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Lesson 1

Acceptance & Rejection

Jason was a young teenager with major emotional problems. He had been on drugs, in and out of juvenile court, and was often in trouble. He was a loner and had virtually no friends. One of the worst parts of the day was lunch. He always sat at the same table in the school cafeteria, not with kids that were friends that he could talk to, but with kids that were neutral and at least didn't reject him. One day there was just one seat left at that table, but when he went to sit down, the class bully kicked the chair away and told the other kids to spread out their elbows and not let Jason get in. Jason eventually shoved his way in and later, for a reason not relevant to this part of the story, got suspended for three days.

1. Are you ever the bully? In what way? Are you ever like the kids who spread their elbows? How? When? Do you ever feel like Jason? When? Why?

2. Thinking of the kids at the table, why are Christians so often afraid to speak out and take a stand for what is right? Are you willing to tell someone he is drinking too much? That he has a problem with anger? That he is a hypocrite?

3. Are you willing to stand up for what is true? For what you know is right? Speak out when someone in your group, possibly even the leader, is going in the wrong direction? (Mark 2:15-17) Be careful that you are not overly judgmental.

4. When Jesus went back to Capernaum, he was rejected (Mark 2:15-17). Why? Do we sometimes reject someone we know too well? Are we sometimes rejected because we are too well known? What can or should we do about this tendency?

5. What hinders us from listening and learning from the people we know well?

6. Jesus was also rejected by the Pharisees for his radical teaching. Many people continue to reject it today. Why do some people accept his teaching and others not? (John 12:37-50, especially 12:42-43)

7. You're on a missions trip. The leader has a heart for Christ but, you soon learn, the brain of a hamster. You a) bail out as soon as possible, b) make the most of it, c) vow to never go on another trip with that organization, d) speak to the leader, e) talk to the other participants about the idiot leader, or f)_____.

Lesson 2 Suffering

1. Is suffering universal, i.e., do we all suffer? (Ezekiel 21:4, John 16:33) A) Yes, everyone suffers. B) Most people suffer, but some do not.

2. It seems that some people suffer more than others. Why is this? (Isaiah 55:8-9, Psalm 73:16-17, 135:6) A) They were bad and God is punishing them. B) It is God's will, but not his punishment. C) You sow what you reap. D) They were in the wrong place at the wrong time. E) It is random chance. F) No one knows.

3. Does the Lord sometimes desert you in your suffering? (Isaiah 41:10, Lamentations 3:19-24, Philippians 4:6-7) After all, if God deserted Jesus (briefly) when he was dying on the cross, why wouldn't he desert you? (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)

4. Is it sometimes good to suffer? Is there a benefit to it? Are there reasons for suffering? (Psalm 119:71, Romans 5:3-4, James 1:2-4, John 9:1-3)

5. Could God possibly allow some pain and suffering to get your attention? (Psalm 94:12, 119:71)

6. In addition to getting your attention, do you think God might allow suffering as part of his refining process? (Job 23:10, 33:14-20, Psalm 66:10, Proverbs 17:3, Isaiah 48:10)

7. Have you personally experienced suffering as part of God's refining process? How? When? Did it work? Did it last or is it something that God must repeat over and over? Why?

Lesson 3 Faith and Deeds

1. In James 2:14, James speaks of a person having faith without deeds and asks, “Can such faith save him?” Can it?

2. From a worldly perspective, why is it important to have deeds along with faith?

3. What does Jesus say about faith and works? (Matthew 7:26-27)

4. Proper motivation is important in understanding the value of our works. What are we being asked to do and why? (1 John 3:16-18)

5. Explain the meaning of James 2:18. (How can you show your faith without deeds?)

6. Doesn't James 2:18 contradict Paul in Romans 3:28 when he writes “man is justified (saved) by faith without the deeds (works) of the law”

7. What is the point of James 2:19? (Is only believing—or faith—enough?)

8. What do you think of Paul's description of our job and compensation package in 2 Corinthians 5:10, Colossians 3:23-24, and Titus 3:8. Are you motivated?

9. Think about:
 - A. Improper motives that get you involved in doing good works.
 - B. Excuses you have given the Lord for not being more involved in His service.

Lesson 4 Self-Control

1. How does the Bible speak of self-control as a Christian trait in a positive way? (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 2:2, 5-6, 11-12)
2. What does Peter say follows from self-control? (2 Peter 1:5-8) Is Peter qualified to write about this trait?
3. How is the lack of self-control spoken of in the Bible? (Proverbs 25:28, 2 Timothy 3:1-5)
4. Are you born with self-control? Are you taught self-control? (Jeremiah 35:6) What is another way that self-control enters your life? (Galatians 5:5, 16, 22-23)
5. The Bible tells us many reasons to have self-control. What are some of them?
 - A. _____(Proverbs 16:32, 29:11)
 - B. _____(1 Cor 7:3-5, 1 Thess 4:3-4)
 - C. _____(1 Thess 5:6-8)
 - D. _____(1 Peter 4:7)
 - E. _____(1 Peter 5:8-9)
 - F. _____(Psalm 39:1-2)
6. With which one or two of these six reasons for having self-control do you have the most trouble? Why? Has this changed over time?
7. Do you think that God realizes that self-control might be difficult for us? Is he willing to help us in this area? What do we have to do to gain his aid? (1 Cor 10:13b, James 4:7-8a)

Lesson 5 Ambition

1. In the dictionary, the word “ambition” has two primary meanings: a) an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power and b) a desire to achieve a particular end. What’s the difference between these two meanings? Is having ambition good or bad?

