

PROGRESSING TOGETHER

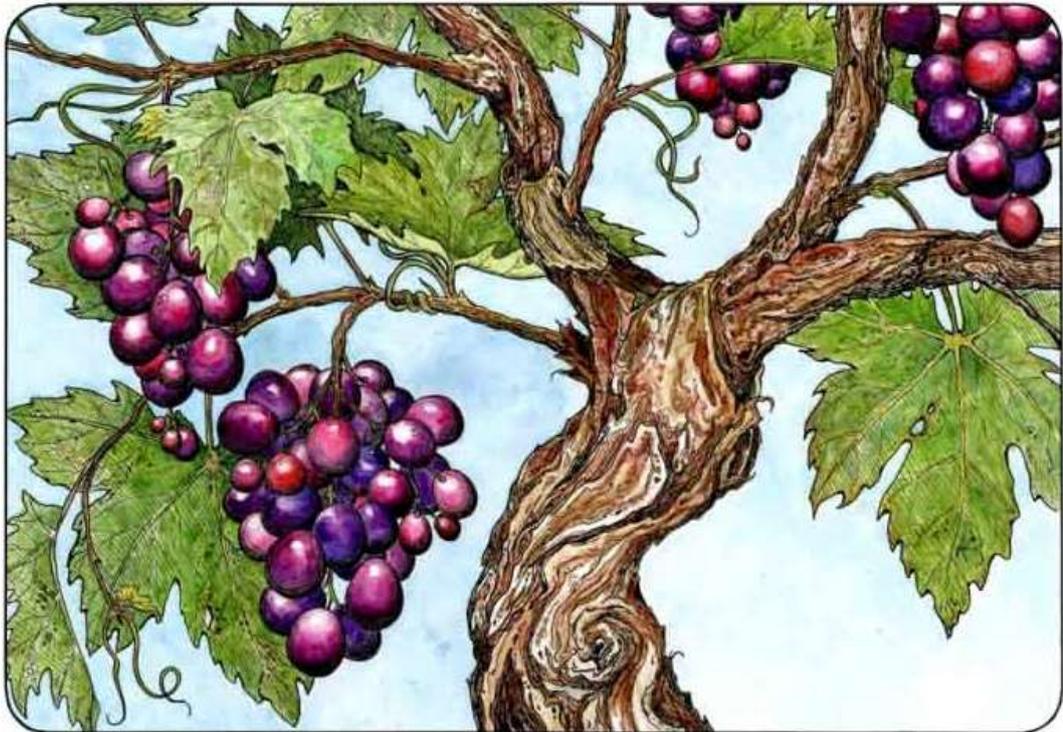


COURSE 107

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

(Formerly Course 106 – Christian Ethics)

Group Leader Version with Notes and Answer Key



We pray...
that you may live a life worthy of the Lord
and may please Him in every way;
bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10

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PROGRESSING TOGETHER LEVEL I

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

The first six courses of the Level I program are designed to help you to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. If you have followed this program you will recall the theme verse below. Complete the missing phrase here:



*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,
continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him,
strengthened in the faith as you were taught,
and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7*

With this course we enter into a new phase: Bearing fruit for God’s glory. Our theme verse is Colossians 1:10. Review the verse on the cover page of this course, then write it from memory below:



We pray...
that you may live a life worthy of the Lord
and may please Him in every way;
bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God.

PART II: BEARING FRUIT FOR HIS GLORY

Course 107 Discerning God’s Will	Course 110 A Life of Service
Course 108 Transformed Relationships	Course 111 Forgiveness & Reconciliation
Course 109 Spiritual Warfare & the Occult	Course 112 Prepared to Give an Answer

In our first course in this series, we will discover that as we grow in our understanding of God’s word, we become more capable of discerning God’s will for our daily lives. This will enable us to bear much fruit as we learn to follow His ways.



COURSE 107: Discerning God’s Will

Course Objectives

1. To understand the key Biblical teachings that make up the Christian moral ethics.
2. To allow the renewed heart, soul, and mind to work together with God's Word to discern God’s will.
3. To apply Biblical ethical teaching to specific life situations to make God-honouring decisions.
4. To commit to remaining connected to Christ and His Body for the power to live a moral and ethical life.

Lessons

❶	The Ten Commandments
❷	The Greatest Commandment
❸	The Teaching of Jesus
❹	Our Conscience Renewed by God
❺	Strengthened to Bear Fruit

Introduction

No one can escape the influence of society around us. We all share its language, traditions and customs. When we receive Jesus as our Saviour and accept him as our Lord, our new faith changes our behaviour. We find that the Lord approves of some of the moral values that we have learnt in the society we live in, but that He will change others.

How can we know how we should behave as a disciple of Christ? What should we do and what should we not do? Where can we find the strength to put into practise our convictions?

