
STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS SYLLABUS

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I: Introduction to Christian Ethics

This study will cover Christian behavior and conduct from all aspects, including Christian responsibility and morality applied to daily living.

Resource Materials (While not individually footnoted, all are utilized, cited and quoted, some extensively):

An Introduction to Christian Ethics Charles B. Williams
Christian Personal Ethics Carl F.H. Henry
Basic Christian Ethics Paul Ramsey
Ethics, Alternatives & Issues Norman Geisler
Christian Ethics R.E.O. White
Theonomy in Christian Ethics. Greg Bahnsen
Introducing Christian Ethics. Henry Barnett
Christian Ethics, a Primer. William Tillman
Lecture Series on Christian Ethics Dr. Hobart Freeman
Christian Ethics. Waldo Beach, H. Richard Niebuhr

The study will be divided into two sections. The first section deals with the principles of Christian Ethics while the second will be concerned with the practice.

A. Definitions

1. The Basic Definition

An ethic is defined as a set of moral principles or values; a theory or system of moral values. Ethics are principles of conduct, i.e., what is good, what is bad, etc.

2. The Definition from the Perspective of the Christian

- a. The study of the principles and practices of right and wrong in the light of the Scriptures;
- b. The application of Christianity to conduct;
- c. Translating doctrine into deeds, i.e., the study and application of the Christian faith.

Some mistakenly use the terms “ethics” and “morals” interchangeably, but they are not the same. The term “morals” comes from the Latin meaning “custom” or “habit.” Morals are what people do.

The word “ethics” is from the Greek meaning a standard or rule; a norm. In contrast to morals, ethics communicates the idea of what one ought to do, whereas morals are what they actually do.

Ethics is faith translated into actions. It is living according to biblical facts and principles, not just having knowledge of them.

B. Why study Christian Ethics?

1. Because all people make moral and ethical decisions every day.
2. Because all people need the light that it throws on our daily problems and decisions.
3. Because it stimulates personal spiritual growth. Ethics supplies the standard by which believers can measure their own spiritual growth and development.
4. Because Jesus' teaching was ethical as well as theological.
5. Because every decision is made according to some ethic, i.e., some standard or norm.

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
[Judges 17:6]

This, unfortunately, is the standard of ethics for many today.

C. Two-fold Standard of Conduct or Model

1. Jesus, i.e., His example, His life.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
[John 14:6]

2. The Word of God.

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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2 Tim. 3:16-17]

D. Several Presuppositions to be kept in mind during the course of this Study

1. Christian ethics is grounded or based on the ethics of the Old Testament, its Jewish heritage. The presupposition ethics of the Old Testament fulfilled themselves in the New Testament. The New Testament does not stand by itself, but it's a fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.
[Mat. 5:17]

2. There is a vast difference between Christian ethics and all other ethical systems. For example, philosophical ethics are the ethics of the world and they are based on such things as duty, pleasure, law, science, etc., whereas Christian ethics are based on right and wrong in the light of the scriptures. Philosophy raises all the same questions as theology but the conclusions drawn from philosophy are all wrong. Philosophical ethics tries to answer all questions based on man's fallen intellect. Their ethics is therefore inadequate and incomplete. No philosophy or religion can provide the correct answers except Christianity. The problem with philosophical ethics is that the reasons and concepts of fallen man are made to be the standard. They base their knowledge and pursuit of truth on man's reason. The Christian bases his on the divine revelation of God's Word and the person of Jesus. This is the man who possesses truth.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. [1 Cor. 2:14]

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds. [Eph. 4:17]

Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. [Jer. 10:14-15]

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord. [Ps. 14:1- 4]

3. Christian ethics are based on the Christian religion and because of this, demands moral and ethical behavior. Not every religion, however, demands such behavior. For example, the religions of the ancient Philistines and Canaanites were very immoral with such practices as temple prostitution and child sacrifices.

This lack of moral and ethical behavior in religion is still prevalent in India and other Hindu and Buddhist countries today. Because of their belief in reincarnation and Karma, they have no pity or sympathy for the afflicted, i.e., the blind, cripples, retarded, etc. They feel it is their just desert for bad deeds in a previous life.

The Christian religion, on the other hand, requires certain moral and ethical behavior. However, some professing Christian groups and individuals have abandoned their Judeo-Christian moral and ethical heritage, and now promote pro-abortion positions, homosexual clergy, gambling (bingos, raffles, etc.) drinking, etc. in their church sponsored activities and think there is nothing wrong with it. For the genuine Christian, however, his religion affects every aspect of his life.

4. Christian ethics is not a legal system of ethics or laws but principles that inform us how we should act based on the Word of God.

5. Christian ethics are not based on principles alone but on a living person, i.e., Jesus Christ. One can easily become legalistic by just memorizing a law and not having understood the principle behind it. If all we do is simply adhere to a policy or a rule, we fall into Pharisaic legalism! For the Christian, it should be a matter of conviction of the heart. We choose to follow certain principles of conduct out of love for our Savior.

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II: A Brief History of Christian Ethics

Moral and ethical conduct dates back to the Garden of Eden. Even then they had to make choices and God expected them to choose "right."

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him. [Gen. 2:17-18]

A. Ethics of Ancient Babylon

Babylonian ethics dealt more with social contact than morality. They emphasized such things as the strong not oppressing the weak, i.e., justice to widows, orphans, etc. They taught that religion and ethics had no real relationship. Morally, the gods of the Babylonians (and later, those of the Greeks and Romans), were no better than the people themselves. For example, the Roman god, Bacchus (Greek-Dionysus), was the god of wine and intoxication. Many of the gods of the ancients were extremely depraved in behavior, having committed the vilest acts of immorality and deceit. The only difference between man and his gods was that the gods were stronger and they did not die. Their teaching was that since it was the gods who made men liars, etc., it was therefore impossible for men to behave morally and ethically.

B. Egyptian Ethics

In the 16th century BC, the code of ethics of the Egyptians was essentially that of justice and order. Theirs was a polytheistic society but religion didn't play much of a role in the setting of ethical standards. These people believed that their happiness in the after life depended on their behavior in this life so some degree of morality was demanded.

C. Hindu Ethics

The chief ends of the Hindu's brand of ethics were wealth, desire, and duty, the supreme end being salvation or liberation (Buddhism-Nirvana) as they called it. Others within Hindu/Buddhism believed the method of attaining liberation was through yoga and meditation. They also believe in transmigration which is a belief that a person is reincarnated into another life form, i.e., a cat, dog, cow, or even an insect or a vegetable, etc. One's "karma" determined what life form his next incarnation would take. All forms of life are therefore held in reverence, since by their belief, a rat, bird, monkey or bug could be the reincarnation of your grandmother.

D. Moslem Ethics

The ethics of the Moslem is based on the Koran, their holy book. The emphasis of Islamic ethics is conformity to the law. Religion covers every aspect of the Moslem's life -- their morality, both individual and social, the taking of hostages, and so on.

E. Hebrew Ethics

The ethics of the Hebrew came with the revelation to Moses in the Old Testament. Theirs was a higher system of ethics than any other nation's ethical code. It was the only one that demanded holiness, separation, etc. The Hebrews had the highest form of ethics until the advent of Christianity. Christian ethics is a continuation and fulfillment of Hebrew ethics.

F. Greek Ethics

Some Greek philosophies are still prevalent and influential today. Teachings of some of the more famous Greek philosophers are:

1. Socrates (469 - 399BC, about the same time as Israel's restoration from captivity)

Born in Athens, Socrates was the first moral philosopher. He dealt with two moral questions, i.e., justice and virtue. The problem was that he equated knowledge with virtue, saying that an educated person was righteous and all vice the result of ignorance. The uneducated person was a fool. In 399BC, Socrates was charged with deserting the Grecian gods and corrupting the youth. He was sentenced to die and was poisoned by drinking hemlock. He founded no schools of philosophy.

2. Plato (427 - 347BC)

A student of Socrates, he taught that perfection is attained by practicing the four cardinal virtues, i.e., temperance, courage, justice and wisdom. He said to develop these, one would then be righteous. This philosophy is currently found in many churches today.

3. Aristotle (384 - 322BC)

Studied at Plato's academy in Athens, Aristotle became the tutor of Alexander of Macedon, who later came to be known as Alexander the Great. Aristotle taught that man's chief end is to be happy and only an educated man was a happy man. He brought Plato's views into his school. His chief view he called the golden mean which means "Do nothing in excess."

4. Epicurus (341 - 270BC)

Founder of the philosophical view of Hedonism (termed the ethic of the pigsty), Hedonistic philosophy taught that pleasure was the highest good of man. The pursuit of pleasure was man's chief goal. Pleasure was good and pain was evil. Epicurus rejected Aristotle's golden mean of doing nothing to excess. He said that religion is the chief curse of the human race. He was not really saying that he did not believe in the gods, but he said that the gods had no interest in the human race. Epicurus could also have been a founder of the evolutionary theory. He said that humans were a conglomeration of atoms that came together by chance.

Hedonism is a religion of selfishness. Whatever makes one happy, then do it, regardless of its effect on others. If it makes the individual feel good, then it's all right.

5. Zeno

The founder of Stoicism, Zeno founded a school that lasted from 294 to 200AD. It was still in evidence during the time of Jesus and is mentioned in the book of Acts. Their teachings were exactly the opposite of those of Epicurus. The Stoics taught the highest end is self-denial.

And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.... Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? others said, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. [Acts 17:15-16, 18]

The proponents of the teachings of Zeno taught that the highest goal was to be completely passionless and without feeling, i.e., to feel nothing. Joy, happiness, grief, pain, etc. would have no effect on the wise man. They believed that only two things were real -- fate and providence. Everything that happened was the will of God so all that a man could do was assent to God's will. To show emotion, i.e., grief, joy, etc. was to be diseased. To arrive at the state which was the

standard for the Stoic, one had to practice asceticism, resign oneself to fate and become completely emotionless. The monastics followed this teaching.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. [Col. 2:8]

G. Christian Ethics (as taught by Jesus and the apostles)

The apostles taught that Christianity is not a philosophy but a religion, i.e., the worship of the person Jesus Christ, and is based on principles collected in the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity taught that its principles did not apply just to the educated, but to **all** people. In fact, Christianity teaches that God chooses the foolish.

By the fourth century AD, Constantine had brought many unregenerate into the church. Churches became ritualistic as paganism came into the church. It was about this time that monasticism was born.

Some early Christians who influenced Christianity and Christian doctrine:

1. Augustin of Hippo (354 - 430AD)

Augustin was the first to systematize Christian ethics. Although he had a lot of good things to say, he also had a lot of bad things to say as well. He was greatly influenced by Greek philosophy and tried to Christianize some of Plato's teachings. He taught there were seven cardinal virtues, i.e., the four taught by Plato, which were temperance, courage, justice and wisdom, plus three of the apostle Paul's which were faith, hope and love. His philosophy prevailed in the church until the time of the Middle Ages.

2. Scholasticism (School Men)

This group founded schools and universities of higher learning. They were theologians who tried to harmonize faith and reason and attempted to make a philosophy out of Christianity. Some of the more prominent of this group were Anselm, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas (the father of Roman Catholic theology), who was influenced by the teachings of Aristotle.

3. Mysticism

Mysticism came into being after the Middle Ages. The Mystics repudiated ritual and religion and rejected monasticism and Roman Catholicism. Some of the more influential Mystics were Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, and Thomas a' Kempis who authored the *Imitation of Christ*.

4. Reformation

This era brought the return to New Testament ethics. Monasticism, Ecclesiasticism, and Roman Catholicism were rejected. The reformation of Martin Luther did not teach much holiness but emphasized justification by faith.

5. Holiness

During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, several men and groups came into prominence whose ethical views emphasized holiness. Among their number were the Wesley brothers, John Knox and the Puritans.

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Part III: The Three Basic Questions of Ethics

What is the highest good of man?
What is man's purpose, his goal?
What is man here on earth for?

These three questions are at the heart of every philosophy, religion, and ethics. We will see first how the philosophies answer, and then we will see the answer based on the Christian ethic.

A. Hedonism

Hedonism (the ethic of pleasure) and the American ethic (refer to Epicureanism): Hedonism teaches the pursuit of happiness and pleasure is an end in itself and is man's chief end in life. There are two basic types of Hedonism, namely:

1. Individualistic Hedonism: This is truly the American philosophy, i.e., the pursuit of happiness and pleasure. The individual's enjoyment and greatest amount of pleasure is the end or goal of Individualistic Hedonism. It's the "think of myself" philosophy, i.e., whatever makes me happy. America lives for recreation. Man works to make money to buy pleasure.

Individualistic Hedonism has now crept over into Christianity. Many have represented Christianity as a cross-less Christianity. They make no mention of the crucified life, the call to faith and the like. They preach such things as positive thinking, success, prosperity, and self-fulfillment. Numerous well known preachers in the U.S. promote this kind of Hedonism.

So what is the answer to our question #1? According to Individualistic Hedonism, it's personal happiness at any cost.

2. Universal Hedonism or Utilitarianism: This philosophy is the same as Individualistic Hedonism but universally applied. The founder was J.S. Mill who taught that those actions are right that make the most people happy. The highest good in life is utility -- the end justifies the means. Under this philosophy one could justify all kinds of sins such as lying, robbery, communism, socialism, etc. For example, "It's all right to lie if by so doing you keep from hurting someone." Also, you could justify the Robin Hood robbery method, i.e., stealing from the rich to give to the poor.

This philosophy has also crept into the church. For example, consider the unethical methods often used to raise money; unscrupulous manipulation, give-to-get promises of riches, raffles, bingos, etc. In other words, "if it works, if it raises money, then it's all right."

And what is God's answer to the American Hedonistic ethic?

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. [1 Jo. 2:15-17]

B. Stoicism

Stoicism is the ethic of self-denial. The highest good of man, they say, is self-denial, i.e., to be completely without passion or emotion, unaffected by grief, pain, happiness or pleasure. Stoicism is to exist in a state of tranquility and peace of mind. The Stoics taught that the supreme evil was emotion, i.e., to have emotion was to be diseased.

The philosophy of Stoicism has also crept into Christianity and is an open door to self-righteousness. In Roman Catholicism, Stoicism was adopted by the monastics in the third century. They practiced self-flagellation, and all types of rigorous self-abuses. Monasticism is based on two fallacies.

1. There's a double standard for Christian morality. The only way to attain perfection was to enter a monastery and devote one's life to prayer, fasting, and all types of self-denial so that one could achieve that state where they were unaffected by emotion.

They had another standard for the ordinary layman and this is where the distinction between clergy and laity began. In the Bible, there is no such distinction.

2. The second fallacy is that a life of extreme asceticism promotes righteous living. We know that exactly the opposite is true. The history of the monasteries is a sordid history. This is also the group that promoted the idea of celibacy. Celibacy is a gift (Paul had it), but it is not a gift that everyone has. The general Biblical principle is that "It is not good that the man should be alone (celibate), I will make him an help meet" (Gen.2:18). The error in monasticism has been to flee the sinful world rather than go out into the world to preach the gospel as our Lord said to do.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. [Jo. 17:15]

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 5:14-16]

Protestantism has also picked up Stoicism. Consider, for example, such groups as the Mennonites, the Amish, German Baptists, and many legalistic Pentecostals. These groups have confused "denying self" with "self-denial." An extreme example would be the Amish refusal to have electricity in their homes, or their unwillingness to drive any mechanized vehicle, etc. Legalism demands conformity, whereas true Christianity is transforming.

C. The Ethic of Duty

This ethic is that man's chief end is to do his duty. This is the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), who has been called the greatest modern philosopher. His philosophy can be summed up as "duty for duty's sake." He maintained there is a universal moral law in all men which he called "the sense of ought" and this "sense of ought" causes man to do his duty. He said that doing things out of duty is the highest moral law, that duty and obligation are inseparable terms. Moral law is within us and we're obligated to do it.

On the surface, this seems to be correct, but it is not really in line with Christian ethics and responsibility and often causes in man a false sense of responsibility. The "Ethic of Duty" is the ethic of the social gospel movements. Kant believed that religion was of value only insofar as it caused one to lead a good moral life. Liberal theologians such as Brunner and Brandt, have been tremendously influenced by Kant.

D. The Ethic of Self-Realization

This ethic teaches harmonious development of all of one's capacities and potentials. It encourages development of the self-life, i.e., self-worth, self-esteem, etc. The ethic teaches that one becomes the person he potentially is by coming to a position of self-realization.

This is exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches about self. The Bible teaches self-denial, humility, putting self to death. The ethic of Self-Realization can be summed up as follows:

1. Live by the golden rule;
2. Have faith in yourself -- you can do it! Just develop a well-rounded personality.

Modern philosophy is a big proponent of this self-realization ethic. They maintain that the greatest evil is a negative self-image. They teach that the individual is to look within, that the answer is within you. Realize your own self worth, etc.

No amount of self-realization is going to change man's fallen nature. Man can't look to himself for answers. He must look to God. Proponents of this ethic of self-realization include Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller and many of the so called "prosperity preachers."

E. The Ethic of Love

Embracing this ethic are "the bleeding hearts, i.e., the liberals." They teach that man's highest good is love, i.e., love your neighbor. The ethic of ecumenicalism is part of this and has been adopted by the World Council of Churches. The problem with this ethic is that they do not follow the biblical definition of love. To these people "unity" is more important than truth and the Bible doesn't teach that.

The Bible teaches that we're to dwell together in unity but also in truth. If you throw truth out for the sake of unity, you've missed it. We are set apart or consecrated through the truth (the Word). The unity system that promotes unity at all costs is a false system.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. [John 17:17]

...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. [John 14:6]

F. The Ethic of Power

Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) taught this philosophy and it was the ethic adopted by Adolf Hitler. Not only is this ethic wrong, but it was the justifying, underlying philosophy of tremendous evil. Nietzsche promoted the glorification of brute strength. He maintained that power and will are the keys to life and that war is a purifier of the human race. He called Christianity a slave morality. He said that the virtues of cruelty, courage, and Stoicism would carry the new race through to the future. He maintained that to be strong is to be right.

G. The Ethic of Intuition

This ethic promotes following the inner light. It is the ethic of the Quakers.

H. The Ethic of Pessimism (aka – The Ethic of Crisis)

This is the ethic of Buddhism, i.e., the view that life is futile and reality is evil. It is the view of gloom and doom. Buddha taught that all is suffering.

I. The Ethic of Marxism

This is the ethic of Karl Marx (1818-1883) of the communist ethic. Marx taught that the communist state is the highest state and whatever furthers the goal of the communist state is right. Hatred of religion and hatred of capitalism formed the communist ethic. These communistic policies have been responsible for the deaths of millions of people within their own communist countries. Anyone who opposes the communist state is killed.

J. The Christian Ethic

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
[Mat. 6:33]

What then is the answer to our question from the Christian ethic? It is two-fold:

1. The highest good of man is seeking first the kingdom and His righteousness in your life.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 7:21]

2. To do the will of God, not just doing works, but once the individual has determined the will of God, to be obedient to do God's will by faith.

We are to be about the same business as our Lord. Jesus' ultimate purpose was to establish the kingdom of heaven in the human heart.

K. The Most Important Principles of the Christian Life

1. An abiding trust, an abiding faith in God in all circumstances

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)
[Heb. 10:23] [Also read the entire 11th chapter.]

If you exercise this type of faith in every circumstance of life, the devil can never rob you.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. [Rom. 8:22]

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. [Acts 14:22]

Even in the midst of great duress, we are to continue in the faith. Never give up. A steadfast faith in Jesus Christ is the first and most important principle in the Christian life.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. [Phil. 4:19]

Put first things first and all those things which you need will be provided. It is faith in God that will deliver us from fear, anxiety, and worry.

2. Sincerity and honesty before God and before man.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.
[Eph. 4:15]

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. [2 Cor. 8:21]

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.
[1 Pe. 2:12]

The Christian is to be sincere, not hypocritical, not saying one thing and living another.

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God. [Deut. 25:13-16]

A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight. [Pro. 11:1]

These scriptures deal with man's sincerity and honesty with his fellowman in regards to unjust weights and measures, i.e., unfair and unscrupulous dealing in business activities. God hates dishonesty. One of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses says ...*Thou shalt not steal.* [Ex. 20:15]

Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. [Lk. 3:12-13]

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. [Mat. 7:12]

Jesus tells us that we should treat our fellowman as we want to be treated.

3. Genuine humility

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. [Mat. 5:5]

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering, wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. [1 Pe. 2:19-23]

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. [Phil. 2:1-9]

For I say, through the grace given unto me; to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. [Rom. 12:3]

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. [Jas. 1:21]

But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. [Jas. 4:16]

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. [Gal. 5:26]

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. [Gal. 6:1]

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. [Eph. 4:2]

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. [Col. 3:12-13]

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. [1 Cor. 10:12]

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.
[1 Cor. 13:4]

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
[1 Cor. 15:10]

The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility. [Prov. 15:33]

Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility. [Prov. 18:12]

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life. [Prov. 22:4]

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips. [Prov. 27:2]

If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. [Prov. 30:32]

4. A **forgiving** and **merciful** spirit toward all

Always give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. [Mk. 11:23-25]

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. [Eph. 4:32]

Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It is not an emotion you work up.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. [Col. 3:12]

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. [1 Pe. 4:8]

Love overlooks each other's many faults. Don't concentrate on each other's shortcomings, but instead pray for them. The scriptures tell us to love our enemies.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Mat. 5:43-48] (Also, take the time to read the account found in Matthew 18:21-35.)

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. [1 Jo. 3:15]

5. An **unqualified love of God** and of your neighbor

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great

commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. [Mat. 22:36-40]

Here Jesus gives us the two commandments on which all the others rest. It's impossible to love God and not love others. A natural outgrowth of love of God is love for others. (Read the parable of "The Good Samaritan" found in Luke 10:25-37. Also read James 2:2-9.)

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. [Gal. 5:6]

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. [1 Tim. 1:5]

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. [Mat. 7:12]

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. [1 Jo. 4:20-21]

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. [1 Jo.3:11-14]

6. A complete denial of self and dedication to discipleship

The believer's discipleship to Christ can't take a back seat to anything. Nothing must interfere with his commitment to Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Christian life is not in pleasing self but in pleasing Jesus.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.... And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. [Lk. 9:23, 57-62] (Read additional scriptures found in Luke 14:25-33; Matthew, the entire chapters of 5, 6, 7, and chapter 10:34-39.)

7. The practice of absolute separation from the world through both inward and outward purity

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [1 Jo. 2:15]

This passage tells us that if we love the world, we don't love God. God doesn't want us to have affection for anything here in this world. John also goes on to say:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. [1 Jo. 2:16]

As believers we're not to lust after the flesh, or love material things, or take sinful pride in oneself or one's achievements. If we do, the Word says that the love of the Father is not in us.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. [1 Jo. 2:17]

While the world is dying, those who persevere in the will of God will live on forever.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil.... [1 Jo. 3:7-8a]

In the life of the Christian there must be a separation from sin and the world unto God. It's those that do righteous who are righteous. Let no man deceive you, you cannot sin and stay under God's abundant blessing. The Christian is to run from sin as he would from the devil. Separation from the world is the theme in the following passages.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. [2 Cor. 6:14-18]

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom. 12:1-2]

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. [Rom. 13:14]

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. [Rom. 6:6]

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect. [Mat. 5:48]

Our old nature has been crucified with Christ. Our old nature has been buried and we've been resurrected in a new body to serve the Lord in righteousness. Sin has no more dominion over you. Don't let sin reign over you. It's not your master anymore!

What is our Standard?

What is to be our standard in making moral and ethical choices?

Christians face ethical choices and decisions every day, and many things may not be expressly forbidden in the scriptures, but might not be right conduct for a Christian. For example; smoking or chewing tobacco, imbibing intoxicants, viewing questionable programs and materials, etc.

Abstain from all appearance of evil. [1 Thes. 5:22]

One might ask himself the following questions when faced with such moral or ethical choices:

(a) Would Jesus do this?

(b) Will this glorify God?

(c) Will it edify me?

(d) Does it cause me to take even the appearance of evil?

(e) Could my doing this cause someone else to stumble? [For example, drinking wine with your dinner. Scripturally, you could excuse it but in a society of alcoholics, could your imbibing cause a weaker brother to stumble. Cf. 1 Cor. 8:9-13]

(f) Is my doing this a positive seeking after God's righteousness? [For example, a Christian athlete has been offered a sponsorship by a major liquor manufacturer. He could make big money by promoting the product. But is money the only consideration for a Christian?]

8. Absolute loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience to the Word and Will of God

As believers, we are to be faithful to the Lord. Why bother to call Him Lord (master) if we do not obey?

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 7:21]

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? [Lk. 16:10-12]

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Lk. 6:46]

9. A personal, evangelistic desire to fulfill the great commission as an expression of one's joy of sharing the good news of the kingdom to others.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. [Mat. 28:18-20]

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . . And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. [Mk. 16:15, 20]

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. [John 20:21]

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. [Acts 1:8]

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. [Acts 4:29-30]

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. [Acts 8:4]

10. A sincere concern and loyalty to uphold the purity of the faith at all costs

The Word tells us that we should refuse to let go of the faith. We must decide to be loyal to the truth.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. [Jude 1:3]

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. [1 Tim. 4:1-2]

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove,

rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. [2 Tim. 4:1-4]

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. [Acts 20:27-31]

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. [2 Jo. 1:7-11]

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able to sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. [Titus 1:9-14]

Also read the words of Paul when writing to the Galatians (Gal. 2:1-13) concerning the issue of circumcision for Gentile believers.

