

Speak The Truth In Your Heart

In the preceding lessons, you've learned there are a lot of times when you need to stand up and say something – and a few times you shouldn't. You've learned about judging and forgiving, loving and hating. Now you need a principle that ties all these ideas together. One governing principle that can tell you, in an instant, what you should do. That principle is found in **Psalms 15**.

This is something I call a checklist psalm. It's like one of those magazine self-tests, only this is a Biblical self-test of righteousness. In the opening verse, the author asks: "*LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*" We know God's "holy hill" is a symbol for the Kingdom of God. The question David was asking is, who will dwell there? Who will MAKE IT, and overcome in this life, to be resurrected in the Kingdom of God?

The remainder of the psalm is God's answer. Eleven things are mentioned. All those who are called, chosen, and faithful will pass this test with flying colors. First, you must walk uprightly – as one not ashamed of his deeds. You must be someone who is confident his works please God – this is faith, in case you didn't recognize it at first.

The Bible often hides simple concepts like faith behind descriptions such as these so only those who truly understand faith can understand their meaning. But it is obvious that the same man who walks "uprightly" with his head held high, can go "*boldly unto the throne of grace*" (**Hebrews 4:16**) – that's the third part of faith, knowing you are pleasing God.

Second, you must work righteousness – obey the law. This is listed second because righteousness is second to faith, because you can be faithful without being righteous – as long as you BELIEVE you are righteous and as long as you walk uprightly.

Third, you must speak the truth in your heart. This is the part we're going to focus on today. The rest of the psalm primarily covers topics we've talked about in the last few lessons – gossip, slander, judging, and so on, in addition to mentioning usury, bribery, and oath-breaking.

But speaking the truth in your heart – this is, for our time, probably the most important thing in this psalm. We live in a time where political correctness has drowned truth in a sticky mire of duplicity, so speaking the truth is one of the greatest needs in society today in general and God's people in particular.

Jeremiah 9:5 *And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and WEARY THEMSELVES TO COMMIT INIQUITY.*

God condemns Israel here for TEACHING themselves to speak lies, and working HARD to break the law. They all deceived their neighbors and WOULD NOT speak the truth. **It's not like they were**

trying to obey God and occasionally slipped and told a lie; they were WEARING THEMSELVES OUT *teaching* themselves to speak lies!

The word “teach” is key here – why and how did they TEACH themselves to lie? Well, take children. Children do not by nature lie. Being carnal, like their grown-up counterparts, they will lie whenever it benefits them – but as a general rule, they are truthful. They have no problem saying “Mommy, why is that man so fat?”, or “her clothes are ugly!”, or “that tastes icky!”

Every parent is familiar with this tendency, and immediately sets out to teach the children it isn’t nice to say things like that. They early instill them with the fear of judging someone, with a terror of embarrassing someone by even pointing out their differences – much less correcting their sins.

So as a society, we take children who are born brutally honest, and teach them to lie about everything. So when they grow up, they lie to their wives about how they look or how dinner tasted. They say “thank you! I’ve always wanted one of those!” when someone gives them an ant-farm necklace. They lie to their preacher about how good that sermon was (when they don’t really know, they fell asleep ten minutes into it).

The world calls these white lies, and the world believes they’re mostly a good thing. But what they really are is the source of most of the relationship problems the world has – in one way or another, every relationship is built on, and sustained by, lies. It’s no wonder that every relationship is full of friction as these lies are gradually exposed over time.

And these are just lies that are intended to spare someone’s feelings. This isn’t talking about the millions of intentional lies told in every city every day, which I won’t mention because most everyone agrees they’re a bad thing.

Then there are the lies that become lies after they’re spoken – like promising to be somewhere at a certain time, and being late. Or saying you’ll do something, and canceling later. That’s why **Psalms 15:4** praised those who “*swear to their own hurt, and change not*”. People who are chronically late are liars – they say they’ll be somewhere at a certain time, and they aren’t. That’s a lie.

Of course, that lie isn’t as evil as lying on your resume or telling your date you used to work for N.A.S.A., but still – it’s a serious character flaw that must be corrected. **If you can’t be counted on in this life to manage your few petty possessions and your limited responsibilities to be someplace on time, God certainly can’t count on you to rule cities in the next life.**

God’s people agree to do something or be somewhere, and they are there *no matter what*. That means they’re much more careful what they promise – and you can count on them to do what they promise. That’s worth a lot in this world.

In this lesson, you’re going to learn how to overcome your lie-training and unlearn that habit of lying about everything. You’re going to learn how to...

LESSON 33: SPEAK THE TRUTH IN YOUR HEART

Today, to avoid being thought rude, we almost never speak what’s in our heart. We say, “yes, that was nice” to someone’s face, then as soon as we leave the room we tell someone else what we REALLY thought. So let’s look and see how the Bible handles situations like that – should we be politically correct, or should we be what this world would consider rude?

When Jesus' friend was preaching a false doctrine – that Jesus shouldn't have to die – what did Jesus do? **Mark 8:33**. That was quite an insult – calling him Satan – and offensive just because Peter didn't want Jesus to die! Surely Peter meant well! It was surely embarrassing to him, to single him out and correct him in front of all their friends. Yet that was our perfect example. **Which of us would have handled that situation in that way?**

When Philip found Nathanael and told him about Jesus, what was his response? **John 1:45-46**. Now that was quite a rude response, by modern standards. But it was how Nathanael felt – and it would have been wrong for him to pretend that he *didn't* think Galileans were hillbillies, from whom nothing good could come! And how did Jesus feel about Nathanael's attitude? **Verse 47**.

Because of Nathanael's statement – apparently, the only thing about Nathanael Jesus knew at the time, except what He somehow “saw” earlier (**verse 48**) – Jesus was so impressed that He said “*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*” – high praise indeed! Other versions make it even clearer, where Philips translation says “*Now here is a true man of Israel; there is no deceit in him!*”

Jesus was shocked to find an Israelite who spoke the truth in his heart – it was as rare then as it is today. Being truly honest will be perceived today by most people somewhere between blunt and rude – but that's the example here.

How did Jesus respond when someone said they couldn't follow Him right away, because they had to bury their recently deceased father? **Matthew 8:22**. Now if you or I were to do this, the world would jump on us – how unchristian, to not offer comfort to the bereaved family! Yet how can Christ be un-Christian? Jesus put TRUTH before FEELINGS *EVERY TIME!*

TRUTH BEFORE FEELINGS

The *first* commandment of the whole Bible is to love God; the *second* commandment is to “*love your neighbor as yourself*”. There's an order there! Loving God must come FIRST! And it is on these two principles that every word in the Bible rests (**Matthew 22:40**). So ask yourself – would you rather have your feelings spared and die deceived or be embarrassed for a few minutes and understand the truth?

Would you rather be insulted today by a well-intentioned adviser, or condemned by Nineveh and the queen of Sheba in the second resurrection? (**Matthew 12:41-42**). And find yourself less respected than Sodom? (**Matthew 11:24**). Would you rather be embarrassed in front of your friends, or experience the plagues of Revelation? (**Revelation 18:4**).

This is not exaggeration! This is the choice most of the world faces today. The first step to fixing any problem is admitting it exists. But before that happens, someone usually has to tell you about it – a problem Paul outlines in **Romans 10:13-16**. How will they believe in Him they have not heard preached? How will they repent of sins they don't know exist?

The world today is far too thin-skinned. **Any adult who can't handle being told they were wrong... isn't yet an adult. If you don't like being told you're wrong... don't be wrong!** Any wife who can't handle being told dinner was burned will cause you much grief in other ways down the road.

