



A SERIES ON TOUGH & TIMELY ISSUES

CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH TODAY

A PUBLICATION OF RAY REYNOLDS RAP

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Workbook by Ray Reynolds, Ph.D.

Ray Reynolds Rap Publications



A Series of Lessons on Tough & Timely Issues
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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #1 – Abortion

Introduction: Jesus presents Himself as the Door of the Sheepfold (**John 10:8**) and warns us about those who would come to do us harm (**John 10:10**). He warns of those who promise life, but in the end bring death and suffering. He said, "*I am the good shepherd! I know My sheep and My sheep know Me and I lay down My life for the sheep*" (**John 10:14**). Jesus speaks about giving His life for His sheep, which was ultimately a gift of eternal life (**John 10:28**). If Jesus sought to preserve life, and save life, shouldn't we do the same? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. We Have A Message (The Word of God)

- A. The Lord Cares For The Unborn (**Exodus 21:22-25**)
- B. The Lord Protects The Helpless (**Psalms 82:1-4**)
- C. The Lord Loves Children & Gives Them A Home (**Psalms 127:3-5**)
- D. The Lord Forms Every Child (**Psalms 139:13-16**)
- E. The Lord Plans The Future of Every Child (**Jeremiah 1:5**)

II. We Have A Model (Jesus the Christ)

- A. Jesus Reached Out To The Leper (**Matthew 8:2-30**)
- B. Jesus Reached Out To The Woman With The "*Issue of Blood*" (**Luke 8:43-48**)
- C. Jesus Reached Out To The Little Children (**Mark 10:13, Matthew 9:13, Luke 9:47**)
- D. Jesus Reached Out To All That Came To Him (**Matthew 15:20, Mark 10:1, Luke 19:10**)

III. We Have a Mandate (Jesus' Teachings)

- A. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (**Matthew 18:21-35**)
- B. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25-37**)
- C. The Parable of the Lost Son (**Luke 15:11-32**)

IV. We Have A Mission (Jesus' Disciples)

- A. Discipleship is Servanthood (**John 13:1-5**)
- B. Discipleship is Service (**John 13:17**)
- C. Discipleship is Sacrifice (**Matthew 25:34-40**)

Conclusion: Every church will be forced to face this issue. Every Christian will encounter someone who is struggling with abortion or are suffering because of an abortion in the past. It's time to show Christian love to these people. ALL human life is valuable to God, and it should be valuable to us. We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #2 – Anger Management

Introduction: Why is it so easy for us to get angry? When speaking about the seven most deadly sins, Solomon includes “anger” (**Proverbs 6:16-19**). The word “danger” and “anger” are only separated by one letter. What does the Bible say about anger? How should a Christian feel about getting angry and acting out in aggression? Let’s take a short course in anger management...

Discussion:

I. THE REALITY OF ANGER

Common problem

Common issues

Common solution

John 2:12-24, Matthew 23:39, II Corinthians 7:11

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ANGER

Some anger is purposeful

Some anger is practical

Some anger is profitable

Proverbs 15:8, Ephesians 4:26, Ephesians 4:31

III. THE RECKLESSNESS OF ANGER

Some anger is dangerous

Some anger is deadly

Some anger is devastating

Ephesians 4:26, Acts 26:11, Titus 1:7

IV. THE REPROACH OF ANGER

Watch out for the judgment

Watch out for the council

Watch out for the hell fire

Proverbs 19:11, Proverbs 16:32, I Corinthians 4:13, Romans 12:17-21

V. THE RESOLVE OF ANGER

Our passion can help us overcome anger

Our perspective can help us overcome anger

Our patience can help us overcome anger

Hebrews 10:30, Matthew 18:15-17, James 1:19-21

Conclusion: Are you struggling with anger? Are you stewing and worrying, allowing anger to burn inside of you? Are you ready to become more like Jesus? Are you ready to follow Him?

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #3 – Anxiety & Depression

Introduction: Solomon once said, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad" (**Proverbs 12:25**). That's a good place to start. This short proverb gives both a diagnosis and prescription to what is quickly becoming the plaque of the century. There are more than 40 million people in America struggling with anxiety and depression. We face a lot of confusion and apprehension when we discuss this sensitive topic, but it is one that can no longer be ignored. The Lord does not want us to carry this burden (**Matthew 11:28-30, I Corinthians 10:13**). Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Twelve Scriptures for Dealing with Anxiety & Depression

- "Therefore, my anxious thoughts make me answer, Because of the turmoil within me" (**Job 20:2**).
- "But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head" (**Psalms 3:3**).
- "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD" (**Psalms 32:10**).
- "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles" (**Psalms 34:17**).
- "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (**Psalms 37:3-4**).
- "I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD" (**Psalms 40:1-3**).
- "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God" (**Psalms 42:11**).
- "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (**Psalms 50:15**).
- "Moreover, He said to me, 'Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread'" (**Ezekiel 4:16, 12:18-19**).
- "And the king said to them, 'I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream'" (**Daniel 2:3**).
- "So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously" (**Luke 2:48**).
- "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 4:6-7**)