How should one go about refuting error or heresy?

To remain silent could be construed as a sign of affirmation or agreement, yet we must be sure never to be drawn into a fleshly debate or argument.

Some pointers are:

(a) Try to correct the error in the spirit of love. If you see that you are getting into a debate, stop immediately. God expects us to be upholders of truth but we must do it in a loving, kindly way.

(b) Do not listen to error. Don't give your ear to those who are in error.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. [Prov. 19:27]

Studies in Christian Ethics
Part IV: The Biblical Basis for Ethics

Philosophy has no answers to the perplexing questions. Only Christian ethics has the answers. There are three basic questions that can only be answered through the application of Christian ethics.

A. The Basic Questions of Christian Ethics

1. What is the highest good?
 - a. To seek first the kingdom of God.
 - b. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. . . . [Mat. 6:33]*
 - c. To do the will of God from the heart.
2. What is the standard, the final authority for what is right or wrong?

By what standard does one measure his conduct? The rule? The norm?

Some say there is no standard, it's just left to man's conscience. Others say intuition, and others say man's own reason and intellect.

From the Christian standpoint however, there is a two-fold answer:

- a. From God Himself; and,
- b. From the Word of God.

In these two, the ultimate standard for what is right and wrong can be found. God's Word reveals His righteousness.

The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. [Ps. 97:1-2]

God is the source of all that's right, the source of righteousness. Righteousness is not just one of His attributes (something that He possesses), but He is righteousness.

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. [Ps. 19:8-9]

For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. [Ps. 33:4-5]

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. . . . Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way. . . . Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. [Ps. 119: 75, 128, 137-138]

Those that are unfortunate enough to grow up without any standard, with nothing or no one to direct them as to what is right or wrong, that individual will likely lead a wild, wanton and totally ungoverned life. In contrast, all that God does is right and He doesn't make mistakes. As believers, we are to esteem all His precepts as right. And what is the source of right? God and His Word.

. . . Be ye holy; for I am holy. [1 Pe. 1:16]

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Mat. 5:48]

God's righteousness is His own moral holiness. His perfection of character is the standard for us. We're called to be like Him; as He is, so are we to be. That's His requirement -- that we be like Him.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. [Deut. 32:4]

God does not move or change His mind about sin. Like a rock, He is immovable, unchanging.

. . . *Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.* [Lev. 19:2]

God requires that we be holy, as He is holy. In the same way, He is right, good, loving, sinless, just, etc., and so are we as believers to be.

In contrasting Old Testament ethics with that of the New Testament, we see that Christian (New Testament) ethics has its source in God and His righteousness. It is not based on the moral systems of man, but based on God Himself and the Word of God. In the Old Testament the terms used for divine righteousness and human righteousness are interchangeable. The idea portrayed is man's measure of righteousness was to be God's measure of righteousness. What He is, He expects us to be. In the New Testament, that truth is carried over. God is still the standard we're to measure up to. The requirements haven't changed at all, however, in the Old Testament Israel was unable to carry out what was expected of them in the absolute sense. They did not have the revelation of the Word that we have in the complete sense. They didn't have the Holy Spirit indwelling them like we do so they weren't able to walk out this holiness in their lives. Old Testament believers demonstrated the holiness required of them objectively through the rituals, the sacrifices and the ceremonies. In the New Testament the believer is to manifest this holiness in his life. In the New Testament we have an example to follow, not just a commandment to be holy. Our example is of course found in the life of Jesus, the Son, who is the practical demonstration of holiness. His example is not just an abstract or philosophical truth but the ethical ideal of Christianity is expressed in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word was made 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 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. [John 1:1,2, 14, 18]

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. [John 14:6-7]

3. Is man completely free to choose, to act morally and ethically?

In answering this question, one finds a wide range of answers. Some say man is completely free to choose and act as he does, that there is no such thing as predestination or fate. To the opposite extreme, there are those who say man has no freedom at all. They say man has no choice whatsoever and everything is guided by fate. Some believe that every single detail of man's life has been predestinated, and that man is not free in any sense. If indeed, man is not free to choose ethically and morally, then we have a problem. How can God justify condemning a man to hell for doing wrong if man's not free to choose to do right or wrong to begin with? Man is a unique being as only man has the ability to make moral and ethical decisions. Neither animals nor plants have been given this capability by their Creator. Only to man has this been given.

There is such a thing as predestination and although the teaching does reveal God has predestinated and foreordained and God is ultimately in control of all things, God didn't make a creation and then lose control of it. Predestination does reveal that God's in control of all things (an eternal truth) yet, the Bible simultaneously teaches that man is endowed with a sufficient measure of determination, i.e., freedom of will, freedom to choose, etc. Man is endowed with a sufficient measure of determination to make him responsible for his actions, words, attitudes, motives and

conduct. So both things are simultaneously true. God has predestined, foreordained and He is in control of all events and everything. God created the world and is in control of His creation. Things are not out of control. God hasn't lost the handle on the earth. At the same time, the Bible reveals that man has sufficient determination, sufficient ability to choose right or wrong. That's why he's responsible to choose to act morally and held accountable to God for his choices.

The Bible also teaches that apart from the new birth, man is incapable of realizing the highest moral and ethical good because in his freedom to choose, the sinner will always choose to sin. The sinner will always choose self and he will choose sin. For example, the buzzard is free to eat whatever he wants. The choicest grain is available in the fields; delicious fruits grow on the trees, etc. But the buzzard would starve to death surrounded by such foods because he has a buzzard nature, and is drawn to what is rotten, spoiled and decaying. Likewise, the sinner is drawn towards what is morally rotten and will choose that which is corrupt and vile over what is pure and holy. It's not that he's not free, for he's free enough to choose God if he would, yet his very nature is so corrupt and so depraved that he will only choose corruption. Unless God in His grace draws the sinner and in mercy opens the eye of their understanding so they are brought to faith and repentance, that man will die in his sins. We're told to believe. It's our responsibility to believe. Yet when we do believe, we realize it was only the grace of God that brought us to a state of repentance. So, to answer our question, "Is man free, etc.?" He's free enough to make him responsible for his actions. He's as free as he needs to be in order to act responsibly. If we do wrong, we're responsible. If we sin, God holds us responsible.

B. Old Testament Ethics and New Testament Ethics

The moral and ethical practices we are to possess in the New Testament are based on those found in the Old Testament. As Christians, since our ethics are based on the entire Word of God, we will look at two dispensations of ethics and scripture.

1. Old Testament ethics were based on the revelation of God, His will, and His word to man. In comparison, Babylonian and Egyptian ethics were based on social needs, duty, etc. Greek ethics were based on reason and intellect.
2. Old Testament ethics had a religious basis as opposed to those philosophical ethics that have nothing to do with religion. The Old Testament makes no distinction between ethics and religion. Mixed in with the moral commandments are religious commandments. For example, the Ten Commandments.
3. Old Testament ethics were incomplete, although they were sufficient for Israel at that time in history. God revealed Himself to Israel, as she was able to receive it and apply it. In the Old Testament, prophets and angels were searching for light on what we as Christians now have in the New Testament and consider to be elementary truths. We now know many of the things that were mysteries to Old Testament saints. Our revelation is so much better in that God spoke to the Old Testament people by the prophets. He speaks to us in the New Testament by His own Son. We have a better covenant, a better covenant.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [1 Pe. 1:9-13]

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. [Heb. 1:1-2]

4. Old Testament ethics were an ethic of law as opposed to the New Testament ethics of grace. Although the religious codes (sacrifices, eating only certain foods, etc.) have been done away with, the inner principles of the law (moral and ethical) remain. The Old Testament ethics were based on the teachings and Law of Moses, whereas New Testament ethics are based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

All the principles of the Ten Commandments are still with us and carried over into the New Testament. While they are considered to be Old Testament law, the inner principles contained therein remain valid in this dispensation. The relevance for the Christian to study the ethics of the Old Testament as well as the New is because the Old Testament is part of the revealed will of God. The Old Testament is not to be discarded. It is relevant for believers today to study and understand it. One can't have a true understanding of the New Testament without understanding the Old Testament. While some would say that the Old Testament is no longer important to study and one should preach only from the New, the Bible says that all scripture is important.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. [2 Tim. 3:16]

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. [Rom. 15:4]

Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. [1 Cor. 10:11]

The Old Testament scriptures and law were a tutor to Israel because she is considered to be a spiritual child who needed a tutor. Laws of do's and don'ts are for the immature.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. [Gal. 3:24]

While the Christian under grace has a complete Bible and the Holy Spirit, he is supposed to live by the principles under grace as a more mature person. When one is mature, he no longer needs the law. The Old Testament forms, law, rituals, sacrifices, etc. are done away but the moral and ethical principles remain and are valid for today and forever. The difference in most cases between Old Testament and New Testament ethics is just a matter of degree.

C. Moral and Ethical Requirements

Were God's moral and ethical requirements of the Old Testament dispensation lower for Israel than for the Christians in the New Testament?

There are differing schools of thought on the matter, but the answer is NO. God's requirements, both morally and ethically, were the same, but God tolerated more during the Old Testament dispensation.

Many argue this point based on the following:

1. Why did God permit divorce and polygamy in the Old Testament and not in the New Testament if His requirements were the same?

God allowed or tolerated divorce and remarriage in the Old Testament because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, but from the beginning it was not His intention.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. [Mat. 18:3-8]

There were two prevalent Jewish schools of thought concerning divorce in that day, and the Pharisees were seeking to trick Jesus with their questions. The first, the school of Shammai, said that a man could divorce his wife only if she was unfaithful or immoral. The second, the school of Hillel, allowed divorce in any situation and under any circumstance. Jesus explained what God's original intention was.

Any disruption of marriage violates God's original intention. God did provide however, for the one who had a disloyal mate. Sexual sin severs the marriage covenant. The term "fornication" encompasses all types of sexual sin and includes such things as homosexuality, incest, bestiality, etc. In the New Testament under grace, man is both enabled and expected to follow the religious principles of the law.

2. Why did God allow killing and war in the Old Testament? Clearly, God instructed Israel to fight in wars to exterminate their enemies while in the New Testament the principle of non-resistance, turning the other cheek and loving ones enemies applies.

Thou shalt not kill. [Ex. 20:13]

Is there a contradiction between what is taught in the Old and New Testaments?

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. [Gen. 9:6]

He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.... And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. [Ex. 21:12; 15-16]

In these Old Testament scriptures we have the institution of capital punishment for such crimes as murder, kidnapping, cursing of parents, etc. The command not to kill actually has nothing to do with capital punishment. The state (in the Old Testament meaning Israel) was given the authority by God to execute criminals. The Canaanites whom God told Israel to destroy were guilty of the worst crimes. Don't read these verses as a slaughter of innocents. This was God's judgment upon the wicked. God was having criminals executed so that they could not contaminate His people.

In the New Testament, God is not ruling over nations in a theocratic fashion as He did over Israel. Christians are strangers and pilgrims in this world and are to leave all executions of judgment to the state. It is still the state's responsibility as ordained and established by God.

Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness, the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [Deut. 9:4-5]

In these scriptures, we see the Lord driving out the nations before Israel not because Israel was righteous, but because He had promised it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (they were righteous), and because the nations were so corrupt that He judged them.

3. Why does it indicate that Rahab the harlot was blessed by God when she lied to the officials that came to her house looking for Joshua and Caleb? Lying is clearly prohibited in the New Testament. Did God permit lying in the Old Testament and seemingly bless it? And then turn around and forbid it in the New Testament? If you read the account in Joshua, chapter 2, you will determine that Rahab was a harlot living in an ungodly, wicked city. Having been brought up in such an environment, what did she know of ethics? Rahab was not justified by her ethics but by her faith.

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. [Heb. 11:31]

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? [Jas. 2:25]

Although Rahab's method did not measure up to New Testament standards, remember that she had no morality and no ethical teaching. She was justified because she believed.

Promoters of situation ethics, i.e., certain sins such as lying in certain situations could be acceptable, lying to save someone's life or spare their feelings, use Rahab's lie as an example.

Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. [Lev. 19:11]

4. What about jealousy? The New Testament says one goes to hell for being jealous, yet the Old Testament says that God is jealous. Understand that when the Bible speaks of the jealousy of God, it means that God is jealous of His own honor, glory, and His own name and character. He is jealous of His people and won't share any of these with any other god. The nation of Israel was considered God's wife and she was unfaithful. If a husband is not jealous (wanting the exclusive love) of his wife, there is something wrong with him.

Critics contend that the above clearly indicates that God blessed the people more in the Old Testament dispensation than in the New.

We reply with the following five assertions (listed in items a-e).

(a) God's requirements are the same in the Old Testament as in the New. Absolute holiness was required.

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy. [Lev. 19:2]

For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. [Lev. 11:44-45]

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God.... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. [Lev. 20:7, 26]

(b) God never changed. In the New Testament, Paul said that the righteousness of the law was perfection. Due to the immaturity of the Jews, i.e., the hardness of their hearts, God simply tolerated more from them.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. [Rom. 7:12-14]

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [Rom. 8:3-4]

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent. [Acts 17:30]

(c) God's intention for giving the law was that it was to be obeyed.

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy. [Lev. 19:2]

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. [Ez. 18:4]

Disobedience of the law meant death. When you want to know what God required in the Old Testament, look what He required of Abraham.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. [Gen. 17:1-2]

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Mat. 5:48]

As you see, this was not just a New Testament requirement, but also an Old Testament requirement.

(d) God was simply forbearing with the sins of Israel because He knew He was going to deal with them (their sins).

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. [Rom. 3:23-24]

(e) The point is that the standard is the same in the Old and New Testaments, i.e., holiness and perfection. The law revealed how unholy man was and apart from grace, we could not earn it. Flesh could not keep the law.

Studies in Christian Ethics

Part V: Principles of the Decalogue

The heart of Old Testament ethics is the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are to Old Testament ethics and morality what the Sermon on the Mount is to New Testament ethics.

The Ten Commandments, often called the Moral Law of Israel, were the supreme expression of the revelation of the Old Testament dispensation. It was God's revealed standard of righteousness and the basis of Old Testament ethics and morality. Its inner principles are eternal and although the Ten Commandments were not carried over into the dispensation of grace as a legal code under which the Christian is placed, yet every principle expressed in the Ten Commandments is clearly taught in spirit and principle in the New Testament.

A. The First Commandment

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. [Ex. 20:1-3]

There are two points being made here, namely:

1. Monotheism, i.e., one god. There are three world religions who practice monotheism: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
2. Absolute loyalty to the one God. In New Testament ethics we find the same, i.e., God is one and demands our total devotion and love. One cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God.

...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. [Jas. 4:4]

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. [Mat. 22:36-39]

Here, Jesus plainly lists the greatest commandment, saying that the second is like it, one follows the other.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. [Mat. 10:37-38]

Our love for Christ is to be undivided. Although we are to love others, nothing or no one is to take God's place in our hearts. The principle is total devotion to the Lord.

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. [Lk. 14:25-27; 33]

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. [1 Cor. 16:22]

B. The Second Commandment

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. [Ex. 20:4-6]

There shall be no representations of deity. God visits a curse upon idolaters unto the third and fourth generations. God prohibits images, statues, pictures or other representations because:

1. It is an attempt to portray God like man or some creature. It is an attempt to portray an infinite God as something finite.
2. Invariably when one has a picture or statue, etc., they will switch their affection from the spiritual Jesus to the picture, statue, etc. They actually believe they will be committing sacrilege if they destroy it.

In the New Testament the same principle is true.

And the Word was made 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]

God is spirit; Christ is God the Son clothed in flesh.

God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. [John 4:24]

C. The Third Commandment

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. [Ex. 20:7]

The principle is reverence or respect for God. There are a number of different ways that people take God's name in vain.

1. By the irreverent use of His name, i.e., profanity, cursing, etc.
2. By false swearing, i.e., perjury. In Old Testament days it was common for people to swear by the name of their gods. God told Israel that they could take a vow or swear only in His name. The purpose of calling upon God's name was to call God to bear record that what they said was true. This was a practice that God allowed in the Old Testament but in the New Testament, it was not permitted.

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. [Deut. 23:21-23]

I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. [Ps. 13:14]

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. [Eccl. 5:4-5]

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; [Mat. 5:34]

...swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. [Jas. 5:12]

3. By a hypocritical lifestyle. By professing Christianity and not living it, one profanes God's name.

Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me; I am the Lord. [Lev. 22:2]

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD. [Deut. 28:58]

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. [Isa. 57:15]

He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever: holy and reverend is his name. [Ps. 111:9]

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. [Mat. 15:8-9]

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. [Mat. 6:9]

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. [Acts 4:12]

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. [Phil. 2:9-10]

D. The Fourth Commandment

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor; and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor the maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. [Ex. 20:8-11]

The sabbath consisted of the seventh day of the week, but it also signified a number of other things. The word sabbath means to rest, to cease activity. The Jewish sabbath began at sundown on Friday and lasted until sundown on Saturday. Other days which were considered to be sabbath days by the Jews were the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. In addition, every seventh year was a sabbath year, i.e., a year of rest for the fields during which there was no planting, no cultivation and no harvest.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.... And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store. The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. [Lev. 25:1-5; 20-23]

Also, all debts were cancelled in the sabbath year whether they were paid or not. Another sabbath year was the "Year of Jubilee" which was the year after a series of seven sabbath years, i.e., every fiftieth year. It was during the year of Jubilee that all property which had been bought or sold during the preceding years reverted to its original owner and all slaves were freed.

The sabbath celebrations were bound by numerous laws and restrictions. All work was forbidden on the sabbath. Both animals and man rested on the sabbath.

...which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. [Acts 1:12]

Unnecessary travel was absolutely forbidden and "a sabbath day's journey" consisted of about 3,000 feet. The purpose of the sabbath was rest. God rested after creation on the seventh day not because He was tired, but to set a precedent for man to follow. More significant is that the sabbath was the sign and seal of the covenant God made with Moses and the people of Israel just as circumcision was the sign and seal of God's covenant with Abraham. The sabbath covenant was never intended for Gentiles under grace, contrary to what groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists declare.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying; Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. [Ex. 31:12-17]

The sabbath was only for Israel and never were the Gentiles (Church) obliged to observe it.

Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.... And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. [Ez. 20:12, 20]

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. [2 Cor. 3:6]

Paul calls the law the ministration of death. He says the law kills. The law had a temporary glory, but it ceased at the cross. Seventh Day Adventists and some other groups argue that the sabbath preceded the law, was one of the Ten Commandments, etc., therefore it cannot be set aside. However, there were other practices that started before the law such as sacrifice, the priesthood, etc., but they all ended with the law at the cross.

There are principles in the sabbath. The first and primary one is rest. The Christian, like the Jew, cannot work continuously without rest. The Seventh Day Adventists maintain the sabbath must be observed, but the fact is they don't observe the sabbath in the same manner as the Jews.

See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. [Ex. 16:29]

The Jew was not permitted to travel beyond the limitations previously described. He was not permitted to have a fire or cook.

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day. [Ex. 35:2-3]

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses. [Num. 15:32-36]

Here we have an account of a man who gathered sticks for firewood on the sabbath and God commanded that he be stoned.

Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? [Amos 8:5]

And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. [Neh. 10:31]

In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. [Neh. 13:15-19]

The Jews could do no buying, selling, or trading on the sabbath. Seventh Day Adventists and similar legalistic Sabbath keepers maintain that others should keep the sabbath when they don't keep it to the letter themselves. They want to bind you with a law that they don't even keep.

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow: and continued his speech until midnight. [Acts 20:7]

The early church always worshipped on Sunday. It is true that the apostles went to the synagogues on the Jewish sabbath but the reason for that was that this was where they ministered to their fellow Jews about Jesus. Remember that it was to the Jews that the apostles first went. The Adventists say that it was the Roman Catholic Church who began the worship on the first day of the week, but that is incorrect. The Roman Catholic Church simply put their stamp of approval on the first day worship after Christians had been worshipping on Sunday for about three centuries. Two passages useful in refuting the Adventists' arguments are found in Colossians 2:8-17 and Galatians 4:9-11.

Nowhere in the entire New Testament can one find mention that the church should observe the law of the sabbath, i.e., the seventh day Sabbath, and nowhere in the New Testament is Sabbath breaking listed as a sin! Of the Ten Commandments, nine are mentioned as sin in the New Testament, but one is glaringly absent: The 4th Commandment! However, the principle of the Sabbath does remain!

What is the principle here? Reverence for the Lord's Day and not by adherence to legalistic observance. It is to be a day of rest and a day of worship.

E. The Fifth Commandment

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. [Ex. 20:12]

The principle here is respect for authority. The respect for authority is to begin within the family unit and consequently, will include all in authority. There is a promise with this commandment, i.e., obey and you will live a long life. If there is no respect for authority, including parental authority, there will be no respect for any authority. The Jews, contrary to the youth in this country today, had tremendous respect for the elderly and for their leaders.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. [Eph. 6:1-3]

This is a New Testament passage and is virtually word-for-word as related in the Old Testament. Respect for authority has been one of the keys of survival for the Jewish community. Families will self-destruct when there is no respect for authority. This respect for authority also includes respect for civil authority. (Reference: Romans 13:1-7.)

In Ephesians, chapter 6, it also includes slaves being subject to their masters. In today's society, that should be taken to mean that employees are subject to their employers and have a responsibility to do their work as unto the Lord.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. [1 Tim. 2:1-2]

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. [1 Pe. 2:13-14]

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. [1 Sam. 15:23]

This last passage tells us that rebellion is viewed by God just as He views the sin of witchcraft. Rebellion is a manifestation of the spirit of anti-christ as it is rebellion against God ordained authority.

F. The Sixth Commandment

Thou shalt not kill. [Ex. 20:13]

The principle is respect for the value of human life.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. [Gen. 9:3]

We see from this scripture that man can eat meat so it is permissible to kill animals for food. This is confirmed in the New Testament as well (see 1 Tim. 4:3 and Acts 10, where God gave Peter a vision regarding animals. He was also telling Peter that the Gentile, whom the Jew looked upon as unclean, was acceptable in God's sight). The idea of killing for sport or trophy cannot be justified ethically.

In the Old Testament, the only time life can lawfully be taken is in the act of capital punishment. Even then, it could only be done through the state, i.e., the government.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. [Gen. 9:5-6]

It was not for an individual to take human life in an act of revenge. This commandment refers to unlawful killing, not capital punishment. Israel was a theocracy and God allowed them to carry out His acts of punishment. In the theocratic government, Israel's enemies were God's enemies.

This principle is found in the New Testament as well. The Sermon on the Mount is to the New Testament what the Ten Commandments are to the Old Testament. We see in the Sermon on the Mount that all human life is sacred in that it is to be valued and highly esteemed. There is no justification in the New Testament for taking another human being's life.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. [Mat. 5:38-39]

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [1 Jo. 3:15-16]

G. The Seventh Commandment

Thou shalt not commit adultery. [Ex. 20:14]

The principle is the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of family relationships, emphasizing faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion to one's spouse for one's lifetime. Sex is lawful only between husband and wife. Anything else is gross sin. The penalty in the Bible for the sin of adultery was death. There was no sacrifice that could be offered for the sin of adultery. Grace was present however, in the Old Testament and when an individual genuinely repented, i.e., King David, God did forgive.

The New Testament has quite a bit to say about sexual sins (reference: 1 Cor. 6:13-20). The Old Testament also has something to say regarding that subject.

And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. [Mal. 3:5]

God hates divorce. America and American Christianity has, for the most part, lost its abhorrence of sin, but God has not.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.... It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. [Mat. 5:27-28; 31-32]

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. [Gal. 5:19-21]

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. [1 Cor. 6:9-10]

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [Col. 3:5]

Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. [Heb. 13:4]

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. [Rev. 21:8]

H. The Eighth Commandment

Thou shalt not steal. [Ex. 20:15]

1. The principle is two-fold in both the Old and New Testaments:
 - a. Honesty in the acquisition of one's possessions.
 - b. The recognition of the right of others to own property.
2. Ways in which people violate this commandment (besides with a mask and gun):

- a. By shoplifting;
- b. By substituting prices in stores, i.e., removing store tags and replacing them with lower priced tags);
- c. By using unjust weights and balances in weighing merchandise sold by weight;
- d. By moving landmarks, i.e., boundaries of land;
- e. By gambling, i.e., hoping to gain without having to work or earn it.
- f. By controlling the stock market;
- g. By concealing defects in something you sell, i.e., a faulty automobile, etc.
- h. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. [Rom. 12:17]
- i. *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* [2 Cor. 8:21]
- j. By employees loafing on the job;
- k. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* [2 Thes. 3:10]
- l. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.* [Col. 3:22-25]
- m. By employers not paying proper wages to employees;
- n. *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward.* [1 Tim. 5:18]
- o. *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.* [Col. 4:1]
- p. *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.* [Prov. 11:24]
- q. By failing to pay debts.
- r. *Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* [Rom. 13:8]
- s. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.* [Ps. 37:21]
- t. By cheating on one's income tax.
- u. *...then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.* [Mat. 22:21]
- v. By cheating on exams at school;

w. By bargaining a seller to lower a fair price down to a price that is actually below what the item is worth. We should be willing to pay a fair price for what we buy.

x. *It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.* [Prov. 20:14]

y. By buying stolen merchandise;

z. By businessmen deceitfully selling Grade B merchandise at Grade A prices.

aa. *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* [Eph. 4:28]

bb. *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* [1 Cor. 6:10]

cc. *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.* [Rom. 12:17]

I. The Ninth Commandment

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. [Ex. 20:16]

The principle here is honesty; a prohibition against making false allegations, defamation, and slander.

