

The Man and His Personal Life

The Dynamics of Being God's Man and Succeeding At It!

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As you look over the content of this study you will understand my goals in writing such a series.

I trust that as a man you will study this for personal profit, if you are a Sunday School teacher or a leader of men then I hope you will down load this, study it with the express purpose of teaching other men. May the Lord use you to challenge and build the lives of many men.

Pastors, this would be an exciting series to teach men in whatever form it might be best for your church-- a men's night, or a retreat, or a special Sunday School class, or maybe in some other way.

You will want to check on all of the men's lessons for many choice truths to study and to teach.

Table of Contents

PART ONE

THE MAN AND HIS PERSONAL LIFE

Lesson one--	Exactly, Where ARE You Going?	pgs. 2-4
Lesson two--	Exactly, Where ARE You Going? (part two)	pgs 5-7
Lesson three--	A Man of Worth, Value, and Mature Character	pgs. 8-11
Lesson four--	Wanted -- Men With Convictions	pgs. 12-14
Lesson five--	Our Struggle From Within	pgs. 15-18

EXACTLY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Lesson One

Introduction:

Someone has written, *"No horse gets anywhere till he's harnessed, no steam or gas drives anything until it's confined, no Niagara ever turned anything into light or power until it's tunneled and put through the turbines, no life ever grows great until focused, dedicated and disciplined."* Paul wrote, *"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark. . ."* (Philippians 3:13). **(Assignment -- memorize Philippians 3:13,14.)** We need to become one-eyed men. That's what Jesus was saying when he said, *"When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light"* (See Luke 11:34). Most of us men do not have single-mindedness which would aid us to fulfill God-given goals.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics* says: *"We are engineered as goal - seeking individuals. We are built that way. When we have no personal goal which we are interested in and which means something to us, we have to go around in circles, feel lost and find life itself aimless and purposeless. We are built to conquer environment, solve problems, achieve goals, and we find no real satisfaction or happiness in life without obstacles to conquer and goals to achieve. People who say that life is not worthwhile are really saying that they themselves have no personal goals that are worthwhile."*

The Word of God has a lot to say about goals, directly and probably mainly indirectly. It was the lack of goals, in keeping with the will of God, that caused Israel to waste a whole generation in the wilderness.

Paul was a highly-motivated person with God-honoring personal goals which made him the person that he was. He spoke of "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." (See Acts 26:19.) In Philippians 3:13, 14 he spoke of "this one thing I do and I press toward the mark." The *Greek - Skopos* - is translated "mark." The word denotes a mark on which to fix the eye and is used metaphorically of an aim or object toward which one strives.

Suggestions to those who are teachers:

My aim in this lesson is not to teach a certain portion of Scripture, but to impact each man with the necessity of having goals in every area or aspect of his life. You will have a lot more to teach than what you can possibly cover, aim to deal with the aspects which the Holy Spirit would lead you to teach and the class needs the most. Work in the portions that I suggest about Abraham and use the Scriptures as given on the right hand column as you see fit. Learn to adapt, sum up, and teach according to God's leadership.

At this point, as a teacher, you may desire to cover part of the following, or you may want to weave parts of this outline into the lesson.

Biblical Example Concerning Goal Setting:

ABRAHAM: a Model man (See Romans 4:13-25; Hebrews 11:8-19; James 2:21-23.)

* He had a goal of being obedient. (See Genesis 12:4,5)

- * He had a goal of being faithful in worship. (See Genesis 12:7,8; 13:3,4.)
He build an altar before he set up his tent.
- * He had a goal of being faithful in intercession. (See Genesis 18:23-33.)
- * He had a goal of being faithful in child-rearing. (See Genesis 18:19.)

I. THE ESTABLISHING OF GOALS.

Your key for personal success is to establish goals for your life. We need to distinguish between goals and purpose. Purpose is the long-range direction for your life, which you also need, and must be set through Biblical commands and principles. Goals are more clearly defined and are concrete, measurable, and related to a definite period.

Thomas A Edison said, *"The most important factors of invention can be described in a few words. They consist first of definite knowledge as to what one wishes to achieve. One must fix his mind on that purpose with persistence, and begin searching for that which he seeks. When a man makes up his mind to solve any problem, he may at first meet with dogged opposition, but if he holds on and keeps on searching, he will be sure to find some sort of solution. The problem with most people is that they quit before they start."*

A. Find Out What God Wants Of Your Life.

Find out what God wants from and in your life above everything else. Remember that when we seek God with all our hearts, fully trust Him, and want to fulfill His will, God will give us the desires of our hearts. (See Psalm 34:5,6.) To me this means when I love God as I ought, He will move upon my heartstrings to exercise my desires. My desires will become His desires; therefore, as I pray I can anticipate that God will be at work in me to the fulfillment of those desires. And each desire will be in line with His goals for me.