In these courses we are not trying to say what we should do, or not do, in the face of every possible situation. Rather we want to show how a believer in Christ can use the principles Christ left us in His word, the Bible, to make responsible decisions in his or her daily life. The study of these principles and how to apply them to our lives is called “Christian Ethics.” Each one of us is called to learn God’s principles and to discern, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the counsel of our faith community, how to boldly take action that best honours Christ in each new situation.

In the first four lessons we will study the basis of Christian Ethics and discern together how these principles apply to life situations.

In the fifth lesson we will look at where we can find the strength which allows us to do the will of God.

Testimony

Note for the group leader:

For each course in the Progressing Together Level 1 program, a story has been provided that illustrates the impact of the Biblical teaching on the life of the disciple. The stories are based on real-life testimonies. They can be used to encourage faith and raise interest in the importance of studying what God’s Word has to say on the topic at hand. You can use them in your church fellowship to invite other participants to the course, or as part of the introduction to the first lesson. Alternatively, you may read the story below to your students:

My name is Malak.

I grew up in our Arab society in a religious family like so many others where our parents feared God and followed all the religious rules and commands even if they seemed illogical.

But from a young age I rebelled against all the commandments and rules laid down by my family and teachers. I considered them to be a restriction on my freedom. I wanted to live like a bird set free, with no constraints or laws or moral principles to tie me down.

So, I took no notice of the values and morals of our society and religion. I was helped in that by the fact that I was a man and that our society and religion give the man a privileged place. Yet despite all that, I never felt truly happy, joyful or free. There was always something missing and when I was alone, I would feel a crippling sense of guilt.

I looked at the life of people in the West. I knew that they had a different lifestyle from us and that they lived just as they liked. They also had a different religion, which allowed them to do this. Everything is permitted and there is no authority, law or command to stop them.

So, I decided to adopt the Christian religion as an experiment, hoping that I might be able to go and live in a completely free country, where no one would hold me to account, nor would my conscience ever trouble me. After this decision, I got into contact with a group of people who had converted to Christianity. I thought that they would be like me and so I joined them.

As I got to know them, the foundations of my beliefs were totally shaken. I was astonished at what I discovered about them and myself. For they were living a true freedom in the full sense of the word. It was a ‘freedom with responsibility’ or a ‘freedom based on Christian principles’. I learnt from them that the freedom I had been looking for was really a trap. I was simply becoming a slave to all the things I wanted to do. Those things were actually robbing me of my freedom.

Through those friends I came to know Christ. I learnt that the true principles of Christian freedom spring from the believer’s relationship with God who is love and the giver of freedom. I don’t need a set of commandments or laws that I must obey out of fear of God. Rather, I act out of love and service towards God because I am his son and no longer a slave. Christ himself is my example and the model I seek to follow.

With Christ I have become free but at the same time responsible. I live according to his principles. Because I am a believer, free, created in the image of God, I must now live as a son, not as a slave living according to the ways of slavery. I must live according to the law of free men and I must both strive and remain in Christ.



Lesson 1: The Ten Commandments

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To understand the intent of the moral law as providing structure to society while giving liberty to individuals.
2. To be able to explain the benefits of obeying the 10 commandments.
3. To be able to apply the teachings of the 10 commandments to life’s decisions and situations.



The Mosaic law is made up of the moral law, the civil law, and the ceremonial law. The civil law was designed for the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt and became an actual nation. The ceremonial law regulated the sacrificial Jewish religious system and the purification laws, both of which pointed to the righteousness made available through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah. The moral laws, however, can be applied by all people throughout time.

In this lesson, we will be looking at the moral law as presented in the 10 Commandments and how these commandments can guide us as we grow and mature as Christians.



Read Exodus 20:1-17.



The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) is a covenant treaty between God and His people, Israel. (See also Deuteronomy 5:3). What does the text tell us about God’s relationship to His people? (20:2)

God has rescued them and bought them out of slavery. So, they all are indebted to God as their master.



What is the purpose of these laws?

To show how people who belong to the LORD God should live.



Ex. 20:2 shows that God intends liberty for his people. As you reflect on these laws, describe how observing them would keep the people free.

By obeying these commandments, the Israelites were kept from becoming victims of man’s oppression (free to live in a peaceful and just society) as well as free from being enslaved to their own sinful addictions and to their harmful consequences.



Fill in the table on the following page. (An example is given in italics.)



Note that there are four commandments about our respect for God and six about our respect for others.

Verses	Commandment	Is this commandment talking about values generally respected in your society?		Do you consider this commandment to be...		When this commandment is respected, what are the positive results for me / for society?
		Yes	No	Difficult	Easy	
1 Ex. 20:3	No other gods	✓ in principle	✓ in practice	✓		Example: This releases me from lying, from false gods and idols which, if I followed them, would reduce me to a form of slavery.
2 Ex. 20:4-6	No idols.					This frees me from superstition and from trusting in anything besides the one true God.
3 Ex. 20:7	Do not use the Lord’s name in vain.					This causes me to properly reverence the Lord as God. I do not abuse his name for my personal gain nor as an excuse or blame for things in my life.
4 Ex. 20:8-11 *	Keep the Sabbath holy.					This allows both the body to rest and the heart and mind to focus on God.

