

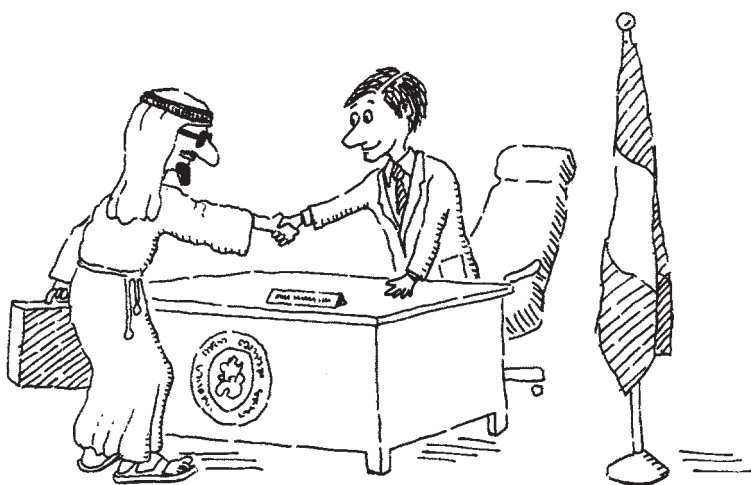
LESSON

4 Problems In Social Relationships

Occasionally we hear about a foreign ambassador who has been called home because of disagreements between his country and the one in which he was serving as his country's representative. There have even been occasions when ambassadors were killed because of such disagreements. Fortunately these stories are not the rule, but the exception. Most of the time, between friendly nations, ambassadors are respected and honored as the authorized representatives of their government, and their own behavior gains honor and respect for their country.

Did you know that you are such an ambassador? You are a citizen of the kingdom of Heaven, and as such, you represent its King, the Lord Jesus Christ, on earth. From the very beginning of human history, God's aim has been to bring humanity back into close relationship with Himself. The amazing truth, however, is that now "he has committed to us the message of reconciliation [bringing back together]. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

It would be much easier for us to deal with problems in our social relationships—at work, at school, in our church, in our neighborhood—if we could keep in focus *who* we are, and *whose* we are! In this lesson we will look at some critical problem areas in the light of our relationship with Christ, and through Him, with others who may not know Him, and who are motivated by selfish desires alone. How are Christians to deal with these problems that are part of our daily experience? The Bible gives very positive guidelines for the ways we should *act* and *react*. Let it speak to your needs as you study this lesson.



lesson outline

Covetousness
Desire for Status
Christian Immaturity
Wealth and Poverty
Injustice

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Evaluate your own attitudes to determine whether you have a problem with covetousness.
- Recognize teachings of Jesus concerning how to overcome the desire for status.
- Find in Ephesians chapters 4 and 5 the solutions for Christian immaturity and write them in a chart.
- Select statements which correctly define sources for achieving maturity in Christ.
- Identify biblical solutions for problems related to wealth and poverty.
- Recognize and correct errors in statements regarding Christian values in relation to money.

- State a principle that should govern the reactions of a Christian who is a victim of injustice.

learning activities

1. Study the lesson according to the instructions given in the learning activities in Lesson 1. Answer each study question before looking at the answer we have given at the end of the lesson.
2. There are many important Scripture references in this lesson. Be sure to read each one carefully in your Bible.
3. Study the key words and their definitions.
4. Take the self-test and check your answers.

keywords

covetousness
deceitfulness
generosity
greed
immaturity

inferiority
injustice
obscene
poverty
profane

self-indulgence
status
steward
superiority
vulgar

lesson development

COVETOUSNESS

Objective 1. *Evaluate your own attitudes to determine whether you have a problem with covetousness.*

We live in a social world. By that I mean that our world is made up of communities of people living, working, playing, and interacting with one another in many ways. Each individual in this world has been given a will of his own. Each has inherited a nature that seems inclined toward selfishness, ambition, the satisfying of personal desires, and the desire to be highly regarded by other individuals. It is no wonder, then, that we create many problems for one another by wrong behavior. One of the greatest problems in our relationships with others is that of *covetousness* or greed—wanting what the other person has. We want someone else’s power, or wealth, or position, or friends, or attractiveness, or talents—we want the best of everything for ourselves, even at the expense of someone else. The last of the Ten Commandments is a strong warning against this:

