene was also a Jew and hence the daughter of the claimed marriage with Jesus, is also a Jew and is a royal descendent as well. Based on many of the Jewish critics, the author is a Jew who had created a magnificent novel.

THE DANGER OF THE DA VINCI CODE NOVEL

- ✠ There are around 60 million copies of the novel that has been sold worldwide. It has also been translated to 44 different languages.
- ✠ It presents the imaginary as the truth in a very professional and attractive way. The novel also has been greatly welcomed among some people in this world that are attracted towards sin, uncleanness, sex outside marriage, and the performing of evil. They came to believe it is a normal act and that the human does not need repentance, or a Saviour that will save the human from sin.
- ✠ What is our view on these evil and wrong thoughts? We have to defend the truth and the true faith that has been handed to us by the saints as in Jude 1:3 “*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to content earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” For if the true faith that we have does not need us to defend it, then what else is

worthy to be defended. From the beginning, the Church has always taken these heresies seriously and faced them to protect the true faith. Otherwise, if such wrong thoughts get into the true faith, then they will affect weak souls.

WHY DID THE LORD CHRIST ALLOW SUCH WRONG STORIES AND NOVELS TO EXITS?

‡ The Lord Christ allowed Satan to work (while limiting him) until the Lord's second coming, when Christ will cast Satan and his soldiers into the lake of fire and brimstone forever. This permission by the Lord for the devil to work through these lies is because He transforms them into good for the Church. In this case it is used as a chance to defend and prove the true faith once more. Had the Lord Christ known that such lies is going to destroy the Church, then He would not have allowed them, but He promised that “*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” Matt 16:18. Nonetheless, as much as this darkness can be too gloomy and these persecutions can be very strong, Christianity grows stronger and spreads further as the Bible says “*But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*” Ex 1:12.

THE CLAIMS OF THE DA VINCI CODE NOVEL

- ‡ The Lord Christ is a normal man and not the Lord God, but He was made a God in the fourth century during the reign of Emperor Constantine.
- ‡ The Lord Christ married Mary Magdalene.
- ‡ The Holy Bible is pure fiction.

Answering “The Da Vinci code” claims against Christianity

THE LORD CHRIST’S DIVINITY AND HIS PARTICULAR NATURE THAT IS NOT OF A NORMAL MAN:

- ✠ Constantine had called the Council to settle a dispute that had taken place when Arius, an Alexandrian priest, began to deny the divinity of Christ. It was the bishops of the Council of Nicea led by our 20th Pope, St. Athanasius, who reaffirmed the historic Christian position against Arius and his followers.
- ✠ Additionally, Christ's divinity is stressed repeatedly in countless passages in the New Testament, which precede the time of Constantine the Great by more than 200 years. To name a few examples:
- ✠ “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.” Matt 1:23
- ✠ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matt 28:18-20
- ✠ When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you. And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ “Mark 2:5-7
- ✠ I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25
- ✠ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Luke 5:21
- ✠ Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am." Luke 22:70
- ✠ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1
- ✠ That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:23
- ✠ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. John 17:5
- ✠ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" John 20:28

- ✠ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:11
- ✠ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Col 1:15
- ✠ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Col 2:9
- ✠ Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2:13
- ✠ But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." Heb 1:8
- ✠ To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. Jude 25
- ✠ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death." Rev 1:17-18
- ✠ There are also affirmations of Jesus' deity in the writings of the Ante Nicene church fathers. To cite few examples:
- ✠ Justin Martyr (100-165 AD): "... the Father of the universe has a son; who being the logos and First-begotten is also God" (First Apology 63:15).
- ✠ Irenaeus (130-200 AD): (referencing Jesus) "... in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, ..." (Against Heresies 1, x, 1)
- ✠ Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD): "Both as God and as man, the Lord renders us every kind of help and service. As God He forgives sins, as man He educates us to avoid sin completely" Christ the Educator, chapter 3.1.
- ✠ Tertullian (150-225 AD): "... the only God has also a Son, his Word who has proceeded from himself, by whom all things were made and without whom nothing has been made: that this was sent by the Father into the virgin and was born of her both man and God. Son of Man, Son of God, ..." (Against Praxeas, 2)

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DID NOT MARRY MARY MAGDALENE AS THE DA VINCI CODE MOVIE CLAIMS

- ✠ To support his claim, Brown appeals to two of the Gnostic (Apocryphal) Gospels: The Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary. These two gospels, among many more, have been rejected by the early church Fathers for their unorthodox content regarding the message of the "Good News". They are considered non-canonical and heretical.