2. What does God think about the first kind of ambition? (Genesis 11:5-8)

3. What is the motivation behind this first kind of ambition? (Ecclesiastes 4:4)

4. What is often the result of this type of ambition? (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

5. How did Jesus respond to the ambition of Zebedee’s sons and their mother? Why were the other disciples indignant? (Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45)

6. When does honorable ambition become dishonorable?

7. How does our culture follow the Gentile pattern of leadership? (Matthew 20:25)

8. What does God say should be the pattern of our ambition? (Proverbs 16:1, 19:21, Joshua 1:8, James 4:13-16, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

Lesson 6 Arrogance

1. To be “arrogant” (adj) means exaggerating one’s own worth or importance in an unpleasantly overpowering manner; being excessively proud, haughty or lordly. “Arrogance” (noun) means a feeling of superiority demonstrated in an overbearing manner. Antonyms would include humble (humility) and unassuming.

Arrogance is an outlook that says:

- What I achieve is because of me.
- I am strong and need no one’s help.
- When I achieve something good, the credit belongs to me.

Humility is an outlook that says:

- What I achieve is due to God’s grace.
- I am weak and need God’s help.
- When I achieve something good, the credit belongs to God.

2. What does God think about arrogance?

3. Why else does the Bible say that arrogant pride is dangerous?

4. Lon Solomon, Senior Pastor at the McLean Bible Church said “I am convinced that arrogance is the ‘mother sin’ of every other sin.” Do you believe that? Can you think of an example? How would arrogance relate to adultery? To coveting things belonging to your neighbor? To worshiping an idol?

5. Can good people be arrogant or proud? (Matthew 26:31-35, Mark 10:35-37) How was Peter arrogant? Does God forgive arrogance? How can we be forgiven?

6. How can we protect ourselves against arrogance? A. Give God the credit for what you achieve. (1 Corinthians 15:9-10) B. Surround yourself with honest friends who will point out your arrogance. (Proverbs 27:6) C. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. (Romans 12:3) Compare yourself with the right standard, which is what?

Lesson 7 Approaching God

1. Does God ask us to seek him or is it man's idea to seek God? (Isaiah 55:6-9, Amos 5:4-6, Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9, James 4:8a)

2. In approaching God, does the Father attract and draw us to himself or does he wait for us to take the initiative to seek him? (John 6:35, 40, 44, especially 6:44)

3. How did Jesus tell us that we should approach the Father? (John 14:6, Romans 5:2, Ephesians 3:12, 1 Peter 3:18. See especially NLT, CEV or Worldwide English translations.)

4. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in approaching the Father? (Eph 2:17-18)

5. To approach God and have him accept us, we must do four things:

A) _____ (Romans 5:2, Hebrews 11:6)

B) _____ (Psalm 24:3-5, Matthew 5:8)

C) _____ (Matthew 6:6)

D) _____ (Psalm 145:18)

6. There are many promises for those who approach God. Here are six of them:

A) _____ (Deuteronomy 4:29, 2 Chronicles 15:2b)

B) _____ (2 Kings 13:4)

C) _____ (2 Chronicles 7:14)

D) _____ (Isaiah 55:3)

E) _____ (Psalm 65:4)

F) _____ (Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 5:14)

Lesson 8
Prayer

1. There are more than 200 specific reference to prayer in the Bible. In Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul says that God loves you and can do immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine. Why does he say that? Can we experience this?

2. So, we are told to pray boldly, actually audaciously, and to pray continually, without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Psalms 55:17, Psalms 145:1-2, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 6:18) What does that really mean?

3. Have you ever prayed for something absurd like “Lord, let me win this next game of computer solitaire” or “don’t let it rain today.” Let’s say you win the game of solitaire or that it didn’t rain, do you think that God answered your prayer or was it just random chance?

4. Before a sports contest of some sort (softball game, tennis match, etc.) have you every prayed alone or with the team to win the game or match? Do you think God answers prayers like this? What if both teams are Christians and pray for a win?

5. How often do your prayers have to be answered (in the way that you want) before you are convinced that God hears and answers them? Do you ever “test” God with your prayers? (Judges 6: 36-40, Deuteronomy 6:16, Matthew 4:5-7)

6. When a prayer is not answered in the way that you want, do you think God is trying to teach you a lesson? The Bible says that God answers prayers. In some cases, he says, “yes,” in some cases, “no,” and sometimes he says, “wait.” Do you think some prayers are not answered because they are not heard by God? Can you think of some reasons why God wouldn’t answer prayer?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____