II. Twelve Strategies for Dealing with Anxiety & Depression

- **Be Still & Know** – Meditation, breathing, quiet time, and take a step back.
- **Spend Time in Prayer** – Quality time in prayer and focus on God.
- **Consider the Scriptures** – Quality time in reading, studying, and journaling.
- **Identify the Causes** – Try to discover the triggers of your anxiety or depression.
- **Manage Your Stress** – Most of our triggers are self-inflicted.
- **Describe Your Experiences** – Seek someone, or an outlet, to describe your feelings.
- **Believe the Truth, Stop Believing Lies** – Stop the negative feedback loop.
- **Look at Your Lifestyle Choices** – Diet, exercise, hobbies, free time, work, time off, etc.
- **Self-care & Self-love** – Give yourself positive affirmations and rewards.
- **Resolve Conflicts** – Sometimes the anxiety fades when we practice reconciliation.
- **Seek to Serve Others** – Take the focus off of yourself and help other people.
- **Get Help** – Severe anxiety, chronic depression, OCD, PTSD, etc. needs attention.

Conclusion: We should show love for God and for others. However, if you are dealing with depression and/or anxiety, please know that you are never alone. God is with you. Give it to God!

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #4 – Alcoholism

Introduction: The church is often heavily influenced by its culture. It is clear from most of the New Testament epistles that we need to keep our minds clear. We need to pattern our lives after the Scriptures and not the culture. We have an issue with alcoholism in the world today. We need to learn the facts. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Are The Facts About Alcoholism?

- A. Understand The Fundamentals - Disposition vs. Disease
- B. Understand The Fears - Dangerous vs. Dismissive
- C. Understand The Facts - Dull vs. Deadly

II. What Does The Bible Say About Alcohol?

- A. Alcohol & The Old Testament
 - 1. Everything was created for consumption (**Genesis 2, 9**), but Noah abused this right.
 - 2. Wine is a blessing (**Genesis 27:28, Numbers 18:11-13, Psalm 104:15, Proverbs 3:9-10, Joel 3:17-18**), offering (**Exodus 29:40, Numbers 18:11-13**) and symbol of salvation (**Isaiah 55:1-3**).
 - 3. In **Isaiah 65:8** wine is found "in the grape" and cannot be separated from the grape.
- B. Alcohol & The New Testament
 - 1. Jesus used wine as an illustration (**Matthew 9, 22, Mark 2, 12, Luke 5, 14, John 2**).
 - 2. Jesus discusses drinking wine (**Luke 7:33-35**) and using it medicinally (**Luke 10:34**).
 - 3. There is wine at cross (**Matthew 27:34-48, Mark 15:33-36, Luke 23:36, John 19:28-30**).
 - 4. It's at the Last Supper (**Matthew 26:17-35, Mark 14:11-31, Luke 22:7-34, Acts 2:13, 20:7**).
 - 5. Timothy used it medicinally (**I Timothy 5:23**) but beware (**Ephesians 5:15-18**).

III. How Can We Know That A Christian Should Not Drink Alcohol?

- A. Drunkenness & The Old Testament
 - 1. Solomon associated it with wickedness and violence (**Proverbs 4:14-17, 20:1, 23:29-35**).
 - 2. In **Isaiah 5:22-24** it says drinking is wicked and drunkards will be condemned.
 - 3. In **Jeremiah 25:15-16** wine is seen as a symbol of a curse and punishment.
 - 4. The prophets describe the wine drinker is a proud and wicked (**Habakkuk 2:4-5, 15-16**).
- B. Drunkenness & The New Testament
 - 1. Jesus warned us in **Luke 21:34**, "Don't be weighed down with drunkenness."
 - 2. In **Galatians 5:19-21** drunkenness is condemned as a work of the flesh.
 - 3. In **Ephesians 5:18** it says there is dissipation (sensuality) in wine.
 - 4. Paul instructed Timothy not to choose drunkards to lead (**I Timothy 3:3, 8**).
 - 5. In **Titus 2:2** the older men are instructed to be sober.
- C. Drunkenness & The Christian
 - 1. In **Mark 9:42** we are told not to be a stumbling block to another (especially children).
 - 2. In **I Corinthians 6:18-20** we are reminded that our bodies are not our own.
 - 3. Christians are vigilant to abstain from evil (**Colossians 4:2, I Thessalonians 5:22, I Peter 5:8**).
 - 4. In **I Peter 4:1-5** Peter uses drunkenness to contrast the former life of believers.

Conclusion: We cannot ignore the truth about alcohol in the Bible or the dangers of alcoholism. The best advice is that we live under a new covenant and need to live a new life in Christ. Alcohol, though it may have medicinal purposes or be a vital source of nourishment in foreign countries, is a dangerous thing. Be careful and cautious not to become entangled with things that can alter your mind and destroy your body.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #5 – Church Leadership

Introduction: There are many books and podcasts about strong leadership. Some of those are biblically balanced. However, there is no greater book to read and study about leadership, when we have the Bible. Why should we study about leadership in the Bible? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Does the Bible Say About Leaders?

