

Living Soberly, Righteously and Godly

Presented by Bob Dickey
February 24 - March 1, 2002



Palm Springs Drive Church of Christ
600 Palm Springs Drive
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
831-3230

Living Soberly, Righteously and Godly

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Sunday class: Is there an absolute standard of morality?

Sunday a.m.: Principles of moral decision-making.

Sunday p.m.: Living in perilous times.

Monday: Remembering God while young.

Tuesday: Will God continue to bless America?

Wednesday: The call to commitment.

Thursday: Building Christian homes in an immoral world.

Friday: The sin of man playing God. (Including discussion on moral aspects of medical and scientific technology.)

IS THERE AN ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY?

I. INTRODUCTION

We are living in a morally mixed-up world! It is not always easy to know what is right and wrong. Worldly voices call to us from every hand. Satan is subtly seducing in ever increasing waves of lust and temptation. We are pulled in too many directions. Only Christ and His Word, and God's absolute moral standard can keep us off the road of sin and perdition. Only with the help of the Lord can we stay safely on the road to heaven.

When God tells us something is morally wrong, it is wrong no matter what the courts say, or what our culture believes, or what everybody else practices. When God says something is morally required, then it must be done -- no matter how we personally feel about it or how much some might disagree with that Bible teaching. Why? Because **the power and authority of our God is absolute**; and that authority is expressed in His Word. When we reject God's authority, and the curbs that keep morality in check are pushed aside, then each person becomes his own authority.

II. THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY!

A. **One of the clearest Biblical statements of that absolute standard of authority is the text of our lesson: Titus 2:11-12.**

B. **In this grand text, we can view the THREE TENSES OF THE GOSPEL:**

1. THE PAST...(verse 11) *"The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all"*
2. THE PRESENT...(verse 12) *"...instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world"*
3. THE FUTURE...(verse 13) *"...looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"*
4. There is nothing we can do about the past, but how we are living in the present, will be the determining factor of our future!

C. **The gospel standard of God's grace teaches us how we must live:**

1. The conditional nature of salvation by grace is clearly stated in this text.
 - a. This is understood by the language: *"instructing (teaching) us"* (verse 12).
 - b. If salvation were by *"grace only,"* no instruction or teaching would be necessary.
 - c. There would be no question of *"what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness...?"* (2 Pet. 3:11), if God's grace was not Conditional.
2. **GOD'S GRACE TEACHES US TO SAY "NO"...**
 - a. Like the familiar slogan, "Just say 2qo" from the recent campaign against drug abuse, the standard of God's grace in the gospel teaches us to say "no"...

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- 1) We are taught to say "No" to "*ungodliness*" (vs. 12).
 - a) Paul says that the gospel's intent is to teach us to deny ungodliness.
 - b) "Ungodliness" is from a Greek word that means impiety, ungodly deeds, and desires after evil things (Vine).
 - c) It involves an atheistic disregard for the person of God--His holiness, greatness and majesty; it describes actions which reflect no reverence to Him (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Tim. 2:16; Jude 4, 14-16).
 - 2) We are taught to say "No" to "*worldly lusts*" (vs. 12).
 - a) Again, the gospel's intent is to teach us to deny worldly lusts.
 - b) These are lusts that are "pertaining to this world" (Vine).
 - c) Consider the teaching of 1 Cor. 10:6-11; Gal. 5:24; and 1 Jn. 2:15-17.
 - b. Only when we say "No" to "*ungodliness and worldly lusts*" will we be truly living by the absolute moral standard of God.
3. **GOD'S GRACE TEACHES US TO SAY "YES"...**
- a. As surely as we must say "No" to some things, we are also taught to say "Yes"...
 - 1) We are taught to say "Yes" to living "*soberly*" (vs. 12).
 - a) The Greek word here might be translated "sensibly."
 - b) Vine says, "it suggests the exercise of that self-restraint that governs all passions and desires, enabling the believer to be conformed to...Christ".
 - c) The grace of God teaches us to practice self-control (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8, 2:6; 1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Pet. 1:6).
 - 2) We are taught to say "Yes" to living "*righteously*" (vs. 12).
 - a) This Greek word means "just, without prejudice or partiality" (Vine).
 - b) It manifests a life that is patterned after the righteousness of God.
 - c) Consider the teaching of Rom. 1:17, 6:13, 16, 18-19; 12:1-2.
 - 3) We are taught to say, "Yes" to living "*godly*" (vs. 12).
 - a) Of this Greek word, Vine says, "denotes piously, godly".
 - b) It is suggestive of one who is reverent toward God in his manner of life.
 - c) Consider the teaching of 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:6.
 - b. Only when we say, "Yes" to this sober, righteous, and godly way of living, will we be truly abiding by the absolute moral standard of God.
 - c. Someone has suggested that the gospel grace of God teaches us to live in relation to three different realms or worlds:

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- 1.) THE WORLD WITHIN US---"*Soberly*"
- 2.) THE WORLD AROUND US---"*Righteously*"
- 3.) THE WORLD ABOVE US---"*Godly*"

III. CONCLUSION

A. **Remember the three gospel tenses!**

1. We know what has happened in the past -- what God has done in bringing grace and Salvation to all who believe and obey His Son.
2. We know what God expects of us in the present -- because we are instructed by this gospel of His grace how we should live.
3. We know what awaits us in the future -- because we have the glorious hope of our Savior's appearing someday.

B. **Paul said, '...let God be found true, but every man a liar...' (Rom. 3:4).**

1. What that means is "GOD IS ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY!"
2. Are you allowing Him to be that in your life?

PRINCIPLES OF MORAL DECISION MAKING

I. INTRODUCTION

A. **Illustration:** "Some Dieting Rules for Cheaters"

1. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could change all the rules about calories and the harmful foods that affect our bodies?
2. Unfortunately, what we eat has consequences.

B. **In the same way, we may wish at times, that we could change all the rules about sin and the effect it has upon our lives.**

1. But how we live has consequences--both in this life and in eternity.
2. That is why it is so important that we make proper moral decisions.
3. May God help us to realize the effect that our decisions will have on our future!
4. *"Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap..."* (Gal. 6:7-8).

C. **Every day we are faced with making choices and decisions.**

1. While many of those choices and decisions may be simple or seem insignificant...
2. Others are important and far-reaching.
 - a. Some of those choices and decisions we make will affect us the rest of our lives.
 - b. Some of those choices and decisions will affect us forever--throughout eternity!

D. **Let me remind you of TWO BIBLE EXAMPLES -- Both made a decision that would affect the course of their lives.**

1. THE CASE OF LOT -- IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS,..
 - a. *"Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east...and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom"* (Gen. 13:11 - 13).
 - b. Consider some of the consequences of that decision.
 - 1) Lot and his family ended up dwelling in a terrible place of wickedness.
 - 2) The visit of the angel messengers brought out the evil men of the city.
 - 3) Not even ten righteous souls could be found to spare the city God's destruction.
 - 4) Before the cities were destroyed, Lot and his family had to be led out to safety.
 - 5) In spite of being warned, Lot's wife looked back, and was lost to her family.
 - 6) In desperation, Lot's daughters got him drunk to bear children by their father.
2. THE CASE OF MOSES -- AS REVIEWED IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS...

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- a. *By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season... "(Heb. 11:24-25).*
- b. Do you see the consequence of that noble decision?
 - 1) *"...for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 12:26).*
 - 2) What that means is: HE CARED ABOUT THE OUTCOME!

