

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN!

A series of lessons designed to instill awareness of basic responsibilities that members sustain to each other and to the Lord. These things are designed by the Lord to cause His body to grow, and thus be a better instrument in reaching out to the lost. The thoughts and lessons on these pages have been gleaned from so many sources I wouldn't know where to begin to start giving credits. Suffice it to say, my only reason for gathering this data is to serve the Lord more diligently and to glorify Him. May all who study or teach these pages be of the same purpose. God be praised!

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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN!

Lesson 1: MY SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN!

INTRODUCTION:

1. The fact that I am a Christian means that my life now has greater blessings than ever before!
2. With these blessings there are also responsibilities, but each command of God is designed for my own personal good.
3. If one blessing can be said to be greater than any other, that of the forgiveness of sins would top the list! Were it not for this blessing, we would never enjoy Heaven!

I. ALL HAVE SINNED!

- A. Sin defined: [**hamartia**] *"a failing to hit the mark, a bad action, evil deed ... a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action. 2. That which is done wrong ... an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act."* ---Thayer
 1. Transgression. I John 3:4
 2. Unrighteousness. I John 5:17
 3. Wasted opportunities. James 4:17
 4. Not of faith. Romans 14:23
- B. The Scriptures are explicit: Romans 3:23; I John 1:8-10
- C. The consequences of sin are emphatic and undesirable!
 1. Sin separates from God. Isaiah 59:1-2
 2. It will cause us to be lost. 2 Thes.1:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev.10:11-12; 21:8

II. JESUS CAME TO SAVE THE LOST! Luke 19:10; I Timothy 1:15

- A. He died for our sins. Romans 5:6-8; Heb.9:22; Matt.26:28
- B. He is our advocate with God. I John 2:1-2
- C. The New Testament is the means of our salvation.
 1. The law of Moses in the Old Testament couldn't save. Romans 3:20
 2. The grace of Christ through the New Testament does! Heb.10:9-10

III. WE HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL.

Rom.1:16; Heb.5:8-9; I Peter 1:22-23

- A. The commission of Christ: Mark 16:15-16; Matt.28:18-20; Luke 24:47
- B. It was first preached on Pentecost: Acts 2:36-41
- C. It, along with other scriptures, teaches that we must:
 1. Believe: Hebrews 11:6
 2. Repent: Acts 17:30
 3. Confess: Acts 8:36-38
 4. Be baptized: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
 - a) Baptism puts us into Christ! Galatians 3:27
 - b) In Christ we are saved! 2 Tim.2:10; 2 Cor.5:17
- D. Thus, we have remission of our sins!
 "Remission" = [**aphesis**] *"forgiveness, pardon, of sins (prop. the letting them go, as if they had not been committed) remission of their penalty."* ---Thayer

CONCLUSION:

We can never fully appreciate the remission of sins here, but it is just one of the many blessings we enjoy as Christians. Let us show others what a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian, and more people will be asking, "WHAT SHALL WE DO TO BE SAVED?"

QUESTIONS ON LESSON # 1

1. Why is engaging in sinful activities not acceptable to the Lord? What does sin do that nothing else will do?

2. What passages lead you to believe that Jesus knew His purpose on earth was to be a sacrifice to save the Lost, and who all might that include?

3. If forgiveness of sins is a genuine BLESSING from God, do we have to actually DO anything in order to have God's forgiveness?

4. Can you wrap up forgiveness of sins into ONE THING and, if so, what would you say we're saved by, and WHY?

5. If sin separates from God: a) When? b) How far? c) For how long? d) Why does it?

6. To what end is Jesus serving now? [Is He still shedding His blood? Is He still offering sacrifice for us? Does He have to die anymore? Is He benefitting us now?]