- A. Leadership is one of the greatest needs today
 - 1. It is needed in our nation (**Proverbs 14:34**).
 - 2. It is needed in the home (**Genesis 18:19**).
 - 3. It is needed in the church (**I Timothy 3**).
- B. Improper leadership can have disastrous results.
 - 1. It can lead to error (**Isaiah 9:16**).
 - 2. It can lead to a dead end (**Matthew 15:14**).
 - 3. It can lead to hell (**Matthew 23:24, 15**).
- C. A good leader is out in front.
 - 1. Imitate Christ (**I Corinthians 11:1**).
 - 2. Suffer for doing good (**I Peter 2:21**).
 - 3. Recruit and mentor others (**Judges 7:17**).

II. What Can We Learn From Great Leaders?

- A. The Meekness of Moses (**Numbers 12:3**)
- B. The Heart of David (**I Samuel 16:7**)
- C. The Confidence of Joshua (**Joshua 24:15**)
- D. The Courage of Daniel (**Daniel 6**)
- E. The Boldness of Nehemiah (**Nehemiah 12-13**)
- F. The Suffering of Paul (**II Corinthians 1:5**)
- G. The Boldness of Peter (**I Peter 3:15**)
- H. The Love of John (**I John 4:7**)

III. What Can We Learn From Church Leaders?

- A. The Apostles (**Matthew 10:1-4**)
- B. Elders/Deacons (**I Timothy 3:1-16**)
- C. Ministers/Evangelists (**II Timothy 4:1-2**)
- D. Ministry Leaders (**Acts 6:1-6**)

Conclusion: If we fail to study and apply what we have learned from the Bible about leadership, the church will never reach its full potential. Every part of the Body of Christ is valuable, but we need biblical leaders to lead the way. What will you do to support strong leaders?

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #6 – Citizenship/Patriotism

Introduction: Many Christians want nothing to do with public life or politics. Others are strongly invested in political parties and social gatherings. I've often admired men like David Lipscomb and T.B. Larimore that took an apolitical view of life. However, after a study of the Bible we can see that there are some surprising messages for us about duty to our government. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. God's View of Government

- A. God Established The Government To Maintain Law (**Romans 13:1-7**)
- B. God Established The Government To Execute Justice (**Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 106:3**)
- C. God Established The Government To Establish Order (**Genesis 1-3, II Kings 24, Daniel 2-4**)
- D. God Established The Government To Provide For The Common Good (**Isaiah 9:6, Daniel 2**)

II. Our Responsibility To Government

- A. Our Government is Ordained by God (**Mark 12:13-17, I Timothy 2:1-4, I Peter 2:13-17**)
- B. Our Government Deserves Obedience (**Acts 5:29, 16:35-39, 22:24-29**).
- C. Our Government Serves Society: Joseph (**Genesis 41**), Daniel (**Daniel 6**), and Paul (**Acts 17:22-34; 22:22-26:32**)
- D. Our Government Influences People (**Matthew 5:13-14**)

Abraham Lincoln said, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own...It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." -- Abraham Lincoln, 1863. Cited in Anson Phelps Stokes, Church and State in the United States (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), vol. 3, p. 186.

III. Our Impact On The Government

- A. Be Prayerful - Pray For Authorities (**I Timothy 2:1-2, Romans 13:1-7**)
- B. Be Informed – Know & Understand the Facts
- C. Be Active - Get Involved in Your Community

Conclusion: Some Christians have a difficult time determining whether, and when, to let their voices be heard on the great moral issues of the day. More than 400 years ago Martin Luther put it well, when he said: "If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved." It's time to stand up for the truth. We should be proud of both our earthly and Heavenly citizenship. We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #7 – Denominationalism

Introduction: The church is more divided now than it ever has been (NI, ME, NBC, instrumental, independent, Christian, Disciples of Christ, ICOC, etc.). Consider how many Christian denominations are around the world (over 34K – Independents 22K, Protestants 9K, Marginals 1600, Orthodox 781, Roman Catholics 242, Anglicans 168, etc. - Wikipedia). Recently it was reported that there are over 600 different divisions and conventions of the Baptist denomination. What can we do about religious division? What does the Bible say about unity and division? What is the responsibility of believers in the church? We need to learn the truth about biblical unity. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Do We Know About Denominationalism?