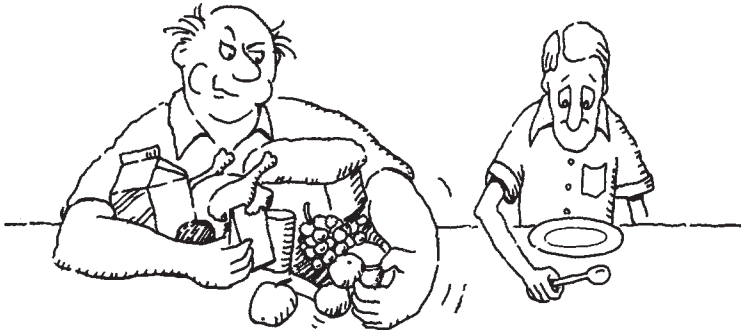
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Exodus 20:17).

Are you always comparing yourself with other people and their accomplishments? This can be helpful in some respects, but it can be harmful if it keeps you in constant turmoil and dissatisfaction. Should you try to keep up with everyone you admire? Not necessarily. You can learn from others, of course. We all do. But at the same time you should be aware of your own limitations and accept yourself as you are. Also be aware of your own strengths and develop them fully. But don’t seek the impossible!

I can enjoy a concert violinist without having to be one, or without resenting the person who is one. I can admire my neighbor’s new house, or car, or bicycle, and rejoice with him without having to have the same thing myself. The Bible teaches that we should “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those

who mourn” (Romans 12:15). Being sorry for someone isn’t hard, but sometimes being glad is, especially if you feel jealous.

The sin of covetousness may lead to other problem-making sins: lying or stealing to get what you want, anger, compromise of your Christian testimony, jealousy, resentment, hatred, revenge, deception. . . . No wonder God included in the Ten Commandments the warning against covetousness.



Application

1 In Lesson 2 we discussed the one possible solution for problems related to covetousness. Can you state what it is, and give the Scripture reference which supports it as a solution?

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2 Test yourself. If you answer YES to any of these questions, you need to apply the problem-solving steps to your problem of covetousness, and ask the Lord to help you turn it into an attitude of love. You may substitute other names wherever we use the name “X” if it fits your situation.

	YES	NO
a I have a friend who seems to have success in everything, and I resent feeling inferior to him.		
b I am unhappy with the talent I have, and I am always wishing I could be as talented as “X.”		
c I am tired of being poor. I wish I had as many nice things as “X.”		

d	I have a right to be jealous of "X," because my employer or supervisor gives him better treatment than I receive.		
e	I am angry with God, because I seem to get the worst of everything, while my friends always seem to have whatever they want or need.		
f	It usually gives me satisfaction when one of my co-workers is scolded for making a mistake.		
g	"X" has something I want so much I can hardly think of anything else.		



DESIRE FOR STATUS

Objective 2. *Recognize teachings of Jesus concerning how to overcome the desire for status.*

Someone has said, "The world has yet to see what could be accomplished for the kingdom of God by someone who is not concerned about getting the credit for it."

It is part of our human nature that we want to be noticed, to receive praise, position, honor, status, recognition, and power. Have you ever had your feelings hurt because you did not get the proper recognition for something you had done? I have. Probably everyone has, at some time or another. Problems occur for the person who is always striving to be at the top, who wants to be in charge and receive the credit for whatever is done. Problems also occur for the person who feels jealousy when someone else gains honor and recognition, or who feels resentment when his own contribution seems to go unnoticed.

But Jesus has the cure for these kinds of hurts, as well as for all the other harmful things that accompany status seeking. The cure is within ourselves. It must be in the attitude with which we serve God.

Jesus knew what was in man (John 2:24-25). He knew of man's tendency to feel jealousy and to desire power. While he was still with His disciples, they had argued about who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). He told them not to be like

the heathen kings who sought power and wanted to lord it over those under them. He said, "Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves" (Luke 22:25-26).

Jesus showed them by His example what He meant by being a servant. At the last Passover supper with His disciples, Jesus washed their feet as one of the slaves would do. At the conclusion of this act, He said,

Do you understand what I have done for you? . . . You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and your Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:12-17).

Application

3 Which of the following statements represent what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples (and us) about seeking status? Circle the letter preceding TRUE statements.