7. What is inferred by the GREAT COMMISSION?

8. Whom did Jesus make responsible for carrying out the great commission?

9. Just HOW IMPORTANT can the remission of sins be, especially to people of today?

10. What are some ways we can be showing others our Christianity?

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Lesson 2: I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW! II Peter 3:18; 1:5-11

INTRODUCTION:

When one becomes a Christian, he is then a babe in Christ. That's how, **by the new birth**, he has entered the family of God, and so now has the need to **grow constantly stronger** [in knowledge, in maturity, in spirituality] as a child of God! In this lesson we study the need and manner of that growth!

I. GOD'S WORD IS THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL FOOD!

- A. As babes, we must grow if we're to develop properly. I Peter 2:1-2
- B. The Bible, the word of God, provides both milk and meat. Hebrews 5:12-14
- C. The Bible, the word of God, is adequate to furnish us to every good thing the Lord expects of us! II Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3
- D. Therefore, there is the **need** to get the "food of God" [*His information*] from the Bible into our minds! The **ONLY** way to do that is called "STUDYING"! II Tim. 2:15; I Tim. 4:13
1. How often should one study for proper development? Acts 17:11
 2. What should be our attitude toward the Word of God? James 1:21-22
- E. If the spiritual realm is anything at all akin to the physical realm then, **as a new babe in Christ --- A CHRISTIAN --- I'll need to study God's word [take food] every day!**

II. I ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ATTEND AND FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE CONGREGATION WHERE I'M A MEMBER!

- A. Attendance is essential to growth. We feed our physical bodies about 21 times each week. This should cause some serious consideration about how much we need to feed our souls!
- B. When we come together, the Lord has promised to be with us! Matthew 18:20; 28:20.

- C. It's a Divine command with Godly benefits **for me AND others**, both from our study together as well as our mutual edification! **Hebrews 10:23-25**
1. We're obligated to aid and assist each other. **Galatians 6:1-2**; **Ephesians 4:16**
 2. So it helps us to have a good conscience knowing that we are obeying God as well as sustaining each other! **James 4:17**; **I John 3:21-22**
- D. Attendance is essential to fellowship in work and worship!
1. Just as in the physical realm, proper development necessarily includes the right kinds and amounts of food, suitable exercise, an acceptable environment, and the encouragement of others in our growth patterns!
 2. Many of our acts that bring praise and adoration to God are ***jointly participated in***, because they not only show our WORSHIP OF GOD, they also are a MEANS OF OUR OWN GROWTH AND STRENGTH! **II Peter 3:18**
 - a) One of the reasons for our coming together is to partake of the Lord's Supper! **Matt. 26:26-29**
 - 1) How often was it observed? **Acts 20:7**
 - 2) WHY? What does "In remembrance of Me" mean? **I Cor.11:25**
 - 3) What does the Lord's Supper have to do with our faith in the second coming? **I Cor.11:26**
 - 4) How is it a memorial of His death? **I Cor.11:26**
 - 5) What is the purpose of "examine himself" ["searching the inner heart"]? **I Cor.11:28**
 - 6) How does the Lord's Supper affect our spiritual health? **I Cor.11:29-32**
 - 7) ***Why do we need to "come together" to effect these things?***
 - b) What's the need for "coming together" to praise God in song? **Eph. 5:19**; **Col. 3:16.**
 - c) Being in a worship assembly places us in a good environment! **I Cor.15:33**
- E. Attending services is a source of increasing our faith, of our edifying and being edified, of our provoking to good works and being provoked, and of **helping us all to persevere** in our steadfastness in serving the Lord! **IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**
1. The "pattern" of apostacy nearly always begins with neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, even though we may consider some of the services as "lesser important", viz- Midweek Bible studies or Sunday evening services.
 2. Spiritual union with Christ is essential, and I can find it in assembling with the household of God!
 3. It helps us to realize our continued relationship as a part of that "Holy Temple". **Ephesians 2:19-22**
 4. Being faithful to the Lord benefits us with the greatest blessings ever! **Rev.2:10**

CONCLUSION: **Galatians 6:9**; **I Corinthians 15:58**

QUESTIONS ON LESSON # 2

1. Once you get into Christ through the new birth, do you have any further "works" to do? If so, what?

2. Is "milk" and "meat" the same to everyone? How can we determine the difference?

3. WHO'S responsibility is it to make sure that new babes in Christ get fed, and why?

4. What does attending services have to do with "growing" as a Christian?

5. Name three benefits you feel are vital to spiritual well-being that you receive from attending services.

6. What difference do you feel is made in one's life who regularly attends services?

7. What NEED does attendance of services fulfill that cannot otherwise be done?

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Lesson 3: I HAVE A DUTY TO GIVE TO THE LORD!