Truth SOLVES problems permanently. With truth, you get honest feedback that will help you be a better cook. With lies, especially “white” lies, you only hide the problem, and postpone the inevitable for another day, and the wife can only wonder why her husband likes eating out in restaurants so much.

As children of God, we are in the truth business. Not because we hate people, but because we love them. **You would want someone to tell you about the truth, rather than let you continue on that wide and broad way that leads to destruction, right? So, do unto others as you want them to do to you.** It's that simple.

Should we soften and twist the truth to make it easier to accept? **2 Corinthians 2:17.** What does God say will happen to those who handle the word of God deceitfully? **Jeremiah 48:10.** Does the truth usually upset people? **John 7:7.** Did Paul make enemies with the truth? **Galatians 4:16.** Did Paul upset a church with his condemnations? **2 Corinthians 7:8.** And did he temporarily regret that – then realize it was a great thing? **Verse 9.** Why? **Verses 10-11.**

We never use the truth as a cudgel to hurt people. Sometimes they take offense, but even that will ultimately work to their benefit – if not in this life, then in the next. But regardless of the outcome, we always speak the truth, the full truth, and nothing but the truth – because there is only the one truth. Anything less is deceit and guile.

As I said, we aren't blunt with the truth to be cruel, but because sometimes that's the only way to help people. Every doctor knows the first step to curing an illness is forcing the patient to accept the severity of the situation they're in; sometimes, you have to tell the patient the awful truth, look them in the eye and say "you've got bunions!"

Well, in our position as spiritual physicians (**Luke 5:31-32**), or at least interns, we sometimes have to be harsh. But most of the time, we need only be frank; sometimes blunt. *And the guiding principle for all of this is "speak the truth in your heart" – isn't that what you'd want others to do to you?*

BEING HONEST

Read **1 Peter 2:22.** Instead of using the word "guile", BBE says of Jesus "*there was no DECEIT in his mouth*". We have mentioned before how Jesus called a Gentile woman a dog and refused at first to help her (**Matthew 15:26**). And how Jesus called the Pharisees all sorts of names, such as fools, liars, hypocrites, white-washed tombs, snakes, sons of the devil, and so on.

Jesus was obeying the command in **Psalms 15.** He was speaking the truth in His heart **and that's why the Bible says there was no deceit found in Him.** Had He *thought* the Pharisees were hypocrites *but been afraid to hurt their feelings and kept silent* **He would have been deceitful!**

If you've stood up for the things you've read in your Bible at all, you've probably been called quite a few names by now; you've probably been called arrogant, for thinking you know things about God that other people don't. But take **John 8:54-55.** Jesus knew that saying, "I know God, and you people don't; and I obey Him, and you don't" sounded arrogant and foolish to the Pharisees, just as it would sound arrogant if you said it to someone today. **But it was true!**

For Jesus to have pretended *not to know God*, in order to *appear* humble would have been a SIN! If He had said something more politically correct like "we both need to know God better" *Jesus would have been a liar like them!* **Jesus had no choice but to say He knew God, and they didn't, no matter how it sounded!**

WE VS. YOU

I have often been condemned for using the word “you” when saying things like “you need to repent of tolerating sin”; the politically correct false Christians of our day believe that is very offensive. They say we should always use the word “we” so as to make it more generic, more tactful. Well, “we” should obey God. That applies to both me and you. But “we” should not repent of tolerating sin *because I already have*.

To paraphrase Jesus’ words in **John 8:55**, if I were to say that “we” should repent of that, it would make me a liar like them. Jesus is our perfect example in all things; and this is the same thing that shocked the people about Him. After saying many of the most important verses in the NT in **Matthew 5-7**, most of which condemned His audience as sinners, how did the people react? **Matthew 7:28-29**.

They were SHOCKED because He spoke with AUTHORITY. He didn’t say, “we should do this”, and softly guide people into the truth as the scribes and Pharisees tended to do – or as soft-on-sin ministers do in our day! He said YOU should listen to these sayings, or YOU will be commanded “*depart from me, you who work iniquity!*” He said anyone who didn’t listen to Him was a fool! (**verse 26**). These sayings shocked people *but that shock convinced many people to follow him!* (**Matthew 8:1**).

We have NO Biblical examples of righteous men taking the politically correct attitude of softening the words of God – in fact, we have the exact opposite example. And an excellent case in point was from Peter’s sermon in **Acts 2**. This chapter is read *a lot* in Protestant churches, but somehow they manage to miss most of its lessons.

In **verses 22-23**, for instance; Peter told these people “*YE have taken [Jesus], and by wicked hands have crucified [him]*”. Notice this direct condemnation. Put yourself in the setting and try to imagine Peter pointing at a huge crowd of Jews, saying “YOU have wickedly murdered the Son of God!” And a little later, he said “*that same Jesus, whom YOU have crucified*”, is now “*both Lord and Christ*”.

Peter did not kill Christ. He denied Him, yes, but he was not one of the crowd screaming “give us Barabbas!” and “let His blood be on us, and on our children!” (**Matthew 27:17-25**). Therefore, Peter said YOU PEOPLE killed Christ. Not “we”, but YOU! It’s a relatively minor point, but important because it is how Jesus preached – and because it is symbolic of an overall attitude of TRUTH and condemnation of sin.

By saying that **I** have repented of tolerating sin, I am speaking the truth in my heart. By saying that **WE** should repent of tolerating sin, I am *not* – I am speaking a politically correct white lie. I am softening the truth for the sake of the feelings of my audience. And the Bible ACTIVELY teaches against that.

If *you* need to stop stealing, I say so. If **WE** need to be more meek, I say that instead. And on a personal level, if twice-cooked chicken tastes like twice-eaten chicken, I say so. **I digress on this because you need to do the same thing – that’s how you speak the truth in your heart.** This is true for every subject, but it is vitally important you teach the truth about God in this fashion.

KEEPING SILENT

So if you can’t say something nice, is it better to say nothing at all rather than to offend someone? That’s what your mother said, but is it what the Bible said? Well, let’s see. When Job was examining himself for possible sins in **Job 31**, such as committing adultery in his heart, abusing his servants, ignoring the poor and exploiting widows, he mentioned one particular potential sin in **Job 31:34** –

allowing the contempt of families to terrify him into silence. Job was proud that he hadn't done this. Should we be? **Isaiah 62:6.**

Or take the example of Esther. One of the most powerful men in the kingdom was plotting to exterminate the Jews, and the Jewish queen Esther was out of favor at the moment. Her much older and wiser cousin Mordecai was trying to persuade her to do something to help her people, and told her ... **Esther 4:13-14.**

The key here is "if you hold your peace now"... well, God can deliver these people in some other way, through someone else. But if you let the "contempt of families" keep you from saying something, "you and your father's house shall be destroyed". **And who knows – perhaps God brought you into this person's life for the sole purpose of telling them about this sin?**

TYING YOUR SHOES

Everyone who went to Sunday school knows the story of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace. In **Daniel 3:1-7**, a giant golden idol was set up, and a huge crowd of people was assembled. And when the music played, anyone who didn't bow to this idol would be cast alive into the furnace.

Now think about it. The three heroes of the story knew an idol was simply a hunk of metal. They knew they were "spiritual", and the idol couldn't hurt them. To save themselves a lot of trouble, when the music played all they had to do was simply to bend down and TIE THEIR SHOES!

Think about it! How easy would it have been for them to have found some unobtrusive way to not stand out when the music played? For them to have "dropped something" and bent over and pick it up just as the rest of the crowd was bowing to the idol?

What would you have done? Would you have found an excuse to be elsewhere, or developed a sudden need to see if you could touch your toes? The fact is, a clever person who thinks ahead can find a way around most of these problems. Would you have stood up when everyone else was bowing, and *stood* your ground (so to speak)? Or would you have found a way to justify blending in with the crowd?