5 Ex. 20:12	Honour your father and mother.					This allows for the healthy functioning of society (ex. respect for authority) as well as the passing of wisdom and knowledge to succeeding generations.
6 Ex. 20:13	You shall not murder.					It honours and protects all life. It promotes peace and respect for all humanity. <i>Note for the group leader: You could add that it helps us discern God’s will on social issues like abortion and euthanasia.</i>
7 Ex. 20:14	You shall not commit adultery.					This protects my heart from sexual sin and the slavery which that brings. It preserves the family and protects children and women from exploitation.

8	Ex. 20:15	<i>You shall not steal.</i>					<i>It protects persons and property and encourages honest industry, commerce, well-being and the accumulation of wealth. It checks greed and idolatry.</i>
9	Ex. 20:16	<i>You shall not bear false witness.</i>					<i>This helps me be a person of character and integrity. It protects all from false accusations.</i>
10	Ex. 20:17	<i>You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods.</i>					<i>It also helps me to avoid covetousness and greed. It encourages the enjoyment of good things while avoiding enslavement to lust for more.</i>

** Note for the group leader*

The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy is the only one of the 10 commandments not confirmed in the New Testament. In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul instructs the Colossians to “Let no one pass judgment on you in relation to...the Sabbath.” He also says that the Sabbath is a “shadow of things to come.” Likewise, the writer of Hebrews says we are to enter God’s rest and live as fully sanctified to God every day of the week (Hebrews 4:9-11). As a result of this, the commandment to keep the Sabbath as a special day of worship is no longer required.

- In fact, Sunday quickly became the preferred day of worship for the New Testament community of faith, as it celebrated the resurrection of Christ from the dead. See Acts 20:7; 1Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10.*
- Note that the principle of the law remains true today: setting one day per week aside for rest and devotion to the Lord-while no longer an obligation-is still a wholesome, blessed discipline/practice.*



EXAMPLE: Djamila is a 17-year-old Christian. Her parents are practising Muslims. On the television she discovers the latest fashions in France. She knows that for a Muslim this way of dressing would be considered sinful but she wonders, as a Christian, if she could dress like this.



Which of the ten commandments should be taken into consideration in this context?

The fifth, perhaps the 7th and the 10th, even the 1st.



Why is the 5th commandment relevant in this situation? (Exodus 20:12)?

Djamila could well shock her parents unnecessarily, for they will interpret her behaviour according to their Muslim criteria.

God asks children to respect and obey their parents.



Why is the 7th commandment relevant in this situation? (Exodus 20:14)?

If her clothes are seductive, she exposes men to the temptation of desire. She could even be led into temptation herself.



Why are the 10th and the 1st commandments relevant in this situation? (Exodus 20:3 and 17)?

Her desire for these clothes could become covetousness and turn to idolatry. Djamila could also make other women jealous. Desiring something that is not available can lead to sin (though not always). After all, it was covetousness by looking that led to the fall of Adam and Eve.



Optional activities

1. Learn the 10 Commandments by heart using hand gestures. Click on the following [link](#) for ideas. (Make sure you adapt the hand gestures to your particular culture.)
2. Listen to Psalm 19:7-13. Make a list of what the law of God is like and how obedience to the Law affects our lives. Then, thank God for His law.

Verse	What is the law like?	How does obedience to God’s Law affect our lives?



Applications

1. We looked together at the decision Djamila had to make regarding her choice of clothes. Come up with another example of a real-life situation where an understanding and application of the Ten Commandments can help a Christian make a good decision.
2. How are covetousness and idolatry linked? Provide an example from your life or that of another believer of how you or they have overcome covetousness and/or idolatry.
3. Read or listen to Psalm 1 and draw a picture to represent the blessing of the person who delights in the law of the Lord. Then, thank God for His law and for His promise to bless you as you walk in His ways. Pray that you would delight more and more in doing His will. Put your picture in a place where you can see it often and continue to pray this prayer during the coming week.

Note for the group leader:

Tell the students that there will be a revision activity at the end of this course. They will be asked to invent a drama that shows what you have learned about discerning God’s will. Ask them to start thinking about this.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ②: The Greatest Commandment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To see and be able to explain how the Greatest Commandment of love for God and our fellow man fulfils the 10 Commandments.
2. To understand how to apply the principle of love to moral choices.
3. To examine a personal habit in the light of the law of love and determine if there is a need to change.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Read Matthew 22:34-40.



In Matthew 22:33-40 Jesus quotes two commandments from the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. This "greatest commandment" shows us the universal aspect of the law which can be applied in all places and circumstances.

The "rules" of the Old Testament were primarily laws which guided human behaviour whereas the "greatest commandment" addresses man's heart.



The Greatest Commandment is composed of two parts. Each addresses relationship: first, our relationship to God and then, our relationship to our fellow man. Write both parts below:

1. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*
2. *Love your neighbour as yourself.*



With which parts of our being should we express our love of God? What function does each of these parts have in our lives?