INTRODUCTION:

1. God has ordained every one of His commands to us for our own benefit and spiritual well-being! This is especially true of His command for us to **GIVE!** Acts 20:35-*"It is more blessed to give than to receive!"*

2. Here you see the central theme of Christianity all wrapped up in this one verse: our attitude and disposition of mind ought to be concerning **WHAT WE CAN DO FOR THE LORD, AND OTHERS!** The attitude of the world is, "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO FOR ME?" Our attitude is given strength with the following facts:
- A. God gave to us:
 - 1) Life. Acts 17:24-25
 - 2) Material blessings. Acts 14:17
 - 3) His Son. John 3:16
 - 4) Salvation. Rom.6:23
 - 5) Will give us all things. Rom.8:32
 - B. Jesus freely gave and brought untold blessings.
 - 1) He became poor that we might be rich. 2 Cor.8:9
 - 2) He gave Himself. Gal.2:20; Titus 2:14
 - C. **It was Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive!"**
3. What are some of these "blessings of giving"?

I. THE CHURCH IS BLESSED WITH INCREASED ABILITY!

- A. The church cannot enter into business enterprises to finance its work, such as real estate schemes, raffles, pie suppers, etc. Such is without scriptural authority in carrying out the work of the church!
- B. **INDIVIDUALS ARE TO WORK!** I Thes.4:11-12; Eph.4:28
- C. Then the individual is to give to the Lord [via the church] according to the way he has prospered! I Cor.16:2. Thus, the church is blessed with ability to support its work from the freewill offerings and contributions of its members. I Cor.9:14; I Tim.5:16

II. THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE ARE OBEYING A DIVINE COMMAND!

- A. Obedience to the Lord's commands always brings blessings to the person.
- B. An examination of the commands reveal the manner of our giving:
 1. It is **periodic**. "*First Day of the week*"
 2. It is **personal**. "*Each one of you*" [The poor and rich alike stand on equal ground here. Not in the amount, but in motive and attitude! Mark 12:41-44]
 3. It is **proportionate**. "*As God hath prospered him*"
 - a) How much shall I give? Should I compare with other people & what they do?
 - b) Compare these passages of scripture: Deut.16:16-17: 2 Cor.8:12
 4. It is a **voluntary pledge** on our part. 2 Cor.9:7
 5. It is also a **promise** ... as we have **PURPOSED** in our hearts! 2 Cor.9:7
- C. The **BASIS** of our liberality is whether or not **we've given ourselves to God**. 2 Cor.8:1-5

III. FINALLY, THERE ARE DEFINITE BLESSINGS TO THE GIVER!

Mal.3:8-10; Luke 6:38

- A. The giver's "reaping" will be in proportion to his "sowing". 2 Cor.9:6-7
- B. The more we give the more fruit will abound to our account. Phil.4:15-17

- C. It's the way we lay up treasures in heaven. I Tim.6:17-19;
Matt.6:19
- D. It is a way for us to be pleasing to God. Heb.13:16
1. "God loveth a cheerful giver!"
2. But Satan sure doesn't!
- E. It's the way we reap a harvest. You can't reap if you don't
sow! Psa.126:6

CONCLUSION:

1. When we do not give PROPERLY, we rob God!
2. Yet, even more, we rob ourselves of the richest blessings possible ... the blessings of liberality! 2 Cor.8:1-5
3. We all need to strive diligently to give ourselves completely to the Lord!