II. CONSIDER FIVE QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP US THINK ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECISIONS WE MAKE...

A. There are many ways we might consider Bible teaching about our moral decision-making.

B. Allow me to suggest five questions that can help us understand important principles in making moral decisions; all of these subjects are reflected in I Corinthians 10...

1. WILL MY CHOICE/DECISION BE GOOD FOR MY LORD?

- a. Note the text of 1 Cor. 10 and consider the lesson from the Israelites of old:
 - 1) 1 Cor. 10:5---"*...with most of them God was not well pleased.*"
 - 2) Verse 6---"*we should not lust after evil things*"
 - 3) Verse 11---"*by way of example..., written for our admonition*"
- b. What were their evil decisions and sins against the Lord?
 - 1) They lusted after evil things---vs. 6.
 - 2) They Were idolaters---vs. 7.
 - 3) They committed fornication---vs. 8.
 - 4) They made trial of the Lord---vs. 9.
 - 5) They also murmured---vs. 10.
- c. And look at the consequence of their evil decisions: "they were overthrown"---vs. 5.
- d. WHO WILL YOU LISTEN TO...WHOM WILL YOU SEEK TO PLEASE?
 - 1) YOURSELF?
 - a) Like the Israelites, we think about what we want--what we feel--what we desire, and self becomes the focus of our choices and decisions.
 - b) Self cannot be the focus if we want to please God (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12).
 - 2) OTHERS?
 - a) Like some of the Israelites, we allow **others** to influence us, and very often we desire to please them.
 - b) Pleasing others will not allow us to please the Lord (vs. 9; cf. Gal. 1:10).

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3.) THE LORD?

- a) Do we consider Him; do we consult Him and His Word; do we desire to please Him in all that we decide and do?
- b) A spiritual sacrifice is what will please the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2).
- c) Rom. 8: 8 --- "... and they that are in the flesh cannot please God."
- d) 1 Jn. 3:22---"...we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight."
- e) Prov. 16:7---"When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

2. WILL MY CHOICE/DECISION BE GOOD FOR MYSELF?

- a. Note once again the text of 1 Cor. 10 and Paul's help of the Corinthians:
 - 1) 1 Cor. 10:23---"*...not all things are expedient...not all things edify.*"
 - 2) This reminds me not all things are good for me; not all things will build me up.
- b. God is concerned about my improvement; He is involved in my betterment.
- c. So I must constant weigh my decisions and ask myself..
 - 1) Will my choice or decision improve me; will it make me better?
 - 2) Will I be sowing to the flesh, or to the spirit (Gal. 6:7-8)?
 - 3) Will I be happy with the fruits (consequence) of my choice or decision?
 - 4) Will this bring desirable results or enslave me to some sin (1 Cor 6:12)?
 - 5) Will this help to keep me in the faith of Christ (2 Cor. 13:5)?
 - 6) Will this help me keep myself for Him, or will it make me a reject (1 Cor.9:27)?
- d. The Lord wants me to make decisions that will be expedient for me, that will edify me, and that will encourage my spiritual growth and development.

3. WILL MY CHOICE/DECISION BE GOOD FOR MY NEIGHBOR?

- a. Note the text of 1 Cor. 10 again:
 - 1) 1 Cor. 10:24,--"*Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good.*"
 - 2) 1 Cor. 10:32---"*Give no occasion of stumbling...*"
 - 3) 1 Cor. 10:33---"*...even as I also please all men in ail things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.*"
- b. We say and think things that Paul would never say or think:

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- 1) We say, "I couldn't care less about them..."--(Paul would never say that!).
 - 2) We say, "I don't care about them--why should I?"--(Paul didn't think that way!).
 - 3) We say, "I've got to think of myself..."---(Paul said, "I'm thinking of them.").
- c. It does matter what you say and think about others; your decisions affect them!
- 1) What do your choices and decisions tell them?
 - 2) Illustration: "I wanted to see if you would."

4. **WILL MY CHOICE/DECISION BE GOOD FOR MY CONSCIENCE?**

- a. Note a statement from the text of 1 Cor. again:
- 1) 1 Cor. 10:28-30---"...for conscience sake...".
 - 2) Paul is teaching about the importance of the conscience.
 - a) We must not violate the conscience of another, causing him to stumble.
 - b) And I should not be forced to violate mine (note vs. 29-30).
 - 3) Paul has much to say about how we can maintain a good conscience:
 - a) We must decide to keep it pure and undefiled (1 Cor. 6: 8:7-10).
 - b) We must keep it from enslaving influences (1 Cor. 6:12).
 - c) We must keep it strong and controlled (1 Cor. 9:27).
- b. Are you controlled by your decisions, or are you self-controlled?
- 1) Think about your job, hobbies, leisure activities, friends, habits
 - 2) Are you a slave to your habits--addicted to choices you have made?
 - 3) Ask yourself: "Will this choice/decision Control me; will I regret it later?"

5. **WILL MY CHOICE/DECISION BE GOOD FOR MY GOD'S GLORY?**

- a. Note the text of 1 Cor. 10 one final time:
- 1) 1 Cor. 10:31---"*...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"
 - 2) We must always consider if our choice/decision will glorify God.
- b. The opposite of **glory** is **shame** (We glorify God or we cause shame).
- 1) Consider an example from Proverbs about children and their parents:
 - a) Read Proverbs 10:1; 17:25; and 19:26.
 - b) If the rebellious, disobedient child brings shame and reproach to this earthly parents...
 - c) Does it not follow that rebellious and disobedient children of God can either be a reproach (making Him ashamed of us) or give Him glory?

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- 2) We must always weigh our decisions by asking, "Will it give God glory?"

III. CONCLUSION

- A. We make choices and decisions everyday.**
- B. But will my choices be good for God, myself, my neighbor, my conscience, His glory?**
- C. There is a choice or decision that will always glorify God... --It is the decision to obey Jesus!**

LIVING IN PERILOUS TIMES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Consider two passages with seemingly no connection between them:

1. The first one we will read is Matthew 5:13-16.
2. The second one, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 is the main text for our study in this lesson.

B. **2 Tim. 3:1---***"But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come"*

1. The KJV renders the passage "*perilous times*"---that is the reason for our lesson title.
2. This is a general warning, to all of every generation; but as you will see, it seems very applicable to our times.

C. What can we say about these perilous or grievous times?

1. They are DIFFICULT TIMES...
 - a. These are times that make us feel spiritually very uneasy.
 - b. There are many temptations and stumbling blocks for us all.
2. They are DEPRAVED TIMES...
 - a. We are not born in depravity, but we are surrounded by moral depravity.
 - b. Crimes and sins like murder, rape, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and unnatural affection abound.
 - c. We live in a time when our nation sanctions killing of babies as a means to practice birth control.
3. They are DECEIVED TIMES...
 - a. We live in a time when men are taught many untrue things.
 - b. It is a time when religion is used to dupe and deceive the people.
4. They are DANGEROUS TIMES...
 - a. In these times men seem to move from bad to worse.
 - b. There is today a proliferation of sin ("*evil men...wax worse and worse*"--vs. 13).
 - c. It is a dangerous time because there is little or no sensitivity to truth.

