



Keys to Happy Family Living

Christian Living Series

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Lesson 2 – Personal Peace (Part II)

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." John 14:27 NASB.

Adequate parenthood requires persons who are at peace with themselves. Lesson 1 gave two steps that will lead you toward personal peace. This lesson is a continuation of Lesson 1.

Proper desires

It is good for us to set goals for ourselves. The Lord Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). It makes a difference what you put first, what you desire. Consider Mark 10:35-45. James and John asked Christ for help in attaining a certain goal, a position for themselves. Christ, in reply, stated His own goal, saying, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-25:

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Desires from a willing heart

Your reason for what you do is as important to you as the act. The character of your service determines whether you will "love yourself." Many Christians are not joyful Christians because of the character of their obedience to the Lord. They say, "Yes, Lord," and obey, but are like the little boy who insisted on standing up on the seat while riding in the automobile. His mother kept urging him to sit down. Finally, with a frowning face he obeyed. Noticing that his mother was not too well pleased, he said, "Well, you told me to sit down, and I did. I'm sitting down on the outside, but inside I'm standing up!"

God's promise to Israel long ago has a message for us today: "If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land" (Isaiah 1:19, emphasis added).

Paul says:

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

In 1 Timothy 6:11 the apostle says, "...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness."

Desires pleasing to God

Daniel lived in an environment where all around him people were eating, drinking, and making merry. However, the record states:

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).

If Daniel had secretly longed for the king's meat and wine, his abstinence would have been hypocrisy and deceit. Our desires must be pleasing to God, even though everyone else has other desires. Our standard is the Bible, not what others do.

David asks the question and then answers it:

"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Psalm 24:3-5).

During high school days, a young man was an outstanding leader in church activities. He always said the right thing and went to the right places. To everyone's surprise, this young man quit following after spiritual things during his college days, even though he attended a Christian institution. He began indulging in activities frowned upon by his church. He discontinued going to church, to Bible study meetings and youth rallies. The reason? He said his heart had never been in his church activities. Now he was doing what he had always longed to do. How much happier he would have been if he had really known Christ! Your desires need to be in accord with your words and actions if you wish to find inner peace.

Proper feelings and thoughts

Desires, feelings, and thoughts go hand in hand. For example, God's rule concerning the act of Christian giving is recorded in 2 Corinthians 9:7:

"Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

God says concerning prayer, "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Psalm 145:18). On the other hand, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

The outer man must agree with the inner man

There is much social pressure that requires you to look happy, to act as if you were happy, to be polite, to do the acceptable thing. Of course we should do these things. However, the outer man must agree with the inner man. The Christian is concerned, not only with his tone of voice, but with what is in the heart as well. The Christian is concerned, not only with how he acts, but with how he feels. James says:

"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic" (James 3:14-15, emphasis added).

To illustrate, a certain woman is a very friendly person, easy to talk to, likable. Consequently, she is always invited to the neighbors' homes for coffee. Friends often ask her to drive them somewhere. The church is always asking her to do special tasks. Her husband frequently brings guests home. But behind her friendly manner are her dislike of people and her resentment because she feels that she is being imposed upon. The people who call upon her surely benefit from her services and her friendliness. She is the loser. The conflict between her acting and her feeling may cause her to become ill.

An official of the famed Mayo Clinic, Dr. Edward Rynearson, made the statement that seven out of ten persons who see a doctor "have symptoms but not actual organic diseases." He says a symptom is usually related to tension caused by conflict between the inner and the outer man.

Dr. O. Spurgeon English, of Temple University, Department of Psychiatry, points out that the emotions can affect blood nourishment, glandular functions, or muscle tones. Most laymen think of pain as originating *only* from such causes as broken bones, bruises, ulcers, inflammation, or infections. They think their discomfort must come from a condition which can be diagnosed by x-ray or other laboratory methods. Dr. English has found that anxiety, hostility, guilt, jealousy, anger, frustration, worry, rage, resentment, and envy are some of the emotions that can cause such problems as disorders of the gastrointestinal tract, disorders of the heart, disorders of the skin, headaches. A glance at his list of emotions reminds one of the works of the flesh, listed in Galatians 5:19-26, or passages such as Ephesians 4:31-32 and James 3:14-18. Note also the fruit of the Spirit of God in these verses, that is, the proper inner reaction toward others.

Your goal—a wholesome response

An adequate estimate of yourself requires proper feelings. Words and deeds without

appropriate desires and feelings behind them leave you cold, dissatisfied with yourself; and, hence, keep you from a proper love of your neighbor.