J. The Tenth Commandment

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. [Ex. 20:17]

The clear principle prohibits the sinful desire (coveting) for what belongs to another.

Studies in Christian Ethics
Part VI: Principles of New Testament Ethics

Distinctive Characteristics of Christian Ethics

1. Christian ethics is the ethics of a Savior.
2. Christian ethics consists of principles, not laws. They are eternal principles, things of eternal consequence.
3. Christian ethics applies only to Christians under grace.
4. Christian ethics is conduct, not just ideas, ideals or thoughts. We cannot separate Christianity from our conduct.
5. Christian ethics is Christian conduct based upon motives. Right motives are an essential key to be eligible for reward and for God to bless.

There are three ingredients of right motives:

- a. If the motive was pure, and the act was done in Jesus' name.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. [Col. 3:17]

- b. The act has to be done for the glory of God. The hearts of men will be examined by God to determine if what was done was to the glory of God or to the glory of self.

- c. The act must be done in faith.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. [Heb. 11:6]

It is impossible for an unregenerate to perform any good act without having a sinful motive. Even a sinner's good deeds are contaminated by his sin and although what he did may have benefited someone else, it is still unacceptable to God.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. [Gal. 2:16]

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [Mat. 7:18]

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. [Isa. 64:6]

Is having a sincere motive enough? Would having a right motive justify wrong conduct? No, sincerity of motive is not enough. For example, stealing to feed your starving family; mercy killing, etc. Having a sincere motive and committing wrong conduct is sometimes referred to as situation ethics. Our standard should be: Never do a wrong to make a right.

There are three basic parts of moral action or conduct:

- (1) The motive of an action;
- (2) The act itself; and,
- (3) The consequences of that action.

Conduct is ethically right when it is the outcome of a good motive carried out by right means and results in biblically acceptable consequences.

6. Christian ethics is an absolute ethic. It is not just the act, but it is the heart.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire....But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart....Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven: for it is God's throne....But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, Nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. [Mat. 5:21-22; 28; 33-34, 37]

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Mat. 5:43-44; 48]

Jesus intended that no one would walk away from hearing or reading the Sermon on the Mount and feel self-righteous. He demands absolute perfection and He let us know just how short of perfection we are.

7. Christian ethics is positive in righteousness.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [Mat. 6:33]

We are to seek righteousness. The message of Christ was not only the message of redemption but also of righteousness. Jesus did not come just that we would receive Him as savior and then live as the Antinomians who believe that since it's all grace, it doesn't matter how one lives. Jesus said that we should turn from sin and live righteously.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. [1 Jo. 3:7]

8. Christian ethics are an ethic of service. In the 13th chapter of John, we have the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. It is important to see this incident for what it is, i.e., the King of Kings, the Lamb of God, stooping to wash the feet of sinful flesh.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. [Lk. 22:25-27]

Service equals love. True greatness in God's kingdom does not come by holding rank or exercising authority but by service to others.

Studies in Christian Ethics

Part VII: Principles of the Sermon on the Mount [Scripture reference: Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7]

The Sermon on the Mount is the core of New Testament ethics, and the longest of Jesus' discourses. The teachings in this sermon call the Christian to a revolutionary change of life. In God's economy, the Christian is accountable not only for his actions but also his motives. The teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount demand a lifestyle foreign to this world's concepts. There is nothing comparable in the religions of the world to the high moral standards of the Sermon on the Mount.

With such high moral standards as are taught in these scriptures, how does the average Christian justify a lifestyle that is entirely foreign to those teachings? How do they justify the fighting and contention, the carrying of grudges, divorce, lawsuits, etc. in light of what Jesus said in the Sermon? Many say it is impossible to live up to such a standard. Certainly, one needs the baptism of the Holy Spirit to be able to crucify the self life and live the Sermon on the Mount. Some Christians have excused their inability to live the Sermon on the Mount by saying that its teachings are not for today. They say it's for the past, while some say it's for the future millennial kingdom. Still others say it's for the Jews and not the church at all. They make any number of excuses because they don't want to live up to the demands this Sermon makes upon them. It's the only way they can justify the way that they live.

Although a Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi considered the Sermon on the Mount to be probably the greatest teaching on man's highest qualities. He is said to have read the passages daily. Many say that the Sermon is a great teaching on pacifism. The Sermon on the Mount, however, does not teach pacifism, rather it teaches non-resistance.

A. Major Views of Professing Christians Concerning the Sermon on the Mount

1. The Humanistic View

This group says that Jesus was a great moral teacher, an ethical genius, who taught the principles of brotherhood. They maintain that certain of Jesus' teachings are still valid but most of what is taught in the Sermon on the Mount was for past times when life was simpler and less complex than today. They say that those teachings can't effectively relate to modern society and that the teachings are now outmoded.

To refute this: The truths that Jesus taught were not relative to time or place but are for all time and for all people. The principles that Jesus taught are the only answers mankind needs to live in this complex, modern world. Jesus doesn't give new principles for new generations. Mankind still has the same age old problems with sin and needs to believe God, in all ages.

2. The Liberal View

The liberals maintain that the Sermon on the Mount is a means of obtaining salvation by works. They say that it's the highest ideal. They try to base their views of social reform on their spiritualized interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. All attempts to legislate morality and efforts to get the unsaved to live by the Sermon on the Mount is part of today's social gospel, i.e., social activism for the reformation of society. The problem with this group is that they overlook the need for the regeneration of individuals. Morality cannot be legislated to the heathen. This was tried with prohibition and it was a failure.

3. The Interim Ethic View

This view was espoused by Dr. Albert Switzer, a neo-orthodox, liberal Protestant and winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Switzer was a brilliant man, a theologian, scientist, etc., but he was not a Christian. He did not adhere to the fundamental doctrines of faith. It was his belief that the Sermon on the Mount was an interim ethic for a miscalculated short interim period. He said that Jesus and the apostles taught an eschatological (end-times) concept that the end of the world was near but they didn't know what they were talking about. Switzer taught that Jesus and the apostles were wrong because they were wrong about the estimated time of Jesus' return. Jesus and the apostles taught that the Christians were to expect His return at any moment. Switzer concluded that the super-human righteousness taught in the Sermon on the Mount was impossible in permanent practice and was only meant for the interim period between the time of Christ's ascension and the

time that He was expected to return. Switzer said that the Sermon on the Mount could not be lived on a permanent basis, but rather for only a temporary period.

To refute this: Jesus and the apostles taught the imminent return of Christ. Their teaching is an incentive for holy living. The Christian is told to "watch and pray." Teaching other than this is encouragement to "eat, drink and be merry, etc." Also, if Switzer maintained that the Sermon was impossible to live permanently, then how could anyone be expected to live it even temporarily?

4. The Dispensational / Fundamentalist View

This is the view of the vast Fundamentalist Christian group, who are generally good born again people who dispensationalize the Bible. They say that the Sermon on the Mount is not for today, that it's for the past, but not for the present. This group maintains belief in the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, yet they actually don't believe much that is taught in it, such as, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, gifts of the Spirit, etc., is for today. Their dispensational views place all such things in a past or future period.

a. The First Advent View: This group maintains that the Sermon on the Mount was applicable only to the first advent when Jesus offered the kingdom to the Jews. If the Jews had believed and received Jesus, then the principles would have become the laws of the kingdom. Since the Jews rejected Jesus, then the teachings on the Sermon on the Mount are not applicable to Christians today. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one cannot live these principles, so they simply cut them out and delegated them to past or future generations yet to come.

b. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. [Mk. 7:13]

c. To refute this: The major flaw with this theory is that the principles taught in the Sermon on the Mount can be found all through the New Testament. If they are going to relegate the Sermon on the Mount to a past time, then they're going to have to do the same with the entire New Testament.

d. The Second Advent View: This group of Fundamentalists says that the Sermon on the Mount is for a future time. This view was promoted by Schaeffer whose theology books are used in many seminaries. Schaeffer's teaching is that the Sermon on the Mount has no relevance for this present age because they are laws for the millennial kingdom. He says they're addressed to the Jews in the Old Testament before the cross and they're for the Jews in the coming kingdom, but not for today. He maintains that the Sermon on the Mount is actually legalistic, i.e., a system of works. He says that one has to "do" something, turn the other cheek, etc. and that would mean the Christian is not under grace.

e. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Lk. 6:46]

f. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 7:21]

g. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. [1 Jo. 3:7]

h. To refute this: No one was ever saved by doing works. The teaching revealed in the Sermon on the Mount is revealed throughout the New Testament and if the Sermon on the Mount is a covenant of works, then all the New Testament is a covenant of works.

i. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. [Titus 3:5]

j. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. [Rom. 3:20]

5. The Biblical / Present Age View

The ethical requirements of the Sermon on the Mount are the highest expression of morality and conduct in the Bible. The Sermon on the Mount has application from the time it was given until the second advent. It's the revealed will of God as to how the Christian is to live under grace in a sinful world. The Sermon on the Mount has the same intent for the Christian as the law did to the Jew which is to be obeyed. The Sermon on the Mount is more absolute than the law. Being under grace, Jesus doesn't make concession for man's hardness of heart.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. [Mat. 7:21-27]

B. Further Internal Proof that the Sermon on the Mount is for the Present Time and not Some Future Age

Only the saved will go into the millennial kingdom. The principles taught in the Sermon on the Mount reveal many things that will no longer be present during the millennial kingdom. Such as, "Love your enemies." The Christian will have no enemies during the millennial kingdom! They are present, however, in this present day and time. We therefore conclude that the Sermon on the Mount is for today.

Following is a list of conditions, which will not be found in the millennial kingdom:

1. Strife and war

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. [Mat. 5:9]

2. Persecution

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [Mat. 5:11]

3. Unrighteousness

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. [Mat. 5:6]

4. Moral decay

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 5:13-16]

5. Adultery and divorce

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. [Mat. 5:28-32]

6. Religious hypocrisy (Scripture reference: Matthew 6:1-18)

7. Satan and his temptations

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. [Mat. 6:13]

8. Fasting

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. [Mat. 6:17-18]

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. [Mat. 9:14-15]

9. Materialism, which is competing with God for man's allegiance (Scripture reference: Matthew 6:19-34)

10. Seeking first the kingdom. How can one do this if he is already in the kingdom?

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [Mat. 6:33]

11. Praying for the kingdom to come. Why pray for something if it has already arrived?

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [Mat. 6:10]

It is obvious that the Sermon on the Mount applies to the present age and to every believer until the time of the second advent.

C. The Eight Beatitudes

Four of the beatitudes concern one's inward life, while four pertain to one's relations toward others. Notice the setting in which Jesus sets forth this teaching.

And seeing the multitudes, he [Jesus] went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. [Mat. 5:1]

The disciples are with Jesus as He teaches and the Sermon is addressed to His disciples, not to the world. Many may want to say, "I'm not ready for the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. I'm not far enough advanced spiritually, etc." If one is saved, he is ready for the Sermon on the Mount because it is for every believer.

In the passages found in Matthew, chapter 5, verses 3 through 12, Jesus uses the word blessed nine times. What does "blessed" mean? Simply it means happy or full of joy. Jesus makes promises to those who possess the attributes of character mentioned in those verses. The believer is not to possess just one or two of the qualities mentioned, but every disciple is to possess these qualities.

1. *Blessed are the poor in spirit. [Mat. 5:3]*

Jesus is not talking about poverty here. Some have misunderstood this to mean poverty and have taken vows of poverty accordingly. Rather Jesus is talking about those who are humbly dependent upon God; those who realize their own spiritual inadequacy and their dependence on His mercy and grace. They have the attitude of "God, forgive me; be merciful and gracious to me." They are humble, honest, broken and repentant before God.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified

rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. [Lk. 18:10-14]

Here is an excellent example of what it means to be poor in spirit. The promise to those who are poor in spirit is the kingdom of heaven.

2. *Blessed are they that mourn.* [Mat. 5:4]

Some have said, "Mourn? I thought Jesus came to make us happy." No, Jesus came to bring holiness, not happiness. However, if we separate ourselves from the world and lead holy lives, then we will have true happiness. To mourn in the sense that Jesus uses it here is to be grieved over one's shallowness; one's shortcomings. It's the sorrow of repentance, mourning for a lost and sinful world. The Christian is surrounded by sin and it should be grievous to him. We are also surrounded by an undiscerning and shallow contemporary church and this should also cause us much grief.

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.... Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. [Lk. 6:21, 25]

In these verses Jesus is speaking to the contemporaries of His day. There are those who are laughing now, but they will be crying later. Likewise, there are those who are now mourning and weeping over the lost estate of the world and the time will come when there will be rejoicing.

The promise to those who mourn is that they shall be comforted.

3. *Blessed are the meek.* [Mat. 5:5]

Meekness is the quality that should characterize every Christian. Meekness does not mean weakness or effeminacy. Meekness means being teachable. The meek person is able to be molded. He is considerate, self-controlled, considering others better than himself. Being meek is just the opposite of the man who is proud, arrogant, critical, boastful, rude, selfish, a power seeker, etc. To be meek is to be teachable, to be humble, honest, and broken.

The promise to those who are meek is that they shall inherit the earth.

4. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.* [Mat. 5:6]

The promise to those who are meek is they shall be filled. Filling speaks of being blessed. True happiness is to be hungry for God, hungry for holiness and Christ-likeness. It is the only thing that fulfills us. No amount of possessions can fill an empty soul. Only Jesus can fill the void in man's life. The idea is to have an intense craving for righteousness.

Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. [Lk. 6:25]

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. [Isa. 55:1-3]

Woe to those that are full, that are not hungry and thirsty for righteousness, which have no burning desire to please God with their lives. Many today are full of their own plans, their own ambitions, opinions, etc. and they don't want God or Christianity to interfere with their lifestyle. We have to be hungry, so hungry that nothing else matters, if we expect God to bless us. And if we're hungry, we will seek to be a part of a church where the Word is being taught. When one is truly hungry and thirsty, he will be at the dinner table when the dinner bell rings. He won't be late. It is a sign of spiritual sickness when we are not hungry for God's word.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. [John 7:37]

Have you been hungry and thirsty? Where have you gone to drink? Have you gone to the springs of living water that never run dry or have you gone to the world?

In the Greek, do hunger indicates a continuous sense of hungering and thirsting. The Christian's total desire is to be the pursuit of righteousness and the things of God. No one who hungers and thirsts goes unfilled for that is the promise.

5. Blessed are the merciful. [Mat. 5:7]

The promise to the merciful is for they shall obtain mercy. The merciful will receive mercy in return. For one to show mercy is totally opposite of the world's concept which is to exercise revenge, retaliation, to get even. Mobs want blood, not mercy.

The Christian is to show mercy to others just as God has shown mercy to him. Just as God has been patient and longsuffering with us, so are we to be with others. Also, the merciful Christian will be a forgiving Christian, just as God has forgiven him.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy: and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. [Jas. 2:13]

If you show no mercy, then you won't obtain mercy. If you want to be forgiven, learn how to forgive. The merciful Christian will forgive and forget. He will overlook the shortcomings of others. He will not want to "get even." Neither will the merciful person be one who gossips or is critical.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart. [Mat. 5:8]

We are not blessed just when we have the outward veneer of religion, not "Sunday religion" and then business as usual the remainder of the week. It is those who are pure in heart, those whose character and conduct reflect true holiness, those who are clean in their attitudes and motives toward others, who will be blessed.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. [Mat. 7:15]

This scripture cautions the Christian about those who outwardly appear to be one of the sheep, i.e., they have the outward veneer of religion, but they hold to doctrines or practice a lifestyle contrary to what the Bible teaches. If the heart is right, then the life is right. And what's in the heart will come out of the mouth. The mouth is a picture window that exposes the heart. A Christian with a foul mouth is a contradiction.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. [Mat. 12:35]

The promise to those who are pure in heart is that they shall see God. It is my belief that this means not only in eternity, but God will also give them a clear vision of holiness and purity right here on earth. Those whose hearts are impure get a distorted view of God. Much of their view of God is right out of their own imaginations because sin obscures one's vision of God.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers. [Mat. 5:9]

The idea of being a peacemaker is just the opposite of being contentious and argumentative. The Christian is to be one who makes peace in the local assembly, even with his enemies.

There are two aspects of peacemaking:

a. The active side

This is the side presented when you go to your brother or sister and seek to be reconciled. You take the initiative. Don't stir up trouble and strife. A peacemaker refuses to quarrel, argue or debate. You can't argue anyone into the faith.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. [Heb. 12:14]

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [Rom. 12:18]

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. [Rom. 14:19]

b. The passive side

This is the message of non-resistance, bridling the tongue, and turning the other cheek.

Being a peacemaker is not keeping peace at any price. For example, an unsaved husband might "calm down" if his Christian wife would forsake her faith in Christ and her faithful attendance at church. But you just can't compromise with the devil. Nor does being a peacemaker mean embracing the ecumenical movement in order to keep peace and find some unity within religion through compromise with the Truth. The Christian must continue to promote the truth of God's Word and that means exposing heresy and error, which can be divisive.

8. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake.* [Mat. 5:10]

Are you attacked by others and hated for the sake of righteousness? Then Jesus says that you are blessed. Some say they are being persecuted for righteousness sake when actually they are being persecuted for their self-righteousness. They are obnoxious and arrogant and contentious. However, if you're being persecuted for genuine righteousness, then praise God! You are tasting a portion of what the prophets and even Jesus experienced.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. [Mat. 5:11-12]

In these passages the Christian is told to rejoice and be glad in the face of persecution. If one is sad and grieved rather than rejoicing, he is showing a lack of faith. Rejoicing shows a positive faith. Now if you aren't being persecuted, maybe you should ask, "Why?" It's a privilege to be persecuted for righteousness sake.

The promise or reward for those who suffer persecution for righteousness sake is theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

If you think you're being persecuted and you have done wrong, then you're not suffering persecution, you are reaping what you have sown.

D. Woes / Warnings

In the sixth chapter of Luke, Jesus gives believers some woes or warnings:

1. *Woe unto you that are rich? for ye have received your consolation.* [Lk. 6:24]

This is a warning to those seeking wealth. Riches are temporal.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. [Jas. 5:1]

2. *Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.* [Lk. 6:25a]

This is a warning to the spiritually indifferent.

3. *Woe unto you that laugh now? for ye shall mourn and weep.* [Lk. 6:25b]

This is a warning to those who are living lives of carelessness and ease.

4. *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you? for so did their fathers to the false prophets.* [Lk. 6:26]

This is a warning to those wanting to be honored and recognized by men. Today's society heaps all kinds of degrees and awards and all manner of accolades on false ministers. The true prophets have always gone against the grain and upset people. Not everyone spoke well of John the Baptist or even of Jesus, and not everyone will speak well of you.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. [2 Tim. 3:12]

E. The Christian's Influence

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 5:13-16]

Jesus says that the Christian has a two-fold influence, i.e., that of salt and light.

1. Salt has three basic qualities or characteristics

a. Salt is a preservative.

As salt, the Christian has a preserving influence on the world. The world is headed for decay and destruction. God is preserving the world for the sake of the believer(s).

Moses was salt in that he interceded for the Israelites when God was ready to destroy them. He acted as salt and preserved the people, for God spared them because of Moses. It was the same with Paul. The Roman heathen on the ship were preserved because of Paul's presence (scripture reference Acts 27). Also, the city of Sodom was destroyed because God found no salt, i.e., righteous men, there.

b. Salt is a purifier.

It has antiseptic (cleansing, purifying) qualities. As Christians, we are to have a cleansing and purifying effect upon the world.

c. Salt is a seasoning.

Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? [Job 6:6]

Salt in one's food can literally transform the taste. If we as Christians, i.e., salt, live our lives as we should, then the Christian message becomes more appetizing to others and causes them to want what we have. Seeing the saltiness in our lives will give them zest and purpose for living.

Salt also has a "bite" to it and will burn a wound or one's eyes. It can cause pain. You will cause pain to some people, and they will not be pleased with your influence because it is convicting. You will rub some the wrong way. However, Jesus did not say that we are the

"sugar" or the "honey" of the earth. He called us "salt." As such, Christians are not to blend in with the earth. Jesus gives us a warning if we do. If the salt has lost its saltiness, then it is good for nothing. Don't lose your saltiness, Christian! In the 14th chapter of Luke, we are told that salt that has lost its saltiness is not even fit for the manure pile. Nothing is more worthless than un-salty salt. The lukewarm Christian is as worthless as un-salty salt. Lot's wife is an example. She would not be salt so salt became her judgment and she became salt forever.

2. Jesus also says that as believers we are the light of the world. In the eighth chapter of John, Jesus said that He was the light of the world. Now He says that believers are the light, so we're to SHINE!

There are several important things that are pointed out about light in those passages:

a. The position of the light

It is to be in a place where it can be seen, a place where it can do some good. Believers are not to be hidden or kept under cover. Christians are to be visible, not secluded or hidden away. There are no "secret agent" Christians.

b. The nature of the light

It is to banish or expose darkness. Believers are to testify and expose spiritual darkness in the world.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. [Phil. 2:15]

c. The purpose of the light

Our light is to be seen so that God will be glorified.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. [Eph. 5:8]

F. The Principle of Marriage and Divorce

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. [Mat. 5:31-32]

In these verses, Jesus is stressing fidelity in marriage and the permanence of marriage. These verses certainly do not represent everything that the Bible has to say concerning marriage and divorce. They are very comprehensive subjects.

In Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus has more to say on the subject. The Pharisees bring up the subject of divorce as there was some controversy in Jesus' day concerning the two prominent rabbinical views on divorce. The Hillel view – a man could divorce his wife for any small infraction – was the view of the liberal faction. On the other hand, there was the conservative view of Shammai, who maintained that divorce was permissible only on grounds of uncleanness, sexual impurity, etc.

The Pharisees were preoccupied with the grounds for divorce whereas Jesus was occupied with the permanency of marriage. The Pharisees called God's provision for divorce a "command" and Jesus called it a "concession." The only ground for divorce that Jesus recognized were for fornication (Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9). And although Jesus does allow divorce for the sin of fornication, even this allowance is a continued accommodation to the hardness of men's hearts. Incompatibility is not biblical grounds for divorce, but the Apostle Paul indicated that abandonment was also legitimate grounds (1 Cor. 7).

The whole biblical teaching is not to encourage separation but reconciliation between parties; marriage is no exception. Divorce is a tragedy and not really the answer to the problem. God considers marriage a divine institution, a divine covenant; Christians are to do all that is possible to keep their marriages intact. Divorce is not the solution; individuals who have problems in their first marriage often do no better, and many times even worse, in second and third marriages. While divorce rate do fluctuate, about half of all first marriages end in divorce; 65- 75% of second and third marriages end in divorce.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. [Mat. 24:36-38]

These scriptures speak of marriage and the giving in marriage. Not that there is anything wrong with marriage, but here Jesus is describing the "last days" and says that multiplying marriages are signs of the "last days." He is stressing that increased numbers and activity in these areas are symbolic of the "last days."

G. The Principle of the Oath / Swearing

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. [Mat. 5:33-37]

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. [Jas. 5:12]

The law permitted the Jew to swear by his God. The pagans also engaged in the practice of swearing by their gods. The reason God allowed Israel to swear by Him was that He was weaning them from an idolatrous background. The oath or swearing that Israel was allowed to do was not to be taken lightly. It was calling upon God to bear record that what the individual said was true. The idea was, a person could be trusted to tell the truth only if he swore it by an oath to his god. Jesus, however, said not to swear at all! His followers were to tell the truth always, so oaths were unnecessary. He forbade it under any circumstances.

Centuries ago theologians took these passages literally, but modern Christians justify swearing under certain circumstances. The Roman Catholic Church does not take the Bible literally and consequently interprets these passages to mean, "one does not swear unnecessarily." That is contrary to what Jesus said. He said not to swear by anything, i.e., the earth, one's head, etc. for if your communication is more than "yes" or "no," that is of the devil.

Taking an oath is a pathetic confession of one's own dishonesty. Oaths arise because men are so often liars. Honest men don't have to resort to oaths.

This principle also includes cursing, i.e., swearing. We will be judged by our words for what is in the heart comes out of the mouth. Also included is taking the Lord's name in vain, i.e., calling upon God to bring down curses upon someone. This practice came from pagan superstitious cultures around Israel. The pagan felt that he could invoke the divine wrath of his god(s) by calling upon that god to damn or curse something or someone. The practice is occult as they believed that calling down such a curse would bring some magical power down to harm an individual. It is witchcraft.

There is nothing that can sanctify an oath or swearing, not swearing by heaven, the earth, one's head, etc. The Christian does not corrupt his God-given gift of communication with others by swearing.

H. The Principle of Non-Resistance, Non-Retaliation, and Active Christian Love

The verses in Matthew 5:38-48 present the high point of the Sermon on the Mount and are a call to absolute Christian love. Nowhere is the challenge greater than in these verses.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. [Mat. 5:38]

In this passage, Jesus is referring to the Old Testament principle of exact retribution.

And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, sound for sound, stripe for stripe. [Ex. 21:23-25]

And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor,; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. [Lev. 24:18-21]

Then both the man, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. [Deut. 19:17-21]

There are two things God is teaching the people when He gives them this principle in the Old Testament.