QUESTIONS ON LESSON # 3

1. Why must we obey the COMMANDS of God if we're saved by GRACE and can't EARN our salvation?

2. What does "giving" have to do with Christianity since God can't really SPEND physical money?

3. What is meant by the fact that there's no scriptural authority for the church to be in secular business?

4. Name five things that help determine the amount we give.

5. What does the passage about "reaping & sowing" (2 Cor.9:6-7) have to do with "giving our money?"

6. Why would anyone want to "lay up treasures in heaven?" (As per Matt.6:20)

7. Name some specific blessings we can cause when we give of our means acceptably to God.

8. Whom do you suppose benefits the most from our giving to the Lord, and why?

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Lesson 4: I AM A DEBTOR TO HELP CONVERT SINNERS! Romans 1:14-17; Matt.22:39

INTRODUCTION:

1. Teaching the gospel in order to try to lead sinners to the Lord is noted by Christ as being the "***second greatest commandment!***"
2. ***IT IS GREAT*** because it ***fulfills a purpose that God has in US***, and ***it leads the lost to God's scheme of redemption*** -- according to the plan that HE has instituted!

I. THE MISSION OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH IS THE SALVATION OF SINNERS!

- A. Christ came to save the lost. Luke 19:10
- B. The mission of the church is the same as Christ's. Eph.3:10-11; I Tim.3:15
- C. It's up to the members of the church to carry out this work. Matt.28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16
- D. New Testament Examples:
 1. They went everywhere preaching the word. Acts 8:4
 2. They continued in the apostles' doctrine. Acts 2:42
 3. They taught daily. Acts 2:46
 4. They taught from house to house. Acts 20:20

II. WHY WE SHOULD TEACH OTHERS:

- A. Christ, our Master, was a personal teacher. John 3:1-5; 4:6ff
- B. Early Christians were personal teachers. [See NT examples noted above in I.D.1-4]
- C. WE are also commanded to teach others. Matt.28:19; 2 Tim.2:2; I Pet.3:15; Jude 3
- D. We derive untold blessings from the activity of teaching others!
 1. We grow in the word ourselves! Matt.5:6
 2. There's also the joy of bringing others to Christ.
 3. There's fruit to our record with God!
- E. It is the effective means God has set for bringing converts to Christ. I Cor.1:21

III. THERE IS A "CALLING" TO FULFILL THIS RESPONSIBILITY!

- A. First, the call from ***ABOVE***. God commands it! Matt.28:19-20
- B. Then, the call from ***WITHOUT***. The need of the sinner calls!

1. Men are lost and need help! **Rom.3:23**
2. The fields are white ... ready to be harvested! **John 4:35**
- C. The call from **WITHIN**. Our conscience. **I Cor.9:16.** Remember the song: *"You Never Mentioned Him to Me!"*
- D. The call from **BENEATH!** **Luke 16:19-31.** What was this lost man's urgent desire?

IV. THE GOSPEL MEETS THE NEED FOR SALVATION! Rom.1:14-17;

I Cor.15:1-4.

- A. It was this gospel that I obeyed from the heart. It washed my sins away and hence I must tell it to my friends that they, too, may learn and obey.
- B. In order to meet the need, it must be proclaimed. **2 Tim.2:2**
- C. Do not get too busy to teach or preach the gospel to your neighbor or friends.
- D. Not everyone can preach or teach publicly, **BUT ALL CAN PERSONALLY EVANGELIZE!** For someone who loves the Lord, nothing thrills the soul like seeing someone whom you have taught obey the gospel.
- E. Put some good study time in on **Ezek.3:15-21**

CONCLUSION:

1. We cannot have someone else commune for us, give for us, be honest for us, or be baptized for us. Neither can we pay someone to do our personal work for us.
2. When we let others do it, we rob ourselves of the blessings that come from helping other people go to heaven.
3. Personal evangelism is a blessing because it saves a soul from death! **James 5:19-20.**
4. When you teach others, you help yourself to live more Godly.
5. How many people will be in heaven because of you?