1. *The heart – it is the source of emotions and will.*
2. *The soul (the spirit) – it is the source of our life.*
3. *The mind – it is the source of thought and decision.*

Note for the group leader:

These categories should not be considered as clearly defined and distinct parts of the human being. They can overlap. The Bible uses different terms in passages elsewhere. Also, in the New Testament, the heart was the seat of the moral, intellectual as well as emotional life (the whole person). See Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 3:15-16.



How does each one of them influence the other two?

Open answer

Some possible responses:

- *What I feel, desire and believe directs how I lead my life and how I think.*
- *The regenerated soul renews my heart and my mind.*
- *The renewed mind leads me to control my emotions, my desires, and changes my life.*



Look at the list of the Ten Commandments in lesson 1, and explain how love is understood in each of the commandments:

1 If I really love God I will desire no other gods.	6 <i>If I love God and my neighbour I do not hate, I do not assassinate, including by my words.</i>
2 <i>If I love God I do not want to make a visible representation of Him.</i>	7 <i>If I love God and my neighbour I respect the bonds of marriage.</i>
3 <i>If I love God I wish neither to destroy His reputation nor deceive Him.</i>	8 <i>If I love God and my neighbour I do not take what belongs to another and I do not cheat.</i>
4 If I love God my work retains its proper importance and I joyfully give over the day of rest to God, knowing that He will provide.	9 If I love God and my neighbour I do not destroy my neighbour’s reputation.
5 <i>If I love God and my neighbour (my parents) I will respect those who gave me life.</i>	10 <i>If I love God and my neighbour I do not long to obtain what belongs to another.</i>



Read Jeremiah 31:31-34



More than 600 years before Jesus Christ, Jeremiah prophesied that the old law based on the letter of the law would be replaced by a new law. This new law, while hardly changing the contents, would no longer be external but would be written on the heart.



Why was a new covenant with a new law necessary?

Because the old one had been broken. The people were not willing to follow the law (the law was not written on their hearts).



What would replace the tables of the law?

A law in the mind and written on the heart



As this new law is not based on the letter of the law, on what is it based?

On love, knowledge of God and forgiveness.



What is the essence of the law that Jesus taught in Matthew 22:37?

To love God fully and with our whole being.



Explain how this command can truly guide all our moral decisions and enable us to accomplish God’s Law in the New Covenant.

God is love, and all His ways are loving. The essence of the law is love for God. We respond to His love with our love to Him first and foremost. This means we want to obey Him and do His will. He wants us to become like Him: loving, gracious and righteous in all our ways. He wants us to love those whom He loves. This includes all whom He has created in His image and especially all those whom He has redeemed and who believe on His Son. Because of our love for Him, we will want to fulfil the Greatest Commandment and the 10 Commandments toward God and man.



EXAMPLE: The Bible does not mention tobacco because it was not known then; but many Christians prefer not to smoke.



How can the "Greatest Commandment" be applied to this question when we consider:

1. The love of God:

If I love God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind, I will also... respect my body, for He created me and He lives in me by the Holy Spirit.

To ruin my health is a lack of respect for God.

I also run the risk of becoming dependent on cigarettes, and using God’s money unwisely.

2. The love of our neighbour:

I respect my neighbour and I do not wish to bother him or ruin his health. Therefore, I do not smoke in his presence.

Also, the money I save on cigarettes can be invested to bless others.

By maintaining my health, I will be more available to serve others.

My example of good personal habits can encourage others to do likewise.

3. The love of self:

Tobacco will not satisfy my needs. I do not wish to ruin my health or to be dependent on (a slave to) any drug or habit.



Optional activities

1. Sing a song about loving God:

- [Love the Lord your God with all your heart](#)
- [I love you, Lord](#)
- [We love you, Lord](#)

2. Sing a song about loving our neighbour:

- [A new commandment I give unto you](#)
- [Love each other](#)
- [Love one another](#)

3. Watch this video from the Bible Project about [the meaning of Agape Love](#):

Pray and ask God to show you how you could show agape love to someone this week. In groups of two share what God has shown you and pray for each other.



Applications

1. As Christ’s bride we want to show our love by remaining pure for him. Think of a behaviour, habit or attitude you are not sure whether you need to change. Apply the law of Love and any of the 10 Commandments as you examine it. (Consider for instance: pornography, entertainment and film viewing habits, Facebook and social media use, playing the lottery, fashion, race cars, sports, hobbies, drinking, dating, high cuisine.)
2. Optional exercise: show how understanding some of Jesus’ responses to objections regarding the Sabbath illustrate the priority of the Greatest Commandment. (Matthew 12:9-14)
3. Watch [this video](#) about taking the opportunity to show love (or God's love) to people around you. Then, pray that you will have many opportunities to show love to others this week.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ③: The Teaching of Jesus

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. *To realise that God’s standard of righteousness is impossible to attain and that we desperately need His mercy.*
2. *To seek the Father’s grace to transform our hearts and make us more like Himself.*
3. *To grow in godliness: become constantly aware of our Father’s presence in our lives.*
4. *To live by the “Golden Rule” of ethics and treat others as we would want to be treated.*



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Read Matthew 5 to 7.