1. God is defining what justice will consist of. It is a judicial civil law defining justice. Justice will consist of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
2. By giving these laws, God is limiting retribution to equal retribution, thereby ruling out revenge. In other words, the law does not permit murder as retribution for the loss of an eye. The law restrains revenge.

Now Jesus teaches something quite revolutionary. He calls not to justice, but to love. Love was to be the Christian's response to wrongdoing. Jesus teaches the Christian to refrain from violence and fighting, even when faced with preserving his so-called "rights." Our attitude, our position is to be so completely that of non-resistance that we will even allow the evil person to inflict upon us double injury. Only one who is dead to pride, flesh, and the love of possessions can accomplish this.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. [Mat. 5:41-42]

We are admonished to go the second mile, turn the other cheek, and to the one who takes our coat, give him our cloak as well. Of course, the Christian is to use wisdom and discernment in adhering to these verses. In the latter verse, give to him that asketh thee shall we then give money to a drunkard to buy more liquor, to a gambler so that he can gamble, to a drug addict for another fix, to a cult member to propagate his error? Of course not. Also, in the case of the borrower who, for example, repetitiously borrows your car and each time brings it home dirty, full of dents, etc. There comes a time for that person to be responsible and the Christian is justified in denying him. One must use common sense and not make ironclad laws remembering that the Sermon on the Mount does not consist of ironclad laws but principles.

Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. [Lk. 6:30]

Here's another instance where common sense must prevail. Just because a heathen asks for your daughter in marriage, doesn't mean you should give her to him. On the other hand, however, if a robber demands your money, give it to him and bless him (pray for him). Do not curse him. The Christian

is called upon to give without discrimination, without expecting anything in return. He is to give with no strings attached.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. [Mat. 5:44]

The Jews were never instructed by God to hate their enemies. Jesus referred here to teachings distorted by the rabbis who twisted the laws so that the people were encouraged to hate their enemies.

If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. [Ex. 23:4-5]

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. [Prov. 25:21]

The Christian is called upon to do good to those that hate him. One really has to crucify the flesh to do the things Jesus asks of us. The epitome of Christian love is to intercede in prayer for those who hate you, those who curse you. It's impossible to really pray for someone without loving them and as you pray, that love increases.

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [Mat. 5:45]

In this passage, Jesus tells us why we are to do all those things. We prove conclusively whose sons we are when we pray and love our enemies. For when we are able to do these things, we are doing the very things that Jesus did. Divine love is indiscriminate love, for God allows the rain to fall on the unjust as well as the just. The old theologians referred to this as common grace. In other words, God gives air, breath, life, etc. to both good and evil men.

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not every the publicans so? [Mat. 5:47]

Here, Jesus calls believers to do more than what sinners, i.e., publicans, do. Even a sinner is capable of loving and doing some good. A man may be totally depraved and still have the capability of doing good. However, even the good that he does is contaminated by some evil (self-interests, etc.). When God tells the Christian to love his enemies, that's a big order. It's not enough to be like the Pharisees who love others like themselves, and those who return their favors, etc. Jesus asks, ...what do ye more than others? If we can't do any better than the Pharisees, then we're no better than the heathen.

I. The Principles of Conduct in Worship and Daily Living

We said that the 5th chapter of Matthew dealt with one's attitudes and principles of conduct toward others. In other words, "don't be like the world." Now in chapter 6, the emphasis is on one's attitude toward God. The message of this chapter is, "Don't be like institutional religion either."

Jesus is basically saying, "Don't give like the hypocrites; don't pray like the hypocrites; don't fast like the hypocrites." Just what is a hypocrite? Simply, one who is an actor on stage, in other words, someone pretending to be what he is not.

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. [Mat. 6:1-4]

Alms are defined as good deeds, righteousness. The motive of the hypocrite in giving is to be seen and applauded by men. Man's recognition is therefore the reward of the hypocrite. He has the

glory of men. The genuine Christian should be characterized by his generosity, but he should be properly motivated. The true Christian does not give grudgingly. If one gives because he sees a need and wants to respond to it, then he has given through a right motive. Giving is a pleasure, a privilege to the genuine Christian.

Just giving is, in of itself, not enough for the hypocrites gave. Some gave quite liberally as well as practiced tithing. Yet because they gave from the wrong motivation, they received no reward from the Father.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mine and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. [Mat. 23:23]

The hypocrite only practices his religion in public, like a Sunday Christian, who fails to live his Christianity at home. The hypocrite is filled with pride and self-righteousness. God is looking for those who are broken and humble in spirit, dependent upon Him.

Jesus calls hypocrisy what it is, mentioning some of the characteristics of the hypocrite.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. [Mat. 23:24-28]

Jesus also warned against some characteristics of hypocritical giving:

- a. Giving to be seen of men. The Christian is told to give in such manner so that one hand doesn't know what the other is doing.
- b. Giving to be praised of men. Don't be guilty of giving to be applauded of men. To do so has its reward, i.e., man's praise and recognition.
- c. Giving to appease one's conscience. There are ungodly people who give generously to churches and worthy causes. An example is Al Capone, who was a notorious gangster and murderer. Others have been murderers, drug dealers, etc. Though they obtain their monies from dishonest endeavors, they seek to appease their consciences by giving some of their ill-gotten gains to a church or some worthy charity.

2. Not only did Jesus address giving hypocritically, He also had several things to say on the subject of prayer.

- a. Avoid praying like the hypocrites.

1) *But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. [Mat. 23:5]*

2) The Pharisees of Jesus' day prayed loudly and noticeably in conspicuous public displays. Jesus tells us that the hypocrite loves to pray. So what's the matter with that? His motive for praying is wrong! His motive is to impress someone, not to be heard in heaven.

3) We wish to emphasize here that a hypocrite is not someone who has merely missed the mark, someone who is still striving. None of us are what we should or could be. A hypocrite is a pretender – one who pretends to be a disciple when in reality, he is not. His life has not been turned around. He is still living in the same old sinful way.

4) Because the Lord warns us not to pray like the hypocrite, don't get the idea that all public prayer is to be avoided. Definitely not. The Christian is still to attend prayer meetings, pray in church, pray over his meals in public restaurants, etc. There is a balance to be maintained.

b. Avoid praying like the heathen as well.

1) *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.* [Mat. 6:7]

2) The Christian is to pray sincerely from his heart and in his own words. Rote, memorized and ritual prayers are often from the head but not the heart.

c. Ask for what we need.

1) Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

2) [Mat. 6:8]

3) God already knows what we need, but He wants us to ask Him anyway. We are to ask in faith.

4) *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.* [Jas. 1:6]

d. Address all prayers to "Our Father."

1) The believer's prayers are to be addressed to God, the Father, not to Mary, the saints, angels, etc.

2) *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* [1 Tim. 2:5]

e. Pray in a forgiving spirit.

If you seek to be forgiven by God, you must be willing to forgive others.

3. Another warning from Jesus concerned fasting like the hypocrites.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [Mat. 6:16]

While fasting is certainly important, it is not a religious duty. It is not to be an act of self-righteousness as it was for the Pharisees who boasted that they fasted twice a week.

There are purposes for fasting. You may know that you have to minister to someone and want to fast prior to that encounter. Perhaps you are believing God for a healing and wish to press in. Then there are occasions when one is seeking direction from God and wishes to put his full heart and attention into it by fasting. The idea of fasting is not to diet or purge one's body from impurities. The purpose for fasting is to turn one's back on everything, even ministering to self, and turn all purposes to God until you hear from Him.

J. The Principles Concerning Covetousness

1. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. [Mat. 6:19]

Jesus begins His teaching of principles regarding the Christian's ownership of goods and possessions. He warns that we are not to store up or hoard possessions here on earth but rather to lay up our treasures in heaven. Now Jesus did not say that the Christian could have no treasures. Certainly he can, but they are to be the right kind of treasures, i.e., heavenly treasures, not worldly.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. [Mat. 6:24]

Jesus goes on to say here that man cannot serve two masters, God and mammon, i.e., wealth or money. Let's face it, people do serve their possessions. The more one has the greater the pressure to preserve what one has. The more one owns, the more tempted he is to "take thought."

Jesus is dealing here with the principle of covetousness. He is not prohibiting or condemning the ownership of goods but he is, however, requiring that the Christian abandon not things, but the "affection" for things. It is not God's intent for the Christian to lack. God does want to bless us. Most believe God for too little rather than too much. However, God will never bless us to the point where we have so much that we won't trust Him. Yet He has promised to bless us more abundantly than we can "ask or think." Having things becomes an obsession with many. No matter how much they have, they require more and more and never content. The need for more possessions becomes a driving force and the devil makes a slave of them. God wants to deliver us from the mentality of storing up things against an uncertain future. Hoarding (covetousness) is sin, as is materialism.

2. Just how serious is the sin of covetousness?

Covetousness is condemned by God as idolatry.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [Eph. 5:5]

Notice the company that Paul links the covetous man with -- whoremongers, the unclean.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. [Col. 3:5-6]

God is telling us to put to death any covetousness because it is idolatry and He will condemn it as such and judge it. An Idol can be anything that one sets his affections on; anything that is allowed to come between God and us. It can be a job, hobby, sports, a house, car, etc.

3. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. [Mat. 6:19-20]*

Jesus tells us the consequences of covetousness. It results in an endless and hopeless struggle to preserve possessions that are deteriorating before our very eyes and we are powerless to stop it.

Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. [Prov. 23:4-5]

God is asking, "Why would you set your eyes (affections) on that which is not permanent and will take wings and fly away?"

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. [Haggai 1:6-9]

In this passage, God is warning the man that if he puts his heart on riches, then He (God) will simply blow on them and then we'll see how long they last.

The sin of covetousness always leads to greater sin, i.e., depravity. For example, the man who covets his neighbor's wife and the sin leads into further sin, i.e., adultery. The man who covets a large house, car, boat, etc. and begins to embezzle money from the company for which he works in order to acquire those luxuries.

4. Steps to Avoid Covetousness

a. View all your material possessions as a means to an end and not as an end in themselves. Example: View your car as a means of transportation, not as a status symbol.

b. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* [Mat. 6:33]

c. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* [Lk. 12:15]

d. *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* [1 Tim. 6:8]

e. Never allow your material possessions to hold a place of affection in your heart. How much do your possessions mean to you? Would your faith in Christ be ruined if you lost your possessions? Can you trust God to keep that which He has given you, that which His bounty has provided?

f. Totally commit all your possessions and view them as belonging to God. See yourself as simply a steward of God's things.

K. The Principles Concerning Sinful Anxiety / Worry (Scripture reference – Matthew, chapters 6- 7)

1. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* [Mat. 6:25]

Jesus says, "Don't take thought about all these things." If we do, then we're no different than the heathen – the Gentiles – for that's what they are concerned with.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. [Mat. 7:7]

Jesus teaches us to have total faith in God for all our needs. Don't worry and stress and fall into sinful anxiety like the heathen do; the Father knows your need.

2. What's so wrong with worry?

a. Worry demands so much attention that it takes one's time from seeking first the kingdom which is of top priority to the Christian.

b. Worry can be evidence of a covetous heart. Those who worry are overly concerned about losing something they have or getting something they don't have. It goes back to the impossibility of serving two masters.

c. Worry is so unnecessary. If God takes care of the birds, surely He will care for you.

d. Worry is unavailing. Worry cannot add a minute to one's life or an inch to one's height. Worry has been compared to a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but doesn't get you anywhere.

e. Worry equals unfaithfulness. If one is worried, he's not faithful to believe that God will do what He says He will do. In that, one becomes just like the unbelieving heathen. Worry demonstrates a lack of faith.

3. These scripture passages do not teach

a. That it is wrong to own or possess things. What is wrong is to worry about things.

b. That one should not work. Some use the passage in Matthew 6:26 about God providing for the birds as an excuse for not working. This is certainly not what God is promoting here for in other passages He says that the one who does not work does not eat.

c. God is calling believers to live a life of total faith believing Him for all their needs. There are, however, conditions to be met.

4. Keys to Overcoming the Tendency to Worry

a. Purpose in your heart to refuse to worry about anything. It must be an act of one's will by determining, "I refuse to worry." Some good scriptures to stand on:

1) *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* [Mat. 6:33]

2) *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* [Phil. 4:19]

3) *Fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* [Ps. 34:9-10]

b. We are to keep God first in our lives and He will provide for us.

c. Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness. This is the most important part, i.e., He will provide for us as we seek first His kingdom.

d. Take care to live one day at a time.

e. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* [Mat. 6:34]

f. Have faith in God. He will provide, protect, and meet all our needs.

g. *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* [Mat. 7:8]

We live as Christians in an anxious, covetous age, and we are admonished to overcome the urge toward covetousness, materialism and the practice of fearful, sinful worry.

L. The Principles Concerning Judgment of Others (Scripture reference: Matthew 7:1-5)

Judge not, that ye be not judged. [Mat. 7:1]

This is probably the most quoted verse in the entire Bible. It is quoted not just by Christians, but also by non-Christians. It is also the most misused scriptural passage. Many have used this verse to say that Christians should never correct error, discern cults, denounce false teaching, etc. They maintain that such action is tantamount to "judging others."

Is this what Jesus is saying to us in these passages? Definitely not.

If we are not to practice discernment, then why does He issue this warning: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits ...* [Mat. 7:15-16]

The fact is, as wise believers we are to examine or discern the lives of others and their teachings. What Jesus is actually teaching here is "don't judge unrighteously, critically, or harshly." Criticism is forbidden. He is speaking against the one who sets himself up as a model and then proceeds to judge others accordingly. Jesus does not say that believers are not to judge "righteous judgment." Again, quite the contrary, for we are told to *...mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.* [Rom. 16:17]

This doesn't mean that believers are to be judgmental. It means rather that we are to be discerning and wise. Don't fall for the false love foolishness of those who say we are unloving if we point out error or heresy, etc., because "it constitutes judgment." We're not coming against people but against error. We are to judge with "righteous judgment."

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. [John 7:24]

But remember, do not criticize.

Believers are to judge righteous judgment in many areas, even among the brethren.

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. [1 Cor. 14:29]

So believers are to judge prophecies whether they are of God, the flesh, or the devil. As believers we are also to judge the teachings and ministries of others, but we must always judge without being judgmental or critical and certainly not in a self-righteous fashion.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. [Mat. 7:2]

That's a strong warning, so be careful how and when you judge. Jesus is saying that your judgment of others will be the standard that He uses to judge you.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. [Jas. 2:13]

Be merciful in your judgment of others.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. [Mat. 7:3-5]

Jesus has some strong words for us. How can you admonish your brother about his life without first getting your own life in order? Jesus is saying here that we are not to be fault-finders, nit-pickers about the little things in the lives of others. Jesus is forbidding the manifestation of a critical spirit. When it becomes necessary to deal with a brother or sister in a corrective fashion, deal with it in love. Love is not just sweetness and sticky sugar; it also involves correction and discipline just as a parent dealing with a disobedient child. The Christian is never to judge rashly, hastily, haughtily, harshly, or critically.

The principle can be summed up in one verse: *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* [Mat. 7:12]

M. The Principles Concerning Discernment (Scripture reference: Matthew 7:6-29)

Jesus calls believers to be discerning and their discernment is to be two-fold:

1. Be discerning concerning to whom you minister.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. [Mat. 7:6]

In this passage, Jesus is referring to people and is calling some hogs and dogs. Certainly not a very flattering comparison! Jesus is saying that there are some people, like dogs, who have no appreciation for holy things. Some of the precious truths and light that you have cannot be shared with some because they have no use for it. What would swine do with precious pearls?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. [Prov. 1:7]

Fools will despise the precious truths of the Word and will use it against you.

Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words. [Prov. 23:9]

Jesus contrasts the wise from the foolish in the following verses.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. [Mat. 7:24-29]

2. Be discerning as to whom you allow to minister to you. Know them by their fruits. What kind of life do they live? No human vessel will prove perfect, but is their life and ministry consistent with biblical truths?

Studies in Christian Ethics

Part VIII: Practical Application of the Principles of Christian Ethics

There are two basic aspects of the Christian faith. The first is believing. The Christian must believe sound doctrine. The second is doing. The Christian must obey what he's heard by putting it into practice. Orthodoxy (right belief) is to be translated into Orthopraxy (right practice).

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. [Jas. 1:22]

Conduct without right principles is sin. Right doctrine without obedience is hypocrisy. The Christian is responsible to apply the ethical principles that he has learned to his conduct. The principles of Christian ethics have reference to the Christian's responsibility to God, to himself, to his neighbor, to his church, and to the state. Many people try to run from or avoid responsibility, but God says that the Christian has responsibilities.

... why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Lk. 6:46]

A. The Christian's Personal Responsibility to Oneself

Society has put an emphasis on "self." It's a humanistic emphasis on self-gratification, self-projection, self-esteem, self-gratification, and on and on. Self is #1 and everything else falls into line following self.

1. Questions Raised

This raises questions for the Christian. Since the Bible teaches that the Christian is to deny self and put self to death, does that rule out all duties and responsibilities to oneself? Just what then is the Christian's responsibility toward himself?

a. One school of thought uses as the basis of their teaching the quotation of Jesus that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. They contend that if we're to love our neighbor as ourselves, then we must first love ourselves. Therefore, the doctrines of self-esteem and self-worth are preached. They maintain that the old doctrines of self-denial are the cause of problems in the lives of many Christians, i.e., that is why they're unable to love themselves, why they have such a poor self-image, such low self-esteem, etc.

Jesus is not teaching a positive self-image, self-esteem, etc. This principle goes back to the Old Testament and what is really being taught here is that the Christian is not to get caught up in selfishness, but he is to look out for his neighbor. Jesus told His followers to love others as I have loved you. His love was a self-less love.

b. Another view is that there is to be no consideration for self at all. To do so is egoism and selfishness. Self is to be hated and denied at every turn. Those following this teaching engage in such things as prolonged fasting, meager daily sustenance, and ascetic practices such as sleeping on a cold, stone floor in winter without blankets, wrapping themselves in wool covers or clothing in hot weather, etc. Paul makes reference to these people:

Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. [Col. 2:23]

He goes on to say that they have a form or sense of godliness but it is man's way, not God's. What these people are really practicing is not self-denial but self-destruction. Righteousness does not come by abusing oneself, but by faith in Christ, which in turn, leads to the individual denying self in his life. God does not call the Christian to self-hatred, but to sin hatred. The Christian is called to surrender his whole life to the lordship of Christ and to seek first the kingdom. The Christian has the responsibility to care for his body as well as his mind and soul. God has not called us to pamper ourselves, but we are to care for ourselves.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Thes. 5:23]

Taking care of oneself is not selfishness, nor is it sinful. The difference is in the motive. The Christian is to take care of himself so that he can be of service to his neighbor and so that he can better serve God. If the believer neglects himself and allows his body to become sick and frail, then he cannot serve others and will most likely then require others to minister to him in his infirmity.

The Lord wants us to be wise. Jesus told His disciples to rest. Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. Not that he was promoting drinking alcoholic beverages, but water was impure in those days in that part of the world just as it is today. He was simply telling Timothy to look out for his physical welfare. Caring for our bodies is really more of a sense of duty to God than to ourselves because it is God who gives us the duty to care for ourselves.

2. The Christian's Two-Fold Responsibility to Care for His Body

a. Self-Preservation

The Christian's responsibility is to preserve body and mind. God tells the believer to take care of his body, his mind, and his life. There are several reasons why God is concerned that we, as believers, take this responsibility seriously:

(1) Because we're responsible to take care of our bodies in order to fulfill the scriptural mandate set forth:

For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. [1 Cor. 6:20]

We're to glorify God in our bodies and one of the ways to glorify Him is through our health and healing. How can the person who is literally killing himself through the use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs glorify God? His continued use of any of these substances is suicidal; how then can he expect to be healed? Man is comprised of three parts: spirit, soul and body. Without his body, he is incomplete; that's why God will resurrect our bodies. Contrary to what some may think, God is interested in the believer's body; He bought it at Calvary. He purchased both the body and its healing in the atonement (Isa. 53:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:24; Ps.103:4-5).

(2) Because we're responsible to take care of ourselves. If we're to be used by God and if we're to be useful to our neighbor, we must have sufficient strength to function in the calling to which God has called us.

In Philippians 2:25 and following, Paul gives the account of Epaphroditus who was sick and almost died. Now Epaphroditus was performing a good work by helping Paul, but others didn't do their part and as a result, Epaphroditus became overworked. It became too much for him physically. God ordained a day of rest and the person who consistently works seven days a week -- even in service to the Lord -- is headed for a breakdown. By giving proper care to one's body, he can be of continual service to God and to his fellow man. A sick person has to depend upon others to give him care and attention. He is incapacitated and unable to spend time caring for and helping others.

(3) Because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? [1 Cor. 6:19]

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. [1 Cor. 3:17-18]

The body of the Christian is compared to the Old Testament temple. It is not to be defiled and it is holy. Therefore, as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Christian's body is not to be defiled through neglect or defiling habits. If we abuse our bodies by smoking, overeating, getting insufficient rest and sleep, then the law of sowing and reaping will prevail. God requires that we maintain and care for our temples, i.e., our bodies.

(4) Because the Word teaches that our bodies and our lives are not ours to do with as we please. We have been bought with a price and we are to consider it as a sacred trust from God.

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. [2 Cor. 5:6 & 10]

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye 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. 6:18-20]

God purchased our bodies at Calvary. He paid the price for it and that's why we can believe Him to heal it. Our bodies are not ours, but God's.

(5) Because the Christian does not live unto himself. The Christian is to take care of himself because his life and his death affect others.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. [Rom. 14:7]

What about those who claim they can do anything they please because it is their life? or even their death? What about those who display the "what's it to you attitude?" What about those who commit suicide? It is a frustration of God's purpose for your life if you choose to kill yourself. And there is a very real devil who will suggest that you do kill yourself, as though through your death you and others would be better off. Suicide demonstrates one lacks faith that God will deliver or provide or heal or restore. It is the result of one's total absorption with their circumstances and as someone once said, is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. It shows a lack of patience, trust, love (for God, oneself and others), and is outright disobedience to the Word of God which declares, "Do thyself no harm" (Acts 16:28. See the Authors booklet Do Thyself No Harm for more information on what the Bible says about suicide). One does not live or die to oneself. He is responsible to others.

There are principles of self-preservation, and as Christians, we are responsible to apply them in our individual lives.

(1) Believers apply the principles by regulating their passions and appetites, i.e., self-control, temperance, etc.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. [Phil. 4:5]

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. [1 Cor. 9:24-27]

The heathen athletes ran to win a silly trophy that deteriorated and at great sacrifice, disciplined their bodies. The Christian, on the other hand, disciplines himself to win an

incorruptible crown. The apostle Paul said that he ruled his body; it did not dictate to him. He said, "It is my slave; I am not its slave."

By the same token, the Christian is not to be a slave to his bodily appetites. We have a responsibility to preserve our minds as well as our bodies. We are to feed it the right spiritual food, and we also have the responsibility to continue to learn. A mind does not remain stagnant; it either advances or atrophies.

Study to show thy self approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [2 Tim. 2:15]

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby. [1 Pe. 2:2]

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. [1 Cor. 14:20]

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom. 12:2]

Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. [Isa. 5:13]

(2) The believer has the responsibility to put off all unclean, defiling habits that defile his mind and body. This includes trashy literature and bad habits.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom. 12:1-2]

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. [Rom. 13:12]

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye 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. 6:18-20]

Christians should carefully and prayerfully consider whether or not they should participate in certain activities, sports, hobbies, etc, that are potentially injurious to the body. For example, high school, college and professional football, hockey, boxing, full contact karate, etc. To pray for divine protection while willingly pummeling oneself or another, might be the equivalent of provoking God. The devil tempted Jesus to jump off the temple roof because God promises divine protection. Remember Jesus' answer? Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Matt.4:7).. Some other very questionable activities are sky diving, hang gliding, mountain climbing, stunt driving, car and motorcycle racing, tightrope walking, etc. Are you tempting God by participation in such dangerous stunts?

(3) The Christian should not willfully neglect the basic principles of good health, i.e., good hygiene, good nutrition, and proper rest. The Bible says we are to eat right.

Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it. [Prov. 25:16]

Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. [Prov. 23:20-21]

The Word also says to get proper rest.

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. [Ps. 127:2]

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. [Ps. 2:8]

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. [Gen. 2:2-3]

Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed. [Ex. 23:12]

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. [Mk. 6:31]

We are to practice good hygiene or cleanliness and although the Bible does not specifically say that "cleanliness is next to godliness," cleanliness is taught throughout the Bible. The Christian is also to get the right kind of exercise, but this does not mean developing the body with the motive to make it more attractive for sexual or lustful purposes.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. [1 Tim. 4:8]

Paul is not speaking here against exercise, but is simply saying that bodily exercise profits one temporarily while here on earth. Spiritual exercise, on the other hand, profits one eternally.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. [Phil. 4:5]

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. [Ps. 147:10-11]

(4) As Christians, we are supposed to preserve ourselves, but does that also include defending oneself in all the ways that people usually think of? Do we use our fists to fight those who slander us or attack us verbally? Do we shoot those who insult us? Do we use weapons to kill the authorities if they attempt to arrest us for our faith? What about defending one's rights? Ask yourself, "What would Jesus do? What did He teach?" He taught His followers to love their enemies, to turn the other cheek. Jesus practiced what he taught and loved His enemies and even healed the severed ear of the servant when Peter cut it off with a sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus was threatened, He did not threaten in return.