Find out what you want to do in life above everything else. But even in that be sure that you do not lean unto your own understanding and that in all your ways you acknowledge Him. (See Proverbs 3:5,6.) Determine your goals as you search out that these are also His goals. Visualize the goal in your mind and heart. Picture what you want to be in Christ and through His power and the manifestation of His life IN the THROUGH you. If you need to do so, get all the facts about the goals which God has impressed upon you. Put them in logical order. Determine how you are going to accomplish these God-given goals.

Consider the words of Paul J. Meyer, *"What you ardently desire, sincerely believe in, vividly imagine, enthusiastically act on must inevitably come to pass."* Now such words may seem anti-Biblical to us! Let's condition this statement with the promises of God. When we are in God's will about a matter because we KNOW HIS HEART, then I think that Meyer's statement comes to fulfillment for the saint of God. We need to be men who believe God for goals set before us that are pleasing to God. We must embrace Biblical goals or we will languish in life and aimlessly move through the years.

2. Set a Timetable for the Fulfillment of the Goal.

To me, it is obvious that Godly leadership, spoken of in the Word of God, often had time tables for the goals which God had set before His men. I cannot visualize Paul without goals, and a time table which carried him through the missionary journeys to the end that churches would be established. I cannot picture Elijah without some goals based upon God's will for His life. I cannot picture Daniel without some goals as he purposed in his heart to do God's will about a number of matters. I think the list could go on and on concerning men who had embraced God-given goals and set a timetable for their accomplishment.

If we are to fulfill goals we must stay on the path and not go rabbit-chasing. It is not enough to talk about goals; we must get at it. Start out this very moment. Remember that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

We must begin with anticipation of God's power and direction, and the persistence to fulfill the goal. Too often we do *plan* to memorize the Word of God, to witness, to serve the Lord, to tithe, and to do a host of other things. But all we do is plan; and we set no timetable for the execution of the goals.

3. Develop Intensity of Purpose.

A dynamic for fulfilling goals is to have intensity of purpose, the strength of discipline that's involved in an athletic team. Players will give their all and suffer every kind of pain in the hardest work they have ever done -- all for the sake of their school, their personal recognition, and their teammates. The goal was there and the dynamics resulted.

Consider Paul's intensity of purpose in the goals that God gave him and he had for his life. (Study Acts 26:15-19. Then consider Acts 9:11-17 which helps us to understand God's goals for his life.) Paul obviously had goals as an unsaved person. In salvation Paul was redirected by God, made a complete 180 degree turn and began fulfilling God's goals with the same intensity he had against God prior to his salvation.

EXACTLY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

(Continued)

Lesson Two

Teacher -- *You ought to review the foregoing lesson as a basis for this lesson, and possibly bring in some parts of it as a spring board for this lesson. And you may want to go the end of this lesson and find some questions and quotes to use in the first lesson.*

Scripture Memorization: Colossians 3:1

II. THE DISCIPLINE OF GOALS.

God expects every man to become a leader. The man is to "dominate" or control and govern the world God made. He is to become a leader whether married or unmarried.

The man is to master the planet and bring it into subjection. (See Genesis 1:23-30.) Are you the leader that God planned for you to be? Probably, if goals mean little to you, then you rarely consider the necessity of building your life to become a leader by God's grace.

1. Consider What Is So Often Lacking

Napoleon Hill in *Think and Grow Rich* has listed ten causes for failure in leadership. (While he was probably unsaved, we can learn something from highly-motivated, famous leaders in their own fields.) The ten causes are:

- * inability to organize details;
- * unwillingness to render humble service;
- * expectation of pay for what they know instead of what they do with that which they know;
- * fear of competition from followers;
- * lack of imagination;
- * selfishness; * intemperance; * disloyalty;
- * emphasis on the authority of leadership rather than being a servant;
- * emphasis on title, rather than performance.

There must be discipline over our actions toward the fulfillment of goals. Paul spoke of bringing his body into control lest he became a castaway, an unusable vessel as a disqualified person, unable to continue to perform God's will. (See and study I Corinthians 9: 24-27.) Goals intensively established, regularly checked on, and ardently desired, bring wonderful discipline of action.

2. Consider what Is Needed

Look at it from the human viewpoint. Dr. Charlotte Buhler from Vienna made a study of the lives of 200 famous men and women to see why they succeeded. In every case there was a self-selected goal that directed all the energies of the individual. *"Write down what you want to achieve, then frame the paper on which you have written and hang it on the wall,"* said Johnson and O'Conner as a result of their findings.

Many a man has puzzled at the lack of results from his grim determination to succeed when his real unconscious desire was to have a good time and to take life easy. Could this truly be the real reason why many saved men languish in their Christian life and their service for God means little?

