

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 26

### *Leave Your Life Of Sin (Bondage)*

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**Proverbs 14:12-14 (Amplified Bible)** - *There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of mirth is heaviness and grief. The backslider in heart [from God and from fearing God] shall be filled with [the fruit of] his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied with [the fruit of] his ways [with the holy thoughts and actions which his heart prompts and in which he delights].*

If a man chooses the way that seems right to him, without any regard to the will of God, he is walking on a land mine, a concealed pathway of destruction. This is a frightening thought, that sin can have such hold on us, blinding us from seeing God, who can save us. It's as though our spiritual eyes have been glued shut by the enemy, and we're just wondering about in stupidity trying to find our way. Unable to see God who can bring clarity and purpose to our lives, we grope in the darkness desperately searching for someone or something to cling to, to make us feel good about ourselves.

The prophet Isaiah describes our dilemma this way, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..." (**Isaiah 53:6**) Man's own way is actually the broad way that Jesus speaks about in the parable of the "narrow and wide gates" (**Matthew 7:13-14**). This broad way seems easy, with no restraints. Whatever feels good, do it! Wickedness can be had in abundance, because it's appeal is to the carnal (fleshly) nature. The attitude is one of, "I don't have to answer to nobody for nothin." Since it is Satan's power that lies behind human rebellion against God, these children of disobedience can only get by with that attitude for so long. (**See: Colossians 3:6**) When sin has run rampant, the broad way suddenly narrows down ending in death, or eternal separation from God.

Thank God for Christ's glorious gospel! Even though man deserves God's punishing wrath, God's love and mercy led him to send Jesus to save those who would turn to him. Jesus came to confront mankind with a choice. No one has to live in bondage to sin, being led around by the nose, following the lies of the devil who

says, "You are no good, you can't change, you won't be forgiven; why even try?"

Praise God, there is a way out of sin's bondage, the narrow road that leads to life. This road can only be entered onto by faith in Jesus Christ. If you want Jesus to be LORD of your life, it is impossible to follow him from a position of bondage. This issue has to be settled up front; you cannot stay on the broad road. Before you can go anywhere with Jesus (follow his lead), you have to exit the broad road, leaving your old life behind. Jesus pleads with us to make the right choice.

**Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)** - *Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

I am thankful for those who find the narrow road and are willing to talk about their conversion experience. A prison inmate recently shared his testimony of how God opened his eyes to the truth, that the broad road he was on was headed toward destruction. He said,

*"I'm hard headed and in need of a hard lesson. They are the only ones that do me any good. The Lord had to get my attention and that took some doing. Looking back on it now I can only shake my head in wonder. Like, I wonder what I was thinking? You know? As everything slowly began to unravel, I started to justify my actions to myself, convinced "I" knew what was best for me. It wasn't until recently that my eyes were opened and I saw the road I was on, and way over yonder the road I was supposed to be on. It is a very humbling experience. One of your spiritual growth lessons played a big part in my awareness. But, like I said, I'm hard headed and it takes a wop with a big stick to get my attention. God has my attention now, and I am humbled. I am very sincere about this. I will follow His lead."*

"I will follow His lead!" These are action words, spoken by one whose blind eyes were opened to the truth. These are words of conviction spoken by one who has been saved by God's grace from the bondage of sin and from Satan's lordship. Through repentance and acceptance of

Jesus as Lord, he is now free to enter the narrow road that "leads" to eternal life.

**II Corinthians 3:16-18 (NIV)** - *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

These verses of scripture reveal an important truth about repentance. Whenever anyone "turns" to the Lord - the veil is taken away! How does one turn to the Lord? This inmate said he had gotten down on his knees beside his bunk and asked God for forgiveness and begged him for direction. He told God, "I will follow your lead." He is following the steps Jesus laid out in scripture and which are necessary for anyone to build a good spiritual foundation. These steps are found in **Luke 6:47**.

1. Whoever comes to me...
2. Hears my sayings...
3. And does them...

All three steps are necessary. It is not enough to come to Jesus. We must also listen to what Jesus has said. But coming and listening are not enough. We must also take personal action. A person can come to Jesus, hear what He has to say, but still not respond. Jesus puts us on the spot with a piercing question:

**Luke 6:46 (NIV)** - "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

There is no way we can fool Jesus. Jesus is not truly LORD of our life until we *personally* respond to his teachings. Many people claim to be Christians, yet they are still living in bondage to sin, held prisoner on the broad road that leads to destruction. Their fear keeps them from coming to Jesus, from making a movement from the broad road to the narrow road. If the truth is to be known, the basis of much of their fear is laziness. Why? It takes time and energy to sit under the teaching instructions of Jesus. It takes effort to seek God's direction, to listen to and then follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Those who are lazy, avoid asking God too many personal questions, because they *fear* he will ask them to take the narrow, more difficult road, rather than the road of less resistance. The bottom line is; to grow spiritually we need to come face to face with our own laziness.

**Proverbs 6:9 (NIV)** - "How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?"

Satan holds people in bondage by playing on their fears, encouraging their laziness by telling them, "Why bother to pray? It is so much easier if you just get on everyone else's prayer lists." Satan wants to hide the truth that, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (**James 5:16b - NIV**) Satan wants people to think they are not good enough to pray, that God will not hear their single prayers. The truth? We don't need a million people praying for us in order to get God's attention! God wants us to **grow up** into the image of Jesus Christ! To grow up, we need to personally go to God in prayer. The righteous man is not one who has no faults. On the contrary, the righteous man is one who personally seeks to discover the will of God; he seeks to gain strength to obey the will of God; and finally, he will obey God, because he gives weight to his prayers with his very life.

**Romans 8:14-15 (KJV)** - *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

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#### Questions for Personal or Group Study:

1. What power lies behind human rebellion against God, blinding man to live a life of sin?
2. No one has to live in bondage to sin. What road must one take to get out of sin's bondage? What is the only way this road can be entered? (**See: John 14:6**)
3. Before we can go anywhere with Jesus, what must we leave behind?
4. What happens when someone "turns" to the Lord? (**See: II Corinthians 3:16-18**)
5. What three steps are necessary for a person to build a good spiritual foundation. (**See: Luke 6:47**)
6. Many people claim to be Christians, yet still live in bondage to sin. What does Satan use as a basis of fear to keep them in bondage? (**See: Proverbs 6:9**)
7. What truth about prayer does Satan want to hide from us? (**See: James 5:16b**)