

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 16

The Christian's Behavior Toward Himself

AIM: to teach my pupils that they should be aware that they can behave either well or badly toward themselves and how to behave properly toward themselves.

POINT OF CONTACT: (Teacher: Attach string to a piece of chalk. With this you will be able to draw circles on the chalkboard. Draw one large circle and within this circle draw other circles, each diminishing in size. The most central circle will be quite small. Remind your pupils that they have been studying Christian behavior lessons. Starting with the outside circle, they could label each circle according to the lessons. Say, "We have thought about the Christian's behavior toward BUSINESS, while meeting NEW PEOPLE, toward his CIRCLE OF ACQUAINTANCES, while at CHURCH, etc. We have come to the very center of the Christian's life, and that is he himself." The middle circle should be labeled, "CHRISTIAN.")

INTRODUCTION: Life is one long series of development steps. When a Christian was an infant, he learned to walk, to talk, to feed himself. It was as if he were climbing tall hills while learning these skills. After he learned these skills, it was as if he walked out on a plateau, using these abilities before he climbed more hills, thus becoming accomplished in new ways. While he was becoming accomplished in these skills, he was also learning his relationship with his parents, other members of his family, acquaintances, his Sunday school teacher, his country, etc. He was learning that certain standards had been set by God for Christian people to keep. He had to know that in every area of life there should be personal goals for him to reach. We have learned how a Christian ought to behave toward people around him—some very close to him, others more remote in their relationships to him. Coming from the most outside perimeter of his life and working in toward the center, our lessons have brought us to the Christian himself. We will consider in this lesson how a Christian ought to behave toward himself.

A Christian ought to convince himself of the truth of Hebrews 12:1. Any thought, any physical habit, any desire, any idea or ideal which would pull on him and keep him from freely living his life as he ought to live it is a "weight." He needs to lay it aside. He needs to behave properly toward himself. Every division of a Christian—his spirit, his mind, and his body—needs to be considered as he seeks to realize fulfillment of the purpose of his life. Our lesson for this week defines what weights should be set aside and what freedoms should be incorporated within the life of every Christian as he determines how he ought to behave toward himself.

- I. HOW A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO BEHAVE TOWARD HIS SPIRIT. Every Christian has a spirit. When Nicodemus asked Jesus to be his Saviour, he received this spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. Whenever anyone accepts Jesus, he is born again. He receives a new man within him; he receives his own spirit, John 3:3-7; II Corinthians 5:17. It is to our spirit that the Holy Spirit communicates, Romans 8:16.
1. A Christian needs to nourish his spirit, the new man. He needs to have a strong spirit that would force away evil and would bring his body and mind into subjection to God's way, I Corinthians 9:27; I Peter 1:13-15.
    - 1) The Christian needs to work on having his spirit remain alert and sensitive to God. Do you remember the story of young Samuel? I Samuel 3. Eli told Samuel to listen for the Voice and to answer when he heard Him again.
    - 2) The Christian needs to work on having his spirit retain what it learns. Read I Samuel 3:19. Everything that Samuel's spirit heard from God, he retained and used.
    - 3) The Christian needs to work on giving his spirit the uppermost place of importance. Ephesians 4:24 instructs Christians that they are to be conscious of the new man—they are to "wear" him, they are to "put on" the new man.
  2. A Christian needs to listen to the new man and ignore the old man.
    - 1) The old man does not like to listen to instruction for right. This makes him admit that he is worthy of criticism.
    - 2) The old man does not like to remember instruction for right. The instruction keeps him from enjoying the doing, thinking, and acting of wrong.