- A. Religious Division Was Anticipated By Jesus (**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**)
- B. Religious Division Existed in the Church (**I Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-4; 11:18, III John 9-10**)
- C. Religious Division Continued Throughout Church History
- D. Religious Division Is Present In The World Today

II. What Does The Bible Say About Religious Division?

- A. Unity & The Teachings of David (**Psalms 133:1**)
- B. Unity & The Teachings of Solomon (**Proverbs 6:16-19**)
- C. Unity & The Teachings of Jesus (**John 17:11, 20-23**)
- D. Unity & The Teachings of Paul (**Romans 12:9-16, I Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3-13**)

III. How Can We Prevent Religious Division?

- A. Authority – We Must Accept The Same Standard of Authority
Matthew 28:18-20, John 8:31, 14:6, Acts 2:42, I Corinthians 14:37
- B. Attitude – We Must Develop A Christ-like Attitude
Ephesians 4:1-3, Philippians 2:1-5, II Timothy 2:24-26
- C. Autonomy – We Must Restrain From Personal Liberties
Romans 14:14-15, 21, 15:1-3, I Corinthians 8:9-13, 10:24, 31-33
- D. Accountability – We Must Focus Our Efforts
Matthew 25, Mark 16:15-16, Ephesians 4:3-6, Hebrews 9:27

Conclusion: Two thoughts come to mind that encourage me to try to seek unity. First, I can save myself and those who hear me (**I Timothy 4:16**). Secondly, great things can have a small beginning (**Matthew 13:31-33**). If unity among believers was so important to Jesus, how could we ignore efforts to maintain the unity He made possible by His death on the cross (**Ephesians 2:13-16**)? Eventually, every church, and every Christian will encounter a problem with a brother or sister (**Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-2**). It can lead stronger unity or to religious division. Our response is critical to keeping unity among our brethren. We cannot turn a blind eye any longer. We must seek unity! We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #8 – Euthanasia

Introduction: God is the Giver and Sustainer of life. However, men seek the right to give or take life. Committees and governments want to decide when someone's life is no longer "useful" enough or of sufficient "quality" to be allowed to continue. The Lord said, "*My thoughts are higher than your thoughts, and My ways than your ways*" (**Isaiah 55:9**). We must remember that all human life is sacred. What does the Bible teach us about taking lives and the sanctity of life? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Life Is Sacred Because Of Its Maker

- A. Life Was Created By God (**Genesis 1-2, Colossians 1:16**)
- B. Life Is Protected By God (**Job 10:12, Psalms 91:11**)
- C. Life Is Valued By God (**Isaiah 49:16, Jeremiah 1:5, 31:3, John 10:10**)
- D. Life Is Preserved By God (**Deuteronomy 5:33, Ephesians 6:1-4, Proverbs 16:31**)

II. Life Is Sacred Because of Its Order

- A. Life Is A Challenge (**John 16:33, James 1:2, I Peter 5:7**)
- B. Life Is A Blessing (**Matthew 25:40, James 1:17**)
- C. Life Is A Vocation (**Mark 1:41, Romans 12:1-2**)
- D. Life Is A Journey (**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 12:1, Hebrews 9:27**)

III. Life Is Sacred Because Of Its Nature

- A. We Are Created With An Eternal Soul (**Psalms 139:15-16**)
- B. We Are Born Again With An Eternal Hope (**John 3:3, 5**)
- C. We Are Promised An Eternal Rest (**John 14:2, I John 5:13**)
- D. We Are Given The Steps To Eternal Life (**Romans 3:23, John 1:12**)
 - 1) One Must Hear The Gospel In Order To Be Saved. - **Romans 10:17**
 - 2) One Must Believe In Jesus Christ In Order To Be Saved. - **John 8:24**
 - 3) One Must Repent Of Their Sins In Order To Be Saved. - **Luke 13:3, 5**
 - 4) One Must Confess Faith In Jesus In Order To Be Saved. - **Matthew 10:32**
 - 5) One Must Be Baptized In Order To Be Saved. - **Mark 16:16**
 - 6) One Must Remain Faithful In Order To Be Saved. - **Revelation 2:10**

Conclusion: Human life is valuable to God. The Lord creates and sustains it. We are made in His own image and for His purpose. No one should feel they have the right to end someone's life. We need to study about justice, but also about mercy. We need to study about punishment, but also about grace. It would be fitting to study about the cities of refuge in the Old Testament. We need to focus on what God says is right, and not our own opinions. Ultimately, we will be judged by the Lord and His Holy Word. We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #9 – Gambling

Introduction: In the latter part of the last century, we saw a dramatic increase in the availability of gambling. Whether it be in Las Vegas, or even a small town like Atmore, AL, gambling has become an epidemic. Many Christians contend that since the Bible does not explicitly address the issue of gambling and that scripture offers no guidance in this regard. On the contrary, there are many principles found in the Word of God that show that if you gamble... the odds are against you. In fact, gambling affects our view of God, our families, our jobs, ourselves and life. We need to learn the facts. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Gambling Affects Our View of God

- A. Gambling Violated The 10th Commandment (**Exodus 20:17**)
- B. Gambling Indicates A Lack of Trust in God's Ability To Provide (**Matthew 6:25-34**)
- C. Gambling Denies God's Law of Order & His Care For Our Lives (**Mathew 10:30**)

II. Gambling Affects Our View of Our Family, Our Jobs, and Others

- A. Gambling Exploits The Most Vulnerable Members of Society (**Zechariah 7:9-10**)
- B. Gambling Presents A Poor Witness To Others (**I Corinthians 10:31-33**)
- C. Gambling Distorts Our Love For Our Neighbor (**Philippians 2:3-4**)

III. Gambling Affects Our View of Ourselves

- A. Gambling Undermines Our Work Ethic (**Genesis 2:15, Exodus 20:9, II Thessalonians 3:10**)
- B. Gambling Distorts Our View of Stewardship (**Matthew 6:19-21, 25:14-30**).
- C. Gambling Centers Around Greed (**I Timothy 6:10, Matthew 6:31**).