- a** Jesus is the Lord and Master.
- b** He washed the disciples' feet because He wanted to show them how humble He was.
- c** Jesus, as the greatest of all, had done a lowly service by washing their feet.
- d** Even though God might use the disciples in great ways, they were not to look upon themselves as great persons, but as servants and messengers.
- e** They were to establish the practice of washing the feet of those who were under them.
- f** Knowing themselves to be only servants and messengers, the disciples were to do a servant's work for each other.
- g** Jesus promised them a blessing if they would wash each other's feet.
- h** Jesus promised them a blessing if they would be as servants to each other.



There are two lessons we can learn from this that should help us to overcome problems of resentment, pride, and superior or inferior feelings.

1. The person who has a position of leadership should be as one who serves. His position should be a means of exalting Christ, not himself.
2. The person who has a lowly position should fulfill it “as unto the Lord,” remembering that God is in control of his life and will bless him if he maintains a servant attitude even in what may be difficult circumstances. Whatever your position, you are to fill it to the best of your ability.

A life of service without concern for status is really the key to personal contentment and to pleasing the Lord. The desire to be the greatest is a destructive force. It destroys peace. It destroys relationships. It destroys communion with God. True freedom to express Christ fully comes when we are willing to give up our ambition for status in this world. Our real rewards are not in this life: “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (Romans 2:7). He will give glory and honor to those whose ambition is to do good!

Application

- 4 Read Luke 17:5-10. Which of the following statements most clearly expresses what Jesus was teaching in this story?
- a It is natural to want to be honored for the things we do, and we deserve to be given recognition when we make a contribution. That is why we want to succeed.
 - b When we do what the Lord tells us to do we should not look for honor and self-glory, but have the attitude, “We have only done what it was our duty to do.”
 - c We should never give recognition or praise to those who have made a contribution, because this will make them feel too important and superior.
-

Of course it is natural to want to receive approval when we do a good job, but the desire to gain honor and recognition should not be our motive in doing good. On the other hand, the person in a position of leadership can reduce the possibility of problems

by giving credit where it is due. An encouraging word will inspire people to work even harder, and with a more positive attitude.

Not everyone has been called to be a leader. God will not judge you by the level of your position, but by how well you have done what it is *your* duty to do. (See Matthew 25:14-30.)

A well-known song says, “To God be the glory for the things He has done.” Can you also say, “To God be the glory for the things we have done!”?

CHRISTIAN IMMATURITY

Evidences of Immaturity

Objective 3. *Find in Ephesians chapters 4 and 5 the solutions for Christian immaturity and write them in a chart.*

When you became a Christian, you did not lose your humanity, your desires, emotions, needs, or the capability of being hurt. These are feelings we must each struggle with every day in our relationships with others. Overcoming them takes time—it is the process of Christian maturity. I’m sure you must know people, perhaps Christians, who always want to be first in line, who want to be given the best seats, who always feel that they are being slighted, and who will complain until they get the best of whatever is being offered. When things go their way, they are happy. When problems arise, they become unpleasant and moody.

Or perhaps you know Christians who spend most of their time worrying—about their children, about a lack of money, about what will happen when they get old. This is another sign of Christian immaturity.

I know a fine Christian widow who is busy and productive, yet she sometimes struggles with loneliness. Does a mature Christian have battles? The same question could be applied to fear, anxiety, depression, doubt, selfishness, anger, and a host of other very human feelings. Certainly even mature Christians battle every day, but they have learned how to win!

In Ephesians chapters 4 and 5 the apostle Paul deals with evidences of immaturity. You will notice that most of these

evidences have to do with our relationships with other people. Paul is talking to Christians in this Scripture portion. He warns them not to continue to live like the heathen. Then, just in case they did not understand the full meaning of what he was saying, he gave them some specific instructions for ways to gain maturity.

Application

5 Read Ephesians 4 and 5, then complete the chart which follows by deciding first if the problem mentioned is one that you are struggling with. Then in the right column write down all the solutions the apostle Paul gives for each problem. We have listed the solutions below the chart. Find where each one fits and write it in the correct space.

Reference	If I Have This Problem	Then I Must Do This:
Ephesians a 4:25	Lying	
b 4:26	Anger	
c 4:28	Stealing	
d 4:29	Using harmful words	
e 4:30	Doing things that make God's Holy Spirit sad	
f 4:31-32; 5:1-2	Bitterness, passion, anger, shouting, insulting, or any hateful feelings	
g 5:3-5	Even <i>mentioning</i> sexual immorality, indecency, greed, or using language which is obscene, profane, or vulgar	
h 5:6-11	Being led into sin by the ungodly, being deceived by them	
i 5:15-16	Being careless and ignorant in the way I live	
j 5:17	Being foolish	
k 5:18	Drunkenness	



SOLUTIONS (The order is mixed. Find where each one fits on the chart and write it in the correct space. Each solution is taken from Ephesians 4 and 5.)