This isn't as uncommon as you might think. It probably happens to you every day; for example, when someone wants you to work on Saturday, what do you say? Some evasive answer like "I'm busy that day, sorry"? – if so, then you just tied your shoes! When what you SHOULD say, at the very least, is "I don't work on Saturdays", and if they ask why, answer "because the Bible commanded us not to work on Saturday"!

Or when someone wants to serve you pork, what do you say? "I'm allergic to pork"? "I don't like pork"? "Pork is unhealthy"? All of these answers are like tying your shoes before the idol. They are white lies, or at best only a very small part of the truth.

The real answer is "I don't eat pork because the Bible says it's unclean", or at the very least "I don't eat pork for religious reasons". These are both true. And both could open up a dialogue where you have a chance to explain and defend the truth. **And that's exactly what most people are afraid of! Being put in a position where they have to defend their unpopular beliefs!**

The point is, Daniel's friends didn't HAVE to keep standing up – they could have found an excuse to blend in; just as we can find excuses to avoid discussions on pork, the Sabbath, and holidays; **but Daniel's friends are in the Bible because they DIDN'T take that easy route and deny God!**

Read **Matthew 10:32-33**. When you “confess God before men”, it doesn’t mean that you go stand on a street corner and shout “repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand” – not that I’m necessarily opposed to that, but it isn’t what God meant.

Read all of **Matthew 10**; you see the entire context is about telling the world the truth, and being persecuted for it, and protected by God when it happens; but if you keep reading in **verses 34-40**, you see it also applies to friends and family as well! The truth you have learned *will* cause divisions in your own household, and you may lose most or all of your friends and family because of it. **If you aren’t willing to do that, then you are not worthy of Jesus – Jesus said so!**

If your primary goal is self-protection, then you are not worthy to be called a Christian. You may think God’s way of life is the greatest thing ever, and be a model Christian (**Mark 10:17-20**); but if you’re not willing to put everything you have, and everything you love, on the line for God, you will never overcome (**Mark 10:21-22**).

Many (soon to be ex-) students come to me and say, “I believe this is the truth, but I just can’t do everything God asks”. When they find out about the Sabbath, or the truth about judging, or unclean meats, or when they realize this will cause a rift in their family or cost them their friends, MANY “*go away sorrowful*” (**Matthew 19:22**).

They value the things of this world more than the things of God *and that’s fine!* That’s their choice, and I thank God that I helped them make a choice! I would rather they made an honest choice like that, than to bring that half-hearted attitude into the true Church of God and corrupt others! And I have much greater respect for those people, than for those without the guts to tell God they don’t like His offer! (**Revelation 3:15**).

Bottom line, if you seek to save your life, you will lose it; if you risk it, you will save it. The same goes for possessions, friends, and the respect of others. If you make your decisions based on avoiding trouble and blending in, you are denying Christ. If you tell people why you do the strange things you do, you’re confessing Christ. It’s that simple.

This will lose you many things you value in the short term – but gain you a hundred times over in the long term, even in this life (**Mark 10:23-31**, particularly **verse 30** – and note that this is still the context of **Mark 10:21-22**). But that requires faith – faith to stand up for the truth and take risks.

If Daniel’s friends hadn’t stood up for the truth, they wouldn’t have been hauled before the king (**Daniel 3:8-15**). And how did they answer? Did they seek to appease him, and carefully choose their words? **Daniel 3:16-18**.

They knew, like you know, that God *might not save them*. They knew it was possible – even likely – that this could end in their death, and at the very least in the loss of their position and privileges and friends! **They were not absolutely certain that God would save them, just like you and I often have doubts!**

But they didn’t care! They knew that God *COULD* save them, and if He didn’t... well, that was too bad, but they would not be serving, or pretending to serve, *or cleverly finding a way around serving*, Nebuchadnezzar’s idol!

It was that attitude that attracted God's attention, and He did indeed save them (**Daniel 3:19-27**). Their clothes didn't even smell smoky! But had they been sneaking around trying to avoid conflict as so many pretend-Christians do today, the story would have ended very differently.

If they had been obeying God in secret, and skirting the issue, and then somehow been caught by their enemies and then dragged before the king, **Jesus would have had very little reason to rescue them.** They denied Him before men, so He can deny them before His Father; they were too busy living their lives to stand up for God, so He will be too busy living *His* life to save them from the fiery furnace!

They were ashamed of Him, so He is ashamed of them. Why is that complicated? If they're ashamed to stand up for their God, surely Jesus would be ashamed to say to His Father "these are my friends"!

Obeying God is good, but being ashamed of the God you obey offsets much of the appreciation God might otherwise have for you! So while God *might* have saved such weak Christians, it most certainly would not have been in the dramatic fashion of the fiery furnace; and they definitely would not have been held up as examples to the rest of us. **Surely the world needs no more examples of non-committal, half-hearted Christianity!**

DOUBLE-MINDED

James 1:8 says "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" The context of this is faith, as you read in **verses 6-7**. God respects *commitment*. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were *absolutely committed*. Whether God saved them or not, they were *NOT* going to bow to that idol no matter WHAT Nebuchadnezzar did!

They weren't worrying about how they presented their case to him, or what people thought of them; they were absolute – that is faith. But a double-minded man is always "wavering" between believing and doubting; such a person believes God protects him, but also feels compelled to sleep with a handgun under his pillow for protection. **Believing God will protect you, and then "tying your shoes" so He won't have to, is double-minded.**

Most people try to please God and at the same time please the world. They try not to offend God – keep the commandments, and so on – and at the same time, not offend their friends and family who hate the commandments of God. This is obviously impossible (**Matthew 6:24**), **and what always happens is you wind up offending both!**

When you try to obey God without offending your friends, you annoy God so that He won't bless you. And at the same time, you annoy your friends, so they persecute you. And because God is mad at you, He doesn't deliver you from their persecution, and so life gets REAL hard, REAL fast. That's why Elijah told the people in **1 Kings 18:21** to MAKE UP THEIR MIND! If Baal was God, then by all means, serve Baal! But if God is the true God, *then live by EVERY WORD OF GOD!*

But because they were trying to obey God AND Baal (as the Samaritans did in **2 Kings 17:32-41**), they wound up being double-minded and making *EVERYONE* mad at them! This is what most people do today, that is, those that try to obey God at all. This is the main characteristic of the Laodiceans (**Revelation 3:14-21**). They aren't cold or hot. They won't make a commitment to ANYTHING!

And God says those “double-minded” people shouldn’t think they will receive ANY answers to their prayers (**James 1:7**). Such people are unstable “in all their ways”. One of the most important lessons you can ever learn is this: **by seeking to offend NO ONE, you will ultimately offend EVERYONE!**

And it was because Daniel’s friends were NOT double-minded that God watched over them. It was because Daniel’s friends DIDN’T CARE what Nebuchadnezzar did, because they “*loved not their lives unto death*” (**Revelation 12:11**), that they saved their lives. By their willingness to offend the world, they pleased God.

NOT BEING CAREFUL

Another good example comes from Daniel himself; Daniel’s enemies got a law passed that forbade any prayers to anyone but the king for a month. Now we all know prayers can and often should be done in secret (**Matthew 6:6**). It would have been VERY easy for Daniel to have avoided getting caught praying to God for a month! And it wouldn’t have even been a sin!