IV. Gambling Affects Our View of Life

- A. Gambling Leads To Addiction
- B. Gambling Destroys The Family
- C. Gambling Devastates The Children
- D. Gambling Encourages Crime
- E. Gambling Brings Poverty
- F. Gambling Ruins Our Economy
- G. Gambling Corrupts Our Government

Conclusion: You may know someone who is struggling with gambling. Gambling is an addiction just like any other form of sin we have discussed in this series of lessons. Our response is critical to encouraging their healing and walk with God. We cannot turn a blind eye any longer. **Ephesians 5:3** says, "Greed should not be named among the saints." **I Thessalonians 5:22** says, "Avoid appearances of evil." And **II Corinthians 5:7** says, "We walk by faith and not by sight." Gambling is to be avoided. We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #10 – LGBTQ+

Introduction: How many of you have become increasingly aware of the LGBTQ+ movement? Homosexuality is an ever-increasing issue within American society, but it is a prominent issue all over the world. You can't surf the web, use social media, turn on the television or even read a newspaper without being confronted by a variety of sources that are pushing the LGBTQ+ agenda. Closer to home, some of us may be faced with having a gay family member and struggle between acceptance and rejection. In recent years, several mainline denominations have abandoned traditional interpretations of Scripture and have embraced the LGBTQ+ Christian movement. We are confronted with a host of questions... Are people born gay, or is it a choice? Can sexual orientation be changed? How many identities are there? Questions abound and many Christians are confused as to what they should believe or how to respond. What does the Bible really say about homosexuality, and what is the responsibility of believers in dealing with this volatile issue? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Does God Think About Homosexuality?

- A. We Can Know God's Purpose Concerning Sexuality (**Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 23-24**)
- B. We Can Know God's Plan Concerning Sexuality (**Matthew 19:4-6**)
- C. We Can Know God's Perspective Concerning Sexuality (**II Peter 2:2-3; 3:3**)
- D. We Can Know God's Power Concerning Sexuality (**Romans 1:18-32**)

II. What Does The Bible Says About Homosexuality?

- A. We Can Know The Old Testament Law (**Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13**)
- B. We Can Know The New Testament Law (**Romans 1:26-27**)
- C. We Can See The Environmental & Cultural Factors (**I Corinthians 6:9-11**)
- D. We Can Determine Ungodly Behavior (**Romans 1:26-27, Isaiah 53:6, I John 1:9**)

III. How Should Christians Respond To Homosexuality?

- A. Christians Should Be Considerate (**Acts 8:26-39**)
- B. Christians Should Be Calm (**Romans 3:23**)
- C. Christians Should Be Compassionate (**I Corinthians 13:1-13**)
- D. Christians Should Be Communicative (**Hebrews 13:3**)
- E. Christians Should Be Cautious (**Galatians 6:1-2**)
- F. Christians Should Be Confident (**I Corinthians 6:11**)
- G. Christians Should Be Compelled (**Ephesians 4:15**)

Conclusion: The world is not getting any more godly or righteous. We live in a crooked and perverse generation. The LGBTQ+ movement is growing stronger. Why? Because the work of the devil is behind it! Our response is critical to encouraging people to seek healing and begin a new walk with God. We need to face the challenges of the church. God is with us.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #11 – Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

Introduction: Any discussion on this subject should be based on at least three truths: 1) God LOVES us & He expects us to be just like Him (John 3:16, Matthew 5:45, 48). 2) God wants us to learn His ways (II Timothy 3:16-17, Isaiah 55:8-9, Proverbs 14:12). 3) God wants us to stand for what is right (Joshua 24:15, Ephesians 4:15, 6:10-17). In an effort to teach the truth in love, and prevent dangerous circumstances, we are using the Bible as our exclusive guide to answer our questions. We must remain grounded in Scripture and apply in a Christ-like spirit. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Does The Bible Say About Marriage?

- A. Marriage is a covenant made between God, a man and a woman (**Genesis 1:18-31**) that was meant to complete us physically, psychologically, emotionally, sexually, conversationally, relationally, and spiritually to bring two flesh into one flesh.
- B. Marriage must meet biblical criteria, regardless of man-made contracts (**Matthew 19:5-6**).
- C. Scriptures abound with stories and warnings about marriages to ungodly individuals and the problems associated with bad marriages (**Proverbs 12:4, 18:22, 19:13-14, 22:9, 31:10-21, Acts 5:1-11, I Samuel 25:3-36, I Kings 11:1-4, I Kings 16:31-33**).
- D. Unholy thoughts and fornication can ruin this covenant (**Matthew 5:27-30, 19:9**).
- E. Faithful covenant with God and your spouse is key to staying in the covenant.
- F. Divorce should be avoided at all costs (**Malachi 2:16, I Corinthians 7:1-24**).
- G. One person can sanctify a covenant marriage (**I Corinthians 7:14, I Peter 3:1**).