- 1) Do not make God's Spirit sad.
- 2) Have nothing to do with such people. Expose them.
- 3) Try to find what the Lord wants you to do.
- 4) Fill your mind with praise—give thanks.
- 5) Do not sin. Do not stay angry.
- 6) Be kind. Be tenderhearted. Be forgiving. Be controlled by love.
- 7) Don't be drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 8) Tell the truth.
- 9) Use helpful words that do good.
- 10) Live as a wise person. Make good use of every opportunity.
- 11) Stop stealing and start working. Provide for yourself and help the poor.

The only way to gain Christian maturity is to start doing those things which will help you to mature. Put into practice those solutions which you need to apply in your own life.

Sources for Achieving Maturity

Objective 4. *Select statements which correctly define sources for achieving maturity in Christ.*

Growth does not happen by accident. It is not a result of something God does *to* you while you sit by doing nothing. There are two sources of power for Christian maturity: *God's power*, and your own *will power*.

God's Power. God's power, of course, is the foundation on which your own will power must rest. Trying to be good without first being made new in Christ would never achieve the kind of behavior the apostle Paul recommended in Ephesians 4 and 5. Read Ephesians 4:15-16 again. Notice that Christ is the Head. *Under His control* all the parts of the body fit and work together. In Ephesians 4:23 you see that "your hearts and minds must be made completely new" (TEV). And finally, in Ephesians 6:10 the apostle Paul tells us to "Build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of His mighty power" (TEV).

So it is first of all God's power that gives us the ability really to live for Him and do what we are told to do in Ephesians 4 and 5.

Application

- 6** This is another way of stating the most important step in finding solutions to our problems (see Lesson 2). God will make us completely new when we
- get advice from Christian friends.
 - confess, believe, and obey—solve the sin problem first.
 - try to be good neighbors.
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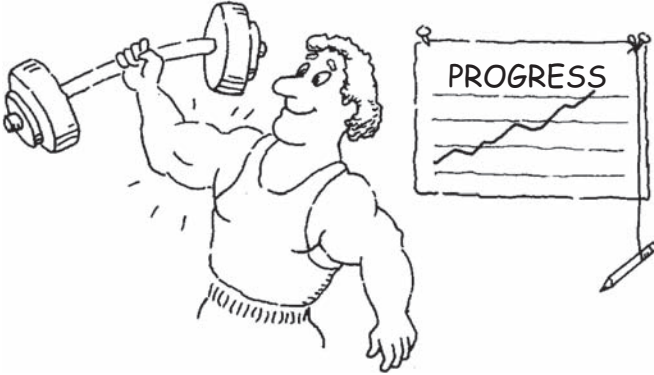
Will Power. Ephesians 4:27 says, “Don’t give the Devil a chance” (TEV). This certainly implies that it is possible to give him a chance. Notice that in Ephesians 4 and 5 there were many instructions for things you must *do*. God has His part, and He will faithfully do it. But if you and I do not do our part we will not grow to maturity, and we may even lose our fellowship with God. We put our own will power into effect by being *obedient* to the instructions given in God’s Word. It is only through obedience that we can reach Christian maturity and overcome the problem of immaturity.

Application

- 7** Circle the letters in front of TRUE statements which define the sources for achieving Christian maturity.
- God’s power to make us completely new does not depend in any way upon our own behavior.
 - We use our own will power to confess Christ, believe that He is our resurrected Lord, and obey His commands.
 - Obedience is possible only because of the power of Christ in us after He makes us completely new.
 - Failure to do our part will keep us from Christian maturity.
 - Obedience is the key to Christian maturity.
 - Problems in a Christian’s life are a sure sign of immaturity.
-

Paul continues in Ephesians 6 to discuss the weapons which we need to fight against immaturity. They are *truth*, *righteousness*, (right living), *readiness to announce the gospel* (our testimony), *faith*, and the *Word of God*. His final instruction is to *pray* (Ephesians 6:18).

Christian maturity involves an ongoing process of spiritual growth. Every time you make a decision to obey God, you progress in your spiritual growth.