All Daniel had to do was to go into his closet (the place Jesus said to pray anyway!) and “not make an issue out of it”. Daniel was in a position of great influence in the kingdom, and he could have easily reasoned, like many ministers do today “better not to make waves, and not risk my position, where I can do so much good, over just one tiny issue of prayer”! **But being a true man of God, HE DIDN’T DO THAT!**

Daniel had the habit of praying in a certain place at a certain time every day. For him to change that, just because of a fear of the punishment of some carnal king, would have showed a tremendous lack of faith in God! So what did he do? **Daniel 6:10.**

Daniel KNEW the law had passed. He didn’t go to the town square and protest with a loud voice, nor did he picket the palace about this unjust law. **He didn’t flaunt his actions – but neither did he change them.** He did exactly what he had done before – knowing he would be caught. **He “was not careful”, just like his three friends hadn’t been!**

Everyone knows the story of the lion’s den and how it ended; but for today’s subject, Daniel’s attitude was the point. He could have easily tied his shoes. He could have *easily* avoided the conflict; **and while he didn’t seek it out, he was ready for it when it came to him.**

For a similar modern case, when you get a Christmas present from a co-worker or a relative who isn’t in the church do you...

A. Take the gift and keep it

B. Take the gift and give it to charity

C. Take the gift and throw it away

D. Find some clever way to avoid the issue entirely or

E. Say “I’m sorry, but Christmas is pagan and God says we shouldn’t keep it so I can’t take your present”. You can even offer them a booklet if they’re curious. WHO KNOWS – maybe God will use YOUR EXAMPLE to CALL THIS PERSON??

Four of these answers involve tying your shoes. Only one doesn't deny Christ on some level. If you have trouble accepting the apparent jump between taking a Christmas gift, and denying Christ, let's look at another example; see **Matthew 26:34-35, 69-74**.

Peter didn't want to be known as a disciple of Christ **because he feared!** Feared for his life, feared to be thought strange, feared to be laughed at; and when you avoid telling someone you don't keep Christmas, Easter, Valentines day, Halloween, Sunday, and so on – and avoid telling them **WHY** – **you are denying Christ**. Just as he did. And that leads us to **Mark 8:38**.

These are good times. You are safe from lynching, from being run out of town on a rail, from being pilloried in the town square or tried as a witch or burned at the stake as a heretic – something that has only been true for about 2% of the world's history. If you will deny Christ now, when you are risking practically nothing except temporary inconvenience or carnal friendships... what will you do when your life is at stake? (**Jeremiah 12:5, Luke 23:28-31**).

TO ANSWER A FOOL... OR NOT?

This is a good time to bring up a contradiction most people have difficulty explaining in the Bible, **Proverbs 26:4-5**. One verse says NOT to answer a fool's foolish question – and the next says you SHOULD answer it. Which is true? Well, both. The key is in the context, in this case, within the verse itself.

See, each statement has an addendum on it; don't answer the fool "or else you'll be as foolish as him", and answer the fool "or else he'll think he won". Those are loose paraphrases, but that's what it's saying.

So the answer is simple; when a fool asks you a foolish question, and you don't answer it, will he think you didn't answer *because you couldn't*? If, by ignoring his question, he'll think he won – then you SHOULD answer it.

On the other hand, if you answer his question will you end up looking a fool? Will it require fighting and bickering on his level? If so, then you shouldn't answer his question. There are several examples of Jesus doing one or the other.

When called before Pilate, who had not seen Jesus before (and thus, deserved a chance to hear what Jesus had to say, because he might actually listen), Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king, what was Jesus' answer? **John 18:37**. [Note: "thou sayest" is a strong affirmative in Greek; rather like "you said it!" or "you bet!" is in English slang].

On the other hand, when called before the priests and asked very similar questions, what did Jesus say? **Luke 22:66-68**. In other words, there was no point in answering them – their mind was made up. They'd heard all His arguments before (**John 18:19-23**). For Jesus to defend Himself and answer each of their made-up arguments would be pointless, and would make Him foolish – a lesson Paul learned too late (**2 Corinthians 11:23**).

All of **2 Corinthians 11** and **12** are about Paul defending baseless charges the Corinthians made against him – just as Jesus was facing baseless charges from the Pharisees, and for the same reason. The difference is, Jesus knew answering those fools "according to their folly" would make Him like unto them (**John 8:55**). So Jesus didn't answer them, lest He be like unto them. Paul realized that defending

himself against these accusations was foolish (2 **Corinthians 11:1, 16**, etc), but did it anyway – foolishly.

Jesus didn't answer them at all (**Matthew 26:57-63**). Because it would have done no good – they were not going to listen. Only when adjured (ordered) by the high priest in the name of God – a command which it would have been a sin for Jesus to disobey – did Jesus answer (**verse 64**).

These are the basic guidelines for when you should or shouldn't answer – if by answering them, you'll look like a fool, then don't. If by not answering them they'll think they won, then you must answer them as Jesus did – even if, by answering them, they eventually win anyway (**verses 65-66**).

Either way, what you say should be honest. **What is the truth in your heart?** What do you really feel? **Tell them that.** That's the guiding principle. **When in doubt, tell the truth.** And when there is nothing else you can do, follow the instruction in **Proverbs 14:7**.

RESPECTING GOD'S DECISION

Most of these scriptures are speaking about sin and truth; since that's by far the predominate topic in the Bible. But these principles apply whether it's the truth about hell, a dress that makes your wife look fat, or a lousy meal at a restaurant. Granted, these last two examples are far less important in the grand scheme of things, but the Bible has a clear principle about “unimportant” things: **Luke 16:10**.

This isn't really about them, this is about you. You can't control whether other people understand or appreciate your praise or rebuke. The world is going to hate you if you do what Jesus said; but this will determine how well you handle being hated by the world.

The first step to having inner peace (not in the sense the Buddhists mean it, but true inner peace) is understanding the wicked *don't have to understand the truth today to be saved*. The second step is realizing *you won't save everyone*. You aren't supposed to save everyone, any more than a fisherman catches all the fish in the sea.

The third step is understanding *you did everything you could, and that's enough*. You studied all three of these in the last lesson, but most of the rest of this lesson is about the third step. God's plan is a good plan – a perfect plan. At this point in the lessons, you are finally starting to see just how perfect it is.

You can't hurt someone with the truth – God has seen to that. You can't tell them too much, too soon; and if they don't understand and wind up perishing, that's alright too – God has that covered in the second resurrection. If they are eventually destroyed for their sins after every effort has been made, it's still for their own good and the good of the rest of the universe.

So it's all good (**Romans 8:28**) – having that perspective allows you to have inner peace over situations that make emotional wrecks of everyone around you. When you meet someone who just can't understand the truth no matter how you explain it to them, **you can accept that and move on. Even if it's a loved one.**

A good scriptural example is in **2 Chronicles 25:14-16**. When the prophet went to this king – who had listened to him in the past (**verses 1-13**), the king refused to hear him and threatened to beat him if he kept talking, how did the prophet respond? He stopped talking, after he said: ***“I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel”***.

The prophet accepted that God had blinded this king *for a reason*, and **he trusted God's judgment in the matter**. When you perceive you are arguing with a brick wall, you should do the same – once you've told them the truth, and they reject it, you've done your job – you've been a sweet smell to God, so go fish in some other pond (**Matthew 10:23**).

BE ANGRY AND SIN NOT

Before we conclude this lesson, we have to take a few wide detours; the first of them is into anger. One of the most important verses about personal relationships is in **Ephesians 4:26**, where it says: "*be angry, and sin not*". You will find several reasons to chuckle if you read commentaries on this verse, where commentators do handstands to explain away the plain command of God to "*be angry, and sin not*". "Surely it doesn't mean we should ever be angry!", they say. Yet that's exactly what it says!

Was Jesus our perfect example? **1 Peter 2:21**. Did Jesus ever get angry? **Mark 3:5**. Does God get angry? **Isaiah 13:9**, **Numbers 11:1**, etc. How long does God's anger last? **Psalms 30:5**. Is it difficult to get God angry? **Psalms 103:8**. Does He hold grudges forever? **Verse 9**. What would happen if God didn't control His anger? **Isaiah 57:16-17**.