II. What Does The Bible Say About Divorce?

- A. If a "bill of divorce" was given from a man to woman (**Matthew 19:7-8, Deuteronomy 24:1**).
- B. If a spouse neglected of food, clothes, or sex (**Exodus 21:10-11, I Corinthians 7:5, 32-34**).
- C. If a woman lied about her virginity (**Deuteronomy 22:13-29**).
- D. If sexual immorality occurred in the marriage (**Matthew 19:9, 5:27-32, 14:4**).
- E. Divorce must be avoided – **Malachi 2:16, I Corinthians 7:1-24**
Exodus 21:10-11, Deuteronomy 22:13-29, 24:1,
Ezra 8-10, Hosea 1-2, Malachi 2:16, Matthew 5:27-32, 14:4, 19:7-9, I Corinthians 7

III. What Does The Bible Say About Remarriage?

- A. Widows are taught that they can remarry (**Romans 7:2-3, I Corinthians 7:39**).
- B. Widows were encouraged to remarry if they were under 60 (**I Timothy 5:9, 14**).
- C. The is only "biblical" reason given for remarriage after divorce (**Matthew 19:9**).
- D. If biblical reasons have been met, the church should encourage scriptural marriage.

Conclusion: The world has struggled in sin since the fall of man. Should we expect any change before Jesus comes again? In the meantime, before Jesus returns, God has left us His Holy Word. The Lord wants us to follow His pattern. He has given us the biblical pattern for marriage. Will you stand for it? Will you follow Him? Will you defend what is right? Let's follow the Bible!

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #12 – Persecution

Introduction: Alarming reports are streaming in from all over today's world. We are learning that believers in many countries are being tortured and even killed because of their stand for Jesus and the truth. Why is this happening? Is this a new occurrence? What are the responsibilities of believers like us who may not be facing the same type of persecution? What does the Bible really say about how we handle persecution? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Why Is There Persecution?

- A. Satan Does It (**I Peter 5:8**)
- B. God Allows It (**James 1:1-5**)
- C. Christianity Requires It (**II Timothy 3:12**)
- D. Christians Must Endure It (**Romans 8:31, Ephesians 6:10-20, II Timothy 4:7-8, I Peter 3:15**)

II. What Examples of Persecution Can We Find In The Bible?

- A. Daniel, The Lion's Den (**Daniel 6**)
- B. The Hall of Fame of Faith (**Hebrews 11**)
- C. The Apostle Paul (**II Corinthians 11:23-27; II Corinthians 12:8-10**)
- D. Stephen, the First Martyr (**Acts 7:57-58**)
- E. James, John's brother (**Acts 12:1-4**)
- F. The 7 Churches of Asia (**Revelation 2-3**)

III. What Examples of Persecution Can We Find Today?

- A. Worldwide Religious Persecution Is Not New
- B. Religious Persecution In China
- C. Religious Persecution In Muslim Nations
- D. Religious Persecution On The Rise

IV. How Should We Respond To Persecution?

- A. Commit Them To God In Your Prayers
- B. Consider Them In Your Thoughts
- C. Comprehend Their Struggles
- D. Communicate Good Things About Them
- E. Confirm Your Support of Them
- F. Correspond With Them
- G. Call Them or Visit Them

Conclusion: Eventually, every church, and every Christian will encounter persecution. The words of martyred missionary Jim Elliott: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Are you willing to die for Christ? Think about all the things Jesus gave up for you, what have you given up for Him? We must stand up for the truth, no matter the cost.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #13 – Pornography

Introduction: Pornography is big billion dollar business. More money is spent annually on this enterprise than gambling. Many men, Christians included, are caught in the deadly attraction to pornography. We can conclude that a sizeable percentage of men in our pews on Sunday morning are in the heat of this battle. Not to mention the untold victims, wives, children, friends who are greatly affected by pornography. We must become involved in the battle against pornography in order to protect ourselves and fulfill God's call to be "*salt and light*." This is spiritual warfare! We must have a battle plan to fight pornography. Our battle plan must include our recognizing pornography for what it is, who the victims are and how to bring healing to them and strategies to turn the tide regarding the devastating influence of pornography in our country. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Does The Bible Say About Pornography?