WEALTH AND POVERTY

Objective 5. *Identify biblical solutions for problems related to wealth and poverty.*

Money seems like such an innocent thing. It can buy us physical comforts, the necessities of life, and can do good if we allow it to. Yet we are warned in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” The Bible says less about heaven than it does about the deceitfulness of wealth and its terrible temptations.

We have included wealth and poverty as problems in social relationships because people are guilty of doing all kinds of evil acts against one another in order to gain possessions for themselves. This subject is related to our discussion of covetousness (greed) earlier in the lesson. It would be impossible to include here all of the warnings given in Scripture that are related to our desire for wealth and our fear of poverty. But we hope to give you some basic guidelines which will help you to avoid problems associated with money and its effect upon your relationships with others. First we will talk about problems associated with wealth and poverty, and then we will offer biblical solutions to these problems, which all have to do with our *attitudes* toward money and what it will do for us.

Problems Related to Wealth

1. *Wealth enslaves us.* The rich young man who asked Jesus how to get eternal life went away sad, because he was enslaved (bound) by his wealth, and he could not give it up (Matthew 19:16-22). Sometimes instead of having possessions, our possessions have us—all of our time is taken up caring for our possessions or trying to get more.

2. *Wealth gives feelings of superiority.* The worldly way is to hold people in high regard because they are wealthy. Often Christians are guilty of doing the same thing. Because people look upon them with high regard and even awe, those who are wealthy may consider themselves superior to people who are not as wealthy as they are.

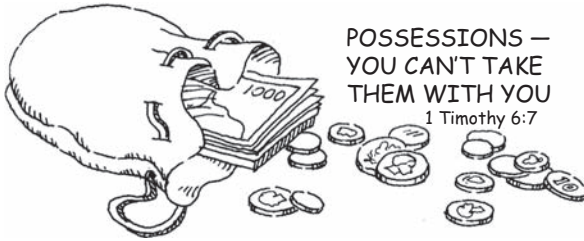
3. *Wealth distorts or changes our values.* It is easy to fall into the trap of valuing riches more than spiritual life. The danger of wealth is the tendency to trust in what money can do instead of what God can do. Money may make you more comfortable physically, but it cannot save you! Wealth is deceitful (Matthew 13:22). Riches do not endure! (Proverbs 27:24). See also Psalm 49:16, 20; Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14; and Luke 12:18-21.

Application

8 Choose the correct completion. The preceding Scriptures reveal that wealth is deceitful because

- a) it seems so enduring, but it is not.
 - b) it can be trusted for what it will do for us.
 - c) it makes us more comfortable physically.
-

4. *Wealth brings about temptation to sin.* A man may be morally upright but be a slave to greed and not recognize it as sin. Ephesians 5:1-6 links greed with idolatry. Greed puts money in the place of God. It causes men to be dishonest in their dealings with other men, and to do other evils such as living in luxury and self-indulgence at the expense of others, or failing to pay honest wages, and has even caused men to condemn and murder other people (see James 5:1-6).



Problems Related to Poverty

Many times poverty is accompanied by real problems. The person with not enough money usually has problems he might consider to be more physical than spiritual. Much of the world is plagued by poverty and the fear of starvation that goes with it.

1. *Worry and fear.* Worry and fear about how we are going to provide for our own or our family's needs is a problem shared by many people, including Christians. We worry about losing our job, becoming ill and unable to work, not having enough money to pay our bills. This is a natural reaction to a very real problem.

2. *Temptation to dishonesty.* The rich and the poor may be bothered by the temptation to gain wealth by dishonesty, but for different reasons. A poor person may make excuses for taking something that belongs to his employer, or a neighbor, or some wealthy person. After all, his need is greater than theirs. But God's commandment covers dishonesty whatever the reason: "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). The greatest dishonesty of all, which is found among both the rich and the poor, is to rob God of what is rightfully His. "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8).

3. *Feelings of inferiority.* Just as the wealthy person may consider himself superior to other men, the poor person is inclined to consider himself inferior, of lower quality than others who have more money. Although this is a very real problem for many people, it is based on wrong values, as we shall see.

4. *Mistaken ideas about God's provision.* For some reason, in spite of all that is said about the dangers of wealth in the Bible, many people get the mistaken idea that godliness is a means to

financial gain (1 Timothy 6:5). They are likely to preach that if you have enough faith you can be rich. Or, if you aren't rich you are failing God in some way. They approach God with the wrong motives, seeking material profit rather than spiritual gain.