Was Moses ever angry ("wroth" in the KJV)? **Numbers 16:15**. Was David? **2 Samuel 13:21**. Are men of God ever angry? **2 Kings 13:19**. Was Elihu justly angry with Job and his friends (for different reasons)? **Job 32:2-5**.

So there is a place for anger in the heart of a true Christian. But what place? When and how should we be angry? How does James tell us to get angry? **James 1:19-20**. What stirs up anger? **Proverbs 15:1**. And what avoids trouble? **Proverbs 15:18**. Should you *never* get angry – or only get angry slowly? **Proverbs 16:32**. Should your anger rule you, or should you rule it? (Same verse). How long should you stay angry? **Ephesians 4:26**.

I ended that series of questions with the same verse I used at first; because it all comes back to that. You have a right to be angry when you are stolen from. You have a right to be angry at the works of darkness that happen in this world. You should be READY in your mind to avenge all disobedience – but only when your own obedience is full (**2 Corinthians 10:6**).

Pretending you're *not* angry and sweeping it under the rug because you think that's what God wants, **is WRONG!** God COMMANDS you to be angry – but not to let that anger cause you to sin. Jesus was ANGRY at the stubbornness and selfishness of the Pharisees. So if you have a problem with someone *deal with it!* Follow the instructions in **Matthew 18** and RESOLVE IT.

Because that same verse – **Ephesians 4:26** – has another vital part we haven't mentioned yet: "*Let not the sun go down on your wrath*". Don't let offenses, real or imagined, go on for weeks or months without dealing with them. Don't let your anger pile up, keeping it all inside until you vent anger you've been saving up for years on someone all at once! **Don't let the sun go down on that anger! Deal with it THAT SAME DAY.**

This is the only way to "be angry" and not sin! If this ONE VERSE were followed, 90% of all personal relationship problems would be solved. When someone offends you, THAT is the time to deal with it! Not later, when it is so easy to just pretend it didn't happen or when both parties barely remember what happened, or when it has piled up till you're too mad to see straight, but RIGHT THEN. Resolve it, and you've "gained your brother!"

If your brother won't hear you, and there is no common church to find witnesses in, then "*let him be to you as a heathen and a publican*" until he repents. All this was covered in Lesson 31, but it bears repeating in this context; **speak the truth in your heart**. If you're angry, ACT like it – BUT DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT! Don't hold grudges, pout, snub, or avoid people; TELL them what they did to you – give them a chance to fix it – and if they won't, you are probably better off without that friend or relative in your life.

Now let's read the context of that critical verse to see why this matters! Read **Ephesians 4:25-27**. When you pretend you're not angry with someone who wronged you, *you are lying to your neighbor (and possibly to yourself as well!)*. So PUT AWAY lying, and SPEAK THE TRUTH with your neighbors!

Be angry, but don't let it cause you to sin; deal with your problems before the sun goes down *so you don't "give place" to the devil!* Other translations make this final verse clearer; (RSV) "*and give no opportunity to the devil*", (Philips) "*don't give the devil that sort of foothold*".

By bottling up your rage inside, you are *serving the devil's purposes, not God's!* By allowing this hatred to exist inside of you, you give the devil a FOOTHOLD – an opportunity to lead you into sin! A chance for him to use your emotional wound to manipulate you into retaliating, or to act in such a way that it gives your opponent an excuse to do things that stir your anger even more!

This can't happen when you follow God's clear direction to put away lying, to speak the truth with your neighbor, to be angry without sinning, and not to allow the sun to set while you're still angry with him! If you obey these commands, you give the devil no foothold in your soul to leverage you into sin!

While you're expressing your anger to the person who wronged you – in the manner outlined in **Matthew 18** – seek to bring about his righteousness, not your vengeance. Let your goal be to fulfill **Proverbs 19:11**. **It takes a far greater man to be merciful than to be vengeful.**

IN-LAWS

While this isn't the lesson about marriage and families, I can't let such an ideal opportunity pass to illustrate the value of truth in relationships. In-laws often make married life miserable **because the married couple breaks every command quoted in this lesson!** Everyone hates their in-laws *because no one speaks the truth to them!*

If your in-laws are jerks who won't stop telling you how to run your life *tell them so!* Not by ranting and raving at them, but frankly and bluntly tell them your problem with them. **But give them solutions – not problems.** Don't just say "I hate you!" **Tell them what they must change in order to have a relationship with you.**

Mostly, in-laws think they know everything and ceaselessly meddle and criticize and stir up trouble. So tell them what to do – and what not to do – in your house. You have that right, that is why you left your parents and were married to your spouse (**Mark 10:7**). If your in-laws never speak to you again *consider it a great blessing.*

When they're ready to respect your rights in your house, you can welcome them back with open arms – if and when they stir up trouble again, "*don't let the sun go down on your wrath*" again – how simple!

Don't let games like guilt trips, sob stories, and other things get in the way either. **There is no excuse for breaking the law of God. Excuses mitigate the punishment, but do not give you a right to sin.**

If you do this in all your relationships, you will have peace. You have a right to expect your friends and family to obey the law towards you. When they hurt you, physically or emotionally, you have a right to demand an apology; within the framework of **Matthew 18**. Of course, bear in mind that it might be you that is wrong and act accordingly "*lest your neighbor put you to shame*".

If you speak the truth to your family, to your friends, what relationships you do have will be good relationships that are valuable. That really MEAN something! You'll have peace in your heart because you won't have constant tension and stress in your life.

WHAT ABOUT ENEMIES?

Obviously, enemies won't let you practice **Matthew 18** on them, per se; but the principle is still the same. The truth! At its heart, that's all **Matthew 18** is about anyway – speaking and determining the TRUTH! You can't control what your enemies (or your friends) do, but telling them what's in your heart *will relieve you of the burden of anger against them!*

When Jesus was slapped, it is certain that should have made Him angry (**Luke 22:63-64**), and it probably did. **But God commanded us not to take vengeance! And to turn the other cheek to those who slap us! And Jesus didn't let that slap cause Him to lose His temper and sin! He was "angry, and sinned not"!**

The way men get angry is seldom, if ever, helpful in encouraging righteousness (**James 1:20**). That's why Paul, in the same chapter that says "*be angry, and sin not*", also said "*Let all bitter, sharp and angry feeling, and noise, and evil words, be put away from you, with all unkind acts*" (**Ephesians 4:31, BBE**).

The last part of that verse "with all unkind acts", or "with all malice" in the KJV, is not translated very well for modern audiences. "With all ill-will" would be better – in other words, don't be angry *with ill-will*. **Be angry for the RIGHT reasons, not for selfish, carnal reasons!**

When someone slaps you, tell them, as Jesus did "*If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*" (**John 18:22-23**). Speak the truth! Loving your enemies does NOT mean you don't tell them they are evil! If they are abusing you contrary to the law, tell them so, as Paul did! (**Acts 22:30-23:3**).

You don't need to yell and curse and scream at them – and you shouldn't (**Jude 1:9**). But once you've told them the truth in your heart, you have nothing else left to say; so you should accept that if they hate you, it's because they hate Jesus; and "*they know not what they do*". They will give account of every single word they say against you (**Matthew 12:36**), and your actions will heap coals of fire on their heads in the judgment (**Proverbs 25:22**).

What's more, their own sins will correct them in this life. What they do to hurt you will hurt them, when they fall into the same trap they laid for others (**Psalms 9:15**). When you truly believe all of these things, your anger will quickly dissolve into pity for them, and like Stephen you can say "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*" – and mean it. Most of us could say it, but few could actually mean it.