II. THE GRIEVOUS SINS CHARACTERISTIC OF THESE PERILOUS TIMES

A. These are the sins of our own day!

B. The terrible thing is, we seem to be gradually accepting them!

C. Consider briefly these 18 vices that mark the perilous "last days" (vs. 1)...

1. "*lovers of self*"
 - a. This describes those who seek their own interests, profit, and enjoyment.
 - b. No doubt, it is mentioned first because it lies at the root of all sin.
2. "*lovers of money*" (covetous)
 - a. Thayer: "loving money; avaricious...improperly desirous of gain"
 - b. We are told it is "*a root of all kinds of evil...*" (1 Tim. 6:10).

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3. **"boastful"**
 - a. This word comes from the Greek "peddler man" with items "of no value".
 - b. So many today are full of big words, uplifted in pride, and loud in their own praise.
4. **"haughty"** (proud)
 - a. This refers to the high-minded and arrogant.
 - b. It describes those who contemptuously "look down" on others "beneath them."
5. **"railers"** (blasphemers)
 - a. "Speaking evil, slanderous, abusive, reproachful" (Thayer)
 - b. Meaning far more than commonly thought, it describes how we speak of/to others.
6. **"disobedient to parents"**
 - a. This rejection of the authority of parents is so commonplace today.
 - b. Yet no character was more condemned by God under the Law of Moses.
7. **"unthankful"**
 - a. This is defined as showing ingratitude or failing to express gratitude.
 - b. So often this is the case with many of us as we fail to express our thanks.
8. **"unholy"**
 - a. This is a general term for any form of unrighteousness.
 - b. Many do not regard anything as holy, treating them as common or profane.
9. **"without natural affection"**
 - a. Used especially of parents and children, it is the opposite of "love of kindred".
 - b. We see it today in abortion, child abuse, and disrespect/disobedience to parents.
10. **"implacable"** (truce breakers)
 - a. This would include promise breakers, not depended on to keep their word.
 - b. Also, the irreconcilable, who cannot be persuaded to enter into an agreement.
11. **"slanderers"** (false accusers)
 - a. This describes those who spread false tales or rumors about another.
 - b. These bring accusations maliciously intended to damage or harm another.
12. **"without self-control"** (incontinent)
 - a. These words describe one with inability or desire to control the natural appetites.
 - b. So many are intemperate today--unwilling to bring themselves under control.
13. **"fierce"** (savage)
 - a. This is defined as one full of hatred, brutal and savage in their treatment of others.

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- b. It describes a brutal or vicious attitude towards others considered in opposition.
- 14. **"no lovers of good"** (despisers of those that are good)
 - a. This is someone who loves neither good men nor good things.
 - b. These despise and belittle anything that is good or wholesome.
- 15. **"traitors"**
 - a. These are ready to betray any person or trust committed to their keeping.
 - b. Always regarded as a crime, treason toward man and God is common today.
- 16. **"headstrong"** (heady)
 - a. This describes someone who is obstinate, willful, or ungovernable.
 - b. Many seem stubbornly bent on pursuing their own plans and accomplishments.
- 17. **"puffed-up"** (high-minded)
 - a. Another word for proud, it describes someone full of self, blinded by pride.
 - b. Note the idea is found both at the beginning and near the end of this list.
- 18. **"lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"**
 - a. These words describe those more ready to follow sensual pleasures than God.
 - b. In our pleasure mad world, it describes most people--intent on pleasing themselves.

III. CONCLUSION

A. **After considering this sordid list, we might be prone to congratulate ourselves, after all, we are so much better than all these thus described.**

- 1. But listen to one more warning: **"holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof..."** (v. 5).
 - a. "form" = outward appearance (an empty shell)
 - b. "power thereof" = the heart is true and right
- 2. We are in the right place today...but could it reflect just a "form of godliness?"
- 3. Are we denying the "power thereof" by our stubborn, selfish hardness of heart?
- 4. If so, I hope these words will serve as a warning to bring us back to the Lord!

B. **Do you remember how we started with two passages: (Mt. 5:13-16 and the text of 2 Tim. 3:1-5); now note a passage that connects both of them together...**

- 1. Phil. 2:14-16
 - a. We are in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
 - b. But we can still be lights in the darkness of this world.
- 2. You matter---because you are light and salt; you are standing for God!

C. **If you are not a Christian...**

- 1. We are trying to let our light shine; we would share the light of the Lord.
 - a. We are not perfect--we are not the light; we are just trying to reflect Jesus.
 - b. Can you see Him? Can you hear Him? Can you hear Him calling?
- 2. If so, we hope you will answer His call; we hope you will come to the light!

REMEMBERING GOD WHILE YOUNG

I. INTRODUCTION

A. **Illustration: "The Land of Beginning Again"**

B. **Wouldn't it be wonderful to be young again?**

1. What Harry Pickup, Jr. said about that prospect.
2. The "days of our youth" are not always happy and easy days.
3. That is why we must "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*" (Eccl. 12:1).

C. **If I had the opportunity to be young again, there would be some things that I would choose to do just the same.**

1. I would choose to belong to the same wonderful family and grow up just as I did.
2. I would still be crazy about Charlotte, would fall in love and marry her again.
3. I would still obey the gospel and would want to remember God while I was young.
4. I would still want to preach the gospel; I would just want to get started sooner.

D. **In light of where you are now, young people, are there some things you would like to change or do differently?**

E. **Remembering God while we are young entails several important things.**

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REMEMBER GOD IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH?

A. **IT MEANS I WILL OBEY AND HONOR MY PARENTS**

1. I know I did that for the most part, but I would like to go back and do even better.
 - a. My parents and my family mean so much more to me today than when I was young.
 - b. My Dad is gone now, and I don't get to see my Mother that often.
 - c. If I could go back, I would want to sit with them at every service of the saints.
 - d. There are things I would like to ask my father; I would like to tell him some things.
 - e. I would cherish every precious moment I could be with them.
2. Remembering God means I would love, obey, and honor my parents (Eph. 6:1-3).
 - a. Why is it that this is so difficult for young people to obey today?
 - b. Why is our time so much like the perilous last days of 2 Tim. 3:1-5, where so many young people are "*disobedient to parents*" (verse 2)?
3. It may be very difficult to do at times, young people, but you must do it!
4. Believe me; you will not regret it later on in life when you are older.

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B. IT MEANS I WILL TRY TO BE A GOOD EXAMPLE TO OTHERS

1. I certainly tried to do that during my High School and College years, but I know I could have been much stronger.
2. An example is something you are always going to be!
 - a. You know, there are some things you can be if you try hard enough.
 - b. And there are some things you can't be; no matter how hard you try.
 - c. But one thing you will always be, whether you try or not, is AN EXAMPLE!
3. Paul encourages young people, like Timothy, to be a proper example (1 Tim. 4:2).
 - a. He tells the young preacher: "*Let no man despise thy youth.*"
 - b. In order to accomplish that, you must be "*an example of (to) the believers*"...
 - 1) IN CONVERSATION--- "*in word*"
 - 2) IN CONDUCT--- "*in manner of life*" (KJV-conversation)
 - 3) IN CHARITY--- "*in love*"
 - 4) IN CONVICTION--- "*in faith*"
 - 5) IN CONSECRATION--- "*in purity*"

C. IT MEANS I WILL RESIST YOUTHFUL AND WORLDLY LUSTS

1. As a young person, the world is trying to conform you to its way of life...
 - a. It is trying to lure you away from everything that is pure and holy.
 - b. It is doing everything it can to ensnare you in its web of deceit.
 - c. It is trying to weaken and destroy your spiritual defenses.
 - d. It is trying to teach you that to be "smart" and sophisticated, you need not trouble yourself to be respectful and polite.
 - e. It is trying to bedazzle you and seduce you with a view of its many sordid pleasures and treasures.
2. But the Bible has a message that can help you resist and remain pure.
 - a. In the letters to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:22 and 1 Tim. 6:11-12), we find "**THE 3 Fs**":
 - 1) **FLEE**-- "*But flee youthful lusts*" (2 Tim. 2:22); "flee these things" (1 Tim. 6:11).
 - 2) **FOLLOW**--- "*follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (2 Tim. 2:22); "*follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*" (1 Tim. 6:11).
 - 3.) **FIGHT**--- "*Fight the good fight of the faith*" (1 Tim. 6:12).
3. This is the time of your life when you must learn to resist impulses and evil desires, developing self-mastery (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:27).