The Bible has solutions for all of the problems we have just studied. In the following exercise we are going to give you the opportunity to find for yourself what the Bible has to say about each one.

Application

9 In the left column we have listed the problems mentioned, along with a Scripture which offers a solution to each problem. In the right column we have summarized the solutions you will find in the Scripture passages. Match each solution (right column) with its related Scripture (left column). Write the number of your choice in each blank space.

- | | |
|--|---|
| a <i>Slavery to wealth:</i>
Matthew 19:21-22, 29 | 1) Trust God. Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and He will provide for your daily needs. |
| b <i>Feelings of superiority:</i> James 1:10 | 2) The man of God should run from this, and seek after the things of God. |
| c <i>Changed or distorted values:</i> Luke 12:32-34 | 3) Be thankful for your high position as a son of God and a servant of God. |
| d <i>Temptation to sin:</i>
1 Timothy 6:9-11 | 4) Be concerned about things of eternal value rather than earthly wealth, for your heart is where your treasure is. |
| e <i>Fear and worry:</i>
Matthew 6:25-34 | 5) Godliness is not dependent on how much earthly wealth you have. |
| f <i>Temptation to dishonesty:</i>
Isaiah 33:15-16 | 6) Put Christ and His kingdom first in your life. |
| g <i>Feelings of inferiority:</i>
James 1:9-10 | 7) God will provide your bread and your water. (He will provide whatever you have need of.) |
| h <i>Mistaken ideas about God's provision:</i>
1 Timothy 6:5-8 | 8) See yourself as a servant; take pride not in your money but in your low position. |



Christian Values Concerning Money

Objective 6. *Recognize and correct errors in statements regarding Christian values in relation to money.*

Here are some general guidelines as to the values we should have concerning material possessions. Developing these attitudes will help you to avoid the pitfalls that too much or too little money may cause. Be sure to read all the Scriptures given.

1. *You are a steward of God's money* (Luke 16:1-13). I am firmly convinced that the Christian who is careful to be honest in his dealings concerning money, and who will give back to God the first tenth of his income, will be blessed (see Malachi 3:8-11). God has obligated Himself to provide for our daily needs when we commit our lives to Him. If you seem always to be in need of money to meet your obligations, or if you continually have problems such as unexpected expenses, illness, or loss of work, ask yourself: "Am I a faithful steward of God's money? Do I give back to Him the tenth that I owe Him? Am I trusting Him to provide for my needs?"

2. *God's obligation to provide your needs is based on your total commitment to His kingdom.* God has obligated Himself to provide for everything that we need. In Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus repeatedly tells us: "Do not worry . . ." It would be foolish for me to write in this lesson a solution to problems as simple as "Do not worry" because I have no power to meet your needs. But we have a powerful God who keeps His promises. When He says that if you seek to please Him He will meet your material needs, He has the power to fulfill that promise, *and he will!*

Application

10 Read the following Scriptures, and write the promise or obligation God has made to you in each one.

- a Philippians 4:19
- b Matthew 6:25-34
- c Hebrews 13:5-6



3. *Riches cannot save you.* Wealth will be worthless in the day of judgment (Proverbs 11:4; Matthew 6:19-20).

4. *The gain that should interest the Christian person is godliness and contentment* (Luke 12:15, 1 Timothy 6:6-7).

5. *True values are spiritual, eternal values* (Colossians 3:1-4).

6. *Generosity toward God is the right spirit for both rich and poor.* God does not count only what you give, but what you have left. Jesus said that the poor widow gave more than all the rich people in the temple (Luke 21:1-4). The apostle Paul commended the poor people of Macedonia because they gave out of “overflowing joy and rich generosity” and even gave sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Paul discovered that when he had fully committed his life to Jesus Christ, all things took on new values. The things he had thought were so important before seemed like rubbish. The things pertaining to Christ and His resurrection power became all important (Philippians 3:7-10). Every true believer will find this to be true. We use the things of this world but do not become engrossed in them (1 Corinthians 7:31). It is a joy and privilege to give to God because He has first place in our hearts.

Application

11 Read each of the following statements carefully. There is something wrong with each one of them. Rewrite each statement so that it correctly gives a Christian value concerning money.

a The amount of riches I have now will be of great value to me when I am judged by God.

.....

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b God requires that the rich be good stewards of His money.

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c God has obligated Himself to provide for every need that everyone has.