- * *To achieve any goal there must be the conscious and the unconscious commitment of all that you are to the dedication of the effort of that goal!*

- * *There must be harmony and energy expended to the fulfillment of God given-goals.*
- * *There must be oneness in purpose if you are to reach your goal.*

3. Consider Four Suggestions For Success.

- * ***Pay the price.*** Results are directly proportionate to the effort we put forth. We must understand emotionally that as we sow we will also reap. (See Galatians 6:6-9.)
- * ***Practice imagination.*** Can you see yourself by the power and grace of God, by the leadership of the Holy Spirit, achieving the God-given goal you've attempted for GOD'S GLORY?
- * ***Practice courage.*** Expect to exercise the kind of courage God spoke of and promised to Joshua. (See Joshua 1: 7-9.) Refuse to believe that there are any circumstances sufficient to cause you to fail, for where God guides He will also supply the courage to persevere.
- * ***Act upon the goals.*** God wants to place on your mind and heart certain goals for His glory that are in keeping with the talents and abilities He has given you. It is not enough to know the goal intellectually and to sense it emotionally, for it will only come to fruition by volition. Achievement demands immediate, dynamic action.

Some Personal Goals by God's Grace:

Immediate:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Long-range:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

III. THE BENEFIT OF GOALS

When we are determined to be in God's will, fulfilling His plan for our lives, we will naturally become goal conscious. It will be our natural desire and concern to be aware of the goals God has for us.

1. We Will Have Personal Happiness.

Probably one of most outstanding benefits of setting and fulfilling goals is personal happiness. Life is too short to be unhappy. You will never be truly happy until you are achieving a worthy, challenging goal. Remember that it cannot be selfish nor can it be evil (or be tainted with sin) and still bring personal joy.

Worthy goals will benefit your family, if you are married. They will benefit the church, community, society, and yes, even the nation. You see, God planned that your abilities are very closely related to your God-given, pure and holy desires. *If you desire little you will exercise little of your capacity.* If they are from God these desires are manifested in all areas of our lives, including our employment, relationships, and service to the King of Kings.

We must act **NOW** toward setting long-range goals. You can only become dynamically successful for the Lord as you set Biblical, God-honoring and God-given goals and work toward them. This is where joy comes in, for we know that we are fulfilling eternal values. But before we can do something, we must first **be something**, that is, *we must become in Christ what we ought to be by His power and grace.*

2. We will have personal fulfillment.

Paul could say "I kept the faith, I finished the course and there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...." (See II Timothy 4:7,8.) I wonder, if at the end of the journey we can look back upon life and see that we were in God's will and did His bidding and fulfilled the goals which He outlined for us?

The sense of personal fulfillment can be very great and is something that God wills we should experience. The opposite -- loss and ruin from the lack of completing God-given goals -- is too often the experience of so many. The Christian who has lived a selfish life will find that the end brings tremendous grief, trauma, frustration, and anguish of soul. The cry will probably be, "If only I had done God's will, if only I had sought His eternal goals, if only I had lived differently."

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Set one goal at a time. Be sure that it is Biblical and challenging.
2. Don't settle for something less than your best. Seek God's best and not some secondary goal.
3. Think about it all the time; that is, write it down so that it becomes a part of you. Build mind-pictures of the joy of fulfilling that goal for the Lord. Use the five senses to bring your total personality to bear upon it.
4. Drive it into your subconscious mind. God made our subconscious minds to work for us; remember that it takes orders. It is fantastically creative for it never rests.
5. Write out immediate goals and long-range goals for a ten year period and then five-and then two-year goals. Have monthly checkups. Have God's plan and then work the plan God has given.
6. Consider some specific areas where you are determined to set goals -- for your personal life, devotional life, family life, financial needs and concerns, and other important areas of life that are meaningful to you.

QUOTES ABOUT GOALS: (compiled by Lloyd Cory, in *Quotable Quotations*)

We are not at our best perched at the summit; we are climbers, at our best when the way is steep. (John W. Gardner)

If you are not sure where you are going, you are liable to end up someplace else. (Robert F. Mager)

The reason most people in business flounder is that they are goalless. They have no personal goals at all, or their goals are undefined, too easy, or not worth the effort. (Richard Conarroe)

Many people have the right aims in life. They just never get around to pulling the trigger. (Sunshine Magazine)

A MAN OF WORTH, VALUE, and MATURE CHARACTER

Lesson Three

Introduction:

There is a very interesting phenomenon occurring in twentieth century America. From birth to late teens, a child's overwhelming perception of authority figures is that they are nearly 100% female, with an occasional male making a generally ineffectual appearance.

In the hospital it is the female nurses who are responsible for almost every aspect of child care. At home, mother is usually the dominant authority figure. In our public grade schools 90% of the teachers are women. The first police person a child meets is more than likely a female crossing guard. At the grocery store, in the restaurants, in vacation Bible school or Sunday School, etc., who does the child see for the most part?

So what has happened to the world's men?? They wear jewelry--bracelets, necklaces, maybe an earring. They have long hair, usually styled by a unisex hairstylist. Or they are "macho men" who act irresponsibly with their wives and children, or indulge in sexual "freedom" or do their "own thing."