You should get mad – but you should also rule your own spirit and control your rage. You should be angry – but you should be able to resolve that anger by confronting the person with whom you're angry.

Dealing with all your past issues all at once will take time – but once you're caught up to the present, once you've dealt with the anger you already have towards people (and/or their anger towards you)... it's very easy to deal with problems one at a time as they come up in the future.

WHY DO WE DREAM?

As I said, before we finish this lesson we must take two major detours; when and how to be angry has been settled, and the second detour is about dreams. As you will see, this isn't nearly as far off-topic as it seems at first.

Everyone dreams. Even animals dream. Why? Where do dreams come from, and what do they mean? It's obvious that God has sometimes communicated with certain prophets through dreams – but is that the only reason God created a soul that could dream? Certainly the majority of more-or-less incomprehensible dreams serve no such purpose... or do they?

Ordinarily, I prefer to tease the point, and reveal the conclusion at the end of a segment; but for once, I want to take you directly to the conclusion and work backwards from there. And that is found in **Job 33:14-18**. Read it carefully, and see what you can understand from those verses, before you continue reading here. Remember, I want you to finish this course knowing HOW to understand *more* than I do, not just knowing what I understand. So try to study it on your own, before you keep reading. What are dreams for? Why, and how, does God use them?

Going through those verses carefully, we can gather several critical facts:

1. These dreams *are not overtly given by God*. In other words, you won't see God speaking to you in the dream because "*God speaks once, yea twice, yet man does not perceive it*".
2. God does this when men are in a "deep sleep" on their beds – R.E.M. sleep, when we dream.
3. In this state, God opens the ears of men – their understanding is less blinded than it would be during the day!
4. God does this (**verse 17, Holman**) "*in order to turn a person from his actions and suppress his pride.*"
5. The purpose of this is to save man from punishment and untimely death.

#4 is the most important of all these facts. While you're conscious, you're ruled by emotions; chiefly, pride. You don't want other people to laugh at you; you want them to think well of you; you don't want to be embarrassed or seem different. Truth be told, it is this pride and fear of embarrassment that keeps most people from behaving like animals.

Without that, men would rape, steal, pillage, and do exactly what they want without fear of anything but other men who were stronger than they are. *And that's exactly what happens in our dreams*. In your

dreams, you can be the most powerful person in the world, have the most desirable mate(s) on Earth, be rich, successful, respected, even worshipped – whatever your heart truly desires. You are free to do exactly what you want to do.

And so dreams are a direct line to your subconscious mind. When you're awake, this is thoroughly suppressed by your conscious mind; this in turn is ruled by what you think is right, or at least what you think you can get away with. So your plans, ideas and ideals rule you when you're awake.

But when you're asleep... you are “withdrawn from your purpose”. Your mind is free to act unfettered by your ideals, free of the day-to-day plans that dominate most of our lives. And most importantly, your pride is hidden from you (**Job 33:17**).

Character is what you do *when no one is watching*. And in no place on Earth are you more safe from scrutiny and criticism than in your dreams. **That means your dreams are the most accurate yardstick of your righteousness.**

SOME PROOF

All of that was extrapolated out of **Job 33**; I offered you very little additional proof. But ironically, when I first understood this, I built the entire idea without connecting it to **Job 33**. I simply hadn't realized that passage was there!

And so while **Job 33** is the best simple proof of it, the Bible abounds with other verses that prove this connection. Many of them come from **Ecclesiastes 5**. Read the whole chapter to get the context, then continue here.

The chapter is primarily about paying vows; specifically, about not saying things you aren't willing to stand behind. This should remind you of **Psalms 15:2-4**; which proves this topic of dreams is not so far as you might think from our main thread of speaking the truth in your heart!

Dreams are mentioned regularly in **Ecclesiastes 5**, and the recurring trend is that these dreams result from “*a multitude of business*” (**verse 3**), and the worry of the rich over their possessions (**verse 12**). There are many other things in this chapter that don't jump out at you, so let's go through it slowly.

Where do dreams come from? **Ecclesiastes 5:2-3**. This tells us dreams come from “*a multitude of business*”. “Business” is translated from a Hebrew word that means “work, especially of a painful or laborious nature”. World English Bible translates this verse better when it says “*For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares...*”

In other words, much trouble, controversy, struggle or problems generate dreams. We often dream about things we did the day before, things we're worried about or fights we've had, so this is not a surprise.

Verse 3 has a **causal link** to **verse 2**; in other words, when **verse 3** says “FOR a dream comes...” it implies that **verse 3** is a RESULT of what was said in **verse 2**; like saying “don't eat too much, FOR stomach-aches come from overeating”; here God says, in effect “don't say rash things; don't make promises to God you can't keep; let your words be few FOR a dream comes from a multitude of cares”.

If you DO say rash things; if you DO make promises to God you can't keep; then that (among other things) CAUSES dreams. Skipping down to **verse 6**, the same type of statement was made: “*Let not*

your mouth make your flesh do evil.” In other words, don’t let your mouth make a vow your body can’t keep – because when you break that vow, it will be a sin, violation of the 9th commandment.

But what’s strange is that it goes on to say “*and say not before the angel, it was an error.*” When could that happen? When would you say to an angel the vow you made was “a mistake” and it “didn’t count”? **Verse 7** answers the question, but not clearly, unless you read it in the YLT: “*For it was done amidst a multitude of dreams, and vanities, and many words, — but, towards God, be thou reverent.*”

Saying to the angel “the vow I made was a mistake, I regret making it!” “*was done amidst a multitude of dreams*”! In other words **you were dreaming when you said it! And an ANGEL was watching your dreams!**

GOD IS WATCHING YOUR DREAMS

Scary as that sounds, is it what the Bible says? **Psalms 17:3**. See how clearly that ties in with what Job said? God TESTED David; He VISITED him in the night, and David was determined that God would find NOTHING objectionable in his dreams!

When does God visit man to “test” (try) him? **Job 7:14, 17-18**. Notice it is in the MORNING that God visits to test men; not at midnight, or noon, but in the morning. Later in **Job 33**, it said God did this when “deep sleep” was upon men; which is R.E.M. sleep, which is when most dreaming occurs!

(Note: dream-ologists (who knew they were actually called oneirologists?) disagree over which is the deepest sleep; but they do agree that R.E.M sleep is usually *perceived* to be the deepest sleep by the sleeper – which is probably the reference the Bible would have used.)

While you’re sleeping, does your soul rest? **Ecclesiastes 2:23**. What is your heart doing in the night, while you’re busy sleeping? **Romans 2:15**. Can what you do during the day affect what you dream about at night? **Ecclesiastes 5:12**.

What you’re seeing is that a guilty conscience has troublesome dreams; a pure conscience has sweet dreams. By seeing which sort of dreams you have, God can, at a glance, see the exact condition of your soul – and so can you.

But it’s deeper than that – literally. What you call your conscience is a more-or-less conscious part of your mind; but beneath that conscience are your subconscious urges. **And these urges can be modified over time.**

What did Paul tell the Corinthians their goal was? 2 Corinthians 10:5. Do you suppose he didn’t mean dreams? Aren’t those “thoughts” too? Are dreamed thoughts impossible to “bring into captivity” to the “obedience of Christ”? (All questions, same verse).

WHY GOD INVENTED DREAMS

It isn’t only sins and lust and so on that causes bad dreams. It is *unresolved* conflict. It doesn’t necessarily matter if you were right or wrong – as long as it festers unresolved in your mind, it is stuck in your conscience waiting to be dealt with. As long as you’re rehearsing things you should have said to them, resenting things they said or did to you, and worrying over it, you’re a prime target for dreams because you have “*a multitude of cares*”.