- ✠ What is intriguing is that even these Apocryphal gospels do not claim that Christ was married to Mary Magdalene. This was a personal interpretation of the author to add some zest to his novel.
- ✠ Once again Brown offers his own interpretation of the gospel of Philip. On page 246, the excerpt reads: “the companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene”. He claims that the Aramaic word for “companion” literally meant “spouse”. That is not true according to Aramaic scholars. And, even more importantly, the Gnostic gospel of Phillip was not written in Aramaic, it was written in Coptic.
- ✠ Moreover, the authors of the New Testament regularly depict the Church as “the bride of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 21:9-10). This metaphor would never have developed if Christ was already married with a spouse. Only if Christ was celibate would the Church have come to be depicted metaphorically as his bride.
- ✠ We do not have any reference from the Church’s elderly fathers indicating that the Lord Jesus Christ married. Even at the early centuries when the Divinity of Christ was being attacked, no one claimed that the Lord Christ was ever married or had children. We do not have a record of any defense from the early fathers of the Church on this topic, which indicates that this marriage claim was never the subject matter of a discussion or an issue in the first place.
- ✠ Additionally, and to keep matters simple, we can close this discussion with just one verse. In the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: “*Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas*” 1 Cor 9:5. So if the Lord Christ was married, the argument have been stronger had St. Paul used the Lord Christ as the reference, rather than using all those witnesses from the disciples. Additionally, no referencing of the Lord Christ being married has ever been mentioned in the New Testament nor was there any prophecy about that in the Old Testament.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE BIBLE WAS MODIFIED AND THAT IT IS FALSE:

- ✠ The Bible is not the product of man; it is however inspired by God through man. Biblical inspiration may be defined as God superintending the human authors, and using their own individual personalities and writing styles under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This resulted in a perfect and errorless recording of the exact message God desired to give to man.

- ✠ For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)
- ✠ There are more than 5,000 different ancient Greek manuscripts containing all the New Testament that have survived to our time. These are written on different materials.
- ✠ Chester Beatty Papyri contains most of the NT writings is dated AD 250
- ✠ Older Papyri, Codex Vaticanus and Codes Siniaticus.
- ✠ The Bodmer Papyri contains most of John and dates AD 200.
- ✠ Rylands Papyri founded in Egypt, containing a fragment of John and dates AD 130.
- ✠ In 2 Peter 1:16 we read, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”
- ✠ Additionally, the entire New Testament can be reconstructed from quotations in the writings of the Early (Ante-Nicene) Church Fathers (AD 95 - 400)*

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline	Catholic	Revelation	Totals
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement (Alex)	1,107	44	1,127	207	11	2,496
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

- ✠ Taken from Josh McDowell, The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict, p. 43.

HOW DID WE OBTAIN THE HOLY BIBLE AS WE KNOW IT TODAY?

- ‡ It was precisely when certain writings appeared claiming to be Apostolic, but were unrecognized by the church as authentic, that efforts were made to make “an approved list” that is the “canon” of the New Testament.
- ‡ Between 170 AD and 220 AD the four Gospels and St. Paul's epistles were formally recognized as “canonical “. Within a century after that the New Testament as we know it today was formally recognized as the “canonical text”. It should be noted that what made the books canonical was their inspiration by the Holy Spirit and their use in the life of the early Church as “inspired text”.
- ‡ This acknowledgement of an official “canon” might never had taken place if other writings had not appeared which claimed to be written by Apostles but were unknown to the Church in its worship and teaching. These false books are the books referred to by some as the “Lost Books of The Bible” or “Apocrypha”.
- ‡ The majority of these Apocryphal books were intended to distort the message of Christ. These deceptive writings were attained from the heresy of “Gnosticism”.
- ‡ In Summary, the Holy Bible was written BY the Church and IN the Church and FOR the Church within the confinement of Holy Tradition. Consequently, it is the Church that recognizes what is canonical through its use in her worship and teaching. The Holy Bible and Church are inseparable.

Conclusion

- ✠ The Lord Christ has already prophesied that sin and evil thoughts are going to come. Even from the beginning of Christianity, wrong thoughts have surfaced but they all vanished while Christianity has grown stronger.
- ✠ The world does not want to feel that it is committing sin nor does it want to feel that it needs repentance or salvation. Hence, the world welcomes all such wrong thoughts and these thoughts spread quickly into many people hearts and are welcomed by the media.
- ✠ In the da Vinci code we find claims that are full of lies and imagination that mix matters to fulfill two goals: the first is a business and a profitable goal as the novel has sold more than 60 million copies, not to mention that it was transformed into a movie that attracted millions of people since it was opened on the 19th May 2006. The second goal is to attack Christianity with its faith, doctrine and history.
- ✠ The story of the novel itself claims that the Lord Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene and had a girl named Sarah as a result. This royal descendent still exists till today and the “Sion” group, which was established in 1099, still believes this claim. The group also claims that it knows facts and many other secrets and symbols that Christians are trying to fight against, as a result the Opus Die has been established to encounter the “Sion” group.
- ✠ One of the most important and known people who have followed the “Sion” group ideas and beliefs was the Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci who is from Vince, Italy. His Last Supper drawing was intentionally drawn without the Holy Grail and with Mary Magdalene to indicate that Mary Magdalene’s descendent is instead of the Holy Grail. This is considered to be biggest lie that the author Dan Brown has used, to justify himself.

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