- A. Pornography Is Divisive (**Genesis 1:26-27, II Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:10, James 3:9**)
- B. Pornography Is Distinctive (**Proverbs 4:15, I Thessalonians 5:21-22, II Timothy 2:22**)
- C. Pornography Is Destructive (**Matthew 18:3, Mark 9:42, 10:14, Luke 18:17, I Timothy 4:12**)
- D. Pornography Is Deceptive (**Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 6:7-8, Proverbs 9:17, 14:12**)

II. Who Are The Victims of Pornography?

- A. Those Who Are Addicted To Pornography Are Victims (**Hebrews 11:25, James 1:13-15**)
- B. Those Who Are Affected By Pornography Are Victims
 - 1. Families, wives and children, are directly affected.
 - 2. Women who have been raped by those who were influenced by porn.
 - 3. Children who have been sexually abused are impacted.
 - 4. Babies are born with sexually transmitted diseases.
 - 5. Young people are scarred for life with these ungodly images.
 - 6. Marriages are broken beyond repair.
- C. Those Who Have Accepted Pornography Are Victim
 - 1. We must arm ourselves with the whole armor of God (**Ephesians 6**).
 - 2. We must resist the devil (**I Peter 5:8**).

III. How Should Christians Respond To Pornography?

- A. Christians Should Be Prayerful (**Ephesians 6:10-18**)
- B. Christians Should Be Prepared (**Luke 10:27-37**)
- C. Christians Should Be Positive (**Matthew 5:13-14**)
- D. Christians Should Be Purposeful (**Genesis 1:27**).
- E. Christians Should Be Practical

Conclusion: We need to minister to the addicted or have been affected by the evil influences of pornography. If you are abusing others, whether verbally, physically, mentally, or sexually, you need to stop it now and get some help for yourself. It's time to find healing.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #14 – Relativism

Introduction: There are several issues that we are facing in the 21st century church. For nearly half a century we faced evolution in the classroom, but now relativism is one of the key issues we face with our youth. We have to be prepared to face it. Culture says everyone has a right to their own theories and that truth is relative. Today we are going to consider some important facts about relativism and how it affects our society. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. What Is Relativism?

- A. Relativism is the opposite of belief in absolute moral truth.
- B. Relativism is not new (**Judges 17:6; 1 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 59:15; Jeremiah 7:28; John 18:38**).
- C. Relativism is quickly becoming the dominant view of "truth" even among Christians.

II. What Does The Bible Says About Truth?

- A. Truth is God! (**John 14:6, Psalm 31:5, Malachi 2:6, John 1:17, 16:13, Romans 1:18**).
- B. Truth is unchanging (**Hebrews 13:8**).
- C. Truth is real (**Psalm 146:5-6**).
- D. Truth is complete (**Proverbs 9:10**).
- E. Truth is standard (**Romans 1:18-32, 2:8-9**).

III. How Has Relativism Affected Us Today?

- A. Relativism in the United States (Religious)
- B. Relativism in the Church
- C. Relativism in the Schools & Colleges
- D. Relativism Among Teenagers

IV. How Can Christians Address the Relativism of Our Age?

- A. Imitate God by walking in truth (**John 3:21, II John 4-6, III John 3-4**).
- B. Imitate God by studying the truth (**II Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17**).
- C. Imitate God by contending for the truth (**II Timothy 4:1-5, Jude 3**).
- D. We need to lovingly confront in a way that requires other to choose among the logical alternatives (**Joshua 24:14-15**).
- E. Remind people that one cannot affirm that there is one God, many gods and no god because two of these views must be false (**I Kings 18:21**).

Conclusion: Eventually, every church, and every Christian will encounter someone who is struggling with relativism. The fundamental question Jesus asked His followers was "Who do you say I am?" (**Matthew 16:15**). As C.S. Lewis said, our answer must be that Jesus was either a lunatic, a liar, or the Lord. If He is Lord, then He is indeed "the way and the truth and the life." It's time to seek the truth.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today: **Lesson #15– Religiously Mixed Marriages**

Introduction: I realize that it is rare to hear sermons on this type of an issue. However, it fits well with our theme on “*Challenges Facing The Church Today*.” We have more “religiously mixed marriages” in the church than ever before. Paul and Peter could relate to those working through a religiously mixed marriage (**I Corinthians 7:12-16, I Peter 3:1-12**). We are going to consider their words of wisdom. These are the seven “C’s” of religiously mixed marriages. Let’s study together...

Discussion:

I. Remember That You Are Chosen

God specifically called you and has a plan for you.

Deuteronomy 7:7-9, Jeremiah 29:11, Joshua 24:15, Matthew 20:15, 28:18-20, Acts 10:34-35, Romans 8:28-29, 39, II Corinthians 6:14, Galatians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4, Philippians 1:6

II. Maintain Good Communication

The #1 cause for divorce is poor communication.

Accept yourself (**Matthew 7:12**), Accept your spouse (**I John 4:18**), Listen (**Proverbs 18:13**)

III. Learn How To Handle Conflict

There is no way to prevent conflict (**Matthew 18:15-17, Proverbs 15:1**).

Be honest and speak the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15, 31-32**).