But by “resolved”, I don’t necessarily mean that you and the person with whom you had a fight “hugged it out”. I mean you *dealt with the problem*. You’re still running the conversation over and over in your head **because you didn’t speak the truth in your heart!** If you had told your adversary what you’re telling yourself over and over **you wouldn’t need to tell yourself!**

I’ve known people who hated their jobs, their boss, and their families so much they would spend the night cussing people out in their sleep! Not just in their dreams, but cussing out loud while they slept! The problem is these people NEVER spoke the truth in their heart, NEVER followed **Matthew 18**; so these issues just piled up in their conscious mind – then spilled over into the unconscious mind, and into their dreams.

Wild animals dream less than domesticated ones; because wild animals are... wild. They are not prevented from expressing the truth in their heart like your housecat is. He’s not strong enough to kill the dog, and cannot flee farther than the nearest tree; so in his dreams he exacts the vengeance that he is unable to exact in his life.

God invented dreams for two reasons; first, as a warning sign that there was trouble in your soul that needed dealt with; and second, because dreams give you an emotional pop-off valve to deal with emotions that you didn’t deal with while you were awake – feelings of guilt, remorse, or longing that you were too afraid or too busy to deal with that day, or perhaps were totally unaware of because of a mental block that had somehow become entrenched in your mind.

Dreaming gives you a place to be Rambo for a few hours and shoot hundreds of bad guys and exact justice – thereby dealing with the unresolved issue from earlier that day because the unqualified boss’s nephew got the promotion you were up for. Without the ability to express these emotions and see our lusts satiated in our dreams, they would stay bottled up inside until we would emotionally explode.

It is this sort of problem that causes people to go insane and bomb their office buildings or show up at school with a gun and mow down their classmates. **And long, long before it gets to that stage, they start doing these things in their dreams.**

If our society was built around truth, these problems would disappear. If children who bullied other children were sternly corrected at home – instead of encouraged, as is often the case – the children they bullied would be less likely to grow up to be sociopaths. If they were given any legal recourse to vent their issues and speak the truth in their heart, rather than having everything they felt repressed, they wouldn’t snap one day and start killing people.

I’m not excusing these murderers – but they’re the symptom, not the problem. The problem is people are trained from birth to suppress their true feelings, to lie about their thoughts and bottle everything up inside. It’s no wonder we are a nation addicted to mood-altering drugs (legal and illegal) and random violence is an everyday occurrence in every town.

Most of that violence would disappear in a few weeks if everyone followed God’s command to put away lying and spoke the truth with their neighbors. But when they don’t, they “*make a place for the devil*”, and invite HIM to solve their problems... HIS way. **It should be no surprise to anyone when that ends badly.**

CLEANING THE CONSCIOUS CONSCIENCE

This is fairly simple; if you've got a problem with someone, *deal with it*. Most of the last half-dozen lessons have been about this in one way or another, so I won't belabor it any more here. **Dreams are the result of unresolved conflict, so make sure you don't have any unresolved conflict!**

As I said before, resolving the conflict doesn't necessarily mean you've "gained your brother". But it does mean **YOU'VE DONE YOUR PART**. Before you go to him, let all those things you wish you'd said be expressed; write them down if you need to. Write down everything you hate about him, make sure you haven't missed anything, and confront him with those issues. Tell him what you think, **and make sure you dig deep for the real truth that you feel**.

When you've done that, you'll find the problem that was hijacking your mind is gone. Sure, you may still regret losing this friend, and your mind may still rub your emotional wound once in awhile, but it won't be the monopolizing influence like it was. **Whether or not he listened to you, you've resolved your issue. What he does is now his problem, not yours, so let it go.**

When that happens, you won't dream about slapping him, shooting him, or stealing all his money. This will take time, and effort, but it's worth it.

CLEANING THE SUBCONSCIOUS CONSCIENCE

This is a bit different. In my own experience (Warning: non-Biblical conclusion coming up!), the subconscious lags a week or two behind your conscious mind. It's as if it takes a few weeks for the resolutions your waking mind makes to seep down into your subconscious; and it goes both ways, both when you make good decisions and bad ones.

In other words, upon waking and analyzing your dream, your waking mind may immediately condemn it; but it may take a few weeks for that thought to disappear from your dreams completely. On the other hand, when your conscious mind makes a foolish compromise with truth, it may take a few weeks for that to show up in your dreams as well.

It also seems that as the condition of your soul improves, this time-delay decreases, so changes made by your conscious mind show up in your subconscious much faster. The purer your soul is, the more easily your conscious mind can access it. This may be different for others, and I have no scripture to support this conclusion, so take it for what it's worth (not too much!).

Regardless, what I do know is that hypnotists cannot make a hypnotized person do anything their conscious mind believes is wrong. I also know that alcohol doesn't turn a loving Christian Jekyll into Mr. Hyde. It merely allows Mr. Hyde to shed his pretense of godliness and act the way he really feels.

Violent drunks are usually emotional and/or literal cowards. They never express their emotions, they just bottle them up – they have unresolved issues with everyone from their mother to their boss, and drinking lowers their inhibitions and allows them to express the rage they truly feel, but never have the courage to express.

Dreams are the same way. **If you would do something in a dream, then given the right circumstances and the right motivation you would do the same thing in real life.** Because you are still you in the dream; you're just free of the pride and fear of embarrassment that ordinarily dominate your decision-making.

On the other hand, if you truly believe adultery is wrong, you won't be committing it in your dreams, either. If you truly believe vengeance belongs to God, you won't be taking vengeance in your dreams. In fact, when presented with a situation where you are tempted to sin in your dreams, a righteous man will find himself rejecting the temptation just as he would when awake.

When being chased by wild animals, in terrifying dreams that so many have, a faithful dreamer will turn to the animals in his dreams and say "The Lord rebuke you" – and they will leave, even in the dream. Dreams are a TREMENDOUS opportunity to practice faith and righteousness in a million situations that would take thousands of years to happen in real life!

This is not just a *pipe dream* (bad pun?), something only saintly prophets and such achieve. YOU and I can do this. Since understanding this truth, I have seen tremendous change in my dream-self. He seldom does anything I would be ashamed to invite others over to see. When he does, I rebuke him; and next time, he does better.

In this way, I strive to say with David "*I have remembered thy name, O LORD, IN THE NIGHT, AND HAVE KEPT THY LAW*" (Psalms 119:55).

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR DREAMS?

This is something that you have to dedicate yourself to doing. It won't happen tonight. Like training a dog or a horse, it takes regular, consistent training to make your subconscious follow God's law. Obviously, it starts with the conscious; as long as you have major issues in your life that you haven't, can't, or won't resolve, your dreams will be turbulent.

But once that's done, the real work can start on your subconscious. Some of it will actually happen in your dreams; if you truly desire this, you will be aware of your dreams enough while dreaming to control them somewhat, and at least feel shame or pride at how you handled a situation while dreaming; but the real work is done as you awaken.

Dreams fade fast as you wake up and get out of bed. Knowing the value of dreams, you need to extend the half-awake state as long as possible. When the first bit of consciousness comes to you in the morning, think about the dreams you just had (and might still be having). I know you may not remember to do this – but put a note by your bed to remind you, make a habit of it, and gradually you will remember without being reminded.

And as you think back on the dreams, while you still remember them (before you open your eyes, if possible), ask yourself, did you behave righteously? Would you invite God to watch your dream last night? If not, what should you have done? Should you have run from the headless horseman, or commanded him to depart from you in the name of God? Should you have told that woman "no thanks, I'm married"? Should you have forgiven that man instead of shooting him? Or simply told him of his sins against you, and left it at that?