D. IT MEANS I WILL PLACE THE LORD FIRST IN MY LIFE

1. Illustration: "I'm Third!"
2. Jesus teaches us God, His kingdom, and His righteousness should be first (Matt. 6:33).

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3. That is exactly what we will do when we "Remember now thy Creator... "(Eccl. 12:1).
4. Some think that God just wants to take away our youthful joys and happiness.
 - a. But nothing could be further from the truth.
 - b. In the last of Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives young people "**THE 3 R's**":
 - 1) **REJOICE**---"*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth*" (Eccl. 11:9).
 - a) Be happy and rejoice that you are still young.
 - b) "*let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth*"
 - c) "*walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thy eyes*"-- (follow dreams)
 - d) "*but know...that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*"
 - 2) **REMOVE**---"*Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart*" (Eccl. 11:10).
 - a) Youth is not the time to have sorrow and vexation in your heart.
 - b) "*and put away evil from thy flesh*"--stay cleansed of all that would defile.
 - c) Why? "*for youth and the dawn of life are vanity*"--youth will not last.
 - 3) **REMEMBER**--- "*Remember now thy creator...*" (Eccl. 12:1).
 - a) Remembering God while you are young will help set your feet on the proper pathway of life.
 - b) "*before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh*" -- harder days ahead
 - c) "*when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*" --now is an easier time.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Young people: Remember who you are, what you are doing, where you are going!
- B. Illustration: Young hitchhiker with sign: "Anywhere"
- C. Acts 2:40---"*Save yourselves from this untoward (going nowhere) generation*"
- D. Illustration: "Yesterday, When I Was Young"
- E. If you have not yet obeyed Jesus, now is a wonderful time to do so--while you are still young!

WILL GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA?

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration: "That priceless family vase"

B. Things that have been priceless and dear are being broken by this generation.

1. America today is crying for a way out of all of the crime, social unrest, economic turmoil, political malfeasance, and gross immorality that has left our nation weak, broken, and utterly bewildered.
2. In our present materialistic society, it seems that everyone measures success by the number of his possessions.
3. Evolutionary thought is taught as fact in our public schools, while prayer and Bible study is outlawed.
4. Marriage and the sanctity of the home are devalued; divorce and abuse is rampant.
5. Abortion has taken the life of more children in the womb than all the soldiers killed in all of the American wars combined.
6. Sexual diseases and the AIDS epidemic reflect a society that is sold on a hedonistic lifestyle; homosexuality is not only "out of the closet," it is defended and paraded before a watching world.
7. Our children are taught, "values clarification," situation ethics, political correctness, and that "tolerance" is a higher virtue than truth.
8. Our age reflects an attitude of disrespect for authority, greed, pride, self-indulgence, and dishonesty that is unparalleled in our nation's history.
9. Most of our religious bodies have cut themselves off from the authoritative nature of the Bible; relativism reigns; division is not only accepted, it is applauded.
10. Even in the Lord's church there is a lack of a clear word in many pulpits, as preachers move away from plain, sin-condemning speech to a language of fluff and verbosity.

C. In Proverbs 14:34, the writer of wisdom reminds us, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.*"

1. We hear the ring of truth in these words, but our danger is always that we will accept the statement--pay lip service to it--without applying its truth to our own nation.
2. So, we must ask ourselves, "WILL GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA?"
 - a. We ask and pray for that constantly, and sing "God Bless America."
 - b. In the past, God has blessed our nation and us abundantly.
 - c. But this is a question we must ask again in the light of our own day... Will the Lord continue to bless America?
 - d. It is a question that needs an answer, because of the statement of our text.

II. HOW CAN WE ANSWER THE QUESTION: "WILL GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA?"

- A. First, we must recognize the truth that "righteousness exalts a nation."

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1. WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS? The answer is found in Psalm 119:172.
2. The NATION OF ISRAEL illustrates the truth of Proverbs 14:34.
 - a. In Deut. 28, blessings were pronounced and promised if Israel was righteous.
 - b. Joshua records how Israel served and obeyed God, even a generation beyond Joshua's day; because of this they were blessed and protected.
 - c. in their later history we see the downward trend in Israel as the nation disobeyed God; but during the few times of reformation, there followed God's exaltation.
3. The history of OTHER NATIONS reminds us of the truth of Proverbs 14:34.
 - a. In Genesis 19, God promised to preserve Sodom and Gomorrah if only ten righteous ones could be found.
 - b. In the story of Jonah, chapter 3, the city of Nineveh was preserved because the people repented at the warnings of the prophet.
4. In all of these examples, God is showing, as well as telling, us "*Righteousness exalts.*"

B. Secondly, we must recognize the truth that "*sin is a reproach.*"

1. From the very beginning God had punished THOSE WHO WERE A REPROACH.
 - a. In Noah's day, the "*wickedness of man was great...thoughts of his heart were only evil continually*" (Gen. 6:5), when God sent the flood to wash the earth clean.
 - b. When the iniquity of the Amorite was full, God destroyed their hold on Canaan, giving their land to His covenant people (Gen. 15:16).
 - c. Sodom and Gomorrah became so corrupt that they were destroyed (Gen. 18, 19).
2. The NATION OF ISRAEL shows the truth of this principle of punishment for sin.
 - a. God told the nation they would be cursed if they failed to obey Him; they would be punished and driven out of their land (Deut. 28:15, 10-24).
 - b. In spite of His warnings, the people were to practice the very things God had punished the heathen nations for, and the "*land would vomit them out*" (Lev. 18:24-30).
 - 1) "*The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it...They have...corrupted themselves...He will visit their sins.*" (Hos. 9:7-9.)
 - 2) Jeremiah shows how Judah became so corrupt that they would suffer the same fate as the Northern Kingdom; Josiah's reformation was their last hope--when he died, the nation fell.
3. In the same way, OTHER NATIONS suffered the Lord's righteous retribution.
 - a. God would use wicked Assyria against Israel, and then punish Assyria (Isa. 10:5ff).
 - b. God would use wicked Babylon against Judah, and then deal a deathblow to Babylon (Hab.1:6; 2:8).

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- c. Though a remnant would be restored, Jerusalem and the Jewish state would suffer for their rejection of God and His Savior; they would be taken by Rome (Matt. 24).
- d. The same end would eventually come to Rome (Rev. 17-19).

