

Living The Christian Life Series:
Lesson 23 Developing the Biblical Techniques and The Crowns That
Accompany Them – Part 6

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Series Text: Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Applicational Text: Psalms 119:105 *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

Introduction:

The object of our current series titled, “*Living the Christian Life*,” is to enable us as believers to graduate from a reliance upon I John 1:9 “*If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” to a better adherence to James 1:16, “*Stop being seduced.*” In order to graduate to resisting sin instead of depending upon the restoration of sin we have been investigating the “*Biblical Techniques For Living The Christian Life and The Crowns That Accompany Them.*”

We have examined the technique for Living the Spirit Controlled life and the accompanying Crown of Righteousness. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer and controls our behavior when we walk in conformity with the behavior God has revealed for us in His Word. As a result of Adam’s sin we are born spiritually dead with a sinful nature that has a natural disposition to sin. When we call upon the name of the Lord for salvation, we experience a spiritual birth and a capacity to understand the things of God, and we are enabled to walk in the way of righteousness. Although we still retain our sin nature, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and sin becomes a choice for us. We sin, when we are seduced into a behavior that is contrary to God’s revealed will for our lives. We saw in our study of the Spirit Controlled life that Satan and his minions bait traps that appeal to our lust pattern and we are seduced into sin. When we confess that sin the Holy Spirit is once again in control and we are enabled to live the Christian way of life. We begin this Christian life as “babes in Christ” and spend more time under the control of the old nature and repetitiously use I John 1:9 and the confess of sin to get back under the enabling control of the Holy Spirit. So, our focus now is upon developing maturity so that we spend more time under the control of the Holy Spirit and experience the inner happiness we seek.

In our study we have been reminded that there is a structure of Spiritual Maturity that is constructed of Biblical Doctrine, we have seen that the building material of the structure is Scripture. That Scripture is to be organized into categories of Bible Doctrine that form a structure of applicable Bible knowledge and creates an environment for spiritual growth. Spiritual Maturity is not measured in how much Bible you know, but how much Bible you apply.

The key categories of doctrine related to developing maturity are Orientation to Grace, Developing A Relaxed Mental Attitude, Mastering the Details of Life, Developing a Capacity to Love, and Inner Happiness. The foundation of the Structure is Jesus Christ and the Word of God, and the roof over the structure is comprised of more the seven thousand promises related to the believer in living out his or her designed ministry.

There are three essentials to spiritual growth, **Knowing What the Word Says, Knowing How it Applies to Us, and Acknowledging what God says about it will produce the joy and peace we seek.** We have identified the proper organization of the Word into useful material for maturity as being the categorical organization of Scripture into categories of Doctrine and we have identified the basic structure of doctrine. We must understand what the Scripture says about Grace, a Relaxed Mental Attitude, Mastery of the Details of Life, Love, and Inner Happiness. Then we must be in agreement with that information to the extent that we accept it as a norm or standard for our behavior.

But, to effectively resist sin during the temptation phase we must **know what the Bible says about our specific areas of weakness**, then we must **agree with God that the behavior is sin**, and finally we must **acknowledge that that behavior will not procure for us the joy and satisfaction it is advertised to provide.**

Objective of This Lesson:

The general objective of Lesson 23 in this series is to provide the mechanics and identify the specific material for developing Spiritual Maturity. That objective focuses on:

- **Develop a positive mind set toward the Word as a Lamp to our feet and a light to our paths, a willingness to perform its truths and judgments.**
- **Develop A Willingness to Implement Grace as a Lifestyle.**
- **Develop A Naturalness to Relaxing in our Mental Attitude.**
- **Develop A Consciousness of our Ability to Control Our Responses**
- **Become Obedient to the Commands to Love God, to Love Others**
- **If we have Joy and Peace in our Hearts, Let our Face Know it**

I. Develop a Positive Mind Set Toward the Word:

To become a doer of the Word we must develop a positive mind set toward the Word as a *Lamp to our feet and a light to our paths*, a willingness to perform its truths and judgments.