There is a muddling of any clear-cut decision on or commitment to, anything. In contrast, God desires that we who are saved men exhibit godly manhood. What is manhood? What does it mean to be a man for God?

Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous. Man has conquered the mountains, the oceans, and even outer space. But the greatest achievement of all is when man conquers himself. "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (See Proverbs 16:32.)

Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous!

Launching Questions:

1. How can we become men of worth, of value and of character?
 2. Can we look at our lives and say, "I am mature in Christ. I have grown into a person of character for God's glory"?
 3. And then, truly, what is maturity anyway?
 4. Do we recognize the characteristics of what it means to be a mature man?
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Memorization verse -- I Corinthians 16:13

I. WE WILL BE MEN OF MATURITY.

Maturity, I suppose means different things to different people, and in varying circumstances of life or at different stages of life. It is also based on whatever criteria we are using for measuring maturity.

1. The Meaning of Maturity

Basically, I think, (as I sit here at my desk on January 24), that maturity depends more on self-discipline than on any other thing. Maturity is manifested to

the extent to which our person is self-controlled in certain areas and aspects of our lives. This can only take place as we are Spirit-controlled. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance, or self-control. Maturity is not based upon how long we have been saved, how old we are, or we measure up to certain people's standards. We will be men of worth, value, and character as we become disciplined persons.

2. The Characteristics of Maturity

A man who is mature is a person who is *under control* or self-disciplined. But there is something more. The aim of self-discipline is to have a disciplined character that goes beyond the minimum demands of specific disciplines and *permeates* the whole life.

A mature man is *disciplined* not in just a few areas for the sake of appearance, but is **disciplined in the inner man** by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the application of the Word of God. The outward, godly life which people see will be the result of the inner dynamic of self-discipline **at the core** of that life. Therefore, the heart or emotions, as well as the intellect and will, are moved upon by God.

It is possible for any man to be a sincere and regenerated (born again) follower of Jesus and yet remain undisciplined in many areas of life. In fact, that is probably the norm and not the abnormal, much to our shame as men. In a general sense, self-discipline is the ability to regulate conduct by principle and judgment rather than by impulse, desire, pressure from others, or social custom. It is basically the ability to subordinate the life to Christ and the Word.

II. WE WILL BE MEN WHO WALK IN BIBLICAL LOVE.

(Study John 13:34,35; 14:21-23; 15:10; Ephesians 5:1, 2.)

1. It Will be a Pure Love.

God's commands are absolutes. But to a large degree our modern age mistakes lust for love; it relegates love to a glandular function -- a reaction to the angle of a neckline or the height of a skirt. Not all of passion is love and not all of love is passion.

According to God, love is not a feeling. Sometimes it doesn't even *feel* good. Sometimes it demands sacrifice that is not easy, but real love is always good. Love centers in the will. That is why love can be commanded and why God can command us to love. Biblical, god-like love (agape) is the foundation of marriage and the obligation in marriage. To a great extent today the unsaved American male, flees from commandments. Or rebels. Some will say, "*I can't love any more. I just can't feel anything.*" That is not true. Giving love is the act of the will. But the spirit of the age is the spirit of rejection toward authority. This spirit has also infiltrated the church. How sad when men especially are rebellious to God's will and plan.

2. It Will be a Godly Love.

What does God love? We will love that which God loves and hate what God hates. And by the way, what does God hate? Maybe we don't consider I Corinthians 13:1-8 often enough. What are the characteristics of godly love?

3. It Will be a Sacrificial Love.

God's love is a giving love. True love will sacrifice, giving all for the sake of the one loved. It will be an unconditional love that gives based not on the merit, qualifications, or the service of another, but freely and fully.

We can become persons of worth, value and character as we allow the love of God to control us, fill us, and overflow through our lives to others on a daily basis. Is this

true in your life as a man? There are those who need you to keep yourself in the love of God. (See Jude 20, 21.) We will build maturity as we are controlled by the discipline of God's love.

III. WE WILL BE MEN WHO QUICKLY REPENT.

God *commands* all men everywhere to repent. (See Acts 17:30.) God would impress a preacher to *command* men to repent. A man of worth, value and character is one who not only repents and accepts Christ as Savior, but who walks a walk of repentance after being saved.

We don't just invite men to repent, to be converted, and to put faith in Christ, we are to command men to repent, to be converted, and to put faith in Christ. There is a key difference between a command and an invitation. If I give you an invitation, you have an option. You can either receive it or reject it. But if I command you, you have no option. You either obey or rebel. God did not get Moses up on the mountain and give him a list of "Ten Suggestions." God gave *commandments*. In our psychologizing of our gospel in the modern pulpit, we have been taught to "invite" people to accept Jesus. Given the option, most reject it. It is not "try Jesus." We are commanded to come to Him for salvation. The lost must obey the gospel. (If you doubt this then please study Romans 10:16,17; Hebrews 5:9; II Thessalonians 1:7,8.)