C. Now, we must recognize that this just truth applies to our own nation.

1. The text says it applies to "*any people.*"
2. Some think and say: "We are too great!" or "There is no nation as mighty as America!"
 - a. They say, "We are God's chosen nation." or "It would not be fair."
 - b. They say, "We have been so blessed and protected before, surely it will continue."
3. In his book, the famous historian, Gibbon, attributed the fall of ancient Rome to five failures in that civilization; compare them to what is happening in America:
 - a. The rapid increase of divorce with the undermining of the sanctity of the home, which is the basis of society.
 - b. Higher and higher taxes, spending money for free bread (welfare state).
 - c. The mad craze for pleasure and sports (becoming more and more brutal).
 - d. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within (decadence).
 - e. The decay of religion; faith fading into mere form.
4. The course our beloved American is taking has not gone without note:
 - a. One writer has written: "America, like ancient Greece and Rome, is following the primrose path of pleasure, luxury and vice of national ruin."
 - b. Another has said: "America is losing a terrible war. The war we are losing is one which if finally lost, will destroy us as surely as if we should suffer defeat on any or all of our far-flung battlefields...".
 - c. Still another warns: "For the first time in our national experience, a generation is arising which has no God and feels no need of one. We have never been so spiritually illiterate as a nation as at this moment...".
 - d. Illustration: "The paradox of our time in history"

D. The answer to the question, "Will God Continue to Bless America?" depends on what we believe and how we live in the days to come.

1. We must **REALIZE** WE ARE BUT MEN-NOT ABLE TO GUIDE OURSELVES.
 - a. David called for God's action to help men know their place: "*Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail; let the nations be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.*" (Psalm 9:19-20).
 - b. "*O Jehovah, / know that the way of man is not in himself, ' it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*" (Jer. 10:23).
2. We must **RECEIVE** GOD'S TEACHING AND CORRECTION.

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- a. Jeremiah's words of long ago ring in our ears today: *"This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth."* (Jer. 7:28; cf. 5:3).
- b. We must receive God and His teaching, or we will receive the spirit of the world and its coming condemnation (Eph. 2:2-3).
 - 1) Speaking of that worldly spirit, John reveals: *"For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness (luxury)".* (Rev. 18:3).
 - 2) Then John heard the voice from heaven calling: *"Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."* (Rev. 18:4-5).
3. We must **REMEMBER** GOD AND SERVE HIM FAITHFULLY.
 - a. David warned: *"The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made; in the net which they hid, their own foot is caught. The Lord is known by the judgment He executes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."* (Psalm 9:15-17).
 - b. Nehemiah urged his people to faithfulness with the words: *"Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible..."* (Neh. 4:14).
4. We must **RETURN** TO THE OLD PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.
 - a. Our plea to America today must be the same as the prophets of old: *"Return ye now every one from his evil way..."* (Jer. 25:4-5).
 - b. With Jeremiah we say: *"Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest..."* (Jer. 6:16).

III. **CONCLUSION**

A. **Let each one of us determine to do our part to love and abide in the Lord.**

1. "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering... but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no man can tell how suddenly a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all of our glory in profound obscurity." (Daniel Webster)
2. May we say with Joshua of old, *"...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15).

B. **And, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do" (Psalm 11:3)?**

1. We can guard against becoming jaded and cynical.
2. We can be salt and a light to the world around us (Matt. 5:13-16).

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3. As strangers and pilgrims on this earth, we can plan and work for heaven: ***"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own...now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."*** (Heb. 11:13-16).
4. Do you have that city as your hope?

THE CALL TO COMMITMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

A. When we speak about **COMMITMENT TO CHRIST**, no one word conveys that idea more fully than "**DISCIPLESHIP**"...

1. While this word does not occur in the New Testament, the word "disciple" is found over 200 times.
2. The root meaning of "disciple" is: "a learner"--but on consideration, it certainly conveys a great deal more than that.
 - a. Example: Writings of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church
 - b. Vine: "a disciple was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence, they are spoken of as being imitators of their master."
 - c. So, in order to be a true disciple of Jesus, we must make Him our Master and adhere to His teachings.

B. We will not present our own ideas, nor the thoughts of men about commitment; but we will hear the call of Jesus to commitment in His own words.

II. THE CALL OF JESUS TO DISCIPLESHIP AND COMMITMENT DEMANDS...

A. A KNOWLEDGE OF AND OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD

1. John 8:31-32---Note the order: abide / disciples / know truth / make you free
2. Illustration: RCA advertisement--"His Master's Voice"
 - a. The same kind of thing characterizes our relationship to Jesus.
 - b. We should be listening to His voice, ready to respond to His direction.
3. The apostles were sent to "*make disciples*" (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16).
 - a. As the New Testament story unfolds, we can see this work beginning:
 - 1) Acts 2:38ff---Peter made disciples; Lord added them (2:47).
 - 2) Acts 8:12-13---Philip made disciples.
 - 3) Acts 8:27ff---Eunuch becomes a disciple.
 - 4) Acts 10:47-48---From among the Gentiles, disciples are made.
 - 5) Acts 11:26---The disciples are called "Christians."
 - b. Therefore, a disciple and a Christian are the same thing.
 - c. If a man wants to be a disciple of Christ, he will have to be a Christian (of Christ)!
4. Ephesians 4:20-24--- "*ye did not so learn Christ... were taught in Him*"

B. BEARING FRUIT FOR THE LORD

1. John 15:5-8---Fruit bearing a requirement of discipleship; a demand of commitment.
 - a. In order to bear fruit, we must first "*abide*" in Christ.
 - b. We sing, "Abide With Me...", but we must also abide in Him!
2. While this involves much, it surely involves our efforts to teach and save lost souls.
 - a. It is what the apostles saw as their work; it is what the early Christians did.

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- b. If we never try to teach another or set the right example before them, it is a serious indictment; it is a failure to be a true disciple--a failure to full commitment.
3. Of course, there are other aspects of fruit bearing.
 - a. What is internal must be seen externally: Matt. 7:16, 20--"*by their fruits...*"
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit is an indication of true discipleship; it is the mark of a fully committed life--Galatians 5:22-23.

C. LOVE FOR EACH OTHER

1. John 13:34-35---Brotherly love is a badge of discipleship!
 - a. This love is defined as "active goodwill."
 - b. In our relationship with one another, it is something that has to be expressed.
 - c. It is not just something we say or pay lip service to (1 Jn. 3:18).
2. 1 Peter 1:22---Note these important aspects of brotherly love:
 - a. It is not to be a feigned or pretended love.
 - b. It is a love "*of the brethren*"... "*for one another*."
 - c. It is a love that comes from a pure and clean heart (it is "heartfelt").
 - d. It is to be a love that is fervent (boiling or zealous).
3. The time may come when we disagree, or stress and strain will figure in this matter.
 - a. But love must prevail if we would be a true disciple of Jesus.
 - b. When we fail in love, we are falling our calling and commitment to the Lord.

D. AN EXACTING AND COSTLY DECISION

1. Luke 14:25-33---Christ tells us to "count the cost."
 - a. It is generally true; anything worthwhile in this life will cost us something.
 - b. Consider how the Lord makes plain the cost of discipleship:
 - 1) HATE FAMILY--- verse 26
 - a) Vine: "of relative preference of one thing over another, by way of expressing either aversion from or disregard for the claims of one person or thing relative to those of another."
 - b) Simply put, we must love them less than the Lord!
 - c) If we cannot/will not do that, we cannot be His disciple!
 - 2) HATE OWN LIFE ALSO--- verse 26
 - a) This is a commitment causing some to actually lose their lives: Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:6, etc.
 - b) You cannot love your life more than you love Jesus!
 - c) When you do love Him more, it will mean more love for self and others.