## II. HOW A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO BEHAVE TOWARD HIS MIND.

1. He should feed his mind with humility, I Peter 5:5-7. He should remind himself that whatever he is that is right and good is only because of Jesus working in and through him. He should drive pride and a desire for personal attention from his mind.
  - 1) No Christian should ever seek glory for himself. He should be willing to give glory to others, however, Galatians 5:26; Philippians 2:3.
  - 2) Every Christian should be willing to humble himself in order that the work of Christ might be done. Jesus humbled Himself to the most extreme degree when He stripped Himself of His majesty and glory to take upon Himself the body and the position of a human being. This included dying the death of shame in order to do the work for which He had come to earth, Philippians 2:5-8.
  - 3) Every Christian should remember that it is not because of his own desire to do right that he does right, Philippians 2:13.
2. He should feed his mind with the things which God tells Him to fill it, Philippians 4:8. Let us notice what should go into the Christian's mind.
  - 1) The facts of the news.
  - 2) The facts which have been assigned for learning as part of his education.
  - 3) The words of the Bible.
  - 4) The words of instruction from his parents and any others in authority.
  - 5) The words of good report about people.
  - 6) The words of praise to God.
  - 7) Thoughts about beautiful flowers, lovely landscapes, etc. Beauty brings peace and relaxation.
  - 8) Sounds of good music. Songs about Jesus help the Christian to live right and to rejoice in his salvation. Classical music is good for the processes of the mind as well as for enjoyment.
3. He should guard his mind against sinful thoughts.
  - 1) To think thoughts of foolishness or folly is sin. Folly is defined as "having a lack of good sense." (Folly could also indicate filthy thoughts.) A Christian should possess God's wisdom; he is commanded to ask for wisdom, Proverbs 1:5; 23:19; James 1:5.
  - 2) To dwell on bad thoughts is sin. The Psalmist prayed, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD..." Psalm 19:14. As soon as a bad thought crosses a Christian's mind, he should say, "Go away, Devil. I am to resist you." See James 4:7. The Christian might also be aware of the fact that the reason a bad thought crosses his mind is because there is willful sin his life. He should then pray a quick prayer of confession and ask the Lord to give him strength against such thoughts.
  - 3) To read books or other materials which contain swearing and dirty language is sin. Bad thoughts and memories come from such reading matter. Not even a teacher in school should insist that Christians feed their minds with garbage—dirty, sexual language or cursing words. Such a matter should be handled courteously, but firmly. A Christian should have such control over his mind as to be able to put away from him any reading matter which is bad in case he has already begun to read such material without having realized what it contains.
  - 4) To watch corrupt or suggestive television programs is sin. The Christian's mind should be strong enough to say to the viewer, "That is wrong to watch. Turn off the television set." Whatever a person watches as well as hears makes a profound impression upon the mind.
4. He should keep his mind from becoming frustrated. This is commanded by God.
  - 1) He should guard against worry, Philippians 4:6, 7.
  - 2) He should have a schedule and work the schedule. Concentrate on one thing at a time. Do it well. Do it with "singleness of heart." Look at three very interesting verses: Acts 2:46; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22. Singleness is a freedom from duplicity. As well as there is a lack of hypocrisy in these recorded actions, so there is a concentration upon one principle purpose.
5. He should keep his mind edified. I Corinthians 14:26 says that all things should be done unto edifying. Everything that enters into the mind of a person should be to the end that the person will

be helped; he will be built up. A good test that a Christian could give to anything that he plans to allow to enter his mind would be: Will it really help me, or will it hurt me?

III. HOW A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO BEHAVE TOWARD HIS BODY. A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 6:19. A Christian's body is the property of God, I Corinthians 6:20. A Christian's body is part of the whole body of Christ, I Corinthians 6:15. A Christian, therefore, is answerable to God for whatever he does or does not do for his body. Paul said that he magnified Christ through his body, Philippians 1:20.

1. A Christian ought to keep his body clean and properly groomed, I Corinthians 11:14, 15; Hebrews 10:22.
2. A Christian ought to keep his body properly clothed, Deuteronomy 22:5; I Timothy 2:9.
3. A Christian ought to guard his body's durability—its ability to function well and long. A Christian ought to be a vessel unto honour, set aside for the Master's use, good enough to be used in His service, II Timothy 2:21.
  - 1) A Christian ought to keep out of his body anything that is poisonous. Poison includes not only those substances which manufacturers label as POISON, but it also includes strong liquor (beer, wine, whiskey, any intoxicating beverage), tobacco, and narcotics. No body can function properly nor be free from any weakening wrongs while it is being fed alcohol, nicotine, or narcotics.
  - 2) A Christian ought to eat only the right kind of food in the right quantities, Proverbs 23:20, 21. Food is a source of energy, strength, muscle tone, healthy blood and teeth, etc. Good food builds resistance to disease germs and helps keep the organs operating properly. If the body is not well, a Christian cannot serve God as he ought to serve Him; he cannot stay awake, he cannot work as he needs to work, he cannot get out and witness, he cannot even go to church services regularly. I Corinthians 10:31 commands the Christian to consider his eating or drinking—whether it is done to the glory of God.
  - 3) A Christian ought to get the right amount of rest. (A Christian ought not to be sleeping, however, when God requires activity or prayer, Proverbs 6:9; 10:5; 20:13; Matthew 26:41.) He ought to do nothing to hinder good, restful sleep. Eating just before bedtime hinders the digestive system from functioning properly as well as it hinders complete relaxation in sleep. Whenever a Christian has sound wisdom and good discretion, restful sleep can follow, Proverbs 3:24. Whenever a Christian is trusting the Lord as he ought to trust Him, his sleep is refreshing, Psalm 3:5. Jesus could sleep during a storm; Peter could sleep in prison while he was chained to two guards.
  - 4) A Christian ought to get the right amount of exercise. People are becoming more and more aware of the fact that the right amount of exercise daily actually prolongs a person's productive life. The Bible says bodily exercise is of some profit, I Timothy 4:8.
  - 5) A Christian ought to keep the room where he is working, relaxing, or sleeping at the right temperature. For efficiency and for good health, this ought to be done.

CONCLUSION: While being sure that the Holy Spirit and the Bible are his guide, the Christian should be sure that he is the master over his mind and his body. The Christian would want to be sure that it is his spirit, his new man, that is his master.