In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sets a very high standard of moral purity: perfection! His two-fold purpose in doing so is evident in Matthew 5:13-20. First (5:13-16), he holds up a model of values and behaviour that inspires us to become like our heavenly Father. Following the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount will make you stand out in the world like salt and light. Second (5:17-20), he convinces those of us who are trying to attain salvation by our righteous deeds that we can never hope to attain it. Exceeding the standard of righteousness set by the Pharisees seems impossible and indeed it is. And so, we all need to acknowledge our need for Christ as our saviour. As believers in Christ we strive for this perfection in our moral choices, knowing that when we fail we can rest by faith in our salvation through the forgiveness of the cross.



A RENEWED HEART – MATTHEW 5



Re-read Matthew 5.



Jesus taught that to truly obey the Old Testament Law man must have a renewed heart. An external observance of the law without a renewed heart falls short of Jesus’ perfect standard for His followers.



The chart below places in parallel the Old Testament Law as practised in Jesus’ day with Jesus’ standard of success in fully achieving it. In each case, rate on the scale of 1-10 the difficulty you have in fulfilling the requirement. Then, determine what quality or attitude of the heart is required and write it in the last column.

Verses	OLD TESTAMENT LAW		JESUS’ TEACHING		HEART TRANSFORMATION
	What did the Law specify?	How difficult is it to follow this perfectly (1-10)? 1=easy 10=hard	What did Jesus’ explanation of the Law require?	How difficult is it to follow this perfectly (1-10)? 1=easy 10=hard	What character traits does Jesus’ explanation require?
5:21-26	You shall not murder		Do not even be angry		Kindness and Forgiveness
5:27-30	You shall not commit adultery		Do not even look at a woman lustfully		<i>Purity, Respect for opposite sex, Goodness</i>
5:33-37	You shall not swear falsely to the LORD		Do not swear falsely in any situation but rather keep your word every time.		<i>Honesty, Truthfulness, Integrity, Sincerity, Faithfulness, Trustworthiness, Sacrifice</i>
5:38-42	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (law of retaliation)		Do not resist evil people or exact retribution against them. Rather bless them.		<i>Forgiveness, Graciousness, Generosity</i>
5:43-47	Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.		Love both your neighbour and your enemy.		<i>Grace and Mercy, forbearance, goodness</i>



How possible is it to accomplish God’s standard of righteous in Matthew 5:20-48? (See also 2 Corinthians 5:21)

It requires perfection and therefore, it is impossible.



Which challenge above is the hardest for you? Why?

Open answer

Note for the group leader:

You could do the following application exercise now or at the end of the lesson.

Choose one of the commandments from the table above. Think about circumstances where this commandment applies. It can be a situation you are going through for the moment. Then, answer the following questions:

-What should be my attitude and actions based on Jesus’ teaching.?

-Is there some way the group could help me with this?

-Is there someone I could ask to talk and pray with me about any of these?

② A RENEWED FOCUS – MATTHEW 6



Re-read Matthew 6.



In Matthew 6 Jesus encourages us to focus on pleasing our heavenly Father rather than pleasing the people of this world.

a) Worshipping God alone



In Matthew 6:1, what is Jesus warning against?

Displaying your righteousness acts in public simply for the praise of man.



In 6:1-18, Jesus describes how three religious practices in his day were being performed in such a way as to impress men but dishonour and insult God. Name these three practices.

Giving to the needy, praying, and fasting



What was the motivation and reward for “the hypocrites”?

To be seen by men



What word does Jesus use to explain how men should perform these activities to honour God?

They should do it in secret.

Note for the group leader:

Time permitting, you could encourage reflection with these follow-up questions:

- How should we live out this principle in our private worship times?*
 - How should this affect our corporate worship times?*
-



What does Jesus promise to those who do these activities in a way that honours and is pleasing to the Father God?

They will be rewarded by God.

b) Allowing our good works to shine while worshipping God in secret



How can we reconcile Matthew 5:13-16 with Matthew 6:1-18?

We must seek to give glory to God rather than glory to ourselves.



When giving to help someone in need, which of the following ways best glorify God? Tick the appropriate response(s) below:



Give (spontaneously) directly to the person.



Give to the person in the presence of other witnesses.



Alert a deacon or treasurer of the church (or house group) to the need and give the amount anonymously through the church.



Can you give another example of how to glorify God and not ourselves in our good works?

Open answer

c) Seeking God’s kingdom first



What is the promise in Matthew 6:33?

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”



Explain what it means to ‘seek God’s Kingdom first’ in the context of verses 19-33.

It means doing what most glorifies God without knowing in advance how God will provide all our needs for tomorrow.

It means confidently and joyfully serving God while trusting Him to provide all we need despite our limited resources.