1. We Need to Repent of Worldly Wisdom.

(Study James 3:13-18.)

This wisdom is a walk in our own thoughts, our own private deliberations and decisions based upon what we think. It is a worldly wisdom on the part of men who, though saved, think according to what pleases them and fulfills their desires and wishes. Such wisdom is the manifestation of carnality that controls many a saved man. This so-called wisdom brings confusion, envy, and every kind of evil work. Men, we need to be set free from worldly, carnal wisdom that brings all kinds of difficulty to those around us and under our care.

What a contrast this worldly wisdom is to God's wisdom that is *"pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, without"* (Note James 3:17) When we walk in God's wisdom we will experience a growth in righteousness that can only take place when we sow peace, for godly living can only blossom in the atmosphere of peace sown by those who make peace. Righteousness cannot be developed in an atmosphere of turmoil. (Consider James 3:18.)

2. We Need to Repent of Our Disobedience.

We are commanded to obey. **God maximizes a man's personality, talent, and character when he obeys God.** God will maximize your manhood and use you in a mighty way when you are determined to sell out to God in total obedience.

Satan in contrast is a usurper. He comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. Satan and sin will rob you of your personality. Satan will steal your character as he seeks to produce disobedience in your life. God will maximize it. While Satan plunders, God empowers and ennobles.

Scripture is very clear about the need of having sorrow unto repentance. The failing member of the Corinthian Church was disobedient. This brought God's judgment and the church's chastening. Often disobedience brings confusion, pain, and suffering. It dispels all peace -- the peace of individuals close to the failing person and the peace of the church. The man needed to repent of his sin and disobedience. (Study I Corinthians 5:1-13.)

Remember, godly sorrow is necessary for repentance. Human sorrow is usually manifested because we are sorry that we are caught, but godly sorrow is for the cause -- sin itself. (Note II Corinthians 7:8-13.)

CONCLUSIONS:

God commands confession. It is only as we confess our lack of maturity, of love or of repentance that we will get right and be right with God. We must confess to be rid of our sin and confess in order to put on righteousness. Unconfessed sin is unforgiven sin. We need forgiveness and cleansing.

Read and study I John 1:4-2:2. Notice that the emphasis is upon fellowship. Christ dealt with the problem of sin for us that we might have fellowship with him and with one another. It is not enough for men to repent, but we need cleansing from the sin so that we do not continue in the sin. Oh, to be freed from the habitual pattern of sin.

If you have never been willing to accept responsibility for your sins against your family, your wife, your own life or against others (or you find it hard to admit sin and wrong) you can never know true manhood.

Forgiveness is a release. When God forgives us, He releases us from that sin forever. Never will He remember it against us again. What a joy to know that! We need to be willing to deal with sin, to be honest about sin, and determine to become mature, victorious men in Christ. God help you to build true manhood!

Application and Guiding Questions:

1. Why does maturity depend so much upon self discipline?
 2. Would you agree that what a person loves shows forth his character?
 3. What are some things God hates? Make a study of this by looking up the word *hate* in a concordance.
 4. Why does God expect the Christian to repent? What does repentance mean?
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QUOTABLE QUOTES:

Maturity begins to grow when you can sense your concern for others outweighing your concern for yourself.

-- John MacNaughton

One of the marks of a mature person is the ability to dissent without creating dissension.

-- Don Robinson

Maturity is the ability to do a job whether you are supervised or not; finish a job once it is started; carry money without spending it. And last, but not least, the ability to bear an injustice without wanting to get even.

-- Fred Cook

Maturity is seen when we are content to feel right about something, without feeling the necessity to prove someone else wrong.

-- Sidney Harris

WANTED -- MEN WITH CONVICTIONS

Lesson Four

Introduction:

What is a conviction? It surely is much different than having a preference, or a strong desire. A conviction is something a person is willing to die for, will not change, and is willing to pay any price to maintain his belief or principle held. I think, generally, God planned that men are to be the standard bearers for their homes, and for society. We will do little to be salt and light to the world without having convictions. The great cause of Christian families floundering and losing their way is a lack of convictions.

As young lads, Daniel, Moses and Joseph must have had strong convictions. All three of these men exhibited great strength of conviction in their adult lives. They held to principle regardless of the price they had to pay. Their convictions steadied them in the times of testing. Whenever we have deep convictions, we can be sure of testings. Anything worthwhile in life will be tested. Every deep abiding belief will some day be tried and tested for our own good. As gold is submitted to the fire, God will see to it that our convictions will be tested to prove their reality, and to purge away the dross and help us become stronger.

There is power in convictions -- power that we will direct toward the lives of those around us, as well as in God's work.

(Memorization assignment -- Ephesians 6:13)

True godly manhood will manifest itself in strong Biblical conviction. Are we M E N for God? Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous! Christ lived and died for His convictions!