QUESTIONS ON LESSON # 4

1. Why did Christ have to come to earth & die to save the lost? Why not just speak it so?

2. Why is it necessary for the mission of the church to be the same as Christ's?

3. Presuming that we don't all have to do exactly the same things in fulfilling God's mission for us, please note some different endeavors we may engage in as acceptable service.

4. Do you "**have a call**" for spreading the gospel? From whence?

5. WHY, or HOW, is the gospel effective in saving people?

6. Can one (or, SOME) pay another to do their evangelistic efforts for them? (Think on this one!)

7. What attitude of heart should Christians have toward teaching others the gospel?

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Lesson 5: IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK WITH THE ELDERS OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATION!

INTRODUCTION:

1. God in His wisdom provided the organization essential to carry on His work. **The purpose of organization is in order to accomplish the work a particular body is designed to do!**
2. Each person has a responsibility to perform his particular work in the best manner possible; efficiently, thoroughly, consistently and persistently!

I. THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE ONLY UNIT OF ORGANIZATION THAT GOD HAS GIVEN THROUGH WHICH WE ARE TO PERFORM OUR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES! Phil.1:1; I Cor.1:2; Rom.16:16; [Rev.1-2-3]

- A. Each local church is to have a plurality of elders. **Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23**
- B. The authority of elders is restricted to the local church, so that is where their realm of activity as an eldership must be confined! **Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2**
 1. The purpose of organization is to facilitate and fulfill the work for which a body is responsible. [Would you say it's important for a congregation to become "organized" as soon as possible? Why?]
 2. The local church **IS THE ONLY UNIT OF ORGANIZATION** of God's people on earth for doing the work of the church, and is the **full**

extent of the organization [That's as far as the organization reaches --- **just the local congregation!**].

- a) **THEN** [*here's a definitive conclusion*] the eldership has no right, ***no scriptural authority***, to act as elders outside the bounds of the local congregation [that is, their being elders doesn't extend to any other body, or organization].
- b) And, since that is true, the local congregation has no right, ***no scriptural authority***, to obligate themselves for any work that extends beyond the scope of the local church -- or, beyond the authority of their eldership!

II. THE WORK, DUTY AND OBLIGATIONS OF ELDERS:

- A. "*Tend the flock (church) of God among you!*" **Acts 20:28; I Pet.5:2; I Tim.3:2**
- B. They're to encourage and discipline the congregation. **I Thes.5:14-15; I Cor.5:9-11**
- C. Rule, exercise oversight, rule well. **Heb.13:17; I Tim.5:17; I Pet.5:2**
- D. They're watchmen of the souls under their care. **Heb.13:17; I Tim.3:5; Titus 1:7**
- E. They're examples for the congregation. **I Pet.5:4**
- F. ***Some restrictions do apply!*** What do you see as restrictions in **I Pet.5:1-4?**

III. THE RELATION AND ATTITUDE OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF A LOCAL CONGREGATION TO THE ELDERSHIP

- A. Know them, duly respect, regard them. **I Thes.5:12-13**
- B. Be subject to them, obey them. **Heb.13:17**
- C. Receive not an accusation against them. **I Tim.5:19**
- D. Above all, there should be full cooperation.
 1. Their plans are made with you in mind and are for the betterment of each person within the local church.
 2. Thus, work with them in the services, in giving, and in living the life of a Christian which would honor and glorify the Heavenly Father!

CONCLUSION:

The elders are serving as shepherds over the flock and we are as the sheep! **John 10: 4, 9, 10, 14, 15.** ***We need to help them in this greatest of human works!***

QUESTIONS ON LESSON # 5

1. How many elders does a congregation of 100 members have to have?

2. What are elders supposed to BE and DO?

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3. What should be the attitude of the congregation toward the eldership?

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4. What should be the attitude of the eldership toward the congregation?

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5. How is the local congregation to be organized? WHY? WHO decided that?

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6. It the responsibility of the elders is to FEED the flock, what's the flock's responsibility? Elaborate.

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7. How important is the reputation and influence of elders?

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8. How long a term should an elder serve?

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9. What happens if the elders decide something I don't like?