Describe a situation in your life where you are anxious and worried and explain how you can change to have a more heavenly focus.

Open answer

Note for the group leader:

You may help participants reflect with questions such as...

- Are you rendering services to people on an on-going basis because you are expected to and/or are ashamed to stop?*
- Do you have trouble saying ‘no’?*
- How do you perform your job or family responsibilities in a way that truly glorifies God?*

Additional note to the group leader:

As this lesson is particularly long, you could determine to lead the group in any one of three ways:

- 1. You could end the lesson here and go directly to the application section at the end of the lesson. In that case you could make a short summary of the last two sections.*
 - 2. You could divide the lesson here and complete sections 3 and 4 in the next session. Conclude with applications from the first two sections.*
 - 3. You could finish the lesson as presented in one session.*
-



THE GOLDEN RULE – MATTHEW 7:1-12



Re-read Matthew 7:1-12.



Matthew 7:12 has become known as the “Golden Rule” of ethics.



Write Matthew 7:12.

“So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”



When we apply the Golden Rule, we are simply imitating our Heavenly Father, who loves to give good things to his children who ask in confidence. (verse 11)



Reread Matthew 7:1-5. How are these verses an application of the Golden Rule?

We are not to judge others more harshly than we would want them to judge us.

Note to the group leader:

These verses do not teach that we are not to judge at all. In fact, a few verses later in Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus tells us to beware of false teachers and to recognize them by their fruits. We are to render a judgment about them by examining their lives. (See also Philippians 1:9 and Hebrews 5:14.)

Matthew 7:1-5 deals with hypocrisy in judging others with a critical, condemning spirit.



Reread Matthew 5:21-46. (You can also review the chart in section 1.) Show how the Golden Rule can be applied to a situation mentioned in this passage. An example is provided below as a model to follow:

In verses 21-26, I prefer people to be forgiving and kind than to be unforgiving and angry toward me. So, I should do likewise.

Open answer. Another example:

In verses 27-30, I would rather have others treat my wife, daughter, or mother with purity and respect, so I should act likewise.



FINAL WARNINGS – MATTHEW 7



Jesus in the closing sections of his message reinforces the theme he introduced in the beginning: we need to be perfect, like our Father in Heaven.



Re-read Matthew 7:12-23



What additional warnings does Jesus give to self-righteous and religious people confident in the merit of their good works before God? (The first response below is given as an example.)

He warns his fellow humans that they are hypocrites. We naturally have blind spots that cause us to excuse ourselves while condemning others. The real problem is inside our hearts. We need to realize that the evil we see around us reveals what we tend not to see in ourselves. (verses 1-5)

Open answer.

Some possible answers:

- *If we are honest we are far from the mark of treating others with the same respect and care that we give to ourselves. (verse 12)*
- *The narrow door makes clear the extreme difficulty of entering into God’s salvation. We must not be distracted by the common beliefs of the majority who are on the wide road to destruction. This would be a shock to the people of Jesus’ day, viewing themselves as God’s faithful covenant people under Roman persecution. (verses 13-14)*
- *The unproductive tree cannot be improved or recovered. It can only be chopped down and removed. Our own efforts to be righteous according to God’s standard are useless. (verses 15-19)*
- *Not everyone who says “Lord” and who does great things will be acceptable to God. (verses 21-23).*



Optional activities

1. Play a skit showing the right and the wrong way to practice one of the three religious practices mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 6 (giving to the needy, praying and fasting). Then, pray that God would give the right attitude when you do these things.
2. Play a skit illustrating the problem of ‘looking at the speck of sawdust in our brother’s eye and paying no attention to the plank in our own eye’ (Matthew 7:3) Then, discuss as a group what can help us overcome this tendency. Then, pray for God’s help to put this into practice.
3. Meditate on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) while listening to [this song](#).



Applications

1. What promises does Jesus offer in the Sermon on the Mount to those who trust in him?
 - [Chapters 5-6](#)
 - *God rewards those who do not seek advancement but rather suffer for His sake in this present world. Matthew 5:3-12*
 - *God sees and rewards all that we do for Him. Matthew 6:1-21*
 - *God will provide for all of our needs without our needing to worry about them. Matthew 6:24-34.*
 - [Chapter 7](#)
 - *We can ask and He will grant us salvation and the power to live righteously. (v11)*
 - *He can make us loving and produce good fruit as a new, fruitful tree. (v17)*
 - *We can build our lives on His Word as a sure foundation. (vv24-25)*

How will you remember these promises and claim them in your daily life? Make an action plan. (What you will do, when, who will encourage you?)
2. Learn Matthew 7:12 by heart. Make a list of all the things you want others to do to you. Think about why you appreciated being treated like that? Pray and ask God to show you how you can act in this way towards someone this week. Put the list you made somewhere where you can see it every day. Then, put it into practice.

What do I want others to do for me?	Why do I appreciate being treated like that?	How can I act in this way towards someone this week?