God expects us to S T A N D..... on our convictions.

S -- criptures are not violated (I John 3:4).

T -- ake the side of right as opposed to the evil (Romans 12:9).

A -- ffirm the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14).

N -- ever move toward personal enslavement (I Corinthians 6:12).

D -- etermine the effects of our actions on other believers.
(Romans 14:21).

Consider with me:

I. MEN OF CONVICTIONS HAVE MOVED THE WORLD.

History will prove the fact that only as MEN have convictions that are abiding will they move the world about them. Only as a dad who has convictions will we impact those whom we ought to influence.

1. Daniel Caused Men to Wait for God's Word.

They waited for the Word of the Lord through him. He had a ministry to three kingdoms and three kings -- Darius, Belshazzar, and Nebuchadnezzar. These men and kingdoms were greatly impacted by Daniel's life, even more than by his dedicated service. Unforgettable stories give us the accounts of what Daniel faced and of the times he could have lost his life except for God's intervention as he acted only upon Godly convictions.

2. Paul Was Used to Turn the World Upside Down.

Empires were moved as Paul stood before the great of his day and gave his testimony. Mighty men trembled in his presence. The entire Roman empire was moved and touched by this one man and by those whose lives Paul had touched who were used of God. God had stated His purpose for Paul, and God could use him because he was trustworthy as a man of conviction. (See Acts 9: 6, 10-17.)

Are you a man of *conviction*?

3. Because of Convictions, John the Baptist Was Used.

(See Mark 1: 2-8; Luke 3: 1-18; John 1:6-8.)

- * ***He held to convictions concerning himself*** - about his ministry and position. He knew he was but a "voice crying in the wilderness." He was sent from God to be a fore runner to prepare the hearts of people for Christ's coming.
- * ***He held to convictions concerning Christ.*** John had strong convictions about the person, power and prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- * ***He held to convictions in regard to his "rights."*** The statement, "*He must increase, but I must decrease,*" reveals John's heart. (See John 3:30.)
- * ***He was willing to die for his convictions.*** John the Baptist faced Herod with his sin regardless of the potential reciprocal results.
ARE YOU a man of convictions?

4. John Wesley Moved a Continent for Christ.

Many say that no single figure influenced so many minds and hearts, no single voice touched so many lives in his day. He traveled over 250,000 miles on horseback and preached many times a day as God used him to shake all of England and many other parts of the world. Through his influence he was used to see many delivered from the horrors of the French revolution as the power of his preaching greatly impacted the society of that day. God used him to move the masses toward an awareness of their sinfulness, and the consciousness of God and His grace.

It is easy to see that men of convictions have moved the world. They were consistent, and faithful, and for the most part uncompromising *Can that be said of us?*

II. MEN OF CONVICTIONS ARE REWARDED HERE, AND IN THE HERE AFTER. (Daniel 9:23.)

Important Questions:

Was Daniel rewarded? Will he be rewarded in the hereafter? I strongly think so. Was Joseph rewarded for doing right, for standing by his convictions? If so, how? Could God have used Joseph if he had failed the test of purity when it came? Can God trust us? Will we be able to hear the words, "*well done, thou good and faithful servant*" because we have been faithful? God honors those who honor Him.

Many times the honor the Lord receives from our lives is based upon our standing upon convictions that are Biblical and God honoring. God is not unfaithful in rewarding us according to our works. He will reward us with crowns and with the privilege of serving Him during the 1,000-year reign, But that too will be based upon our faithfulness here. Only men with convictions will stand when the pressures are on. We are told to stand, and having done all therefore to stand. (See Ephesians 6:13.) May God help us to have such strong Biblical convictions that that we will have impact upon many. Are we truly men for God? Do we have godly manhood? I think that manhood will be manifested in being a person of conviction.

III. MEN OF CONVICTIONS TURN OTHERS TO GOD.

Every person of whom we read in the Word of God who had convictions, had a great influence on the lives of others.

1. Consider Daniel's Influence.

Through Daniel's life God influenced the king to such a extent that he made a decree that the God of Israel was the true God. The God of Daniel was to be recognized by all the people of the empire. This first could only come about because of Daniel's stand. He stood by his convictions!

2. Consider John the Baptist's Influence

Some of John's own disciples were dismayed when they saw that "all men come to him" (Christ). (See John 3:26.) But because of John's convictions about who Christ was, he was not alarmed. Consider the impact that John the Baptist still has because of convictions! When we read about John's life we are faced with the need of being men of conviction!

Are we men of convictions who pass our Biblical convictions on to our children?

In contrast:

1. Demas left, having loved the present world. (See II Timothy 4:10.)
2. Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their lives because they did not war a good warfare, nor hold to faith, and a good conscience. (See I Timothy 1:18-20.)
3. Lot lost his family because in weakness he did not have the strength of convictions needed to help him stand for righteousness. (Read Genesis 13:7-11; 19:14-38.)
4. Samson, though called of God from his mothers womb, did not have the strength of conviction to keep him in the time of his temptations. He played with sin and paid a terrible price, as recorded in Judges, Chapter 16.