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- 3) BEAR HIS OWN CROSS...COME AFTER ME---verse 27
 - a) Bearing our own cross is symbolic of a dedicated way of life.
 - b) A voluntary thing, it is a willingness to sacrifice self, and it begins at the point of self-denial (Matt. 16:24).
 - c) Sometimes it can be heavy and very difficult to bear.
 - 4) RENOUNCE ALL THAT WE HAVE---verse 33
 - a) Some say this applies only to family and self.
 - b) Others say it includes personal treasures and possessions.
 - c) Much like what Jesus says to the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17-22).
 - d) Illustration: Young man said to me, "How can this be?"
 - e) Illustration: She wasn't sure she could repeat her marriage vows...
2. Jesus is telling us clearly: Count the cost of discipleship!
 3. Jesus is making it clear: If one cannot make the full commitment to true discipleship, *"he cannot be my disciple"* (26, 27, 33).

III. CONCLUSION

- A. **It is not our intention to discourage you; our intent is to help you commit to Him.**
- B. **Like Jesus is helping us, we just want you to "Count the cost."**
- C. **It happens all the time in our everyday lives...**
 1. In a college class: "If you want to work..."
 2. In preparing for marriage, before the wedding: "Be sure before you say, I do."
 3. In obeying the gospel/becoming a Christian..."Don't, unless you have to."
- D. That is what Jesus wants us to realize:
"No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom.. "
(Luke 9:62).

BUILDING CHRISTIAN HOMES IN AN IMMORAL WORLD

I. INTRODUCTION

A. **It is so wonderful to see and be associated with so many good families who care about Christ and His work, and who are trying to maintain a godly home.**

1. How should we define the word "home?"
2. There are so many common and oft-quoted statements about a good home:
 - a. "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!"
 - b. "Nothing compares with home!"
 - c. "Home, Sweet Home!"
 - d. "Home is a place where, when you go there, they have to take you in."
 - e. "Welcome Home!" --- (Have you ever been homesick?)
3. Illustration: Contributions to a London magazine: "Definitions of Home"

B. **It has been several years since Time Magazine said: "America's families are in trouble-trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation."**

1. The seriousness of that situation was slowly dawning on us in 1970.
2. But today it is readily apparent to all who can discern the disturbing trends.
3. An eminent sociologist at Columbia University is predicting the demise of the family before the end of the century.

C. **Many are the factors that threaten and undermine God's arrangement for the home.**

1. Values relating to the home have been changing in our immoral world.
 - a. For one thing, the family is not the close-knit trait that it used to be.
 - b. Other institutions have been allowed to assume the roles that should belong to the home.
 - 1) Schools, colleges, and modern educational programs have been substituted for education "at father's and mother's knee."
 - 2) Children, from an early age, are pushed to Day Care Centers for daily keeping, as abandonment of home responsibilities becomes commonplace.
 - 3) More and more parents are expecting the local church to provide the necessary spiritual guidance for their children.
 - c. There is a growing attitude of contempt for marriage and the family unit.
 - 1) We can see it in the modern-day Women's Liberation Movement.
 - 2) It is displayed in the commonly accepted practice of "living together" outside of God's marriage arrangement.
 - 3) We recognize it in the growing tendency towards divorce, and then the resulting unscriptural remarriages so common to our day.
 - a) In 1890 (1 out of 7); in 1946 (1 out of 3); in 1998 (1 out of 2) new marriages was ending with divorce.

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- b) The results of one recent survey reveal that, when young engaged couples were asked if they anticipated spending the rest of their lives with the person they were about to marry, 60% said "NO!"
 - c) Single parent households have increased from 4% (1976) to 49% (1998).
 - 4.) We see this attitude of contempt in the lack of respect young people show toward their parents, those in authority, and elderly people.
 - 5.) We behold it in the increasing child and spousal abuse statistics-- up over 400% during the past few years.
2. But whatever the factor or innovation; all reflect a contempt for God and His Word.

II. HOW CAN WE BUILD HOMES THAT WILL HONOR GOD AND CHRIST?

A. WE MUST MAKE OF OUR MARRIAGES WHAT GOD DESIRES THEM TO BE.

1. Marriage should be viewed as sacred because God designed and ordained it.
 - a. In Matt. 19:3-9, Jesus refers to God's joining of Adam and Eve as the beginning of marriage.
 - b. Some sociologists are still trying to discover the origin of marriage.
 - 1) It is just like some scientists who are still trying to discover the origin of the universe and human life.
 - 2) We wish they would stop long enough someday to read the right book!
 - c. The inspired teaching of the Word of God would answer the Freudians, those who advocate trial or open marriages, those who teach "free love" and those who would seek to abolish the institution of marriage.
2. Marriage should be viewed as serious because God has a marriage law.
 - a. The teaching of some notwithstanding, we must recognize the divine element.
 - 1) Please understand we are not saying that marriage is mandatory (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1-9).
 - 2) We are simply recognizing that God not only instituted marriage, He regulates it, and He will judge it (Heb. 13:4).
 - b. Those who are married are "bound by law" (Rom. 7:2).
 - c. Jesus taught, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9).
 - d. His regulation of the marriage relationship is universal; it is not a "church" ordinance or a limited law.

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3. Marriage should be viewed as satisfying because God designed it to be that way.
 - a. God designed marriage for mutual happiness--not mutual imprisonment.
 - b. In marriage, God supplied the need of man to have companionship.
 - 1) Gen. 2:18---There was only one thing that God made of which He said, "It is not good"--that was for man to be alone!
 - 2) God determined to make a help (companion) meet (suitable) for man.
 - 3) Paul, in 1 Cor. 11:8-9 reveals that the woman was created for the man.
 - a) There is nothing here to indicate that woman is to be man's slave.
 - b) She is a suitable companion, answering to his needs.
 - c) Verse 7 even indicates she is "*the glory of man.*"
 - c. Longfellow, in his beautiful Hiawatha, pictures this loving companionship: "As the cord unto the bow is, So unto the man is woman; Though she bends him, she obeys him, Though she leads him, yet she follows, Useless each without the other."
 - d. Many are the joys and pleasures of married life, when the home is as God directs.

B. WE MUST BE THE KIND OF HUSBANDS AND FATHERS GOD DESIRES.

1. God intends the husband and father to be the head of the home.
 - a. Many say his primary role and responsibility is to be a provider (1 Tim. 5:8).
 - b. But the emphasis in Scripture is that he "*ruleth well his own house*" (1 Tim. 3:4 and 1 Tim. 3:12--this is to elders and deacons, but it shows God's intent for all).
 - c. God gave man the responsibility of being the head of the home (Eph. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 11:3), living as a role model to lead, direct, and protect his family.
 - 1) Husbands and fathers owe their families more than financial security.
 - a) Some seem to forget that they share any of the burdens and duty of making a home, as they come and go as if they were boarders in their own house.
 - b) Many men are "killing themselves" to succeed; while those in their family go unattended.
 - 2) We could paraphrase Jesus: "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own family...?"
2. God intends the husband and father to love his wife as he should (Eph. 5:25-30 and Col. 3:19...note: "be not bitter" = harsh, cruel, sharp, stinging).
 - a. It should be a natural thing for a husband to love his wife.
 - 1) This is something that should come freely and spontaneously from a caring heart.