You have frequently heard me say, *“If you want to know what you truly believe, inventory your behavior.”* The degree to which we believe God’s way is the best and produces the greatest happiness is reflected in our behavior. If we are going to experience the peace and inner happiness God has designed for us, we are going to have to approach it in the same manner as the Psalmist, *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* (Psalm 119:105-106)

“I have sworn it...” I have given my pledge to it. If you aren’t confirming your agreement with Scripture by your behavior, you may have given your pledge to it – But if you are not applying it your pledge is invalid. **I have given my pledge** to it is more than an acknowledgment, it is an agreement with that behavior

“...I will perform it...” We must get beyond acknowledgement that a certain behavior is what will bring us inner happiness, we must be doers of the Word. You will not perform it by simply acknowledging that is what the Bible says, you must move beyond acknowledging it to agreeing with it, accepting it as a norm or standard for yourself. We will perform behavior that we have accepted as a norm or standard for ourselves.

“...I will keep thy righteous judgments.” This is the kind of commitment that is required to succeed in living a godly life. Notice they are called *“righteous judgments.”* These are behaviors that conform to the plan God has designed for our happiness and peace.

To effectively deal with temptation, we must know what God says about sin, specifically what He says about our sin. All sin can be categorized by three areas of lust. The basic Scripture that supports this is I John 2:16

I John 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Eve was deceived into sin when she saw the “forbidden fruit” was *“pleasant to the eye, good for food, and desired to make one wise.”* All three areas of lust are revealed, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.

There was also a presentation of these three areas of lust in the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness – the lust of flesh (food) – the lust of the eye (The kingdoms of the world), and the pride of life (have Angel’s rush to His aid). However, we as

believers have a primary weakness in one of these three areas. Hebrews 12:1 says, *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

You will find your besetting sin in one of these three areas and is identified by I John 1:9 and the sin you repeatedly find yourself confessing. It fits in one of these categories. Let's look at them...

"Lust of the flesh" is an obsession with behavior related to the satisfaction of one or more of the various five empirical senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. As a child in Church we were taught the chorus,

"Watch your eyes, watch your eyes what they see, watch your eyes, watch your eyes what they see, there's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, watch your eyes, watch your eyes what they see.

"Watch your ears watch your ears, what they hear, watch your ears, watch your ears what they hear, there's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, watch your ears, watch your ears what they hear.

"Watch your lips watch your lips what they say, watch your lips, watch your lips what they say, there's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, watch your lips, watch your lips what they say.

"Watch your hands watch your hands what they do, watch your hands, watch your hand what they do, there's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, watch your hands, watch your hands what they do.

"Watch your feet watch your feet where they go, watch your feet, watch your feet where they go, there's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, watch your feet, watch your feet where they go.

"Watch, your eyes, your ears, your lips, your hands, your feet, watch your eyes, your ears, your lips, your hands, your feet, there's a Father up above looking down in tender love, watch your eyes, your ears, your lips, your hands, your feet.

There is a wide variety of obsessions related to the "Lust of the Flesh" - the satisfaction of the various senses mostly related to immorality. Sensuality (the lust of the flesh) can be defined as an uncontrolled sinful indulgence of physical passion based on one or more of our empirical senses, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling.

A Key Scripture with which we must agree is Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness,*

lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

So, the “Lust of the Flesh” identifies sins that are prompted by the desire to satisfy the empirical senses and is one of the three major areas of lust. King David’s sin with Bathsheba is a classic biblical example of that lust pattern when he saw Bathsheba and his lust led to adultery and then led to murder.

The second area of lust is the lust of the eyes.

“Lust of the Eyes” Although at first glance this may seem to be a reference to the empirical sense of seeing, however it is an idiom referring to the obsession with the acquisition and control of material things – wealth and prosperity.

This idiom identifies the weakness of one’s lust pattern with an obsession for the pursuit and the acquisition and control of material things.