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d We should put God first in our lives so that He will take care of us.

.....

.....

e Generosity is something that only the rich are expected to have.

.....



INJUSTICE

Objective 7. *State a principle that should govern the reactions of a Christian who is a victim of injustice.*

The problems in social relationships we have discussed up to this point have to do more with our own attitudes and behavior. Now we want to talk about a problem that we have all faced, and over which we have little or no control. That is the problem of *injustice*: when someone treats you badly, or wrongly, and you didn't deserve it

For example, suppose you have a business dealing with a Christian brother and he takes advantage of you, then refuses to make it right. Suppose you work hard at your job and do more than your employer requires, and your immediate supervisor takes credit for the extra work. Or perhaps you have done a good job, and a jealous co-worker reports that you have been careless or lazy in your work. Or a friend who was caught cheating in school tells the teacher you were cheating too, even though you weren't. Perhaps someone who is less qualified than you has been promoted to a higher position and you felt you deserved the promotion.

I'm sure you can think of many other occasions when injustice has been performed against you. The important question is: How did you react? Did you become angry, say hateful things to the one who had wronged you, withdraw, feel sorry for yourself, or complain to everyone who would listen? It is natural to want to stand up for your own "rights"— those things that you have a right to have, or be. How should a Christian respond in such circumstances? What is the Christian solution to injustice?

I have a friend named Paul who was a policeman when he became a Christian. Immediately his life was filled with joy, and he wanted to share his experience in Christ with everyone he met. Nothing could change his joyful attitude—except the police sergeant who was over him. My friend would go to work in the morning with a song in his heart, only to be greeted by a sour, mean, critical, unhappy sergeant who seemed determined to make life miserable for Paul. Paul’s reaction was to become silent, to burn with anger inside but say nothing, to think of ways he could “get even” with his supervisor. But one morning the thought suddenly occurred to Paul: “Why am I allowing *him* to take away my joy and victory? His bad attitude is *his* problem, not mine! I am going to rejoice in the Lord no matter what the sergeant does to me!” As a result, Paul began to show love and compassion to him, and eventually won him as a good friend.

My friend, Paul, had learned the truth contained in this Scripture:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).

This Scripture emphasizes what we said at the beginning of this lesson: We are ambassadors of Christ, His representatives to the world. Our own good behavior will gain honor and respect for our heavenly Father and for His kingdom.

There are times, of course, when it may be possible to correct an injustice caused by a misunderstanding. But whenever an injustice occurs, you can react in a Christlike way, recognizing that the problem is not *yours*, but someone else’s, and that you have a heavenly Father who cares for you and who will give you victory in your heart. Sometimes He may allow you to bear the injustice, but He will use it to work for your eternal good!

Application

12 State a principle that should govern the reactions of a Christian who is a victim of injustice.

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I can think of no better conclusion to this lesson than to urge you to read Romans chapter 12 very prayerfully and carefully. If you have a modern English translation of the Bible, use that one. This chapter gives in a few verses complete instructions for those who want to have a right relationship with God and with their fellowmen. Read it often, and let it be a guide for all your relationships.

Application

13 Now before you take the self-test, review the various problems in social relationships. Make a list of any problems given that you are presently experiencing. Then refer to Lessons 1–3 and apply Christian principles for problem solving to find a solution for each problem. Be sure your solution is supported by Scripture. Our purpose in making this assignment is to help you make a personal application of the principles taught in this course, so that you may receive spiritual benefit. We trust that you will approach the assignment with a sincere desire to find solutions for possible problem areas in your life.



In our next lesson we will discuss problems in family relationships. This, too, is an area of vital concern to every Christian. May the Lord bless you as you continue your study.

self-test

MULTIPLE CHOICE. There is one best answer for each question. Circle the letter in front of the answer you choose.

- 1 Covetousness is
 - a) being dishonest.
 - b) comparing yourself with others.
 - c) wanting what someone else has.
 - d) trying to be best.
- 2 Jesus washed His disciples' feet to show them they should have a ministry of
 - a) service to one another.
 - b) leadership.
 - c) great importance.
 - d) high status.
- 3 What provides the foundation for Christian maturity?
 - a) Confession.
 - b) Will power.
 - c) Building up your strength.
 - d) God's power.
- 4 Which of these is NOT a problem usually associated with wealth?
 - a) Feelings of superiority.
 - b) Feelings of inferiority.
 - c) Distorted values.
 - d) Temptation to sin.
- 5 Wealth is deceitful because riches do not
 - a) endure.
 - b) satisfy.
 - c) bring happiness.
 - d) make you feel important.
- 6 The solution to covetousness is love, because love
 - a) is not proud.
 - b) trusts.
 - c) is patient.
 - d) does not envy.
- 7 The Christian will not seek personal status and recognition if he sees his position as a means of
 - a) gaining power.
 - b) exalting Christ.
 - c) remaining humble.
 - d) being lowly.