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- 2) But even if it does not come easily, it is commanded!
- b. Note the two illustrations given in the text of Eph. 5:25-30:
 - 1) *"love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church..."* (vs. 25).
 - 2) *"Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies"* (28).
- c. No man is in danger of loving his wife too much, unless she is loved more than God!
3. God intends the husband and father to teach and discipline his children in the Lord.
 - a. There is both a negative and a positive command in this (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).
 - 1) Note the specific negative addressed to fathers:
 - a) *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath..."* (Eph. 6:4).
 - b) *"Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged"* (Col. 3:21).
 - 2) Note the positive: *"..nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4).
 - b. Certainly, the local church has a role to fulfill in spiritual teaching and training, and the mother has her responsibilities, too; but the primary responsibility is placed on the father in the home (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6-9; Prov. 19:18; 22:6; Heb. 12:5-11).

C. WE MUST BE THE KIND OF WIVES AND MOTHERS GOD DESIRES.

1. God intends the wife to love her husband (Tit. 2:4).
 - a. As we said above about a husband's love for his wife, this should be a natural thing.
 - b. But even when it becomes extremely difficult, it is a command from God.
 - c. Included in this love is a respect for him and his God-given role (Eph.5:33; 1 Pet. 3).
2. God intends the mother to love her children (Tit. 2:4).
 - a. Again, this should always be a natural thing for a mother; yet it is a command.
 - b. When a mother truly loves her children, she will provide more than just clothes for their bodies and food for their stomachs.
 - c. Her teaching and discipline is of utmost importance.
 - 1) 1 Tim. 5:14 requires that she *"rule (guide) the household."*
 - 2) Consider the significance of her teaching role by adding 2 Tim. 1:5 with 3:15.
 - 3) *"A child's character is formed at (or over) a mother's knee."*
3. God intends the wife and mother to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind... (Tit. 2:5).
4. God intends the wife to be in subjection to her own husband (Tit. 2:5).

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- a. Several other passages speak of this role of submission (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24, 33; Col. 3:18; and 1 Pet. 3:1-6).
- b. This role of subjection is best understood by Paul's words in Eph. 5:22 and 24:
 - 1) Verse 22---"as unto the Lord"
 - 2) Verse 24---"But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything."
- c. A wife's proper life of subjection will praise God's name, but her lack of subjection will cause His Word to be blasphemed (Tit. 2:5).

D. WE MUST BE THE KIND OF CHILDREN GOD DESIRES US TO BE.

1. God intends that children obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20).
 - a. In Eph. 6:1-2, Paul says this is to be done for three reasons:
 - 1) *"for this is right"* (1)
 - 2) *"that it may be well with thee"* (3)
 - 3) *"that thou mayest live long on the earth"* (3)
 - b. And in Col. 3:20, he adds another reason: *"for this is well-pleasing in the Lord"*.
2. God intends that children honor their parents (Eph. 6:3)
 - a. The word "honor" suggests more than just an obedient respect.
 - b. The Greek word meant "to provide for the needs of"--suggestive of the child's future need to be a help, comfort, and support to his parents in their declining years.
3. The example of Jesus as a young man provides a great pattern for today's youth.
 - a. The incident recorded in Luke 2:41-52 reveals a remarkable misunderstanding that young Jesus had with His parents; yet the text says, "he was subject unto them" (51).
 - b. And then follows a statement that Jesus grew or advanced in four important ways:
 - 1) *"in wisdom"* -- He was learning and developing in understanding (cf. Lk. 2:40).
 - 2) *"in stature"* -- He was growing and developing in physical maturity.
 - 3) *"in favor with God"* -- He was learning obedience (Heb. 5:8; Eccl. 12:1).
 - 4) *"...and man"* -- He was pure and upright before others (Prov. 20:11).

III. CONCLUSION

A. **There is only one way for us to build homes that will honor Christ at a time when the world is so immoral.**

1. We must be faithful and obedient children of God!

BUILDING CHRISTIAN HOMES IN AN IMMORAL WORLD - Page 6

2. When we are, we will have the kind of marriage that is happy and blessed by God.
3. When we are, we will be the kind of husbands and fathers we should be.
4. When we are, we will be the kind of wives and mothers that God desires.
5. When we are, we will be obedient children, honoring both God and our parents.

B. Worldly influences will not make this an easy task; we will be challenged everyday.

1. May we each one accept the challenge of Rom. 12:1-2... "*be not conformed,..*".
2. Are you up to the challenge?

THE SIN OF MAN PLAYING GOD - MORAL ASPECTS OF MODERN MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Let's begin with a brief overview of the subject we are addressing.

As early as 1962, a scientist wrote in Look Magazine, "In the next 25 years, it is likely that man will create life in a test tube. He will transform dead chemicals into living material that can grow and reproduce itself. He will perform an act of God."

More recently, the president of the American Chemical Society, Dr. Charles C. Price, was urging the United States to make creation of life in the laboratory a national goal. It seems there is nothing more discussed and debated in scientific circles these days, than man's control of his own heredity by genetic manipulation. And what we are hearing about these discussions leaves little doubt that man will try to acquire this control. They are saying it is a matter of WHEN and not IF. Right now the debate is raging on WHY or WHY NOT. I could only wish that more of these learned doctors, researchers, and scientific pioneers would be asking "SHOULD WE?!"

John R. Holum, in his book *Of Test Tubes and Testaments* says, "We prize life so highly that most of us suffer vague, uneasy feelings when we see headlines that scientists have created or soon will create life. What do scientists think they are doing anyway? Playing God? Indeed, life seems so wonderful and mysterious that many people feel scientists will almost be gods if they ever create life."

B. What science fiction writers have been prophesying ever since Frankenstein, who brought life to a corpse, is finally beginning to look plausible due to test tube babies and the specter of cloning.

1. Without doubt, some good things may result in the future by this research:
 - a. Cures for genetic diseases, perhaps even cancer
 - b. Created plants that can manufacture their own fertilizer
 - c. A possible lengthening of life for both man and animals
 - d. Elimination of pain, suffering, and aggressive behavior modification
 - e. Enhanced life of future generations
2. On the other side of consideration, there are many dangers and unanswered questions:
 - a. SCIENTIFIC---Do we really know what we are creating?
 - b. POLITICAL---If the dangers of this research are real, who should oversee it?
 - c. LEGAL---Who will be held liable for "accidents" / mutant viruses, etc.?
 - d. MORAL---Do we have the right to tamper with man, made in God's image?

C. Some of these technologies bring frightening possibilities that seem to be morally unthinkable.

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D. We are certain that this treatment will not answer every question, satisfy everyone's curiosity, or even result in complete agreement on every topic.

1. These issues are very complex and multifaceted.
2. They are issues that have been, and will continue to be, very controversial.
3. Answers will not always come easy; solutions will not always be simple.
4. But in these days of moral compromise and ethical relativism, faithful Christians must face these controversies with principles of Biblical truth.