A Key Scripture with which to agree: Matthew 6:19-25 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

The lust of the eyes is the misplaced focus on the acquisition of material things and as noted in the key passage **“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”** Our appointment as Believers is to be ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). According to I Peter 2:11 we are sojourners, strangers not living in our own country but foreigners, living alongside the locals in order to do the business of our King. *What does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what will a man give in exchange for his soul* (Mark 8:36-37)

The third area of lust is pride:

“Pride of Life” is an obsession with ego, power and control. Although every deviation from God’s plan is sin and carries with it the penalty of death, pride is number one on God’s hit list. Proverbs 6:16-19 says, *These six things doth*

the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. The Hebrew grammar here indicates that these seven things are categorized in an order of severity with pride being number one. And, when you think of it, there is an aspect pride related to all sin. When we sin it is because we put our will ahead of God an assertion that our opinion in the matter is superior to His.

Proverbs 16:18 adds, *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

A Key Scripture with which to agree is Romans 12:3: *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Each of us has an area of weakness when it come to temptation: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. We each have a besetting sin. Through the use of the confession of sin via I John 1:9 we are able to restore our broken fellowship, acknowledging God's grace and identifying our sin pattern, enabling us to deal with it more effectively. However, our objective should be to graduate from dealing with it after the fact with I John 1:9 to resisting the temptation itself – moving our focus from I John 1:9 “...if we confess our sins...” to James 1:16; “*Stop being seduced.*” That graduation will enable us to move to the next phase in developing Spiritual Maturity, and wear the Crown of Glory.

II. Develop a Willingness to Implement Grace to Others:

One means of measuring our maturity is the degree to which we understand and apply the doctrine of Grace. We have a difficult time with the doctrine of grace, accepting the idea of God's grace wherein He has provided His righteousness, His resources, and His realm for us at Christ's expense. Is it no wonder that we balk at the thought of gracing others? Yet the degree of our inner happiness is directly determined by our willingness to treat others in grace. The Book of Romans is a fascinating discourse on the doctrine of Grace.

Gracing others is defined as: "...assuming all of the responsibility and cost for maintaining that relationship, avoiding critical expectations, motivated by a self-sacrificial love regardless of the response..." We can use the word GRACE to form an acrostic to define our responsibility to treat others in grace we define it as follows, **G**racing **R**egardless **A**voiding **C**ritical **E**xpectations.

That definition leads us to the next point of our study. In order to achieve spiritual maturity we must develop a naturalness to Relaxing in our mental attitude.

III. Develop a Naturalness to Relaxing in You Mental Attitude:

We can feign a relaxed mental attitude for a period of time but in order for that relaxation to become a natural way of life we are required to recognize that the battle is the Lords.

You see! When we understand the provisions, God has given us, through grace, and understand that He provides all the assets and abilities to do what He asks us to do, we begin to develop a Relaxed Mental Attitude. We relax in our expectations of others and even in our expectations concerning ourselves.

This Relaxed Mental Attitude is dependent upon our learning that God has treated us in grace and therefore places no expectations or demands on us. That, He has assumed all the cost Himself. We discover we are not responsible for results - only responsible to allow God to use as He directs and equips us.

However, we only truly relax in our mental attitude as we treat others in Grace and assume all the responsibility for our relationship with them. We have seen that treating others in grace requires that we set aside our expectations of them and be willing to pay all the expense and assume all the responsibility for maintaining a relationship with them. Paying all the expense is no problem when we realize that God has provided all the assets needed to do that. It becomes only a matter of our self-will and personal desires being set aside for them.

Your Relaxed Mental Attitude will be in direct proportion to your relaxed expectations of God and others which is the result of a proper orientation to grace.

The books of Galatians and Hebrews provide key information concerning our development of a Relaxed Mental Attitude.

IV. Develop a Consciousness of Having Control of Responses:

Most of our unhappiness is because we cannot control our circumstances. God told Adam and Eve to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. But, instead, they submitted to Satan's challenge for them to become like God and became dominated by the world and its circumstances.

The happiness of most Christians is dependent upon their circumstances -- where they are -- who they are with -- what they have -- what they are doing. The degree of our maturity can be measured by the degree of our contentment.