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson 4: Our Conscience Renewed by God

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. Recognize the difference between our old identity and our new identity in Christ.
2. Examine our current behaviours in light of our transformed identity.
3. Learn to put on the new self and walk in righteousness and holiness ‘in the power of the Spirit’.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Each one of us has a conscience to guide us and help us to distinguish good and evil. (Romans 2.14,15). This "inner voice" can change from one person to another according to their character and past influences. It is for this reason that we should open our consciences more and more to the light of the Holy Scriptures so that our values become progressively more like the Lord's.



Read Ephesians 4:17 to 5:21.

①

THE CONDITION OF HUMANITY WITHOUT GOD



How does the "darkening in their understanding" and the "hardening of their hearts" influence the behaviour of people who do not know the one true God? (4:17-31)

When someone refuses to know anything about God, he proclaims himself as his own god. He has his own criteria but no limits (he has lost all moral frontiers « lost all sensitivity » 4:19) He does what he wants according to his own lusts (4:19); it is therefore normal that he commits acts such as described (sexual impurity (4:19), lies (4:25), bitterness, rage, brawling, slander, malice (4:31).

②

THE NEW PERSON RECREATED BY GOD



Reread 4:20-24,30. What has God changed in us now that we are believers in Christ? *Our former way of life before knowing Christ is of the past. Our old nature (old self) has been replaced by the new. We want to live in newness of life in righteousness and holiness through the new nature, created to be like God (4:24). We have the presence of the Holy Spirit to help renew our mind (4:23,30).*



What does God ask us to do now that He has recreated us? Complete each command below. Then explain what this means (how we do this) in your own words. The first and last explanations have been provided as model answers for you.

Verse	Command	What does this mean? How do we do this?
22	Put off <u>the old self/nature</u> .	This means I must consider myself dead to—unaffected by—my former identity with its desires and habits. I proclaim that they have no authority or place in my life and that I refuse them. I rejoice that I have been set free from slavery to sin!! I declare I no longer enjoy this destructive lifestyle.
23	<u>Renew</u> the spirit of your mind.	<i>I must consistently avoid the thoughts and influences of my old life and put them out of my mind. I replace them by continually filling my mind with Scripture meditation, godly fellowship and prayer.</i>
24	<u>Put on</u> the new self.	<i>I must consider myself to now be controlled by and under the authority of my new nature, which is made in the likeness of God. I am no longer a slave to the old self. My desire now is to walk in righteousness and holiness and to please God in all my actions.</i>
30	<u>Do not grieve</u> the Holy Spirit of God.	I understand that God the Holy Spirit lives in my heart. The Holy Spirit is saddened when we choose to disobey His leading and fall back into the sinful ways of the old self. I must continually be attentive to the Spirit and allow Him to help me as I choose daily to put off the old self and put on the new self.

③ THE NEW SELF REPLACES THE OLD



Re-read Ephesians 4:25-5:21. After each verse, write the practice of the Old Self to be removed and then the one designed to replace it from the New.

Verse	What are the elements of the old self that we should “put off”?	What are the elements of the new self that we should “put on”?
4:25	Falsehood, (lies)	Truth
4:26	<i>Sin</i>	
4:28	Theft	<i>Work for my living; share</i>
4:29	<i>Unwholesome talk</i>	Build others up
4:32	Bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, malice	<i>Gentleness, kindness, calmness, respectfulness</i>
4:32		Kindness, compassion, forgiveness
5:1-2		<i>Be like God, love others as Christ loves us</i>
5:3	Sexual immorality, impurity, greed (desire to possess things)	

5:4	<i>Obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking</i>	Thanksgiving
5:5	Immorality, impurity, greed (idolatry)	<i>Purity, generosity</i>
5:9		Goodness, righteousness, truth
5:11	Fruitless deeds of darkness (occult practices)	<i>Expose and condemn occult practices</i>
5:15	<i>Unwise behaviour</i>	wisdom
5:16	Laziness	<i>Make the most of every opportunity to witness</i>
5:17	<i>Foolishness</i>	Understand what is God’s will
5:18	Drunkenness	<i>Be filled with the Holy Spirit</i>
5:19		Mutual encouragement, worship
5:20		<i>Gratefulness, thankfulness</i>
5:21		Mutual submission



Which one of the above areas do you struggle with the most?

Open answer



What can you do to put off that practice and put on the new practice?

Open answer



List some practical steps you can take to change that practice.

Open answer



How can we as a group help and encourage you to change this practice?

Open answer



EXAMPLE: Hakim had never drunk alcohol and had seen enough alcoholics to make him very wary. When he became a Christian, he was relieved to discover that Christians were not big drinkers as he had thought before. However, he was shocked to see his new brothers drinking wine at a small party. He went to his Bible and discovered that the Bible distinguishes between drunkenness (Ephesians 5.18) and a healthy use of wine (1 Timothy 5.23) and that Jesus drank wine with his disciples (Matthew 26.27-29).

Hakim now knows that a Christian may drink but should not get drunk. He will not judge Christians whom he sees drinking. However, he will not drink himself. His conscience would not allow him to do so.



