

Growing in Christ

Lesson 5: God's Temple

Notes for the leader: This is the fifth and final lesson in a series about "Growing in Christ." This lesson focuses on what it means to call Jesus "Lord," and what it means to have the Holy Spirit indwelling you and guiding your life.

Introduction

The first lesson in this series focused on the important step of faith that you must take to become a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of his Church and his Kingdom. The second lesson focused on dealing with **temptation** -- a reality that all of us have to deal with every day, even after we make a commitment to follow Jesus! We studied God's promise that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, but when we are tempted, he will always provide a way out (*1 Cor 10:13*). The third lesson addressed the importance of avoiding deliberate sin -- and, when we **slip or fall** into sin, how important it is to **admit** it quickly, to **repent**, to **confess** our sin to God and to those we have hurt by our sin, to **ask for forgiveness**, and to **seek God's help** to change what we're doing to make sure the same thing doesn't happen again.

In that same lesson, we learned that our goal should be to "*walk as Jesus walked*" -- in **all** our relationships, to try to act as Jesus would: with our **families**, with our **friends**, with **those in authority** over us, and even with our **enemies**. The fourth lesson focused on another way to measure whether we are living a life that's pleasing to God: whether we are experiencing the "*fruit of the spirit*" in our lives: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (*Galatians 5:19-23*). These are things that God wants **all** Christians to have in their lives. But these things don't just "happen" -- you need to be willing to **submit** yourself to God, and especially to His Holy Spirit, who lives in you, if you belong to Him.

This lesson focuses on what it really means to **belong to God**, what it really means for Jesus to be your **Lord**.

In Bible times, calling someone "Lord" meant something very serious. Today, for most people, a job is just a job, and if you don't like what your boss tells you to do, you can ignore him, or you can decide to quit. In Bible times, it wasn't this way at all. If you were a servant, or a slave, which is what most people were, your **Lord** was literally your **master**. If you were a servant, you **couldn't** quit. You couldn't decide to go work for someone else, or decide that you wanted to do something different from what your master said.

In God's Kingdom, **you** decide whether you are willing to turn your life over to Him. But if you **do** decide to call him "Lord," you need to take this decision very seriously.

What are some modern-day examples that carry some of the power that the word "Lord" used to mean? One example is **military service**. If you enlist, you make a **commitment** to obey all lawful orders of your superior officers. You can't **pick** and **choose** which ones you **like**, following **some** orders while ignoring **others**. No army can function effectively unless everyone can **depend** on their fellow soldiers following orders and doing what they're supposed to do.

The main point is that it meant a **lot** to call someone **lord** in ancient times. And it **still** should mean a lot **today**. Keep that in mind as we read the question Jesus asked his followers:

Luke 6:46

Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?.

It means **nothing** to call Jesus "Lord" unless you do your **very best** to **do** what he **says!** You **belong** to him. He **bought** your freedom from sin with his **own blood!** This is what Paul is talking about when he says:

1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

The meaning of the word "**temple**" is "**God's house.**" The Bible tells us again and again that **we** – **all** Christians -- are God's **temple**, the place where He lives. That's what it means when we say that the Holy Spirit "**indwells**" every Christian -- He **lives in us**, and **teaches** us, and **guides** us, and **comforts** us, and **counsels** us. But we must be **willing** to allow Him to do this -- and we must be **willing to listen** and to **do** what He says.

If you try to clean up your **own** life, by **yourself**, without allowing the Holy Spirit to **take control**, you could end up **worse off** than you were before. Jesus told a short parable about this:

Matthew 12:43

When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it goes through desert places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, "I will return to the house I left." When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

What does this parable mean to us today?

Perhaps, for a while, you can manage to stay away from **drugs**, or **alcohol**, or **smoking**, or **sex sins**, or whatever your problem may be. But, unless you invite the Holy Spirit to **move in** and **take control** of your life -- unless you spend time in **prayer** and **bible study**, and **learning God's word** – unless you become an **accountable member of a Christian community** where people will **pray with you** and **support you** when you are **struggling with temptation** -- it's only a matter of time before sin takes control of your life again! You can't "**clean out the house**" by yourself and leave it **spiritually unoccupied!** Many people try to do this -- and that's why many people end up falling into the same sinful patterns and end up **back in prison**.

Many people talk about "**turning control of their lives over to God**" – but then they keep **grabbing the steering wheel**, trying to take control themselves. Fighting over the steering wheel is a good way to end up off the road, in the ditch, or worse, like dead, or back in prison!

These are some serious issues to talk about. Let's split into small groups and discuss three questions about what we've just read. Then will come back together and compare our answers.

***Notes for the leader:** Hand out copies of the Small-Group Discussion Questions to each person. Depending on the size of the group, have them break into small groups of four to ten. Make sure that each group has a capable leader, who can keep the discussion moving and well-focused. Make sure the groups understand how much time they have. 15 minutes should be a minimum. 20 minutes is better. Give each group a time warning three or four minutes before they need to reassemble as a large group, so they can bring their discussion to an orderly conclusion.*

Follow-up Discussion

***Notes for the leader:** The main purpose of the follow-up discussion is to make sure that each small group has grasped the main ideas of the study. You can skim quickly through the answers if it seems clear that everybody understands them. If not, pick a group that "got it" and have them explain the answers.*

If circumstances permit, it's a good idea to walk around and listen to each group discussion so that you know who "got it" and who didn't.

1. What does it mean to call Jesus your "Lord"?

Jesus is your "master." You have committed yourself to follow him and his teachings and commandments. As in the military, you can't pick and choose which ones you like, following some orders while ignoring others.

2. If Jesus is your "Lord," who owns your body and your soul?

How should this affect the way you live your life?

1 Cor 6:19 says "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

It means **nothing** to call Jesus "Lord" if you don't do your **very best** to **do** what he **says!** You **belong** to him. He **bought** your freedom from sin with his **own blood!**

3. If your body is the Temple of God, and where the Holy Spirit lives, how should you take care of your body?

You should treat it as "holy" (set apart for God). You should take care of it and do everything you can to keep it healthy. Don't pollute it with chemicals. Don't use it for unholy purposes.

***Notes for the leader:** Before the group leaves, make sure everyone has a copy of the "Take-Home Thoughts" handout. This will help them remember the things discussed in the lesson. Some of them may also use these handouts to explain the lesson to a cell-mate or in a letter they write to their families. You never know how far the lesson materials may travel, or whose life may be affected by them!*

Small-Group Discussion Questions

Your Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

(1 Cor 3:16-17, 1 Cor 6:19-20)

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Take-home Thoughts About ...

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

In Bible times, calling someone “Lord” meant something very serious. Your **Lord** was literally your **master**. What are some modern-day examples that carry some of the power that the word "Lord" used to mean? If you enlist in military service, you make a **commitment** to obey all lawful orders of your superior officers. You can't pick and choose which ones you like, following some orders while ignoring others. No army can function effectively unless everyone can **depend** on their fellow soldiers following orders and doing what they're supposed to do.

Jesus asked, “*Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?(Luke 6:46)*. It means **nothing** to call Jesus "Lord" if you don't **do** what he **says!** You **belong** to him. He **bought** your freedom from sin with his **own blood!**

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (1 Cor 6:19)

The meaning of "**temple**" is "**God's house.**" The Bible tells **we** – all Christians -- are God's **temple**. The Holy Spirit "**indwells**" every Christian -- He **lives in us**, and **teaches** us, and **guides** us, and **comforts** us, and **counsels** us. But we must be **willing** to allow Him to do this -- and we must be **willing** to **listen** and to **do** what He says.

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