Self-preservation does not necessarily mean self-defense. While the Bible doesn't specifically state that defending our home and family from criminals who would break in and rob, rape, and kill is right or wrong, it does say, "But know this, if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken up" (Matt.24:43). If one is truly a Christian, then he will live as Jesus taught. Rather than weakness as the world would say, "turning the other cheek" is a sign of maturity and strength.

(5) In order to be preserved, believers must also practice self-preparation. This is simply the development of Christian character, Christian virtues. The principle of self-preparation has to do with the believer's responsibility to himself to develop basic Christian virtues. This principle is classified as the Christian's responsibility to himself because it is the believer's responsibility to make himself ready for Christ.

Toward this end, we have assembled a list of many different virtues the Christian should be developing as part of his preparation for the return of Christ. ...*his wife hath made herself ready.* [Rev. 19:7]

Alertness [Prov. 1:5; 22:3]	Hospitality [Heb. 13:1-2; Rom. 12:13]
Appreciativeness [1 Thess. 5:18; Ps. 103:2]	Humility [Eph. 4:2; 1 Pe. 5:5-6; Ja. 4:16; Rom. 12:3]
Attentiveness [Heb. 2:1; Mk. 4:23-24]	Impartiality [Rom. 2:11; Ja. 2:1-9]
Attitude [1 Cor. 10:31]	Industrious [2 Thes. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:11-12; Eph. 4:28]
Availability [Mat. 9:9; 20:27-28; 2 Tim. 4:2; Lu. 9:57-62; 2 Tim. 2:4]	Joyfulness [Eph. 5:19; Ja. 1:2-3; 1 Thes. 5:16; Gal. 5:22]
Commitment [Ps. 37:5; Lk. 14:26-27; 1 Pe. 4:19]	Kindness [Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12; Lu. 10:30-37]
Compassion [1 Pe. 3:8; Jo. 15:13; 1 Jo. 3:16-17]	Knowledge [Phil. 1:9-10; Col. 1:9-10; Jo. 16:13; 2 Pe. 1:3-8]
Concern [Gal. 6:2; Rom. 15:1-2]	Longsuffering [Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:2]
Confidence [Phil. 4:13; Rom. 4:21]	Love [Mt. 22:36-40; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 13:4-7]
Consideration [Phil. 2:3-4]	Loyalty [Lu. 14:26; Mt. 6:24; Jo. 15:13]
Consistency [1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Pe. 5:10; Eph. 4:14; Col. 1:23]	Mannerliness [1 Cor. 13:5]
Contentment [Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6-9; Lu. 9:58]	Moderation [Phil. 4:5]
Cooperativeness [Ps. 133:1; Eph. 4:3; Jo. 6:28-29; 1 Cor. 1:10]	Modesty [1 Tim. 2:9; Titus 2:10]
Courage [Dt. 31:6; 1 Cor. 16:13; Acts 4:29]	Meekness [Mt. 5:5; Eph. 4:2; Ja. 1:21; 3:13]
Courtesy [1 Pe. 3:8]	Mercy [Mt. 5:7; Lu. 6:36]
Decisiveness [Josh. 24:15; Dt. 30:19-20; Heb. 11:24-25]	Morality [Mt. 5:28; 1 Tim. 5:2]
Deference [1 Cor. 10:33; 9:18-22; Rom. 12:16]	Non-Resistance [Mt. 5:39-44]
Dependability [1 Tim. 6:20; Pr. 25:19; 2 Cor. 5:19]	Optimism [Rom. 8:28; Ja. 1:2-3; Phil. 4:8]
Determination [1 Cor. 2:2; Isa. 50:7; Eze. 3:8-10; Lu. 9:51]	Orderliness [1 Cor. 14:33, 40]
Diligence [Col. 3:23; Ecc. 9:10; 2 Pe. 3:14; Pr. 21:5]	Patience [Heb. 6:12, 15; Ja. 5:8]
Discernment [Eze. 44:23; Mal. 3:18; 1 Cor. 2:14-16; Phil. 1:9-11; Heb. 5:14]	Peacefulness [Jo. 16:33; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:18]
Discretion [Ps. 112:5; Pr. 2:11; 3:21]	Perseverance [Gal. 6:9; Lu. 11:8; Eph. 6:18]
Efficiency [Eph. 5:16; Pr. 18:9; 16:20]	Punctuality [Ecc. 3:1; Pr. 25:19; Eph. 5:16]
Endurance [Heb. 12:1-3; 10:35-39; Lu. 8:15; Mt. 24:13]	Purity [Mt. 5:8; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:5]
Equity [Pr. 1:3; Mt. 7:12]	Purposefulness [Pro. 29:18; Mt. 6:33; 7:21; 5:48]
Faith [Heb. 11:6; Rom. 1:17; Nahum 1:7; Lu. 18:8]	Respectfulness [1 Thes. 5:12-13; Rom. 13:7; Eph. 6:1-2, 5]
Faithfulness [1 Cor. 7:25; 3 Jo. 4-5; Rev. 2:10, 13; 3:8]	Responsibility [2 Cor. 5:9; Rom. 14:12; Eph. 6:5-8]
Fearlessness [2 Tim. 1:7; Mk. 5:36; Jer. 1:8, 17; 1 Jo. 4:18]	Righteousness [1 Jo. 3:5-10; 2:6; 1 Cor. 15:34]
Flexibility [Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pe. 3:15; Jer. 10:23; Pr. 16:9]	Self-Control [Gal. 5:23-24; 1 Thes. 5:22; Lu. 9:23]
Forbearance [Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13]	Sincerity [1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 1 Thes. 2:4-10; Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18]
Forgiveness [Col. 3:13; Mk. 11:25-26; Mt. 5:44]	Sobriety [Titus 2:2, 4, 6; 1 Thes. 5:6, 8; 1 Pe. 5:8]
Friendliness [Pr. 18:24; Jo. 15:13-15; Ja. 4:4; 2:23]	Stewardship [1 Cor. 4:1-2; Mt. 25:14-30; Lu. 16:1-12]
Generosity [2 Cor. 9:6-7; 1 Tim. 6:17-18; Rom. 12:13; Acts 20:35]	Studiousness [2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Acts 17:11-12]
Gentleness [2 Tim. 2:24; Gal. 5:22]	Submissiveness [Jo. 10:27; Ja. 4:7; 1 Pe. 2:13; 5:5; Heb. 13:17]
Godliness [1 Tim. 4:7-8; 6:3-6; 2 Pe. 1:6-7]	Tactfulness [Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-25]
Goodness [Gal. 5:22; 6:10]	Teachableness [Pr. 29:1; Col. 3:16; Ja. 1:21-25]
Holiness [1 Pe. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 7:1; Heb. 12:14; 1 Thes. 3:13]	Tenderheartedness [Eph. 4:32; 2 Chron. 34:27-28]
Honesty [Lu. 8:15; Rom. 12:17; 1 Pe. 2:12; 2 Cor. 8:21]	Thankfulness [Col. 3:15, 17; 4:2; Phil. 4:6]
	Truthfulness [Eph. 4:15, 25; Col. 3:9; Acts 5:3; Rev. 21:8]
	Trustworthiness [Mt. 25:46; Pr. 25:19]
	Wisdom [Pr. 3:13; 4:5-7; 10:31]
	Zeal [Jo. 2:17; Rev. 2:4; 3:15-16, 19]

B. The Christian's Responsibility to God and Nature

Each individual believer has a responsibility to his Creator. Consider the following basic responsibilities:

1. Believers have the responsibility to fellowship with Him. Some of the things involved in that fellowship are:

a. Fear of God

Those who truly know God will have a wholesome fear of Him. Those who speak casually and flippantly about God, calling Him nicknames, etc., do not have a true knowledge of Him for to truly know Him is to hold Him in awe and reverence.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. [Prov. 1:7]

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. [Prov. 9:10]

The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility. [Prov. 15:33]

b. Love of God

Those who truly love God will hold nothing back from Him. He will have all their devotion.

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. [Lk. 10:27]

c. Trust God

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. [Mark 11:22]

This was not a suggestion or a polite request which Jesus made, but a command. Jesus' disciples are to be characterized by their bold joy and confidence in Him, by a firm, unwavering confidence.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thy own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. [Prov. 3:5-6]

d. Obedience to God

Not only are we to believe, but we are also to obey.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 7:21]

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Lk. 6:46]

e. Know God

To truly know God is to know Him in the sense of communion, fellowship, in the assurance of salvation. Probably the best way to get to know God is through prayer. The Christian is told to pray without ceasing. Prayer should be a characteristic of the Christian's daily life.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. [John 17:3]

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. [John 3:16]

When the apostle Paul speaks of the five-fold ministry (Ephesians, chapter 4:11), he says that the ministers are to bring the believers into a greater depth of knowledge and communion with God.

f. Please God

Believers are to please God by doing all of those things previously mentioned. We please God through our faith exercised in His promises, in His word, etc.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. [Heb. 11:6]

g. Honor God

Believers are to reverence Him; worship Him; glorify Him; to hold Him in awe.

...for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. [Ps. 45:11]

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture; and the sheep of his hand.... [Ps. 95:6-7]

2. Believer's have the responsibility to communicate God's grace and truth to the world. It is the believer's responsibility to communicate the full gospel message of a full redemption in Jesus Christ.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. [Mat. 28:19-20]

... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. [Mark 16:15-16]

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. [Lk. 24:47-48]

As Christians, we are responsible to live in such a fashion that the world recognizes that we are God's children. For far too long, the average professing Christian has lived no differently than the world. This has hurt the cause of Christianity probably more than any other single thing. We must walk as children of light. We are to live our testimony, i.e., by letting our light shine.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. [Eph. 5:8]

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. [Mat. 5:16]

...I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. [1 Pe. 11-12]

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. [1 Pe. 3:13-16]

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. [Phil. 2:15]

C. The Christian's Responsibility to God's Sentient Creatures

1. What is the Christian's responsibility to God's created order? To the environment? What about groups who promote such causes as "Save the Whales," "Don't Litter," etc.? The principle behind what these groups are promoting is not wrong, however, their method of protest is often wrong. The Christian does have a responsibility to the creation which God has placed him in. He is not free to waste, pollute, wantonly kill wildlife, etc. The Christian does have a responsibility to the created order. The Christian is to respect his environment and resources, such as air, water, land, etc.

There are several Biblical principles the Christian should keep in mind to help to show him his responsibility, i.e., things that will give him respect for God's creation so he does not misuse them.

a. Remember that all the earth is God's creation and He created it good. (Scripture references: Genesis, chapters 1 and 2.) God created a wondrous, awe inspiring creation.

b. God is revealed in that creation. God actually declares His existence, His presence through the beauty and wonder of His creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. [Ps. 19:1]

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?...Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet...O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth [Ps. 8:1, 3-4, 6, 9]

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world 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]

The creation testifies of the existence of God. Even the most pagan savage can behold God in nature. This leaves man without excuse. God is in every part of nature, i.e., the gigantic mountain peaks, the sunset across a lake, the quietness of a hot, sultry afternoon in the swamps. However, when the beach is cluttered with trash, the mountain stream is black with pollution and dead fish, these things mar nature's testimony of God. When man through carelessness or greed, destroys this beauty, then he's destroyed nature's testimony. It is therefore man's responsibility to be sure that nature continues her testimony toward God.

What about using the resources of nature? What about cutting trees for lumber, making paper, etc.? There is no problem in using nature's commodities, but when many trees are felled, then man is responsible to plant new seedlings to replenish the forests. Man is to take care of his environment. He is not to desecrate it. He should use it if he needs it, but not waste it. Man is to consider himself as a trustee of nature. The principle of stewardship comes in here. Man has been entrusted with the care of God's creation. We must remember that it all belongs to God. It's all His!

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. [Ps. 24:1]

For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. [Ps. 50:10]

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. [Deut. 10:14]

And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord: and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's. [Ex. 9:29]

...for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. [1 Cor. 10:28]

2. God gives principles in His Word concerning the believer's responsibility to conserve and preserve the earth's natural resources. He left specific instructions to Israel, telling them not to cut down the fruit bearing trees when felling timber for use in warfare and laying siege against the cities.

When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued. [Deut. 20:19-20]

God also instructs the Israelites to allow the land to lay fallow every seventh year. Here is seen the principle of soil conservation. It has taken modern man some 1900 years to discover the advantages of that principle, yet God told the Israelites to practice that principle centuries ago.

And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed. [Ex. 23:10-12]

When Joseph was carried away into Egypt, God gave him wisdom whereby he was to save his people Israel from the famine that was sweeping the nations.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. [Gen. 41: 34-36]

There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up. [Prov. 21:20]

The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious. [Prov. 12:27]

The New Testament also contains teachings regarding the principles of conservation and preservation. In the well known parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), can be found a lesson in not being wasteful. Even in the performance of a miracle, Jesus was concerned with the principle of conservation. When He multiplied the loaves and fishes, He gave instruction so that the "extra" would not be wasted.

3. Man also has the responsibility to display kindness toward God's sentient (to feel, sense, perception) creatures, i.e., the animal kingdom.

a. As created beings, animals share the gift of creaturely existence with humanity.

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after the kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.... And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. [Gen. 1:21-22, 24]

After God created the creatures, He blessed them. The animals were here first.

b. The animals are valuable in God's sight and He cares for them, too.

...O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. [Ps. 36:6]

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [Mat. 6:26]

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. [Neh. 9:6]

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. [Prov. 12:10]

c. The Bible declares that all animals belong to God.

For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. [Ps. 50:10-11]

If all the creatures are God's, then we should consider ourselves as trustees of God's creatures. We have dominion over them, therefore we can use them, i.e., oxen to plow, work horses, etc., but as we use them, we're to treat them properly.

... thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. [Deut. 24:4]

If a bird nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days. [Deut. 22:6-7]

d. Animals are included in God's covenant with Noah and all mankind. [Scripture references: Genesis 9:8-13; 16-17.]

When men were judged by the flood, the animal kingdom was judged also as they partook of man's judgment. The covenant is therefore the animals and the animal kingdom is groaning and awaiting the total restoration of all things just as is man. Because they partook of the curse, the animal kingdom will also partake of the redemption. [Scripture references – Romans 8:19-22; Isaiah 11:6-9.] The animals will enjoy the millennial kingdom also.

4. Questions have been raised by some ethicists concerning the killing of animals.

... commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. [1 Tim. 4:3-4]

One of the signs of the deceiver is that he will say the believer should not eat meat.

a. The allowance for the humane killing of animals for food cannot be denied. Abraham killed a calf and fed it to the Lord. [Scripture references – Genesis 9:3 and 18:1-8.] The sacrifice system was set up by God and the offerings, including meat, were eaten by the priests and their families.

b. The use of animal skins, furs, and hides for clothing is also acceptable because the Bible sets a precedent.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. [Gen. 3:21]

This does not endorse the killing of some animal so that a woman can pridefully parade around in a fur coat, but the Eskimo who depends upon animal fur to clothe himself and his family to keep them from freezing in the Arctic climate is acceptable.

c. Hunting for food is permissible as is fishing for food. There is no scriptural basis for vegetarianism. However, hunting or killing for sport is something else altogether. If a Christian hunts, he should do so in an ethical and humane fashion, i.e., hunt legally and with a license, not over killing.

5. Man also has the responsibility to treat animals humanely. Animal cruelty is definitely against God's principles.

a. Killing for Amusement: Animals should never be killed or caused to suffer for amusement, i.e., bull fighting, cock fighting, dog fighting, etc. Such practices are not sports but ungodly and unethical activities.

b. Cruelly beating or torturing animals is also sadistic. The practice of certain forms of intensive farming is considered animal cruelty, where animals are penned or cooped up in such confinement that they are unable to move about. Animal experimentation where animals are poisoned, burned, starved, etc. in order to observe their reactions to certain conditions is also highly unethical. Christians should not be involved in any of these practices in any way, shape or form.

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.
[Prov. 12:10]

Some have asked about praying for their animals. There is absolutely nothing wrong in that. In fact, there are many accounts of animals being healed after their owner has laid hands on the animal and prayed for it.

D. The Christian's Responsibility to Others

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. [Mat. 22:36-40]

What is the believer's responsibility toward his fellow man? It can be summed up in one word -- love. One's first responsibility is to God, to love Him with all our mind, soul, and strength. The second responsibility is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

1. Who is my neighbor? [Scripture reference – Lk. 10:25-37] In this passage of scripture, Jesus recounts the parable of the Good Samaritan. He uses this account as an example in order to answer the young lawyer's question regarding, "Who is my neighbor?"

The Samaritans were hated by the Jews because of their mixed heritage and although they had adopted Judaism, they practiced idolatry along with it. Hatred breeds hatred and the Samaritans, in turn, hated the Jews. Yet in the biblical account, it was the despised Samaritan, not the priest or the Pharisee, who stopped to minister to the wounded Jew. Therefore, in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?", according to Jesus' example, it is anyone who has a need. This does not mean just those who are of blood relation, the same religion, the same nationality, the same race -- it means all.

What if the person who had a need was an enemy and had misused you in some way? Can we use this as justification for not helping them?

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the

same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Mat. 5:43-48]

It is only a Christian who can love those who hate them and not even all Christians can do this. This principle of loving one's enemies was not just a New Testament principle. It was also taught in the Old Testament law.

If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. [Ex. 23:4-5]

The New Testament also has something to say about this principle.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so going thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. [Rom. 12:20-21]

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law... Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. [Rom. 13:8, 10]

As Christians, we have a debt of love that we owe to every human being. If we truly love our neighbor, we will not deal treacherously or falsely with him. But what if your neighbor is a heretic, a Jehovah Witness, a Mormon, a Moonie, etc.? Are they still your neighbor? Yes, if they have a physical need, you respond to it. If they are hungry, need to use something that belongs to you, etc., you should help. However, you are not to let them into your house to discuss doctrine unless you determine that the person truly wants to know the truth and wants light. The Bible forbids that you do anything that would condone error, but if you have the means to meet a physical need, by all means do so.

2. How does one love his neighbor? Let's examine what the Samaritan did.

a. The Samaritan had compassion on the Jew. The Samaritan was the only one who stopped to help. By the same token, we are to show love, compassion and mercy on the misfortunes of others. We are to help them as the opportunity arises. Practice the "golden rule."

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. [Mat. 7:12]

b. The Samaritan's ministrations to the Jew involved the expenditure of a most valuable commodity -- his time. The easiest thing to do for others is to give money. Time is the greater gift. The Samaritan gave unselfishly of both time and money. He also gave of his energy and his effort to a man of a different nationality and religion. That's what love really is, i.e., giving something of yourself to someone else. Ministering to others compasses many things, i.e., visiting the sick, responding to the needs of others in all types of ways. The Christian's responsibility is to be one of loving service to his neighbor. Loving one's neighbor would also include other virtues such as forgiveness, friendliness, consideration, goodness, generosity, kindness, patience, concern, etc., all the fruits of the Spirit.

Social concern is not left to the church as an organization. It's not the church's responsibility to feed the hungry of the land, establish welfare agencies, retirement centers, etc. The Bible reveals that those responsibilities are designated for the individual believer. It is not the business of the church to jump on the bandwagon of socialistic/humanistic reforms. Each Christian is to give of himself and his substance to minister to the needs of others. The Good Samaritan didn't send the Salvation Army or the Traveler's Aid to help the wounded Jew. He personally responded to the man's need. This is as God intended. The problem with all the social organizations which provide assistance is that they take the responsibility away from the individual. It is the individual that God wants to be responsible and it is the individual whom God will hold accountable. He will not judge some corporate assembly, but each individual. It is to the individual that He will say, "I was hungry, thirsty, naked, etc. and you didn't minister to me." If you have someone who has a need, you minister to them.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? [Jas. 2:14-16]

The church's business is not social reform but preaching the gospel. Some will argue this point saying that Jesus helped others so the church is to help others also. Jesus set the example. He first fed them the Word and then met the physical need. If the individual is not equipped to meet the entire need, if it is greater than you have means to provide, then the church can provide assistance, but the first responsibility remains that of the individual believer. Jesus' priority was teaching the people, delivering them from the bondage of sin and death, and after He had ministered the Word, then He fed them. There were some He said that just followed Him about to be fed. They didn't want the Word, just food for their stomachs. It is the same today. People call the church asking for money for their rent, groceries, gas for the car, etc. We tell them to come hear the Word and then we will respond to the need. Many will rail and curse because they are interested only in their physical needs. Few, if any, respond by coming to hear the Word.

The social concern of the Christian is on a one-to-one basis just as the Good Samaritan's example. The believer's responsibility to others is to love his neighbor as he does himself. Then he demonstrates his love for them by ministering to their need in whatever capacity he can.

Although such institutions as orphanages, hospitals, feeding programs, housing the homeless are all examples of genuine good works, they are not the responsibility of the corporate church. They are the responsibility of the individual believer. Social gospel proponents are involved in many humanitarian efforts, but they are not saving men's souls.

One must always bear in mind that these are principles, and as such, are not to become iron-clad laws. There are certainly some instances when it may be more practical for the church to take a collection for a needy church body or perform some service as a corporate group.

The social gospel proponents strongly disagree with the idea that the social concern of the Christian is on a one-to-one basis. They use the following passages to support their stand: Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-8; 11:28-30; and, 1 Cor. 16:1-2. Now the accounts in Acts 2 and 4 have to do with a unique situation and unique problem which was occurring in Jerusalem. At the time this was written, thousands of Jews had gotten saved and as a result, had been kicked out of their Jewish homes, lost their jobs, etc. because they had apostatized from Judaism. Because of this unique need, the church got together to see that distribution of monies and goods was evenly made to all persons, with no individual or group receiving a larger share than another. Acts 11 and 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, had to do with the same situation, but it occurred in different cities, i.e., Corinth and Antioch.

The Christian is to express loving concern to his family and to the saints. However, he does expect us to use wisdom, common sense, and discernment because situations are not always what they appear to be.

(1) No one should be an unnecessary burden on the church, expecting the church members to pay his bills, feed his family, etc. when the problem is that the individual is just lazy and won't work. Such an individual needs admonishment, not help. To help such an individual only encourages his problem.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. [1 Tim. 5:8]

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. [2 Thes. 3:10]

(2) Each person should pull his own weight and pay his own way so that he is not a burden on the church, and also so that he can help others who have a genuine need.

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. [Eph. 4:28]

Concerning those who have needs, keep in mind that a person who has a need should not look to the church body to meet that need; they should look to the Lord. In summary, we say that the basic social responsibility of the Christian is to provide for himself. Each individual is to earn his own income so that he is not a burden on others, not the church, the government, his family, society, etc.

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. [1 Thes. 4:11-12]

For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. [2 Thes. 3:7-8]

The individual has the responsibility to provide for his family, i.e., his parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, cousins, etc., any family member who has a need whether saved or unsaved.

This, unfortunately, is not the standard of ethics for many today.

E. The Problem of Prejudice

The word "prejudice" means to pre-judge someone, not on merit, but for something such as the color of skin. Many racists have been Protestants who misuse biblical passages to defend their hatred. For example, the "mark" of Cain, the curse of Ham.

Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woolen come upon thee. [Lev. 19:19]

Individuals who use such passages as the basis of their prejudice are merely twisting the meaning of the scriptures. This particular passage is not saying anything about not interbreeding colors or races, but rather speaks of not mixing breeds. For example, don't breed cattle with horses, dogs with cats, etc. God is not saying, "Don't let a white cow mate with a black cow." Biblically, there is no problem with one human being integrating with another. Some maintain there are 200 races of people, while others state there are only three: Caucasian (European), Mongoloid (Asian), and Black (African).

Racists are merely the propagators of hatred for racism is just another word for hatred. Hatred is the mother of murder and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. [1 Jo. 3:15]

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. [1 Jo. 4:7-8, 20-22]

Not only is the Christian to love his brother, but his enemies as well. One of the greatest examples of racism was Adolph Hitler. He rose to power on a platform of hatred toward the Jews.

Just what is God's attitude toward prejudice and segregation?

1. The Old Testament taught and insisted on, segregation of the Jews from the Gentiles. This was not on the basis of race, however, but on the basis of religion. God did not want the Jews to

become polluted with the idolatry of the Gentile nations. He gave to the Jews and to the Jews alone, the revelation of His divine nature. They were not permitted to mingle or marry Gentiles however, they were allowed to have commerce or trade with them up to a point.

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee; the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. [Deut. 7:1-4]

If any of the nations converted to Judaism, however, it was then all right for the Jew to marry a member of the citizenry. An example was that of Ruth, a Moabitess, one of the forbidden nations. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, had another daughter-in-law who chose to stay with her people and with the gods of her people. Ruth, however, chose to stay with Naomi and gave up the religion of the Moabites. Consequently, God blessed her for she was the grandmother of King David and the lineage of Jesus is through her line.

The widow to whom God sent the prophet Elijah (1 Kings, chapter 17) is another example. By the power of God, Elijah multiplied the woman's supply of household oil whereby she and her family were able to live by selling the oil to others. Also, out of all the lepers in Israel, God chose to heal the leper Naaman who was a Syrian and a gentile. God healed where faith was demonstrated.

And Mariam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.... [Num. 12:1]

They apparently objected to their brother's marriage to this woman because of her color. She was an Ethiopian and they were black. God, however, did not oppose the marriage because the woman was of the Jewish faith. The Bible does not forbid interracial marriage but it does forbid marriage outside one's religion or faith.

2. The New Testament accounts reveal that Jesus was not prejudiced. When He ministered to the Syrophenician (Greek) woman (Mark 7:24-30), Jesus did not discriminate against her on the basis of her race but on religion. When He saw her faith, however, He healed her daughter.