- 8** To be a good steward of God's money you must
- a) get as much as you can.
 - b) have everything you want.
 - c) sell everything you have and give to the poor.
 - d) put God's kingdom first and give with generosity.
- 9** God's obligation to provide your needs is based on
- a) His power to do it.
 - b) the importance of your needs.
 - c) your total commitment to His kingdom.
 - d) whether or not you worry about them.
- 10** The Christian solution to injustice is to
- a) take the injustice in a Christ-like way, and trust God to give you victory over it.
 - b) pray that God will punish the person who wronged you.
 - c) stand for your own rights.
 - d) get even with the one who wronged you.

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the answer is TRUE, and write **F** if it is FALSE.

- **11** Jesus taught that the one who serves should be like the one who rules.
- **12** The amount of effort a person should give to a job depends on how important the job is.
- **13** A true servant attitude is one that says, "I have only done what it was my duty to do."
- **14** It is wrong to praise someone for doing a good job.
- **15** The mature Christian is free from problems.
- **16** The best way to gain Christian maturity is to start doing those things which will help you to mature.
- **17** God has given us many things that we must do to obtain Christian maturity.
- **18** We put our will power into effect by being obedient.
- **19** A danger of wealth is that we may trust it instead of God.
- **20** If you have enough faith you can be rich.

answers to study questions

- 7 a False.
b True.
c True.
d True.
e True.
f False. (Some problems may be, but certainly not all of them.)
- 1 The solution is LOVE and the Scripture is 1 Corinthians chapter 13. (Love is patient, kind, rejoices with the truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, is not proud, rude, self-seeking, or easily angered, and *does not envy*, boast, keep a record of wrongs, delight in evil, or fail.)
- 8 a) it seems so enduring, but it is not.
- 2 Did your answers reveal any problem with covetousness in your life? If so, I advise you to go through the steps in problem solving with an honest desire to correct this problem and develop right attitudes. These steps are given in Lesson 3.
- 9 a 6) Put Christ first . . .
b 8) See yourself as a servant . . .
c 4) Be concerned about eternal value . . .
d 2) The man of God should run . . .
e 1) Trust God . . . He will provide . . .
f 7) God will provide . . .
g 3) Be thankful for your high position as a son and a servant of God.
h 5) Godliness is not dependent on earthly wealth.
- 3 a True.
b False.
c True.
d True.
e False.
f True.
g False.
h True.
- 10 a He will meet all your needs.
b If you put His kingdom first in your life, He will provide all the things that you need.
c He will never leave you nor forsake you.
- 4 Answer **b** correctly expresses what Jesus was teaching. The other two statements both represent opposing and wrong attitudes.

- 11 a** The amount of riches I have will be of *no* value to me when I am judged by God.
- b** God requires that both the rich and the poor be good stewards of His money.
- c** God has obligated Himself to meet all the needs of those who put His kingdom first in their lives.
- d** We should put God first in our lives and then *trust* Him to take care of us.
- e** All Christians, both rich and poor, should have a spirit of generosity.
- 5 a** 8) Tell the truth.
- b** 5) Do not sin. Do not stay angry.
- c** 11) Stop stealing, start working. Provide for yourself and help the poor.
- d** 9) Use helpful words that do good.
- e** 1) Do not make God's Spirit sad.
- f** 6) Be kind. Be tenderhearted. Be forgiving. Be controlled by love.
- g** 4) Fill your mind with praise—give thanks.
- h** 2) Have nothing to do with such people. Expose them.
- i** 10) Live as a wise person. Make good use of every opportunity.
- j** 3) Try to find what the Lord wants you to do.
- k** 7) Don't be drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 12** Your answer. It should include this thought: A Christian can react in a Christlike way to any injustice by remembering that he is a representative of His heavenly Father, who cares for him.
- 6 b)** confess, believe, and obey—solve the sin problem first.
- 13** Your answer.