IV. Be Considerate of Your Spouse

Look for good in your spouse (**Matthew 7:3**)

Submit to your spouse (**Ephesians 5:21-33**)

Think about your actions, adornment, and attitude (**I Peter 3:1-12**)

Hang in there! (**I Corinthians 7:12-16**)

V. Take Care of the Children

If you give up your children will suffer (consider the stats).

Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:1-4, Colossians 3:18-21

VI. Lean on the Church

The church is a fellowship of broken people.

Galatians 6:1-2, John 13:34-35, I Thessalonians 5:11

VII. Hold Fast To Your Christianity

Know your strengths and your weaknesses.

Philippians 4:13, Romans 8:28-31, Matthew 28:20, I Peter 2:21-25

Conclusion: Remember that you are the sermon your spouse sees everyday. You can sanctify the marriage. You can save yourself, your spouse, and your children. Don’t ever give up! God forbid if the church ever turns away from on those who are struggling. We are ministers of reconciliation! Let’s get to work.

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Challenges Facing The Church Today: Lesson #16 – Trauma, Abuse & PTSD

Introduction: The church is full of broken and traumatized people. We are probably familiar with the words trauma and abuse, but what about PTSD? H. Norman Wright said, “Traumatized people have alterations in their brains. Trauma can create PTSD. This is not just an emotional response to troubling events; it’s the expression of a persistent deregulation of body and brain chemistry. And brain chemistry can be altered for decades. With this change arousing events can trigger flashbacks. Trauma creates chaos in our brain. Trauma causes an emotional as well as a cognitive concussion.” Abuse survivors need to seek ministry and counseling. What can we do? Let’s study together...

Discussion:

I. What Are Common Symptoms of PTSD?

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Avoidance
- Depression
- Exhaustion
- Fear
- Flashbacks
- Hopelessness
- Hypervigilance
- Insomnia
- Intrusive Thoughts
- Nightmares
- Numbness
- Reliving Painful Memories
- Sensitivity
- Shame
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Triggers
- Volatility
- Worry

II. What Are Some Effective Ways for Coping With PTSD?

Spiritual Methods:

- Accountability
- Prayer
- Meditation
- Studying the Bible

Balancing Methods:

- Breathing
- Grounding
- Stretching
- Thought Management

Distraction Methods:

- Going for a Walk
- Hobbies
- Movies or Music
- Reading a Book

Soothing Methods:

- Bath or Shower
- Healthy Eating or Drinking
- Rest (nap or blanket)
- Therapy

III. What Are Some Bible Verses To Help With Trauma, Abuse & PTSD?

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Deuteronomy 31:6 | • Acts 7:54-8:3 | • II Corinthians 6:4-18 |
| • Psalm 22-23 | • Acts 22:2 | • II Corinthians 11:23-33 |
| • Isaiah 40:31 | • Romans 8:18-23, 38-39 | • Philippians 3:17, 21 |
| • Isaiah 41:10 | • Romans 10:2 | • Philippians 4:8-9, 12-19 |
| • Matthew 5:9 | • Romans 12:1-2 | • I Timothy 1:13 |
| • Matthew 28:20 | • I Corinthians 3:16 | • Hebrews 4:12 |
| • John 3:8, 16 | • II Corinthians 1:8-11, 20 | • Hebrews 13:5 |
| • John 14:6, 16, 26-27 | • II Corinthians 4:7-12, 16 | • I Peter 5:6-7 |

Conclusion: The church should also learn how to handle: Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Spiritual Abuse. We cannot turn a blind eye to justice (**Matthew 5:9, James 1:27**).

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Challenges Facing The Church Today:

Lesson #17 – World Religions

Introduction: We often realize that we are in the minority as Christians. We are surrounded by hundreds of different world religions. In fact, it seems that new cult movements are springing up all over the planet. I thought it would serve us well to study some of the major religions of the world. How do we proceed? How do we start? Well, I think we need to question how we got here. How did we come to have so many religions in the world? There are about twelve characteristics of primitive religion that have their origins soon after Creation. Let's study them...

Discussion:

I. The Twelve Characteristics of Primitive Religion

- Reverence
- Ritual
- Myths
- Fetishes
- Shamans
- Divination
- Prayer
- Animism
- Taboo
- Sacrifice
- Fatality
- Wisdom

II. Observations About World Religions

Which religions are monotheistic?

Which religions are prominent in the East? The West?

What world religion interests you the most? Which one scares you the most?

Conclusion: Where do we go from here? The best way to move forward is for us to look at these religions chronologically. We should study Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shintoism, African religions, Judaism and Islam. We need to learn how to have dialogue with these religious people. When Paul encountered different religions he met the people on common ground (**Acts 17:30**). God has brought all religions to the cross (John 3:16). God has made Jesus both "Lord and Christ" (**Acts 2:36**). Therefore, we are commanded to "repent and be baptized" for the remission of our sins (**Acts 2:38**). It is at that point, after being buried in baptism and dying to the life of sin, that we are given a new life in Christ (**Romans 6:3-4**). Is your faith deeply rooted in Christ?

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