Jesus also ministered to the woman of Samaria (John, chapter 4) while she was at the well. Then in Luke, chapter 10, He tells the parable of the Good Samaritan.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. [Jo. 12:32]

Here we see Jesus saying that He will draw all men to Himself, not just a particular race.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. [Mat. 28:19-20]

When Jesus tells us to teach all nations in the Great Commission, He excludes no race or creed.

What was the attitude of the apostles toward prejudice? They did experience some prejudice at one point, but God quickly straightened that out. Peter was rebuked by God for his attitude toward the Gentile Christians. The apostle Paul also rebuked Peter (Galatians 2:9-21) for separating himself from the Gentile Christians because of his fear of the Jews. Peter had been eating with the gentiles until the Jewish Christians appeared on the scene. Then for fear of offending his fellow Jews, Peter separated himself again. God no longer segregates between Jews and gentiles. All are justified through faith in Christ.

God showed the gentiles would also be recipients of the Holy Spirit, and that God made all nations, and all are of one blood. [Scripture references – Acts 10:1-11, 18; 2 Cor. 6:14-18]

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.
[Acts 17:26-27]

What is to be the Christian's attitude toward minorities?

- a. Believers are to love all men equally without bias or prejudice. We are to treat all men alike. An example of true Christ-like behavior is that of the Good Samaritan. All men are our neighbors.
- b. Believers are to have an attitude of repentance from any form of prejudice. This means prejudice toward minorities, ethnic groups, prejudices within one's own race such as the obese, smokers, the aged, adolescents, etc.

F. Responsibilities in Marriage and the Family

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel. [Ps. 128:1-6]

This psalm describes the reward of the righteous, the blessings of a family, and a God-centered home.

It is obvious to almost everyone today that the home is under attack; the victim of the devil's barbs and assaults. Because many homes today are often the place of contention, strife, exchange of harsh and bitter words, homes are unstable, there is rebellion and insecurity in husbands, wives and children.

There is no one cause of the breakdown of the home, but rather there are many factors which have contributed. Some of the long range trends that have contributed to the demise of the family in America include:

1. Long Term Trends

- a. The increasing impermanence of the home.
- b. The increasing divorce rates.
- c. Decreasing family size.
- d. The loss of traditional family functions.
- e. The changing morality in our society.
- f. Widespread corruption in government, industry, and at all levels of society.
- g. Declining morality even in churches and ministries.
- h. Declining male leadership (headship). [Scripture reference – Eph. 5:22-25]

Even sociologists are reporting that female dominance is partially to blame for the following:

- (1) Increasing divorce rates. Dominating females reduce men to wimps and then are not happy with them.

(2) Impotence in men.

(3) Increasing promiscuity and co-habitation (forsaking marriage altogether).

(4) Increasing homosexuality and lesbianism.

2. Family Control

There are two types of control over families, i.e., formal or legal control and informal control. Up until the last century, the family controlled itself (informal control). However, the state (government) has assumed more and more legal (formal control) over the family. We are not debating whether or not these controls are good or bad. The purpose of our study is to point out that these controls exist.

a. Formal or Legal Control

Some examples of the types of control which the state (government) has assumed are: Couples must have a license from the State in order to marry. There are laws which say a husband must support his wife and children. (This is God's law, too. See 1 Timothy 5:8.) Some countries, such as China, even regulate how many children a couple can have. Laws require mothers to properly care for children, send them to school, accept mandated inoculations, use seat belts, car seats, etc. Fornication and adultery are (or were) illegal in most states. Also, in some states there are (or were) laws against being homosexual. Obviously, many of these laws are not enforced. The activities of children are also regulated in that they cannot work under a certain age, and it is compulsory that they attend school until a certain age. Divorce is regulated by the state, by the courts, by law. (During the time of the Old Testament, it was a religious consideration.) There are also health laws which require medical attention for the sick, particularly minors. There are laws regulating home births. The government has assumed more and more responsibility for the way people live. Education is regulated, jobs and businesses are regulated. Where and how one lives is regulated in that he must adhere to certain laws in building a home and adhere to zoning restrictions, etc. concerning one's place of residence. Even death is regulated in that there are specific regulations concerning burial, etc. Also, consider the regulatory agencies which regulate care for the elderly, such as Medicare and Social Security, etc.

b. Informal Controls

These controls can be just about as effective as the formal (legal) controls in that certain social pressures are applied to shape or mold one's lifestyle, one's habits and practices. If one doesn't conform to these controls, he is ridiculed or ostracized by neighbors, co-workers, and even by other family members. A good example of this is in the refusal to celebrate certain holidays, such as Mardi Gras, Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc. There is no formal (legal) law which says one must observe these holidays, but strong social pressures are applied if one chooses not to do so. He is subjected to criticism, ridicule, and ostracism by those members of society who do observe the holidays and who are in the majority. Another example would be the pressures applied to a worker who fails to join a labor union at his place of employment.

3. The Biblical Foundation of Marriage

a. One of the foremost purposes of marriage according to the scriptures is that of procreation.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it . . . [Gen. 1:27-28]

There are some groups, such as the Mormons, who believe that conjugal relations between husband and wife are for the sole purpose of procreation. Coming together for any other purpose is sin.

b. For the expression of love

Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. [Heb. 13:4]

c. For companionship

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. [Gen. 2:18]

4. Marriage is the basis of the family and the home.

Without marriage, children would be without proper care, training, love, etc. The home is the God-ordained structure of society. When the home breaks down, society crumbles.

G. The Four Foundations of Marriage

There are four principles or pillars that hold up the Christian marriage:

1. The principle of monogamy or one husband and one wife. [Scripture references: Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 2:18, 22, 24.]

Polygamy was practiced during the Old Testament times by many men, including the patriarchs. God tolerated it as a temporary measure, however it was never His intention that it be practiced. Monogamy was God's principle or intention from the beginning. This is seen clearly in that God provided for Adam one wife, Eve, not several wives.

Although Adam had the animals for companions in the garden, God saw that he had a greater need. Hence, the creation of the woman, Eve. Within the confines of marriage between one man and one woman, sex is part of God's divine plan. Few have the gift of celibacy as did the apostle Paul.

The practice of polygamy was not without problems. Just recall the problems created between Sarah and Hagar (Genesis, chapter 21) and Jacob's problems with his wives, Leah and Rachel (Genesis, chapter 30). Solomon's wives led to his destruction with their introduction of idolatry into the kingdom (1 Kings, chapter 11). Solomon is probably the Bible's greatest example of excess. Polygamy was never God's perfect will. It was only tolerated for a time during the Old Testament dispensation.

The scriptures indicate that God's principle was always monogamy. Monogamy was encouraged by the Old Testament prophet, Malachi.

...Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. [Mal. 2:14-15]

Also, in Proverbs, chapter 31, the virtuous woman text shows the ideal wife lives in a monogamous society. Jesus himself taught in the gospels that monogamy was a pillar on which marriage was to be built upon. Without monogamy in marriage, there is no stability in the home.

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. [Mat. 19:4-6]

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.... Husbands, love your

wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.... Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. [Eph. 5:22-23, 25, 28, 33]

2. Another pillar is that the marriage union is permanent.

In the New Testament, marriage is conceived as binding together one man and one woman for life. Only death terminates the marriage relationship. Jesus mentioned only one biblical ground for divorce, fornication. Paul mentions abandonment as grounds also (1 Cor. 7).

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. [Rom. 7:1-3]

3. Fidelity (absolute faithfulness, devotion) is the fundamental basis of every true marriage.

Both marriage partners should give the other no basis for mistrust. Believers are told not to be unfaithful with one's heart by committing heart infidelity or entertaining lustful thoughts.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. [Mat. 5:27-28]

4. Love is the ultimate grounds of marriage.

This love is to be mutual self-giving love, not just physical attraction, not just friendship, though these certainly play a part. The type of love to be found in a marriage is the same kind of love that Christ had for the church -- agape or self-giving, sacrificial love, the kind of love given believers by Christ, even to the laying down of His life. [Scripture reference – Ephesians 5:21-31] Marriage partners are to be united in heart, purpose, and in love. Husbands have the responsibility to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives have the responsibility to reverence, i.e., honor, submit, respect and obey, their husbands.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. [1 Jo. 4:16]

This is the kind of agape love that God is, the kind of love that Christ is when he died for us at Calvary. This kind of love expresses itself in an attitude of consideration. It also expresses itself through trust which is an integral part of love. Forgiveness is another important part of agape love; love will forgive. This kind of love produces an atmosphere conducive to the rearing of children, it gives them stability, permanence, and teaches them loyalty and many other favorable attributes.

H. Parent / Child Relationships

Biblical Responsibility of Parents to Children

The first and foremost responsibility of parents to their children is to make them secure. This is a two-fold security:

1. Children must be secure in their parents' love. This love begins even before birth as the child is still in the womb. Parents are to be thankful for the child even while it is yet unborn. Although we do not understand just how, we know that the unborn experience rejection, etc. when they are unwanted. This conveying love to the child is a continuing responsibility as the child grows.

If children are not secure, their personalities will not develop into assured, confident adults. Parents need to be particularly aware of anything that would threaten a child's security. If they are not secure, it is very likely that rejection and insecurities will set in. There is, of course, rejection to some degree in everyone's life. It's just part of the overcoming life, but we speak of rejection that can create severe problems.

There are three categories of children who seem to suffer a heavy sense of rejection:

- a. The unwanted child
- b. The illegitimate child
- c. The adopted child

Parents should particularly be aware of avoiding situations where the child perceives that another child is loved more than he is. Following are just a few ways to avoid the insecurities of favoritism among children:

- a. Never compare your children to each other. It's not right. Children shouldn't feel they have to compete for their parents' approval.
- b. Don't do for one what you don't do for the others.
- c. Don't tell one child you love them without telling the others.

2. The child must be secure in the love of God. The parents are responsible for seeing that the child is trained in the Word of God and in leading the child to Christ.

- a. Provide your children with the security of a scripturally ordered home, where a biblical point of view prevails.

(1) There must be spiritual and moral instruction in the home. The church should not be expected to be the sole and primary source of the child's religious teaching. The church should only reinforce and undergird what is taught in the home.

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. [Deut. 31:11-12]

Here we see the corporate responsibility of the nation of Israel, as well as the individual responsibility, to instruct the people in the law.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. [Deut. 6:7-9]

God is telling Israel that the Word of God is to be a part of their every day conversation.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. [Prov. 22:6] Here we have both a command and a promise.

And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. [Eph. 6:4] And here we see the responsibility of fathers.

(2) There should be loving correction and discipline in the scripturally ordered home.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.
[Prov. 13:24]

Love is corrective.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
[Heb. 12:6]

God loves us, therefore, He corrects us. When it comes to discipline, there are three things to be considered:

- (a) Parents must be firm.
- (b) Parents must be consistent.
- (c) Discipline must be done in love.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.
[Heb. 12:11]

Just as God chastens us in a loving way, we also are to chasten our children. Never discipline in anger and never to harm or to injure.

The purpose of discipline is to lovingly and consistently guide the growth of the child in order that he may become a mature Christian and develop an independent personality.

There are three methods of raising children:

- (a) The Cherub Method – Parents consider their children to be angels. They never do anything wrong. It is always the other person's kids who are problems. There is generally no discipline in this method of child rearing.
- (b) The Hammer & Anvil Method – This is the method whereby children are "beaten" into shape.
- (c) The Biblical Method – This is the method whereby children are molded by training, teaching, instruction; discipline; and, most importantly, by example.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. [Prov. 22:15]

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.... Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. [Prov. 29:15, 17]

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.
[Prov. 19:18]

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.
[Prov. 13:24]

I. Children's Responsibilities to Parents

The first and primary responsibility of children to their parents is as listed in the Decalogue, i.e., to honor them.

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. [Ex. 20:12]

This is the first commandment with promise. Children who honor their parents are promised long life. Then, as part of honoring their parents, children will also do the following:

1. Obey them.

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. [Prov. 6:20]

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. [Prov. 1:8]

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise. [Eph. 6:1-2]

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. [Rom. 1:28-30]

2. Fear them in the sense of reverencing them.

Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. [Lev. 19:3]

3. Submit to their discipline.

And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.... And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. [Ex. 21:15, 17]

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless after ward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. [Heb. 12:9-11]

What about unsaved parents who require things from their children which are contrary to their religious principles? In that case, it is total submission but limited obedience. It is this same principle which the believer must invoke when compelled by the government to do something which is contrary to his Christian ethics.

4. Respect them. Children are to respect all elders in general.

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord. [Lev. 19:32]

5. Love them always and care for them in their old age or in sickness, etc. Children are responsible for this.

Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. [1 Tim. 5:3-4]

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God; that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. [Mark 7:9-13]

J. The Christian Attitude toward Dating

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. [Ps. 127:3-5]

The United States leads the world in divorce statistics. Divorce statistics for Christians are now on equal par with that of the unsaved. Two practices or problems cited as unique to the United States are the major causes of marital discord and distress. The first is dating and the second is going steady. These practices were introduced by Hollywood and both contradict biblical principles. How does one determine that these practices are bad? By examining the fruit of these two practices.

1. The Practice of Dating

What's wrong with dating? One psychologist, who, incidentally, is not even a Christian, had some very accurate comments on the dangerous side effects of dating. He called the dating scene a dangerous and unhealthy practice and probably the reason the divorce rate in America is four times higher than any western country. His comments were:

- a. Dating imposes a social tyranny. Dating forces insecure boys and girls into going steady relationships just for the sake of having that assurance they will have someone to attend social functions with, thereby gaining social acceptance of their peers. Going steady is for some little more than 'an insurance policy' assuring them they will always have someone to go with.
- b. Dating fosters a subtle form of mutual exploitation. It produces predatory males and spoiled females.
- c. Dating inspires the idea of variety and change in boy/girl relationships. Many young people date many different boys and girls. One week they are with one and the next week with another. They are quick to break off relationships for minor reasons and quickly begin another. Contrary to what most parents and authorities think, this is not a good practice for it often carries over into marriage. They are not as inclined to work out or overcome their problems within marriage, hence, the divorce habit.
- d. Among youngsters who are not wage earners, dating gives a distorted attitude toward money. Parents freely dole out whatever is needed for going out and movies, proms, etc., are quite expensive these days to say nothing of the cost of running and maintaining an automobile.
- e. Dating has promoted a high increase of fornication, illegitimate pregnancy and venereal disease among youth. They have a private, portable bedroom in the automobile.
- f. Dating complicates the relationship between parents and children.

2. The Practice of Going Steady

Couples who go steady most often take on mutual concerns and sexual relationships just as married couples. Surveys reveal that among steadies, the female is usually the dominant party, manipulating the male through sex or withdrawal of affection. The significance is that the male is being prepared for marriage.

Going steady is not to be confused with being engaged. They are not the same. Engagement in the Bible is called betrothal. Engagement then was a very firm committal to one another and if it were broken off, there had to be a bill of divorcement even though the marriage had not taken place or been consummated.

Why is the practice of going steady so popular among teenagers? Why do they do it?

- a. It's the American custom, i.e., a mark of personal achievement.
- b. It makes it easier for the couple to excuse sinful sexual activity. They rationalize their sin because they'll probably get married.
- c. American boys and girls are basically insecure.

What are the fruits of going steady?

- a. There is a large percentage of fornication among steadies.
- b. There is a large percentage of pregnant brides among those who go steady.
- c. There is a huge increase in venereal disease.
- d. There is a huge increase in illegitimate pregnancies.
- e. There is a huge increase in divorce rates.

3. Some mistakes made by parents with their teenage children in their attitude toward the practice of dating

- a. Parents often encourage boyfriend/girlfriend relationships too early in their children's lives. This is not always a conscious encouragement, but both parents and grandparents are known to talk about how "cute" it is when the little ones hold hands. They also ask the kiddies if they have a girlfriend or boyfriend, etc. It's bad enough that society contributes to children growing up too rapidly without parents and grandparents encouraging it as well. Society contributes in various ways, i.e., the media, TV shows, mode of dress, etc. Children should be allowed to grow up and mature at their own pace.
- b. Parents are too permissive with their young people. We recognize that this is a pendulum that can swing both ways, but the overly protective, strict parents are the minority. The majority of parents are too permissive and they are the cause of the greatest problems. Most parents don't know where their children are, with whom they are, or even when they will be home. Teenagers are allowed to make their own rules.

Now there are no laws or rules to be followed, but there are principles to be adhered to. Each family's needs are different. Each family must seek the Lord for wisdom to enact the principles in their own home and family. But as long as a child lives under the parents' roof, the parents are responsible to set guidelines.

4. Some Mistakes that Teens Make

- a. Teens often look up to the wrong heroes. The movie and TV industries are largely responsible for the moral decay in our society today. These industries portray adulterers, fornicators and harlots as the heroes and heroines of the movies and TV. When a Christian is portrayed, he is seen as a hypocritical, Bible spouting crazed wacko.
- b. Teenagers have adopted the "now" philosophy. They cannot seem to think of the future. They think of everything as right now, today -- go for all the gusto. Little thought is given to the fact that many of the choices the teen makes now will affect him for the remainder of his life.

Few realize they are setting a precedent for the rest of their lives and that mistakes made in the teen years can haunt them for the next 50 to 60 years.

c. The adoption of Hollywood values and Hollywood commitments. When one has the wrong heroes, he tends to emulate their values, commitments, etc.

d. The "I'll find out for myself" philosophy. The world's philosophy is "try it, you'll like it." Try drugs, try alcohol, try sex. Too often young people find out for themselves the hard way with serious consequences resulting. This was the philosophy of the prodigal son. (Lk. 15)

The best advice one can give young people is to seek the advice and wisdom of your godly parents.

A sign seen recently said: "Teenagers! Leave home, get a job, get rich, and do it all now while you still know everything."

5. For all of these reasons (and more), many parents have concluded they shouldn't allow their teenage child to date at all. This doesn't mean boys and girls won't be attracted to each other, but it considers what the world's idea of dating is, i.e., a boy and girl alone without supervision. Such a combination equals one thing -- disaster. As long as teens are in groups, they are usually all right. It's when they are alone that they usually begin to do things that they shouldn't.

a. Social relationships among teens

At what age is a young person considered an adult? Legally, a child reaches some stage of adulthood at 18 and other stages at 21, but remember the rate of maturity differs in all young people. There are no rules and laws for determining rates of maturity. Each family has to be spiritually sensitive and work these things out among family members.

There are acceptable alternatives to dating. Fellowship with the opposite sex is not to be avoided altogether. In this, just as in all aspects of Christian living, there are principles and guidelines to be followed, even though there are no hard and fast rules. As stated earlier, each family is different and has to resolve such things for themselves.

Some scriptures to be used as principles are:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom. 12:1-2]

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. [1 Cor. 10:31]

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth... And whatsoever ye do in word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. [Col. 3:1-8, 17]

Just because one is a child or a teen does not exempt him from living the pure, holy, prayerful life that the Lord expects from any believer. Children and teens should have a time for Bible reading and prayer just as their parents do, and parents shouldn't have to continually remind them of these Christian responsibilities.

What are some of the acceptable alternatives to dating? The answer is group activities with supervision.

Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity... Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. [1 Tim. 5:1-2, 22]

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. [2 Tim. 2:22]

There are many types of acceptable group activities, i.e., games, socials, etc. In younger teens there should always be close adult supervision and any attempt by the youngsters to pair off and wander away from the group is to be discouraged. Here again, one must practice wisdom and not go overboard forbidding teens of the opposite sex to talk together, etc.

The older teens (18-19) can usually be given a bit more freedom in these areas than the younger ones, but here again, wisdom is to be practiced.

b. Social relationships between mature youth

What about mature teens (18-19) going steady? Even psychologists say that such practice hinders the development of personality in youth. They don't develop normal relationships and friendships with others. All activities are planned around each other. Consequently, they miss many of the maturing processes. The practice also leads to many teenage marriages and the odds are very heavily stacked against the success of any teenage marriages.

c. Social relationships among single adults (20 and up)

Obviously, one cannot require supervision for adults. But even adults must exercise Christian propriety and should not put themselves in a compromising situation.

6. If the practices of dating and going steady are unacceptable for the Christian, the young single may well ask, "If I don't date and play the field, then how will I find the right mate for me?" The answer for the Christian is the same as in all aspects of the Christian life -- trust God. Just as we must trust God for choice of career, health, and finances, so must the Christian single person trust God for the right mate. Now this is not to say that one takes matters into his own hands and begins an active search. Better to just pray in faith that God will send the right person and let it rest with Him.

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. [1 Jo. 4:5]

Prayerfully seek the direct, providential leading of God in providing a companion for you for life. God is much more concerned about whom you marry than you are. He is your heavenly Father and wants what is best for you. One's spouse has a very important effect upon him spiritually. The wrong spouse can be an anchor around one's neck spiritually. The wrong spouse can take you from the things of the Lord and the church. The most important decision any young person makes, aside from receiving Christ as Savior, is the choosing of a lifetime mate.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [Jas. 1:5]

The ingredient that is vital for the success of a marriage is maturity. Marriage is the exclusive realm of mature people. Exactly what is a mature person? Someone who is self-controlled.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. [Prov. 16:32]

The person who is slow to anger, who has self under control, he is a mature person. Now most teens do not fit that description. Most are self-centered, self-willed, rebellious, and want their own way. If marriage is anything, it is giving, being understanding, compassionate, considerate. God planned that each person spend the first twenty years of their lives at home with their own parents learning how to get along with people. Home is the training ground. If one can learn to give and take at home, then he is better prepared for marriage.

Now for those teens who think they are already mature and ready for life's big responsibilities, just ask yourself, "How do I treat my family members?" Your answer to that question indicates how you will treat a spouse. If you are rebellious, cocky, irreverent, thoughtless, and selfish, then that's just the way you will be unless God changes you. Marriage certainly won't change you.

Following are some questions you can ask yourself to measure the depth or level of your emotional maturity.

- a. Do I love my parents and show it? Do you treat them with respect or disrespect? If you are unable to love those who have done so much and given so sacrificially to your care and upbringing, then how do you expect to be able to love a spouse? An admonition to young people -- when looking for a potential mate, observe the way that person treats his parents. Stay far, far away from the one who has the wrong attitude toward his parents.
- b. Do I act mature? Do you pout or throw temper tantrums when you don't get your way?
- c. Do you say things you don't mean? When flesh gets riled up and angry, do you tell family members or friends things that you don't really mean? One of the marks of the mature person is that he rules his own spirit, bridles his tongue.
- d. Do I try to see my parents' side or only my own? Am I reasonable? Can I be reasoned with or am I obstinate?
- e. Do I pray for my parents, my family? The emotionally mature do. The emotionally mature are concerned about the salvation and welfare of family.
- f. How well do I get along with siblings? Do you spend your time with them in fighting, arguing, etc.? If you do, then you can count on the same thing happening with a spouse.
- g. How well do you share at home? Can you exist with your siblings in peace and harmony? Someone once said, "You are becoming what you are now." What are you now? Many teens are loudmouthed, self-centered brats.

If you are one of those few who are emotionally mature, then these are some things you will want for your siblings.

- a. You would desire for them to serve God. The first thing the apostle Andrew did when he heard about Jesus was to run and tell his brother, Simon (Peter).

He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone. [John 1:41-42]

- b. You would encourage them, lift them up; not think only of yourself.
- c. You would speak well of your siblings. There would be no name calling and ridiculing.
- d. You would love them genuinely, not only in word but also in actions.
- e. You would pray for them every day. You would want the Lord to strengthen, uphold and bless them.

- f. You would not be telling their faults to others.
- g. You would be sensitive to their needs and not just your own.
- h. You would not take them for granted. They are your brothers and sisters, i.e., family. In a few short years, if the Lord tarries, you will all be grown and separated with each living separate lives.
- i. You would treat them like you would those who you now regard as your closest and dearest friends. Chances are that those close friends will be history in two or three years and you may not even know where they are, but your brothers and sisters are yours forever.

Maturity is more than just emotional and physical; there must also be spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is a pre-requisite for marriage. Those contemplating marriage should be spiritually mature in godly wisdom, dedication to the Lord, knowledgeable concerning leadership of the family, etc.

If you want to know how spiritually mature you are, ask yourself these questions.

- a. How serious are you about spiritual matters?
- b. How much time do you spend meditating on the things of God, seeking first the kingdom? Prayer? Bible study?
- c. Are you attentive in church?

Christian Marriage is marriage between Christians. Christians are only to marry Christians. God forbids the marriage of a Christian to an unbeliever. In John 8, Jesus calls unbelievers "children of the devil." According to the Bible, one has not only a physical father, but also a spiritual father. If one is not born again, then he is a child of the devil. God's child and Satan's child should never marry.

One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. [Josh. 23:10-13]

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites; and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. [Deut. 7:1-6]

Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. [Ezra 9:12-13]

...and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. [Neh. 13:25]

If the person you want to marry is not a Christian, don't be so foolish as to think you will change them after marriage. You will not change them nor reform them. They will change you. They will turn your heart away. Consider, for example, Solomon and his idolatrous wives who turned his heart from God. The unbeliever's family also exerts great influence on the believer and eventually will destroy him. This is a sober warning which appears in the Word. When a believer marries an unbeliever, he marries into the devil's family. If the believer insists upon this course of action, then he will pay the consequences for his action. If he thinks he will not be miserable, he is deceiving himself. Realize that when you marry an unbeliever, you get the Devil as your father-in-law. (See John 8:44.)