In conclusion:

1. Resolve to live for God regardless of the costs. Be a man; seek godly manhood. (Make I Corinthians 16:13 yours.)
2. Seek to be uncompromising, living in the presence of God, seeking His face.
3. Courage is something God can give. It is impossible to be a faithful Christian and a coward at the same time.
4. Men of prayer are men of purpose. Become a man of prayer, for only by the impact of a deep prayer life will convictions be formed.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

Beware lest we mistake our prejudices for our convictions.
-- Dr. Harry A. Ironside

People without convictions are often like the wind, they change the direction of their vane as they watch to see which way the wind might blow.
-- Ed Watke Jr.

Men without deep, abiding convictions are often as unstable as water. They are driven with the wind of opinion about them rather than having the stability of abiding truth and divine direction.
-- Ed Watke Jr.

Children need to have the stability of a father who knows what he believes and knows why he believes what he believes. Such convictions are present only when the father has the anchor of Biblical, convicting truth abiding in the heart.

-- Ed Watke Jr.

OUR STRUGGLE FROM WITHIN

Lesson Five

Introduction:

Maybe we men have more struggles in our Christian lives than our wives have. For some of us this may be our viewpoint, or what we perceive. Some of us will relate to the following, as a man wrote these words, *"I remember the time I first trusted Christ as my personal Savior. I was so happy; I felt so clean. I can remember thinking to myself, now that I am saved, I won't do wrong anymore. It wasn't too long after that thought that I discovered I could still sin by thoughts, words and deeds. I was disappointed. However, through some Bible teaching, I learned that every believer still has a sin nature in him that has the capacity and instinct to be self-centered and rebellious to God."*

Each one of us can identify with these words. In fact the Apostle John describes our struggle from within as the "lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). The word *lust*, strictly speaking means a strong craving for something and is not necessarily undesirable or sexually oriented. However, we usually think of lust as *inordinate desire* for something that is sinful and life controlling. It is to be noted that the Holy Spirit lusts for our devotion as found in James 4:5. In marriage we should have a godly, strong desire or craving toward our mate.

(Memorization assignment -- I John 2:15-17.)

I. STRONG DESIRES CAN SO EASILY CONTROL US.

1. Strong desires can be built in our lives by our life-style, or what we allow in our daily routine. Such lustful desires come from an unchecked sin nature and lead us to transgression.
2. Pursuing lusts draws away from our love toward God, and our investment is instead given to the world and the sinful world system.
3. The word *world* as used in I John 2:15-17 is speaking of the society's system of values and thinking that is hostile toward God and competes for the Christian's priorities and love.
4. It is clear from the Word of God that the world lies in the lap of the wicked one. Satan is the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air, and he seeks to control us through every means that he can use. Satan has the world orchestrated to play his tune and dance his steps. It is very easy for us to fall in line.
5. These strong desires so often come to us through the eye gate -- what we view in magazines, papers, TV, and other things about us. We must be alert to what we allow ourselves to look at.

We must watch what we look at, our thoughts, and the intents of our hearts! The mind will fasten upon the things that come to us through the medium of the eye gate. The eye gate is one of the main avenues to the thoughts, heart, and soul of a man.

Consider:

The lust of the eyes is a part of the struggle from within. This refers to our appetite for what others have, though that may not be God's will for us, or at least in God's timing for us.

Curiosity can be a valuable human trait, but our sin nature can take control of our imagination and create covetousness and greed that becomes an obsession. We must guard against fueling our internal covetousness.

The lust of the eyes can turn window-shopping into a credit extravaganza, as we acquire things we don't need or can't afford. It can turn sincere admiration of another person's appearance, grooming, and personal qualities into fantasies of illicit sexual desire. It can turn a healthy pleasure in whatever God has given us to enjoy into a competitive desire to keep ahead of the Joneses. This mentality draws us away from loving God.

II. THE LUST OF THE FLESH CAN EASILY ENTICE US.

1. The "lust of the flesh" is one type of personal struggle that every saved man faces almost every day, or maybe many times a day. Temptation is very real!
2. This refers to physical and emotional appetites that go beyond God's will for our lives. There are pressures to listen to the world's philosophy of life, which says, *"If it feels good, do it."*
3. Yielding to this attitude can bring many failures, such as extramarital affairs, drunkenness, drugs, gluttony, wild partying, laziness, disorderliness, impulsiveness, covetousness, and so on. Many Christians have fallen into grave sin who would have never thought it possible. We live in a world that is catering to a desire-oriented and pleasure-motivated life-style.
4. Men can easily lose their sensitivity to the Lord while giving part of themselves over to sensuality indulging in different kinds of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (See Ephesians 4:19.)