II. CAN SCIENCE PRESS AHEAD WITHOUT BEING GUILTY OF PLAYING GOD?

A. Listen to the voice of concerned doctors, scientists, and people of faith:

1. "What happens to the historical concept of the sanctity of the individual if surgeons can transplant heads, if biologists can double the size of the head, and if physiologists can put electric machinery inside the head?" (Vance Packard, *The People Shapers*).
2. "Modern biology is leading us to the point where we have the ability to manipulate genes, and manipulate the essence of life...of various organisms under various conditions." (Dr. David Baltimore, Nobel Laureate, testifying to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Health, about recombinant DNA).
3. "...evil people planning to use the technology to produce a race of acquiescent robots." (June Goodfield, *Genetic Engineering and the Manipulation of Life*).
4. "Science is too blinded by its own involvement to be discerning--it is too optimistic and proud--too sure of man's superiority..." (HUMAN LIFE: Controversies and Concerns [Reference Shelf Series], edited by Brace Bohle, Vol. 51, No. 5).
5. "I know of no more elemental capability, even including manipulation of nuclear forces. While it clearly would present opportunities for meeting present sources of human distress, I believe that the limitations of our special capacities for directing such a capability to fulfilling human purposes will more likely bring with it a train of awesome and possibly disastrous consequences. Decisions will be made by individuals, groups, and perhaps whole societies, that may well have unintended but irreversible effects." (Shaw Livermore, arguing against continuing research, IBID).

B. Look at the way America has set the lead in bringing innovations to the world, and a resulting moral quagmire.

1. ABORTION IS THE SIN OF MAN PLAYING GOD.

- a. America led the way in 1973, when the Supreme Court declared it legal to terminate a pregnancy in the first three months--or up to six months in some instances (The case of Roe vs. Wade and Doe vs. Bolton).

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- b. "About 40 million abortions are performed worldwide every year"--over a million take place in this country each year. (Herbert Lugt, *A Matter of Life and Death*).
 - c. Abortion is now the single most commonly performed surgical procedure in America ("The Battle Over Abortion," *Time Magazine*, April 6, 1981).
 - d. The two dissenting judges in the Supreme Court decision pointed out, with abortion, what we have is a rivalry between reverence for life and reverence for lifestyle.
 - e. Many doctors fear that the abortion mentality will eventually lead to infanticide in America; already some humanistic philosophers are openly advocating it.
2. EUTHANASIA (Mercy Killing) IS THE SIN OF MAN PLAYING GOD.
- a. The well-publicized case of Karen Quinlan in 1975 did much to focus attention on the "right to death" movement.
 - b. Then came the California law of 1976 which gave the terminally ill the right to "die with dignity" and without application of heroic medical means.
 - c. The "Baby Doe" case in Indiana in 1983, where a baby was born with Down's Syndrome and esophagus blockage, was not fed or treated, but allowed to die, has been called an example of infanticide.
 - d. Dr. Jack Kavorkian, the Michigan physician nicknamed "Dr. Death" kept the issue of assisted suicide in the news in recent years; he has helped many people take their own lives while blatantly advocating active euthanasia.
 - e. Now, the state of Oregon is in the news again, as the Attorney General is moving to block the state's four-year-old assisted suicide law.
 - f. Concerned voices should be asking, "Do we have the right to rash death, either by suicide or by refusing reasonable treatment?"
3. GENETIC ENGINEERING AND HUMAN EXPERIMENTATION ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR SOME TO BE GUILTY OF THE SIN OF MAN PLAYING GOD.
- a. Let's define what we mean by "genetic engineering":
 - 1) "The popular term, genetic engineering, might be considered as covering anything having to do with the manipulation of the gametes (reproductive cells: sperms and eggs) or the fetus, for whatever purpose, from conception other than by sexual union, to treatment of disease in uteri, to the ultimate manufacture of a human being to exact specifications." ("Genetic Engineering: Reprise," Journal of the American Medical Association, p. 220 [1972]).
 - 2) As we are addressing the subject in this lesson, we are limiting our treatment to genetic interference and the experimentation and modification of other aspects of the human body or behavior.
 - 3) For another perspective: "For centuries Western culture in general and Christians in particular have held to a view of the sanctity of human life.

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In our society today this view is beginning to erode into a quality-of-life standard. Where once we saw the disabled, the retarded, and the unborn as having a special place in God's world, now we have moved into a position of judging only the quality of human life. No longer is life as such seen as sacred and worthy to be saved. Now it is seen as something to be judged and evaluated. If we arbitrarily feel that life is not worth living (that it will not be quality life), then it is advisable to terminate it" (J. Kerby Anderson, Genetic Engineering).

- b. Many of these projects underway are frightening and disturbing:
 - 1) Manipulating genes to engineer life
 - 2) Modifying the makeup and action of the human brain
 - 3) Programming human behavior (genetic behavior modification)
 - 4) Marrying man to animal and man to machine
 - 5) Devising new and ominous forms of surveillance
 - 6) Altering dramatically the beginning and ending of life
 - 7) Cloning of both animals and humans
- c. Many of these innovations are morally unthinkable, unless we are deceived by the philosophy of ethical relativism, and believe that man has a right to be his own god.
- d. Modern genetic engineering, in many ways, moves God's beautiful laws of procreation and natural order another step toward the morality of manufacture.

4. CLONING IS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR OF MAN TRYING TO PLAY GOD.

- a. Clone is the name for a group of organisms or other living matter with exactly the same genetic material.
 - 1) Cell cloning and DNA cloning have revolutionized the fields of biology and modern medicine.
 - 2) Recently, scientists have developed an experimental technique for cloning higher animals (In 1996, a group of British scientists used this procedure to clone a sheep they called "Dolly"--since then, scientists from Japan, the U.S., and elsewhere have used similar techniques to produce clones of mice, cattle, and other mammals.
 - 3) Now, many are clamoring for this technology to be advanced to attempt human cloning; arguing for this as an effective way for infertile couples to reproduce.
- b. While views about the morality, as well as the pros and cons, of cloning vary widely, there are many ethical and religious objections that concerned people are raising.
 - 1) Some **ETHICAL CONCERNS AND ARGUMENTS** against human cloning:
 - a) The possibility of physical harm to the embryo
 - b) The possibility of psychological harm to the child

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- c) The possible degradation of the quality of parenting and family life
 - d) The possible "objectification" of children (view children as objects)
 - e) Possible social harms (a form of eugenics)
 - f) The use of scarce resources (diverting from more important needs)
- 2) Some MORAL AND RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS against human cloning:
- a) It took the scientists who created Dolly 277 tries before they got a healthy, viable lamb. Because cloning humans is more complicated, "even more deaths and lethal birth defects can be expected during experimentation" (Fox, Technology, NCGR). That, critics say, would be immoral.
 - b) Belief in the existence of the human soul, unique to each individual (Argue: Will it be possible to clone the human soul, along with the human?)
 - c) Most Christians believe that the Bible teaches that children should be conceived within a marital union between two loving, married partners of the opposite sex.
 - d) Human cloning violates God's intentions by allowing man to reproduce without a married partner.
 - e) Will allow humans to choose the genes of their children instead of leaving it up to the laws of God...In this sense humans would be "playing God".
 - f) When children are turned into "projects" whose genes we can bend to our will, their existence is degraded...("Their existence becomes a project we undertake if it promises to meet our needs and desires"--Meilaender)
- c. We have not heard the end of the cloning debate; hopefully, we are more informed about the issues involved.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Man's encroachment into many of these areas is not only a depersonalizing interference in God's natural order, it is an affront to God -- an attempt to push Him and His laws aside.

B. It is the old sin of man trying to play God, and judgment always follows.

1. Rom. 1:18-22.... "*...knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... "*

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2. 2 Thess. 2:4.... "*... he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God*"
3. We must recognize the sanctity of life, and that we were made in the image of God.
4. Our bodies belong to Him (Acts 17:28; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19ff).
5. God has placed limitations upon the right over our bodies (Gal. 5:19-24; Eph. 4:28; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:3-4).

C. **Is man building a scientific "Tower of Babel?" -- Will another confounding be the eventual result?**