Not only do these prohibitions appear in the Old Testament, but they are also found in the New Testament.

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. [1 Cor. 7:39]

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [2 Cor. 14-15]

Don't marry an unbeliever, but don't marry a make-believer either. There are many in the churches today who are not saved, so be certain that you know the spiritual condition of the one with whom you are considering marriage.

Marriage is only for those who are mutually in love. Love is the foundation stone for Christian marriage. The book of Ruth is an account of true and mature love.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. [Eph. 5:25]

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. [Col. 3:19]

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. [Titus 2:4]

Marriage should be between people who know each other reasonably well. Marriage is just not something one does unless he really knows the other person. That's why engagements are a good thing. They give both parties the opportunity to really get to know each other, i.e., know their likes, dislikes, true character, attitudes, how they handle responsibility, finances, difficulties, their level of maturity, how spiritually minded. Engagements should not be too lengthy however. A period of six to nine months is usually about right.

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord. [Prov. 18:22]

One will never regret following God's principles in respect to dating and marriage. Look at the fruits of the world's way.

When one is contemplating marriage, there are several characteristics that should be possessed by the one you're seriously interested in. In other words, take an honest assessment of that person's character. Qualities of a mature Christian that would make them a good candidate for marriage follow.

For the Man:

a. He should be spiritual, a spiritually minded person. Is he a believer in the Bible? A witness for Christianity? A soul winner? Seeking first the kingdom? Is doing God's will first in his life? Is he a prayer, not just a player?

b. He should be a man of character, i.e., he does right; he lives right. Someone has said that character is what you are when no one is looking. Is he responsible and punctual in his habits? Can he be relied on to be on time? Is he good natured? Is he honest? A personable individual? Is he a person of integrity? Can he say "no" to sin?

c. He should be manly, i.e., masculine and not effeminate. There should be no confusion as to his gender, not androgynous.

d. He should be pure. Contrary to popular opinion, purity is not just for women. Sexual sin devastates the mind and conscience, both emotionally and spiritually. Sexual sins leave scars even if repented of.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. [1 Tim. 4:12]

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. [1 Tim. 5:22]

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. [1 Cor. 6:18]

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness; which is idolatry: For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. [Col. 3:5-6]

e. He should be stable, a consistent person, not given to wild changes in moods. A stable person is one who sticks to what he starts; one who does not flit from job-to-job-to-job. He pays his bills and is a responsible individual.

f. He should have convictions, strong Bible-based convictions. A man with no convictions is still a child. A man should have backbone and be able to stand for what he believes to be right.

g. He should be kind, considerate, thoughtful. Take note of the way he treats others because that is the way that he will treat a spouse.

h. He should be unselfish. Beware of the stingy, self-centered man. If he is stingy and tight now, he will not change after marriage.

i. He should be loyal -- to his family, to his pastor, to his church, to his superiors.

j. He should treat his parents well. He should honor them and speak respectfully of them. If he mistreats his parents and cannot speak well of them, then he will follow that same pattern of conduct with a spouse.

k. He should be physically clean, a neat and tidy individual.

l. He should be self-controlled, not high-tempered, violent or explosive in temperament.

m. He should display sound judgment. He should be sensible, a man of common sense. He should be able to make sound decisions because the decisions that he makes will affect his wife and family for years to come.

n. He should have good work habits. He will be the support of his wife and family. He should be a responsible individual, not afraid of work.

o. He should have associates (friends) who are godly people of good influence. If his friends are punks, thugs, drunks, drug users, worldly people, then look out. One is known by the company that he keeps. Also, carefully consider the type of woman that he is attracted to. Is he attracted to worldly, unregenerate types? If he is, then forget him.

p. He should be easy to get along with. Are you comfortable around him or are you afraid you will say something that will displease him? Do you have to “walk on eggshells” around him? Is he moody and unpleasant if things don't go his way?

q. He should be sincere. Is he real or a phony?

r. He should be a giver, of himself. Also, he should be a giver to the Lord and to the needy.

s. He should be understandable, i.e., reasonable. He should not jump to conclusions always blaming someone, usually the spouse, for things that go awry.

t. He should be willing to accept you the way that you are. If not, BEWARE!

For the Woman

Women should possess much the same qualities as the male.

a. She should be spiritual, a woman who is pure, having a meek and quiet spirit.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. [1 Pe. 3:3-4]

b. She should be a woman of character. How does she keep her room? That's how she will keep house one day.

c. She should be feminine, neat and tidy in appearance, yet modest. Her dress and appearance should not draw attention to her body. Immodest dress leads to immodest behavior.

d. She should be submissive -- to God, to authority, to her parents and not domineering. If she is not submissive now, it is very unlikely that she will be submissive to a husband.

e. She should be a hard worker. Does she hate housework? Hate to cook? Does she have the qualities to become a good mother? Does she treat her own parents with love and respect?

f. She should be a woman of convictions, yet considerate and kind. Look carefully at how she treats others. Is she critical or a gossip?

g. She should be a giver, unselfish, willing to share and definitely not a spendthrift. Can she be content to live within her means or is she always wanting something more?

h. She should be discerning and show discretion.

i. She should be sensible, reasonable, knowledgeable. She should be a woman of virtue, the example of which is described in Proverbs 31.

K. The Christian Marriage

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto 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. [Gen. 2:18, 21-24]

Marriage is the original, the oldest, institution in God's plan. It was God who established the home, and it is the home that is being attacked more so today than at any time in history. A few statistics indicating just how serious the attack is.

During the early 1980's divorce rates peaked at an all time high, then during 1985-86 appeared to drop a bit. They are now on the rise again. Up until the 1900s there was only one divorce in every 17 marriages. Now it is one in two marriages that end in divorce. In 1986 there were 2.4 million divorces in the USA alone. The average duration of the marriage relationship before ending in divorce was seven years.

1. Five Sources of Marital Problems [Problems that have recurred over and over in marriages which have broken up. These gained by clergymen and other counselors through interviews of couples.]

a. Many couples have come into marriage having had no favorable role models to draw from in their formative years. These individuals may have come from homes where parents argued, fought, etc. They had no knowledge of how parents ought to sit down together and pray over problems, etc. and calmly work out solutions to their problems jointly.

b. The present American tendency is for young men and women to marry virtual strangers. We have said before that young people should not rush hastily into marriage for they could end up regretting it for the remainder of their lives. Young people need to really get to know one another, their views about such important issues as debt, handling finances, children, careers, etc. And unfortunately, many young people do not really know one another. Each has put their "best-foot-forward" during courtship and the other does not really know the person's temperament and views regarding many important aspects of life.

c. Spiritual incompatibility is a trouble spot in many Christian marriages. What are your religious views and stands on various areas of doctrine, etc.? It is not infrequent that one partner is more spiritually mature than the other, and that mature partner must be wise enough not to bring that maturity to the attention of the other partner. It will not serve to help the weaker partner to become more mature, nor will it edify or improve the marriage.

d. Continuing parental dependence by one or more of the marriage partners is often a problem. Running home to mom and dad over minor little differences is never a wise move. Couples should never throw up to one another the other's weaknesses, saying how well mom or dad do thus-and-so. One has to leave (home) in order to cleave (as advocated in Genesis).

e. Statistically, the greatest single source of conflict in marriage is money! Materialism and debt have ruined more marriages and destroyed more homes than anything else. And don't think that money woes afflict only the poor and middle class. The rich also have their share of problems. J. Paul Getty, one of the world's richest men, had a tragic, unhappy series of marriages with children dying from illness and suicide.

A wise sentence to memorize: Debt and credit are my enemies! Approximately 80 percent of couples filing for divorce state the focus of their problems was money. Fear debt.

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. [Prov. 22:7]

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. [Rom. 13:8]

God ordained marriage and He will sustain it. It is only God who can make your marriage what it should be and will make it not only survive but prosper. God saw that something vital was lacking in the man so He made him a helpmeet, i.e., a partner, who is woman. The woman completes the man.

Statistically, five out of ten marriages end in divorce. Of the five which survive, three do not attain the level of harmony and success that is desirable. Most marriages fail to produce a godly, harmonious relationship between the partners. Most have failed to make the transition from the "me" to the "thou." Husband and wife have to pull together to make a marriage work. They must be willing to overlook the other's faults and pray earnestly for one another. To make your marriage work you must fulfill your scriptural role and go above and beyond what is required. Each must give unselfishly, love unconditionally and always be willing to forgive one another. Each spouse must bite his tongue; don't speak hastily; don't return evil for evil; turn the other cheek; exercise charity (love); and use the tongue only to edify.

2. Several Keys to Building a Healthier Marriage

a. Recognize certain essential needs that each individual has. If your marriage is to prosper, we must see these needs. Your husband or wife has a need to be loved. That is a basic human need and is vital to a stable marriage.

(1) Tell your spouse that you love him/her. God doesn't just assume that we know that He loves us. He repeatedly tells us in His Word. It should be the same with husbands and wives. Don't just assume that they know or feel they should know because of all the various things that you do for them. Tell them! [Scriptures references: Ps. 146:8; Jer. 31:3; Mal. 1:2; John 3:16; 16:27; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 John 4:9-10.] It is because the Father tells us that He loves us that we see demonstrations of His love in all that He has created. Because He says it in so many ways, I know that my Father loves me. This serves to underscore how important it is that we express our love for one another.

(2) Demonstrate your love for your spouse.

...let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. [1 Jo. 3:18]

b. Words alone, without corresponding action, can be hollow, meaningless and even unbelievable. There are hundreds of ways to demonstrate your love to your spouse. You know what your spouse likes and you know what aggravates him. Don't let relationships grow stale. Remember the reasons that you married that person in the first place. Drawing apart is a gradual and often subtle thing. Communication breaks down and alienation set in.

...to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband : and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. [1 Cor. 7:2-5]

Marriage has its obligations, its debts. It is each partner's responsibility to habitually render these obligations, i.e., due benevolence, to his spouse. In the above passage, we have a paradox. One verse says that each belongs to the other and denial constitutes fraud. This includes not only physical needs, but verbal expression as well.

c. Everyone needs to be needed. Both partners need to work at letting the other know they're more than just a paycheck, a provider; more than just a maid, servant or sex object. When the Bible (Gen. 2:24) says that a man and his wife are to cleave together, they are to be inseparable. They need one another. People who don't feel needed tend to lose their zest for living, their desire to live. Never tell a spouse you don't love him/her or need him. If you're not making your spouse feel needed, then you're failing in your marriage responsibility.

L. The Hedge of Thorns

Several Keys to Building a Healthier Marriage

1. The need to be secure. Partners need to be secure in each other's love, devotion, and appreciation.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. [Prov. 31:10-11]

There are several "no-no's" that should be practiced by both marriage partners, namely:

- a. No flirtatious looks or suggestive conversation with members of the opposite sex.
- b. No close friendships with members of the opposite sex.
- c. Don't be overly complimentary or flattering to a member of the opposite sex.

To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words. [Prov. 2:16]

- d. No unexplained absences.
- e. No mentioning of names of old flames, old romances.
- f. Never compare your spouse to someone else's spouse.

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. [1 Cor. 7:32-33]

Paul is saying that the married have obligations and responsibilities to their families. It is the husband's responsibility to please his wife, to make her happy. Those who are married are to be concerned for their wife's happiness.

When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken. [Deut. 24:5]

Under Jewish law, the newly married man was exempt from certain social and civic obligations in order to stay home with his new bride for an entire year. These principles reveal that each marriage partner is to be concerned with his spouse's happiness and not just his own.

Husbands need to be more aware of their spouse's emotional needs. The female is unique in emotional makeup. It is a God-given instinct that women are just more security conscious than men. This is even true in the animal kingdom where it is the female who is concerned about the security of the home and the rearing of the young, even to the point of sacrificing her own life to protect them from peril.

2. The need for respect. Every husband needs to be respected as a man by his wife. He wants to be protective, the provider, the leader of his family and wants to be loved and respected as such.

Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. [Prov. 14:1]

One of the things that threaten a man's headship and manliness is a wife who becomes financially independent and self-sufficient. Such women convey displeasing attitudes which threaten the husband's role. We know that in some cases it is imperative that the wife go out to work. If such is the case, then one should believe that working is a temporary situation. Wives should then submit their income to their husbands, if possible because the one who controls the pocketbook controls the

marriage. Of course, we realize that this is not possible in some marriages where the husband is not responsible enough to manage the finances. Women must also diligently guard their hearts from the worldly influence of feminism.

Another thing that threatens a husband's position of headship is when the wife shows no respect for her husband's ability to make right choices/decisions. These types of women usually run to others asking their view or opinions concerning things about which they should be consulting their husbands.

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home.... [1 Cor. 14:35]

Wives, do not try to dominate. Don't resist your husband's decisions, even if they are wrong ones. Don't keep reminding him of past mistakes. Wives should not try to be their husband's conscience.

M. Reducing Tensions in Marriage

1. Reducing Tension and Preserving the Home.

The process of adjustment in the marriage relationship is a lifetime commitment. Making a marriage work requires great effort on the part of both partners. Half-hearted attempts just won't do it. Several ways to help reduce tension in the home and prolong the marriage relationship are:

a. At the beginning or prior to marriage, come to an agreement on the biblical roles of husband and wife. Each must know what the other's views are concerning careers, children, headship of the home, etc. It is vital to clarify who functions in what role.

b. Surrender the non-essentials that cause friction and tension in the home. Each partner in the marriage has little peculiarities that can aggravate the other and each partner knows just what those peculiarities are. Both partners must be careful not to deliberately do what they know aggravates the other.

c. Keep a sense of humor in the marriage relationship. Usually one partner has a greater sense of humor than the other. Be careful to look for the humor in situations which occur. It always helps to alleviate the frustration of the situation if you can see humor in it.

d. In serious matters, there are six important principles to follow:

(1) Do not argue with your partner, belittle, insult or resort to name-calling.

(2) Do not withdraw yourself into a shell with hurt feelings, not talking, etc.

(3) Do not retaliate against your mate. Even when you know that your mate is wrong, overcome -- crucify the flesh.

(4) Do engage in calm, reasonable discussion. Always try to see things from the other's viewpoint and be willing to change if you're wrong. And if you're wrong, admit it. Don't hesitate to say, "I'm sorry; I was wrong; forgive me." Such words as these can bridge most gaps. Don't always be ready to justify your position. Crucify your flesh and preserve the peace in your home. Never ridicule or scorn each other. The sarcastic put-down is cruel.

(5) Do pray together and not the self-righteous, pharisee-type prayers. [Lord, show him/her where they are wrong; straighten them out.]

(6) Do determine to solve your problems yourselves without outside help. The modern church has come to advocate the use of counselors for every problem. Now we realize that there are times when there is a genuine need for counseling, but most often the emphasis on counseling is overdone. Solve your problems together with the Lord through prayer. Deal with problems as they arise; don't allow them to intensify. Forget the past

and don't drag up past mistakes. Don't let disputes drag on for days or weeks. Deal with the dispute before going to bed each night. Think the good and not the evil.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. [Eph. 4:26]

Finally brethren, 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 on these things. [Phil. 4:8]

2. The Ethical View of the Wedding Ceremony

While the lavishly expensive, elaborate church and synagogue wedding ceremonies were unknown in Bible times, they did have wedding ceremonies and celebrations (John, chapter 2, the wedding in Cana), but they were certainly not the elaborate, costly affairs that many have today.

There are no iron-clad rules to follow for the wedding ceremony. The ceremony doesn't have to be performed in a church building, nor does it have to be performed by a minister to be considered valid in the eyes of God. As long as it is considered legal in the sight of the State, it is considered legal in the eyes of God. It is the Roman Catholic Church who insists that only church weddings are valid, and of course, those ceremonies must be performed in a Roman Catholic Church as they recognize no other.

The Christian should consider avoiding the numerous occult superstitions that have become a part of modern ceremonies, since all superstition is satanic. Some of the more common occult superstitions associated with the wedding ceremony are:

- a. Carrying the bride over the threshold. To fall coming into the house would bring bad luck.
- b. Throwing rice on the newlyweds, which is a symbol of fertility, and a superstition to insure many children.
- c. A bride attired in her wedding gown is not to look in a mirror.
- d. The groom is not supposed to see the bride in her wedding gown prior to the ceremony.
- e. The symbols of something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue are all occult superstitions.
- f. The old saying, "Rain on the wedding day brings bad luck."
- g. An unmarried girl should not be a bridesmaid three times. If she does, then she won't become a bride herself. Also, an unmarried girl should not try on the wedding ring belonging to someone else; neither should she eat the last piece of wedding cake as all such actions bring her to a life of spinsterhood. But then, if she catches the bridal bouquet, she will be the next one married.

All are superstitions that should be avoided.

N. Divorce and Remarriage

O. The Christian's Responsibility in the Economic Sphere

Just what does "The Economic Order" mean? It is the process by which those things made to support life and wellbeing are produced, distributed and consumed. This economic order has a two-fold purpose:

1. To provide individuals and communities with goods and resources needed to sustain life and wellbeing, including rest and recreation.

2. To provide the Christian with a sphere of service whereby he can glorify God and serve his fellow man.

Until Jesus comes, there will be no perfect economic philosophy or system of government. With all its faults, capitalism is the better form of government, but never make the mistake of thinking it is perfect. As Christians however, we have the responsibility to obey the laws of whatever government under which we live and pray for it. The only time the Christian doesn't obey the government is when that law would cause him to sin against the laws of God. There was no more cruel system of government than that of the Romans and Jesus did not lead his followers in rebellion against that government. Rebellion against one's country is absolutely forbidden. Even though we may not agree with our leaders, as Christians, we are not to be anarchists or railers, etc.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. [Rom. 13:2-7]

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. [1 Tim. 2:1-3]

The Christian's attitude toward the secular governments and philosophies of the world should be:

1. Recognize that the only perfect economic order of government is the one when Christ comes to rule and reign on the earth. Pray that Christ's kingdom will come.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [Mat. 6:9-10]

2. Be aware that all economic systems are sinful. Why? Because men and societies are sinful.
3. Every economic philosophy is of this world's system and scripturally judged imperfect in principle and practice. Do not equate democracy with righteousness as many in America do.

The Christians attitude toward the economic order should:

1. Realize that all economic governments and systems belong to the Gentile governments which will be overthrown. All systems are imperfect and temporary.

2. Know all economic and government systems, including capitalism, are under the control of Satan.

Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered....And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. [Lk. 4:2, 5-6]

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. [2 Cor. 4:4]

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. [1 Jo. 5:19]

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. [John 18:33-36]

Capitalism has many weaknesses, some of which are:

1. It permits a great amount of inequality. Capitalism produces or causes great inequality among the people. Less than one percent of America's population owns and controls fifty percent of America's wealth. One-fifth have forty-seven percent and one-fifth have one percent.
2. The capitalistic philosophy subordinates the meaning of human needs to the economic advantages of those who have money and power. The rich grow richer off the misfortunes and needs of others. Some good examples are the law profession where lawyers are receiving fees of thirty-three to fifty percent from the misfortunes of others; the medical and drug professions who capitalize on the sickness and misery of others in their desperation for a cure.
3. Large numbers of people can become victims of vast unemployment. Businesses and industries can shut down overnight, giving no prior notice, thereby leaving many without employment.
4. Capitalism places an emphasis on the attainment of position or the accumulation of possessions and these are used as the measurement of the degree of one's success. It breeds materialism and encourages the promotion of self.
5. Capitalism is a system that has largely robbed labor of its dignity. Because of the lack of interest on the part of workers and because of the mass production of goods, most have lost the sense of pride in their work. Bad attitudes toward work or trade produce goods of inferior quality. As Christians, we are to do every job as "unto the Lord." We should derive pleasure and satisfaction in a job well done.

P. The Scriptural View of Economics

The biblical perspective of possessions and wealth is divided into two groups:

1. The Old Testament or Jewish View of Economics

- a. All things, including property, belong to God.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that swell therein. [Ps. 24:1]

Not only the mountains, streams, heavenly bodies, etc., but every living creature belongs to God.

For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. [Ps. 50:9-10]

- b. All this belongs to God by right of creation and it is His by right of supervision; that is, He cares for and sustains it.

There is a view currently in existence today that although God originally created everything, He then took His hands off and let things take care of themselves, thus, no supervision. Those of this group are called Deists.

- c. Man is just a steward of God's possessions. This is brought out right in the Garden of Eden.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.... And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. [Gen. 2:8-10, 15]

d. The Jew was required by law to tithe. The word tithe signifies a tenth.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [Mal. 3:8-10]

The tithe had three purposes.

(1) It was an acknowledgement that God owned everything and by returning to Him that portion, the Jew acknowledged that ownership.

(2) The tithe also served the purpose of sustaining the priesthood, i.e., the Levites, who were given no land, but who were designated as priests, and maintenance and care of the temple.

(3) The tithe actually had a preserving effect in that it served to keep the individual from being swallowed up with covetousness and greed. By the act of giving being instilled and required of the Jew, they were delivered from a covetous spirit. In the passages in Malachi, we see that God promises to bless Israel if they return to Him a tenth which He has required of them by law. If not, there is a curse involved.

e. Materialism was condemned in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

Two of the Ten Commandments actually deal with the sin of materialism.

(1) Commandment 8 – “Thou shalt not steal” – demands respect for the property and rights of others. Even though all things belong to God and we are simply His stewards, this does not give an individual the right to take that which has been entrusted to the ownership of others. A group called “The Children of God” has corrupted the “ownership of everything by God” as a license to steal and take from others what they need or want.

(2) The second commandment dealing with the sin of materialism is Commandment 10 – “Thou shalt not covet” those things belonging to others. God promises to bring divine judgment upon those who are materialistic.

Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! ... Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. [Isa. 5:8, 14]

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! ... For behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.... Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? [Amos 6:1, 11, 13]

d. Honesty and integrity in all of one's business dealings and transactions was demanded by God. Honesty in weights and measures was stressed.

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God. [Deut. 25:13-16]

Long life is promised to the honest man, but dishonesty is an abomination to the Lord.

A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight. [Prov. 11:1]

Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord.... Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord: and a false balance is not good. [Prov. 20:10, 23]

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. [Prov. 28:8]

2. The New Testament View of Economics

The New Testament view is essentially the same as the Old Testament view. Jesus did not come to reform the world's economic systems. He did, however, have much to say about the use of one's money and possessions. He did not consider money or possessions evil in and of themselves. He did not say that money is the root of all evil, but rather, "The love of money is the root of all evil." It is man's attitude and affection toward money and possessions that determine whether or not they are evil for him. In Matthew 19 when the rich, young ruler came to Jesus, Jesus told him to give it all away. The young man's affection for his material was so great that he was unable to do that. Jesus knew his heart and that is why He told the young man to give it all away. On the other hand, Jesus did not require Zacchaeus to give all away. Why? Because Jesus saw the heart of Zacchaeus and knew that Zacchaeus wanted to restore above and beyond what he had taken. Had Jesus told Zacchaeus to give all away, Zacchaeus would have done so. [Scripture reference Luke 19.]

Another factor that determines whether or not it is evil to have money and possessions is how the individual uses his money and possessions. Are they being squandered on frivolous things because, if they are, then that is evil. To use one's money and possessions in a totally selfish manner, with no thought of God's kingdom or the needs of one's fellow man is evil. One's possessions should be used toward God's kingdom. When one's investment is in eternity, then his heart is there as well.

Jesus had quite a bit to say about money as security in Luke, chapter 12. The Christian does not look to collecting things on the earth as his security.

Q. The Christian's Attitude toward Possessions

R. The Christian's Doctrine of Vocation

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. [Eph. 4:1]

1. The 3-Fold Calling of Every Christian

- a. The calling to salvation;
- b. The calling to service in a local church;
- c. The calling to serve and glorify God in his work or place of employment.

What one does is a very important part of what he is and who he is. People identify the individual by his work, his career, his vocation. There is a big difference between a vocation and a job. The common view of the twentieth century is that one has a job while the biblical view is that one has a calling and that is to serve God in all that he does, including his job.

Though this was not the case in the early centuries of the church, in the latter part of the fourth century, it was considered that the only one hundred percent devoted disciples of Jesus were in some sort of religious employment. If a believer was engaged in any sort of secular job, that relegated him to a secondary position in the church. This was the beginning of the categories distinguishing between the clergy and laity. This whole concept is unscriptural and has resulted in great harm to the kingdom of God. Why? For hundreds of years now, the average church member has sat in the pew leaving all ministry to the clergy. This view was developed and perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church.

The USA has adopted the Greco-Roman work ethic rather than the Judeo-Christian work ethic, i.e., there is dignity in work as long as the work is honest. On the other hand, the Greeks and Romans felt that work was for slaves. They wanted to philosophize, to think and ponder.

Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to them that needeth. [Eph. 4:28]

From this scripture, one realizes the Bible places a high value on personal labor and work.

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. [1 Thes. 4:11]

Paul doesn't mince words here. He says that work is a command, not a suggestion, and should not be considered drudgery. And then he takes the concept a step further saying:

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. [2 Thes. 3:10]

2. The Biblical View of Christian Vocation

a. All work has dignity as long as it meets the following two conditions.

(1) As long as it renders a real and necessary service to one's fellow man.

(2) As long as it glorifies God.

b. The meaning and purpose of work has been distorted by the society in which we live. The purpose of today's society is to earn money to buy "things" to gain status.

c. There is a difference between job and calling (vocation).

(1) A job is what one does to earn money to buy the things he needs to gain status.