Note: Man's lost condition is graphically set forth in Ephesians 2:1-3 and Romans 3:9-23. Also in Romans 1:18-32 God sets forth the depth of corruption that is seen in the lives of the lost. No wonder Isaiah 1:4-6 gives us the vivid illustration of a body full of corruption and putrefying sores as the picture of a sinful nation without Christ. When we make these things personal and are honest in the evaluation of our sin nature, we truly have to say that the old carnal, sinful nature is corrupt and wicked to the core.

It might help us to list the works of the flesh as set forth in Galatians 5:19-21. Men need to face the truth of what God says and to work at protecting their own lives and the lives of their children from the effects of sin's control.

III. THE PRIDE OF LIFE CAN EASILY CAPTIVATE US.

(See Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Proverbs 11:2; 18:12; James 4:6,10; I Peter 5:5, 6.)

1. The pride of life is also a struggle of our inner lives. This is the drive to be important and significant for the sake of personal glory.
2. As men, we can easily have a craving for status, power, and praise.

The Man and His Personal Life

3. There can be the desire to influence and control others as a result of power plays.
4. In this situation the Holy Spirit is not given the right of control in the life so that He can bring glory, honor, and praise to God alone. Pride of life will cause the person to boast of what he is, what he has, and what he has done.
5. What is the major and first sin? Do you see pride as the major motivator in the fall of Eve and Adam (and Lucifer in the first place)? Most Bible scholars feel that P R I D E is the major sin behind all other sins, even the gross sins that plague our nation and world. PRIDE is our chief sin! It is at the base of all sins.
6. It is pride that causes the average saved man to blame others when he does not face personal responsibility.
7. It is because of pride that we get angry, answer back, pout, become hostile, clam up, hold grudges, get hurt, and are not willing to reach out in love to others.
8. Pride causes us to be more concerned about ourselves and our personal protection than our potential ministry to others, in humility and meekness.

APPLICATIONS in our struggles with our lusts and pride from within.

We have the power of choice each day. We can choose where we invest our affections and what we make important in our lives. There are several guidelines to keep in mind as you deal with your struggle from within.

1. First, ***keep Christ in first place*** in your life and make Him your ultimate purpose for living. This includes keeping strong in the Word and making much of prayer each day.
2. Second, ***turn off sin's power daily***. The Word of God teaches us that we render sin's power ineffective when we consider or reckon ourselves dead to the impulses and messages from our sin nature. Instead we are to consider ourselves alive and responsive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. There must be a personal confession based on the word of God that could be stated thus: *"I am dead to sin and Satan, but I am alive and responsive to God. I hereby, right now, yield myself to You, Lord, and to Your control over me."* When you are tempted from within or without-- you should be willing to confess this affirmation. It is a powerful way to be on overcomer. (Study Romans 6:1-14.) *We may have to reaffirm this many times a day when temptation comes hot and heavy and Satan is working to defeat.*
3. Third, ***walk in the Spirit***, as an ideal, command, and truth closely connected to step two. What is the result of walking in the Spirit? You will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit will make each one of us sensitive to what we *look at*, what we *desire*, and what moves us in *pride*. (Study Galatians 5:16,17, 22-26.)
4. Fourth, ***meditate in the Scriptures***. This will help you daily experience Romans 12:2b, *"be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Only then will we be able to test and approve what God's will is -- *His good, acceptable and perfect will for us*. As you memorize, meditate on, and apply the Word of God, the Scriptures will actually transform your thought processes, enabling you to live in a way pleasing to God.
5. Fifth, ***take positive action***, doing God's will, not remaining idle, facing the inner struggle of life in victory by God's power.

ADDITIONAL STUDY:

What do the following verses tell us about the world and what is the significance to us?

John 15:19

About the world _____

Significance _____

John 7:7

About the world _____

Significance _____

Galatians 6:14

About the world _____

Significance _____

I John 2:17

About the world _____

Significance _____

Acts 4:27

About the world _____

Significance _____

GUIDING AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Romans 6:11 relate to the struggle within? When did we die in a legal sense?
2. How would you apply Romans 6: 6, 11, 13 and 14 to your personal struggle?
3. Study Hebrews 12:1, 2 and see how this portion of the Word of God relates to this subject in a significant way?
4. How does Hebrews 4:15 assure us that our Savior understands our pressures and sympathizes with us?
5. As you look at Matthew 26:41, what responsibilities are suggested in this verse for resisting temptations?

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

Our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God.
-- Thomas D. Bernard

Sin as a caterpillar is dangerous, but sin as a butterfly is a thousand times worse. If sin in its ugliest form is dangerous, who can know its unmeasured power and influence when it puts on robes of beauty!
--Megiddo Message

Sin in its various forms can be clasped so close we cannot see its face.
-- Richard Trench

You cannot play with sin and overcome it at the same time.
--J. C. Macaulay