Figure out the answer, and tell yourself what the right thing was, and repent of the wrong thing! This is great practice judging the law of God because it gives you many odd, often outlandish scenarios **but in each of them there was a right thing that God would have done!** Finding what that is often an exciting challenge!

And if you regularly, firmly, and consistently judge your dreams each morning, you will find they CAN change! You will see them grow and follow your direction over time! It won't happen all at once. It may take years before you're happy with them – but you should see results in a month or two at most.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER YOUR DREAMS?

Many people have this problem; my *opinion*, based on the people I've known who never remember dreams, is they have SO many unresolved issues that their dreams are too intense for their minds to handle, so they block them out. **I believe, without any Biblical or clinical proof**, that if these issues are resolved, gradually the dreams will be remembered more often. I'll know more as students try the things in these lessons and report back how they worked for them (yes, that means you).

The point of dreams is plainly stated in **Psalms 4:4** and **Psalms 77:6**; so you can “*commune with your own heart upon your bed*”, so your spirit can make “*diligent search*” for sin in your soul. If you can't do that, you are missing one the greatest, if not the single greatest, tools for developing your soul into a copy of the spirit of God.

I can't believe God would allow that tool to be blocked from you by not remembering your dreams unless you have such a serious problem that access to your subconscious would endanger your salvation. Work on your unresolved issues and see if you don't start remembering your dreams so you can begin to “*commune with your own heart upon your bed*”.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Bible is one package. Everything in it explains everything else. It's all part of one big picture, as I keep hinting, and will in time reveal to you – at least, all of it that I know. And as an example of that, consider what we've studied today: “Speaking the truth in your heart” has connected to being righteously angry; that in turn has connected to dreams; and purifying the subconscious; and now we're going to tie it to something apparently totally unrelated...

When your dream-self sins, the first thing you should do when you wake up is repent, right? And after repentance, what has to happen? **Hebrews 9:22**. On the other hand, when you go to work, have disagreements with people, confront them, you are obligated to resolve them by what time? **Ephesians 4:26**.

So if you do this, you will be resolving problems twice a day – every day. In the morning, you repent of your dreams, and that requires a sacrifice; a *morning sacrifice!* And in the evening, you repent of your sins that day, if any, and that requires another sacrifice; *an evening sacrifice!* See **Exodus 29:38-40**. Why was that sacrifice required? **Verses 41-46**.

This sacrifice was required because *God was going to meet with them at those times*, to “*speak there unto you*”! And God wanted the sins of the DAY purged before He met with them at night (in our dreams), and wanted the sins of the NIGHT purged before He met with them in the morning, to guide them through the day!

You can find connecting threads like this throughout the Bible; all the way back in **Genesis 3**, remember when God discovered Adam's sin? What time of day was that? **Genesis 3:8**. The COOL of the day happens *as the sun is about to go down! In the EVENING!* And it was at that time God appeared to Adam, and when He discovered Adam had sinned, what did He do? **Verse 21. Animal skins only come from dead animals – such as might be killed for an EVENING SACRIFICE!**

Do you begin to grasp the wonder of the Bible? The interweaving connections between every scripture, bringing what the world perceives as a jumbled book of random Hebrew fairy tales into a SINGLE PICTURE, uniting the words of the Bible in a way that no conceivable group of humans could have possibly written!

The morning and evening sacrifices have other meanings as well – for the yearly and thousand-yearly plans – but we'll get to those another day. But as they apply to us, the first sacrifice is for your subconscious mind, and the second is for your conscious mind. All of the sacrifices have a meaning that is just as significant for us as these two, but that's enough for right now. (Besides, I don't understand most of the sacrifices myself – yet!).

As we repent of the day's sins, we must symbolically “die”, according to **Romans 7:9**. And Paul said “*I die daily*” (**1 Corinthians 15:31**). This means at the end of each day as we repent of the day's misdeeds, if any, a sacrifice must be applied to us.

Then we sleep, and our subconscious dredges up the issues we didn't deal with for one reason or another, and vacuums out the cracks in our psyche to purge the last vestiges of our problems from the day. Our mind deals with those issues, and as soon as we arise in the morning we look back over those dreams which we remember, repent if necessary, and a sacrifice must be applied again.

On the other hand, if you DO “*let the sun go down on your wrath*”, you GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL! You're creating an environment that's just like home to him! So he will “*terrify you with visions*” (**Job 7:14**) as he did Job – we call them nightmares – and guess who's fault that is? Why, yours! Because *you* made a place where he is comfortable by not resolving the problems that are the result of your own sins, and by not rebuking other people of their sins that you still harbor resentment over!

The more muddled your mind is, and the less righteous your subconscious mind, the more your dreams will be told in abstract symbols; because **God always deals in parables to the less righteous to protect them from understanding too much, too fast. Especially in your dreams!**

You may have totally bizarre arrangements of concepts to vent your unresolved issues – but still, there is always a “right thing” to do. And as you approach righteousness, your dreams should simplify and reveal the actual characters your mind is presenting for analysis and judgment. As you deal with these issues, you should have fewer dreams, and more peaceful, restful sleep.

Your subconscious is the part of you God really wants trained. That training must begin in your conscious mind, but your dreams offer you, and God, a tool of inestimable value for testing and correcting your subconscious.

The end of this process – and it should hardly take a lifetime – will result in a heart so pure that God can be sure you can be trusted. Because your actions, and even your conscious thoughts, will no longer be mere facades to hide deeper thoughts of lust, envy, and greed. Instead, your actions and thoughts will be only the inevitable outpouring of a subconscious nature that is a veritable copy of the nature of God Himself. And then you, too, will be able to proclaim to God...

Isaiah 26:9 *With my soul have I desired thee IN THE NIGHT; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee EARLY: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

It *is* possible to control your dreams. Regardless of what psychologists may tell you, dreams are only an outpouring of your most sincere, unfettered desires. Logically, when you reach a point spiritually, where you truly don't *want* to see your coworker slaughtered, and where you can understand and accept why he is the way he is – and where you have done your part in helping him to see his mistakes – then you have no reason to imagine yourself venting at him in your dreams.

When you do catch yourself doing something in a dream that is wrong, consider the situation; figure out what the right answer was, and promise yourself you will do better next time. Then the morning sacrifice can be applied to you – because remember, there is no sacrifice for a willful (or un-repent-ed-of) sin.

As we follow this path of righteousness towards building a copy of the divine nature within ourselves, and as you approach peace with your place in the universe, you will reach a point where your actions in your dreams are as righteous as your actions when conscious.

When that happens, and the angel drops by for your daily spiritual check-up in the morning, he is greeted by the peace of a righteous spirit – not cussed out by an irate madman. And when he is greeted by such a righteous spirit... he just might finally be able to talk to you about something important... and give you a dream about something that's a bit more profound than the mundane details of this life.

As a child, I always wondered how men in the Bible had the presence of mind to respond so cogently in their dreams (**1 Kings 3:5-15**, **Isaiah 6**, etc). Now I know. Their conscious and subconscious minds were in harmony; what their waking mind wanted, their subconscious also wanted, and there was no friction between the two. When their dream self was confronted with a situation, they responded exactly as their waking selves would have.

Considering Joseph's and Daniel's dreams, their subconscious mind must have been pure indeed for them to receive the visions they did, and to be "greatly beloved of God" as they were. If you desire to share in the love of God as they did, you cannot expect to achieve it by doing any less.

The bottom line of this lesson is simple; whenever, wherever, and however a situation arises – whether at work, at home, or when speaking to a crowd of people burning you at the stake... whether you're awake or whether you're dreaming, if you want to please God – speak the truth in your heart.

1 Peter 3:10 *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

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