In Philippians 4:11, Paul said: *"...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*

Notice, Paul said, he had learned to become content. Contentment doesn't just come to the Christian naturally. It is a progressive maturing acquired through knowledge and faith. As you become oriented to grace, drop your expectations and relax mentally, you begin to find happiness apart from your circumstances or situation and you begin to master the details of life. How great it is to no longer be in bondage to circumstances.

It is only when we begin to grace others and let go of our expectations for them, to the degree that we drop our expectations and learn to be content regardless of our circumstances that we develop a capacity to love others self-sacrificially.

V. Develop an Attitude of Self-Sacrificial Love for Others:

This ability to love others self-sacrificially is certainly a measure of our maturity but cannot be achieved by sheer will power, it is developed by ceasing in our attempt to control the behavior of others and direct our focus to controlling our response to their behavior. No! Don't tell me that my response is to treat them in grace. Yes! That is the expression of Self-Sacrificial Love.

Our ability to love with an agape love is based on the degree to which we have mastered the details of life (focused on response instead of circumstances), which is in proportion to our development of a relaxed mental attitude (dropped our expectations of them), which is in proportion to our orientation to grace (assuming the responsibility and cost for a relationship with them), which is dependent upon our understanding of Christ and His teachings.

Most Christians become frustrated in their attempt to love others as Christ loves them. Self-centeredness is the hindrance to agape love. It is through the development of Orientation to Grace that we develop an attitude of self-sacrifice toward others. Through the development of A Relaxed Mental Attitude our expectations of others is dropped. And, through the development of the Mastery of The Details of Life our demands upon those we love is eliminated. Thus, we finally begin to have a real capacity to love.

Love is the motivator for grace. God was motivated by love to treat us in grace. As we begin to look at things from a divine perspective, we begin to love others with a self-sacrificial love. In grace, God has given us the ability to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is, *"...love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control..."* Therefore, we can treat others in grace and self-sacrificial love through the exercise of grace and the elimination of our expectations and demands upon them.

Developing this floor provides us with a capacity to love God, to love our spouse, and to love others. Although the entire Bible is a book of love and grace the book of I John along with the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians provides a crash course enabling you to get started.

To the degree that you follow these instructions for living the Christian life you will experience the inner happiness God has designed for you. As you make the attempt to follow these guidelines, don't forget to let your face know about it.

Conclusion: Let Your Face Know When You Have Inner Happiness:

Isaiah 26:3 says, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

A popular kid's song from the 1950's Said, *"If you're happy and you know it then your face with surely show it!"*

This passage in Isaiah confirms that. Our peace and inner happiness go hand in hand. Now, if you are not at peace following the promises, principles, doctrines, and techniques of the development of Spiritual Maturity it is because you haven't accepted them as norms and standards for your life. You might know them, but until you accept them and apply them your happiness can only be feigned. Your face will show when you have inner happiness. Your face will reflect the degree of godliness in your life.

Look at the example of Jesus himself on the Mount of Transfiguration, when His deity became visible.

Matthew 17:1-9 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Six days before this experience Jesus had asked His disciples who they thought He was and here in this passage in Matthew, He reveals himself to Peter, James, and John. We make our relationship with Him visible to others when they are able to see it in our face. We reflect that relationship with Him when we treat others in grace, relax in our mental attitude, display a positive response to our circumstances, and love with a self-sacrificial love – inner happiness is the result, and our face will show it.

Our free-will is the problem. God has given us the capacity to develop this lifestyle in which we can experience inner happiness and others will see it, but our free-will is the problem. By the choices we make concerning the Word of God we determine the degree

of our happiness and we are enabled to acquire the Crown of Glory that reflects our character.

Our Applicational Text for This Lesson was Psalms 119:105: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

That preps us for our study next time as we take another look at the technique of living the Faith Rest Life and acquiring the Crown of Life.

But it all begins at Salvation:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...

With the heart man believes unto righteousness...

But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved...

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1