(2) Vocation: Though one needs money to survive, money is not one's primary aim. One works because he likes what he does, can help his fellow man, and can take pride in his accomplishment. The Christian's reward is not in making money to accumulate goods, but in glorifying God in his place of employment.

Although the Christian is to perform his work or conduct his business as unto the Lord, he is not to exalt or put that job or business in such priority that he lives for that job. One's job or business is not to be the center of one's life. He is to glorify and serve God in that job but the job is not to be allowed to come between him and God or between him and his family. Each person is responsible to arrange his life in the proper priority so that nothing comes between him and his service to the Lord.

3. The Christian's View of His Job/Career/Business

a. Consider your job as an opportunity to serve the Lord. Employees, do your job as unto the Lord, without shirking, performing whatever tasks you are requested to perform, provided they are not unethical for a Christian.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. [Eph. 6:5-6]

Employers, you also are to treat your employees with respect and dignity.

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. [Col. 3:22-25]

If one performs his work as unto the Lord, then how can he justify such actions as strikes (demanding higher wages, protests of various types, etc.)? If you are working under unfavorable conditions, then overcome and believe God for something better. Pray about the condition(s) asking the Lord to do a work in you and to open doors for something better. The Christian's responsibility is always to serve the Lord in his job, i.e., to perform his job well.

b. Work, though ordained of God, is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end.

c. One's vocation must meet two conditions:

(1) It must render a real, genuine, necessary service to one's community and fellowman. It must fulfill some real need.

(2) One must be able to glorify God in it. It should be the type work that would not cause one to become caught in some compromising position. Christians should question whether jobs in certain fields could be unethical or inappropriate for them; such as those involving gambling, the liquor industry, or any job that could require violence towards another person. Early Christians had ethical qualms about such as serving in the military, and the manufacture of devices or machines that are designed to kill, maim, or cripple others. Many Christians also questioned whether it is fitting or proper for a Christian to devote their life to trivialities, such as dedicating one's life's work to breeding spotted mice, etc. A Christian's job should be neither worldly nor ungodly, nor should one's vocation be a profession that injures people under the name of entertainment or sports. Is it ethical to endanger one's own life in vocations such as a racecar driver, tightrope walker, lion tamer, etc.?

d. The Christian's vocation should:

(1) Utilize and challenge one's God-given skills, talents and abilities.

(2) Be a job that one can pray over and ask God to bless and prosper it. Just imagine how absurd it would be to pray over a job such as a cigarette machine vendor or a liquor distributor.

e. How does one recover the biblical concept of vocation?

One must recognize that it is a grievous mistake to think that work is not Christian unless it is in some church related context. The Roman Catholic Church started this double standard of laymen (common people) and clergy. They began what was called the Councils of Perfection which they said was based on the account of the rich young ruler. They said that had he given up all that he had (taken vows of chastity, poverty, etc.) and served God in full-time service, he would then have been perfect. Out of this system came the concept of laity and clergy where only the priests, monks, etc. were considered clergy and as such, only the priests, monks, etc. were considered clergy and were the ones involved in the work of the church on a full-time basis. The common people or laity were then ministered to by the clergy and thereby considered inferior. The Bible, however, teaches that all are called to be in full-time Christian service. All are called to be full-time servants of God.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

[1 Pe. 5:1-3]

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[1 Pe. 2:9]

S. The Morality of Gambling

Is it ethical for the Christian to gamble? Are all forms of gambling wrong? Are some forms harmless, i.e., bingo, football/sports pools, etc., as some teach?

There are two types of gambling in the USA today, i.e., legal and illegal. Of course, illegal gambling is always wrong because it is against the law. It is therefore unethical and sinful for the Christian to engage in. But what about legalized gambling, i.e., casinos, horse/dog track betting, state controlled lotteries, cruise ship gambling, sweepstakes, raffles, drawings, (Many even consider the stock market a form of gambling.)? Are these acceptable for the Christian? In a recent Time magazine poll, 80 percent of Americans said that gambling is acceptable. This magazine also stated that some \$100 billion is gambled away by Americans. Obviously, gambling is just as addictive as alcohol, nicotine, or drugs.

Who profits from gambling? Organized crime, of course. Does the fact that its legal make gambling ethical for the Christian? Many things are considered legal by the government but which God considers sinful, abortion being one example. There are two views within Christendom concerning the morality and ethics of gambling.

1. The Catholic View

All gambling is not wrong, not to be disallowed or condemned. "Small scale" gambling is a legitimate and fun way of making money for specialized programs. Their view is that the danger lies in the excess. They say the same thing about drinking alcoholic beverages.

2. The Biblical View

Gambling is a moral crime on any scale. There are at least ten reasons why.

a. Because God ordained labor and work in order for man to earn income. In Genesis, chapter 2, Adam was told "to dress" the garden. One's earnings should come from one's employment, with the exception of gifts.

b. Gambling perverts the biblical concept of honest, useful employment, In gambling, gain is secured without rendering in service or in value of productivity.

Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labor shall increase.

[Prov. 13:11]

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. [Prov. 10:2]

c. Gambling is just another form of fraud and deception. It takes advantage of sinful humanity by deceiving them into thinking they can get something for nothing.

d. Gambling perverts moral character. When practiced by someone professing to be a Christian, it places a stumbling block before others, even when done on a small scale.

e. Gambling teaches the exploitation of one's neighbor. For an individual to win, someone has to lose.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. [Mat. 22:35-40]

f. Gambling violates God's law against greed and covetousness.

g. Gambling stands in direct opposition to biblical principles and Christian values i.e., the Christian work ethic.

I have shown you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. [Acts 20:35]

h. Gambling runs in bad company. Gambling, prostitution, alcohol and drugs are always found together and are often all controlled by organized crime.

i. Gambling always produces deterioration in society, even legalized gambling. Examples are the casinos brought into Atlantic City, NJ, which were supposed to be such an asset to the community in bringing jobs and money into the area. In reality, all it brought was more crime.

j. The idea or theory that legalized gambling helps a state to solve its financial problems through lotteries, etc. That's a delusion. Several important considerations are overlooked.

(1) It's indecent for a government to finance itself through the moral weaknesses of its citizens. The people who can least afford to lose are the ones who lose.

(2) It presents a double standard of morality to citizens. What is illegal for the average citizen becomes legal for the government. Consequently, the people lose respect for the government.

(3) Legalized gambling is just as controlled by organized crime as is illegal gambling. The promised revenues of legalized gambling never materialize.

T. The Morality of Usury (The Charging of Interest)

1. The practice of usury is about as old as man himself. In the book of Deuteronomy, the Jew is forbidden to charge a fellow Jew interest on money or goods lent.

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it. [Deut. 23:19-20]

The word usury is the Hebrew *neshek* which means "a biting" or "to bite," representing the painfulness that is inflicted upon the one who borrows; the lender takes a bite! That's why we always encourage people to buy only when they have the cash to pay for the item. Paying a lender interest is indeed costly. If you don't have the money to pay cash, then believe the Lord for it, and wait until you do. Don't go into debt lightly. Proverbs says that the borrower becomes the slave of the lender.

Some today make a distinction between usury and interest. They say that usury is excessive interest. However, the Bible uses the words usury and interest interchangeably. They're the same thing! Just a few verses of scripture on this subject follow.

If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. [Ex. 22:25]

If you lend money to a neighbor, a brother, a fellow Jew, then don't charge interest for it. The Bible teaches that taking interest is taking an unfair advantage of a person who is in dire straits, for only a person in dire straits would borrow. To a Jew, to have to borrow was considered a shame, even a disgrace.

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. [Lev. 25:35-37]

To lend with interest to a fellow Jew was considered to be a moral defilement, character defilement.

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved. [Ps. 15:1-5]

The upright man God will preserve, but those who become involved in moral defilements, of which one is usury, will not be preserved.

The Jew was not the only one who considered the charging of usury as defiling. The Greeks and Romans also shared their view about those who lent for usury. Remember the Jew's aversion to the publicans (the tax collectors).

In the year 1179 at the Third Lateran Council, the practice of usury was condemned by the church.

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. [Prov. 28:8]

One is to take pity on the poor. Charging him interest is just the opposite of one who shows mercy or pity.

Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. [Jer. 15:10]

In this passage, the prophet is questioning his afflictions. He cannot think of what he has done wrong to have all those bad things happen to him. He cites several things that he has not been guilty of, one of which is taking usury. He thereby implies that if he had taken usury, then he could understand why he is experiencing the afflictions for that would have been worthy of judgment.

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God. [Ezek. 18:4-9]

In the fifth chapter of Old Testament book of Nehemiah, we find a lengthy condemnation of the Jews because they were charging interest to one another. And this is not the only instance, for throughout the Old Testament, the practice of usury was sternly denounced.

2. Some observations are worthy of note.

a. The Jew was forbidden to charge interest to another Jew, but he was not forbidden to charge interest of a non-Jew. The principle was that the Jew actually owed certain obligations to a fellow Jew. If a fellow Jew had a need and another had the means whereby to satisfy that need and didn't, then it was considered sin. The same principle applies in the New Testament. We owe a special obligation to a fellow brother or sister to bless, minister to, or share where there is a need. We are to help one another, but not to our own advantage.

b. This law or prohibition had to do with the poor and needy. It does not refer to lending to someone for commercial purposes. It has to do with a personal loan to another who has a personal need, not a business loan. There is no obligation to loan to someone for the purpose of their making money from the loan. It is simply to be a means to provide for a person's need.

c. These prohibitions were imposed to bring about a check on covetousness. To lend without usury would result in God's blessing coming to the lender.

d. Our money-making should be above reproach and beyond suspicion. It matters very much to God how we make our money. Our money is to be made honestly and justly. Money made by wickedness is an abomination to God and money made out of the need of the poor saints is an abomination.

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. [Prov. 28:8]

e. There is a sphere where usury is allowed. The Jew could loan to foreigners and non-Jews and charge interest.

Jesus recognized that the practice of usury existed. Though He did not condone it, He used it as a spiritual analogy. What He has entrusted to us, He expects us to bring in a harvest with it.

Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. [Mat. 25:27]

The New Testament view concerning usury is basically the same as the Old Testament view, with a few additions. The New Testament says that not only is the Christian to lend without interest, but he should be prepared to give it away and expect nothing in return. [Scripture reference – Lk. 6:27-38] The ideal for the Christian is not just to lend, but to give! This practice must, of course, be done with common sense. Don't give to heretics to support the spread of their abominable doctrines, but if the heretic is hungry, buy him a meal.

The Christian is to be willing to forgive the debt altogether if necessary. Our giving or lending is to be done without any ulterior motive, i.e., "I'll give you this, but I expect you to do this or that." There are to be "no strings attached."

The purpose is to eliminate selfishness and covetousness from one's life. If we see the needs of another, we are to minister to them accordingly.

U. Our Four-Fold Debt to Government and Authority

Christians have a four-fold debt (responsibility or obligation) to the government and authorities. These responsibilities are:

1. To respect them. [Scripture references – Romans, chapter 13 and Exodus 22:28] We are told not to speak evil against dignities because those in authority are there because God placed them there.

2. To be obedient to the government and its laws. The only exception here is when the laws of the land are in violation of the laws of God. Then and only then, does the Christian have the right to disobey the laws of the land for the law of God always takes precedence.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs to subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. [Rom. 13:1-6]

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. [Rom. 9:17]

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. [Titus 3:1]

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. [Dan. 4:17]

3. Submit to those in authority. Three examples have been left to us regarding those who submitted to authority.

a. The early church submitted to those in authority. It cost many of them their lives to affirm their Christian faith, but they did not rise up and take up arms against the government and seek to protest or overthrow it.

b. Christ Himself recognized those in authority and even recognized Pilate's authority as being from above.

And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. [John 19:9-11]

c. The epistles of Paul are filled with examples of early Christians submitting to authority and Paul's admonitions to them. [Scripture references – Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22-24; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-15; 1 Peter 2:13-25]

V. New Testament Non-Resistance

The Christian's standard on such things as war, conflict, and killing, is the non-resistant example of Jesus Christ. [Scripture reference – Matthew 5:38-48.] This passage is sober, strong, solemn, but it is New Testament Christianity and the way that Christ called believers to live. Christians are expected to live by a higher standard than others; the Christian's position is not merely one of pacifism, but one of non-resistance. This is very difficult for the average American to understand as the American ideology is a far cry from New Testament Christianity.

1. Disciples of Christ are to live peaceably with all men. [Scripture reference – Romans, chapter 12] An overcomer is not a strife-filled, contentious, argumentative person; he is a peacemaker.

2. Disciples of Christ will not avenge themselves. They will leave vengeance to God. If you have been wronged, cheated, or taken advantage of in a business transaction, a Christian would not be out of order to tell the other party that they have wrongly treated you. However, this must be done in the right attitude and with no antagonism or anger on your part. If the person responds negatively, you are not to react in like manner threatening to sue, etc. The following scripture is an example of the Christian's conduct in such situations. It is a mark of moral failure to engage in law suits.

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? [1 Cor. 6:2-7]

3. Disciples of Christ will love their enemies just as Jesus said. [Scripture references – Matthew 5:44-45; Romans 12:1-21.]

4. The non-resistant Christian will manifest the fruit of the Spirit at all times. All of us have three basic spheres of life, i.e., personal lives, business lives, and religious lives and the fruit of the spirit is to be reflected in all three, not just one or two. [Scripture references – Rom. 13:1-2; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13; and 1 Tim. 2.] The overcomer's life is to reflect respect, obedience, submission and prayer to those in government and authority.

The Word says that believers are to submit to the laws of the state, except where those laws are in conflict with the laws of God, and then they are to obey the higher power.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. [Acts 5:29]

When believers choose not to obey the law of the land, they do not behave in an attitude of rebelliousness and hostility. They must respectfully state their disagreement with the law and at all times display a spirit of meekness. It is not that they are unpatriotic or that they do not love their country. Jesus did not fight for Israel's freedom from Roman oppression; as Christians, we are to follow His example, remembering that we are citizens of heaven (Phil.3:20).

For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. [Phil. 3:20]

The Protestant argument regarding the Christian's role in such situations was first advocated by Martin Luther and is basically the same argument as is embraced by Protestants today.

1. The Christian acting privately as an individual is entirely responsible for his own moral actions. [This is certainly true enough.]

2. The Christian acting as a representative of government is acting on behalf of society and the government bears the responsibility and moral guilt of his actions. [Not so! God holds the individual responsible for his actions. Governments have no souls and cannot be accountable to God. It is each individual who will stand before God to give account of his life.]

W. Separation of Church and State

X. Christianity and Politics

Y. Death and Terminal Illness

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet...
[1 Cor. 15:26-27]

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. [Heb. 9:27]

Death is appointed unto man and should Christ delay His return, it is an appointment we will all have to keep.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die... [Eccl. 3:1-2]

1. The Two Meanings of the Term Death

a. Humanistically, death, to the unbeliever, is the permanent cessation of all vital functions; the end of life; extinction.

b. The Christian's definition is quite different however. The word death in Hebrew is *mauwit* and in Greek *thanatos*, which being translated means, the cessation of life. It is that experience that terminates this life and whereby the believer enters into the spiritual realm.

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? [John 11:26]

These were the words spoken by Jesus to his dear friend, Martha, the sister of Lazarus. He tells us here that the soul lives on after physical death. Death is sure according to the scriptures but it is the advent or time of death that is uncertain.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. [Job 14:1-2]

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. [Jas. 4:14]

2. Death and Terminal Illness: How is it determined that death has occurred? Since the advent of medical science, it is more and more difficult to determine. Years ago, a person was termed dead when they ceased to breathe. However, in this day and age science is able to keep bodies alive artificially for indefinite periods of time. From a legal standpoint, a person is usually (although this is not always the case) considered dead if they are brain dead, i.e., total loss of brain function, and if the person is determined to be in a permanent, irreversible, vegetative state.

Just how long are doctors obligated to try to sustain life in a terminally ill person? According to the Hippocratic Oath that all doctors are required to take, they are required to sustain life as long as possible.

What's wrong with keeping a brain dead person alive on machines by using medical science?

a. It prevents the person from dying with any sense of dignity.

b. Artificial means of prolonging life also prolongs the suffering of the patient and the family. There is nothing pretty about death, and seeing one's loved one hooked up to all types of monitors and machines is very hard on the patient's family.

c. Lengthy and prolonged hospital stays and medical treatment drains not only the emotions of the patient and his family but also drains their resources.

Should a terminally ill patient have the right to die? Should medical science force its way on the individual to keep him alive whether he wants to be kept alive or not? Should a person be

able to say whether or not he wishes to be kept alive by artificial means? If the patient is unable to speak for himself, then the family should make that decision for him.

3. Use of Ordinary and Extraordinary Means of Prolonging Life

Many people today are writing what are called living wills stating that only ordinary means are to be used in their medical treatment. They want no extraordinary means. By extraordinary means is meant the use of medicines, operations, treatments, etc. which offer no reasonable hope of success; means that cannot be said to offer hope for recovery or any satisfactory quality of life.

4. Mercy Killing and Euthanasia (Gentle Death)

Is it ever right to terminate life in order to relieve suffering?

5. If a person is terminally ill, should they be told they are dying? In many cases, doctors say "no" because the patient gives up, becomes depressed, etc., and sometimes expires soon after being told.

From the Christian standpoint, however, it is our belief that they should be told, for several reasons. The wisdom of God should be sought by the person telling the terminally ill of their impending death.

a. If the dying person is lost, he can make his peace and get right with God.

b. If the dying individual is Christian, he can also make his peace with God and make restitution, seek forgiveness of those wronged, etc.

Z. Capital Punishment

AA. Grief

BB. The Funeral

CC. Cremation

1. Is It a Christian Practice?

In recent years, more people are choosing to be cremated or have their loved ones cremated. In the Greater New Orleans area approximately five percent of the dead are cremated, while on the West Coast, even high percentages choose cremation, presently about 14-15 percent.

The term cremation comes from the Latin crematio meaning burning or to burn. Two different encyclopedias describe it as the burning of human corpses which was the general practice of the ancient world, with the exception of Egypt who embalmed and entombed their dead, and the Hebrews (Israelites) who buried their dead. No one knows what culture originated the practice of cremation, but we do know that most pagan, heathen nations practiced it, including Rome.

Some of the selling points proponents of cremation use are: It's cheaper; it's cleaner; and it makes more sense where cemetery plots are at a premium. According to a local funeral director, however, most families who choose cremation still have an embalming, a casket, and a wake. All of these practices are quite expensive so there isn't much of a monetary savings when all this is done.

Burial, according to Jewish and Christian tradition, should be a simple, unobtrusive ceremony without overspending on costly caskets, flowers, etc. A simple casket is fine; there is no need to buy the very expensive, ornate types. The greatest saving in cremation is that there is no need to buy a

cemetery plot or a headstone. There is no state or local law which says that anything specific has to be done with the remains, which in today's terminology are now referred to as cremains.

In the 23rd chapter of Genesis, the Bible talks about Abraham's purchase of a specific piece of ground in which to bury his wife, Sarah. Abraham, who left his home and property and became a desert nomad, owning no property, must have had great respect for his wife and her earthly remains as he purchased land in which to bury her and to remain a memorial to her memory. Sarah's place of burial became well known, and many of the patriarchs were later buried there. Also, in Genesis 49:29-31, Jacob gives instructions regarding his place of burial. From its inception, the Jewish custom was to bury their dead. Therefore, we must answer negatively the question, "Is cremation a Christian practice?"

2. Why Cremation is Not Christian

a. Cremation is a pagan practice and closely associated with pagan mysticism of the after life.

b. Burial, not cremation, was always Israel's custom of dealing with the dead. God buried Moses (Deut. 34:5-6); He did not cremate him. By so doing, it reveals to us two things.

(1) That the body of the dead is to be treated with respect. At death, the body has served its divinely intended purpose, that of housing the personality of the person. Although the corpse is not the person, it should be treated with respect.

(2) Burial is the only method of disposition sanctioned by God.

c. Because burial and not cremation has always been the custom of Christians. The burial of Lazarus is described in John, chapter 11. We also know that Jesus was buried as were Ananias and Sapphira of the New Testament church. Not one single verse in either the Old or New Testaments mentions cremation as a legitimate means of disposing of the dead. Not even in church history was the practice of cremation supported. In fact, over three million Christians are buried in the Roman catacombs.

d. For the Jew, the most severe disgrace or dishonor was to have no burial at all.

Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. [Jer. 22:18-19]

This is a curse which was pronounced upon Jehoiakim because of his wickedness. It was the custom to simply drag animals out and throw them upon refuse heaps, not bury them. A similar fate (2 Kings 9:30-37) was the end of the wicked queen Jezebel, whom we are told was dragged away by dogs who consumed much of her body. Cursed by God, there was no monument, no memorial to either of these wicked rulers.

e. The question is asked, "Is it all right to be cremated if the cremains are later buried?" For the body to be cremated at all was a mark of divine wrath. Burning was reserved for the wicked. Burning was the means whereby the stench of a wicked person or city was removed, i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah. Burning was a sign of divine judgment or retribution. The judgment of Achan's transgression (Joshua 7:15-ff) resulted in his family and all his possessions being burned along with him.

Just why was cremation so repugnant to the Jew? They considered that burning was for garbage, not human beings. Burning was a form of contempt upon one's enemies, hence, the practice of burning many of the early Christians.

f. Burial is a symbol in water baptism, depicting the death, burial and resurrection. This picture is destroyed if cremation rather than burial is the method used for disposing of the body.

g. Cremation will be the final judgment of this wicked world.

... and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. [2 Pe. 3:10]

DD. The Question of Suicide

Thou shalt not kill. [Ex. 20:13]

Suicide is a Latin term that comes from *sui* meaning self and *cide* meaning killing, murder. The definition of the word is: the voluntary and intentional murder of oneself. Suicide is murder. Therefore, the sixth commandment, forbidding man to kill is not limited to the killing of others, but also includes the prohibition of killing one's self.

The first murder occurred in the Garden of Eden. It is a case of fratricide when Cain kills his brother Abel. We see an account of suicide in 1 Samuel, chapter 31, when King Saul fell upon his own sword. Suicide was not uncommon for soldiers in that being captured by the enemy meant certain and often tortuous death. Also, in the New Testament we have another account of suicide when Judas Iscariot hung himself following his betrayal of Jesus (Matthew, chapter 27). There is nothing in either account to indicate that either of these men repented and went to be with the Lord so we have to conclude that they died lost and unregenerate.

Throughout history, Israel considered suicide wrong morally, ethically and philosophically. Other cultures, however, did not view it as such. Both the Greeks and Romans considered suicide a noble way to end one's life. For example, Socrates held a banquet for his friends and, in their presence, drank hemlock and died. Also, in the country of Japan, the practice of *hari-kari* was prevalent. These people considered suicide a way to save honor, to save face. They, too, had an elaborate ceremony in the presence of witnesses and family when someone of rank committed suicide. The Jews and the Christians, however, have always rejected such pagan practices.

Until recently in this country, most suicides were among the older generation, i.e., the elderly who had terminal illnesses, people who had been reduced to bankruptcy or destitution, etc. The trend now is indicating that suicide is increasing to a high count among the young people. The highest rates are among whites, males, upper middle class, and the better educated. Doctors, psychiatrists, and other professionals have high suicide rates.

The suicide rate among youth is rising because many, if not most, have the overall feeling that life is futile, there is no purpose to their life. Some even see religion as something meaningless. The three major causes of youth suicide have been determined to be drugs, sex, and music.

There are ten biblical reasons why suicide is a sin against God.

1. Because it violates the sixth commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

2. Because it is a denial of God's sovereignty. It is God who has determined the number of a man's years.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. [Acts 17:24-26]

3. Because it is the sin of unbelief – a lack of faith in God. All believers have trials, but none have suffered as did Job. His plight was so critical that his wife even encouraged him to commit suicide. (Job 2:7-10)

4. Because it is cowardly. Suicide is an irreversible cop-out, i.e., a failure of courage. Even entertaining the thought of suicide opens the door for demon oppression.

5. Because it is a rejection of God's love. Suicide is a spurning of the hand of God saying, "I don't want your help."

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be no dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee. [Isa. 41:10-13]

6. Because it is a sin against God's property, which is your body. Your body is the temple of God; you are bought with a price.

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye 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]

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. [1 Cor. 3:16-17]

7. Because it is a sin against one's self. Man is made in the image of God. Jesus said that the first commandment was to love God with our heart, mind, and strength; and the second like unto it, i.e., we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We should not kill ourselves any more than we should kill our neighbor.

8. Because it is a violation of God's word.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom. 12:1-2]

As believers, we are called to be living sacrifices, not dead ones. Believers are to live every day a life that magnifies and glorifies the Lord.

9. Because it is an irreversible act, and impossible to repent of. It's the sin one cannot repent of for suicide is the choice that prevents all future choices.

10. Because it is a sin against one's own family. It robs the family of one of its members. It also deprives the family of any opportunity to minister to the person's needs. Suicide lays an extremely heavy burden of guilt and shame upon the family.

What about Samson? Did he commit suicide when he brought the pillars of the pagan temple down upon his own head and those of the idolatrous people? There is a distinction between self-sacrifice and suicide. Jesus did not commit suicide and He laid down His own life for us. There are numerous accounts of acts of self-sacrifice when one has laid down his own life in order to save the lives of others.

There are demonic spirits of suicide. They manifest in the lives of some people and are evidenced by the daring and risky feats these people attempt. Some examples are high-wire walkers, those who regularly perform death-defying stunts and other types of high-risk activities i.e., "dare devils."