

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 77 – *Recidivism – A Revolving-Door*

By Sharon K. Griffiee

After receiving my June 2017, “Spiritual Growth Lesson”, a dear inmate wrote a letter of response. He said,

“I received your lesson, *The Call to Obedience* and I really enjoyed reading it. I love the examples that you used about faith and obedience working together. And it made me take a good look at myself about my obedience to Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father. You see, Sharon, I’m still holding on to my worldly ways. I guess you could say, I’m like the rich young ruler, but without the money. I will be leaving prison in the next four months and I don’t want to fall by the wayside or go back to my old ways. I pray that the Lord hears me and touches my heart and mind so that I’ll walk with the Lord in all that I do...because I’m sick of being in and out of prisons and county jails. *God has always called to me in my dreams*, but I ignored the Lord and ended up in jail for not doing his will. I realize now that Satan was using me and keeping me from doing God’s will.”

This prisoner’s response is all too familiar. For those who have found themselves on the wrong side of the law, prison has too often become *A Revolving-Door*; a heartbreaking cycle. An inmate leaves prison hoping to stay out, only to find they have to return once again. Naturally when the subject of *Recidivism* comes up, statistics never paint a pretty picture. However, Jesus does not want us dwelling on numbers, but getting to the root cause. It began in the Garden.

The Curse Cycle Begins

Genesis 3:1-4 (KJV) – Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree

which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

In these verses of scripture we get an impression of just how crafty Satan is. Satan did not come as some brute, physically over-powering animal and force Eve into doing whatever he wanted her to do. Satan, a cunning snake, did not have the authority or power to do that. He had to come up with something less obvious. He came at her with *words*. As Eve began to listen to his words, he began to influence the way she thought. That is the way Satan operates; the way he tempted Adam and Eve, and that is the way he tempts you and me. Satan does not force us, nor does he overpower us. He cannot *make us* do anything.

Jesus set the example how to handle Satan

Matthew 16:23-24 (NLT) – Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.” Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.”

Satan’s strategy is to draw us into his dangerous trap. He comes to us with subtle words and thoughts. If we allow Satan to mess with our thoughts, he can gain a *stronghold* in our mind and destroy us. A *stronghold* is an area in which we are held bondage because of a wrong way of thinking. That is why it is critical that we examine our thoughts. At the first sign that our thoughts are not lining up with God’s Word (His viewpoint), we must speak directly to our adversary, “*Get away from me, Satan!*”

Satan must be told in no uncertain terms that we are not buying into his lies. Notice that the first thing Satan did when he came against Adam and Eve was to come against the Word of God; the reason? God’s Word contains life! It will stop sin (death) in its tracks. Knowing this, Satan set out to cut off the lifeline; how? He began to mock God’s authority. “*Yea, hath God said?*” Satan shrewdly came against what God had said. He came against God’s Word, interjecting doubt. Speaking hard thoughts against God, Satan offered Eve the false hope of advantage to be gained by sin. The truth, there is no advantage to be gained by sin; none whatsoever.

The Word – Our line of defense against sin

The Word of God is our number one line of defense against the enticement of sin in any area of our life. God’s Word teaches that Satan is a liar from the beginning. Jesus exposed the truth about Satan, saying he is the father of lies. (John 8:44). Satan comes with his deceptive smooth talk. What lie does he use hoping to entice us? *One can sin and get away with it!* Watch out, brothers and sisters, his lie is a dangerous trap!

Genesis 2:16-17 (KJV) – And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

We see here that The Lord God *commanded* the man to be morally responsible. He could eat freely from all the other fruit at his disposal and enjoy the positive blessings God desired for him. On the negative side, God warned him not to eat from the forbidden tree or he would surely die. Death is the penalty for sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s Word, siding with *Satan’s lie*, a curse came upon the whole human race. Anyone since that day, who has believed Satan’s lie has been trapped in the curse cycle. As sin is repeated, again and again, the curse is perpetuated. This is true, despite the fact that Jesus went to the cross over 2,000 years ago to redeem mankind from the curse.

Galatians 3:13-14 (KJV) – Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Jesus paid the price for what Adam and Eve did. At the cross, He broke the power of the curse, making it possible to have a new life in Christ.

Jesus, the Door, the Way, the Life

John 10:9-11 (NKJV) – “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

Satan is a thief. He sets out to steal the Word of God from the hearts of men so that he might gain a following through false, deceptive words. Jesus does not fog our minds with cunning words to lure us into following him. He tells us the truth, to count the cost because the choice is solely ours to make; life or death, blessing or cursing. If life is our desire, entrance is through Jesus, the Door.

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Questions for personal or group study

1. Recidivism has become a revolving door of society. How does Jesus want us to deal with it?
2. The Bible tells us in Genesis 3:1 that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. Since the serpent, Satan, can’t *make us* do anything, what did he use to tempt Adam and Eve?
3. The first thing Satan did when he came against Adam and Eve was to come against the Word of God. *Yea, hath God said?* What does Satan have against the Word of God?
4. Jesus said in John 8:44 that Satan is the Father of Lies. What is *his lie*? Why is it a deadly trap?
5. Why are so many people not enjoying freedom from the curse? See: II Corinthians 4:3-4