Each of us has his own private world of thoughts. The questions are often asked: "What do you think of that person?" "What do you suppose he meant?" "What did you think of the sermon?" Such questions illustrate that you hold the key of the gate to your thoughts. No one can share your thoughts without your consent. In order for you to have a sense of wholesomeness, you must experience wholesome thinking.

We come back to "the great commandment" (Matthew 22:37). If we love God wholly, we want to do things His way. The promise is that, if you "let your requests be made known to God ... the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). When our minds and hearts are in tune with God, our thinking will be wholesome.

A reporter tells of a reaction common to many. While covering a dog show, he approached an official for a press pass, explaining that he wanted to write an article about the show. The official delivered a brief, snarling lecture on the subject of people who expect to get into dog shows free, unless they are showing dogs. Then he asked, "Are you showing dogs?" "No, I am not!" replied the reporter. The official abruptly turned his back, leaving an astonished and overwhelmed reporter. Immediately the newsman began to think of things he should have said. Sharp-edged retorts leaped into his mind. He fancied a much more successful comeback that included sidestepping an irate, lunging official and flooring him with a neat right to the jaw. He had thought himself into a sweat before something else took his attention.

How different was Christ's example! After being beaten, spat upon, mocked, and crucified, He called upon God, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Peter said of the Lord Jesus, "...and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Feelings and thoughts have to do with the inner man. They need not show. As the psalmist says, "His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords" (Psalm 55:21).

Your goal ought to be such that your response to the unexpected situation, the unfair, unreasonable situation, will be a wholesome, positive one -- "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

When you achieve this goal, you will find that your thoughts will conform to the exhortation of Philippians 4:8:

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

Summary

Proper words, proper actions, proper desires, proper feelings, proper thoughts are the ingredients that give you a sense of personal wholesomeness. These qualities are necessary in order that you might love your neighbor--as yourself.

Study Assignment for Lesson 2

Look up each Scripture verse referred to in Lesson 2.

Add to the lists you made for Lesson 1 the truths emphasized in Lesson 2.

Read thoughtfully Philippians 4:8-9. Meditate on this Scripture passage.

Ask yourself:

1. What kind of example should I be?
2. What thoughts should occupy my mind this week?
3. What promise is given for me to rely on?
4. What weakness do I see in my life?
5. What new truth have I learned from Philippians 4:8-9?

PERSONAL EVALUATION TEST I

Instructions

The personal evaluation test below is the first of six such tests in the course. These are intended to help you determine whether or not you are practicing in life what the course teaches.

After completing each test, click to the associated answer sheet and check your answers. You will find it beneficial to review any points you miss. Look up the page listed after each question and re-read the section carefully to find where you failed to measure up.

Check Up on Your Personal Peace

Answer Yes or No in the space provided.

- _____ 1. I always speak kindly about those who hurt me.
- _____ 2. I speak gently to my child when he has an accident.
- _____ 3. I believe that "a soft answer turns away wrath."
- _____ 4. I use a soft answer to turn away wrath.
- _____ 5. I am happy to have people know what I say about them behind their backs.
- _____ 6. Everything I have done today could be looked upon as an act of worship.
- _____ 7. My standard of living is the Bible.
- _____ 8. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to give me victory over frustration, jealousy and anger.
- _____ 9. When my child screams, I scream back.
- _____ 10. I sometimes feel ashamed of what I have said.
- _____ 11. I am holding a grudge against someone.
- _____ 12. I retaliate when someone offends me.

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

Self-Check Test 2

How much can you remember?

Use these questions for reviewing your lesson.

In the space provided, mark the following statements "True" or "False."

- _____ 1. The important thing is to set goals for ourselves regardless of what they are.
- _____ 2. God wants His desires to be our desires.
- _____ 3. Our standards should be formed from our observations of other true Christians.
- _____ 4. If we are to please God in His service, our heart must be in our work.

- _____ 5. How a person feels in his heart is as important as how he acts.
- _____ 6. Such emotions as guilt, jealousy, anger, and worry can cause physical disorders.
- _____ 7. Love, joy, peace, patience and self-control are proper reactions to anger, anxiety, etc.
- _____ 8. Good deeds done for a neighbor are valid if accompanied by appropriate desires and feelings.
- _____ 9. When we are at peace with our neighbors, our thinking will be wholesome.
- _____ 10. Unfair, unexpected situations should be met with wholesome, positive feelings and thoughts.

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

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