Optional activities

1. Bring in a nice clean jug (that is not see-through) and fill it with dirty water. Ask the participants who would like a drink from it. Pour the dirty water in their glass. Ask: What is most important, the outside aspect of the jug or its content? Why?
Then, discuss the following questions:
 - What does it mean for us to be ‘made new in the attitudes of our mind’?
 - What happens if we only change our external behaviour but not the attitudes of our minds?
2. Sing one of the following songs as a prayer to God for your own sanctification and the renewing of your mind:
 - [Holiness](#), Scott Underwood
 - [Take my life and let it be](#)
 - [The Power of Your Love](#), by Geoff Bullock
 - [Create in me a clean heart](#)



Applications

1. Pray and ask God to show you if there are any things on the negative list in section 3 above that you are doing. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Thank him that you have been made new in Christ. Break up into groups of two or three and share what God has shown you (as specifically or generally as you want). Then, pray for each other. Throughout the week, ask the Lord to give you strength to resist the temptation to do this. Recite Ephesians 4:22-24 whenever you are tempted.
2. Pray and ask God to show you if there is anything on the positive list that you are not doing. Break up into groups of two or three and share what God has shown you (as specifically or generally as you want). Then pray for each other. Throughout this week, put into practice what God has shown to you.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson 5: Strengthened to Bear Fruit

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To recognise that our strength and ability to produce fruit is based on remaining in Christ.
2. To understand that Christians strive to live righteously and ethically because we love God and not because we are trying to earn our salvation.
3. To commit to live a life that produces the fruit of the Spirit.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



In this lesson, we are going to look at the strength that allows us to do God's will. God Himself works in us “to will and to act according to His good purpose” (Philippians 2.13). Our ethical codes are based on the character of God. The Mosaic law is a reflection of this. The perfect life of Jesus is an example. The Holy Spirit will empower us to obey God's law in our everyday life.

Read John 15:1-17.



The picture of the vine shows us that we must be "grafted" into Christ and use His strength to keep the law. If we are in Christ we will produce fruit for Him. At first sight, this fruit looks very much like "good works" but this fruit does not come from ourselves. It grows from our relationship with Christ. Bearing fruit in this way is the true accomplishment of the law.



Fill in the table below: What does the text say about the vine and how can this teaching be applied to my life?

	The vine	My life
God’s plan Verses 8 and 16	A vine that bears much fruit is to the glory of the vineyard owner/gardener.	If I bear much fruit, I glorify God. God chose me so that I may bear much fruit
The position of the shoot (branch) Verses 4 and 5	It does not bear fruit unless it remains in the vine.	<i>I do not bear fruit myself. I must remain in Christ.</i>

<p>The work of the gardener Verse 2</p>	<p>He cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit. Those that bear fruit, he trims so that they become even more fruitful.</p>	<p><i>If I bear fruit, Jesus allows me to go through trials so that I bear even more.</i></p>
<p>Who benefits? Verse 8</p>	<p>The vineyard owner/gardener</p>	<p><i>God for He will be glorified.</i></p>



What is the new relationship between Jesus and the believer (verses 12-16)?

They are friends.



On what is it based?

- *Obedience to the commands of Jesus (verse 14).*
- *Jesus who chooses; he sends the believer out to bear fruit that will have a durable effect (verse 16).*



What are its characteristics?

- *Knowledge of God and of His plan (verse 15)*
- *Confidence in Christ and total dependence on him (verse 5)*
- *Limitless love (verse 13)*



A servant tries to please his master and a friend wants to please his friend. Compare what motivates each one of them to act in this way.

- *The servant is motivated by submission and blind/forced obedience.*
- *The friend is motivated by love; namely, by the desire to please his friend with the assurance that he has understood what his friend wants. In our relationship to Christ this becomes a loving obedience.*



In what way is my relationship with Jesus like that between a master and his servant?

Submission and dependence may be required without necessarily knowing all the whys and wherefores of my work.



In what way is my relationship with Jesus like that between friends?

Complicity in the work. Through Jesus I know God and His will for me, including the broad lines of His plan for man in a relationship of love.

Note to the group leader:

No longer are we simply ignorant servants; now our relationship with God is primarily one of friendship. Meanwhile we remain servants and never fully comprehend God’s plan. We are often called upon to obey God without fully knowing why.



What do you consider a ‘good work’?

Open answer



List at least five things which are considered to be ‘good works’ in your society.

1. Helping an elderly person to cross the road
2. *Giving to charity*
3. *Going to the mosque or a church*
4. *Giving food to a needy person*
5. *Visiting the sick*



A ‘work’ is very different from a ‘fruit’. The first is a deed or an action which can be motivated either by love for God or by our old nature (the flesh). The fruit of the Spirit are a set of attitudes of the new nature which motivate good works that are truly pleasing to God.



Read Galatians 5:16-26.



Paul talks here about the evil works of the flesh, and the good fruit of the Spirit.



Why does he insist on the fact that the flesh can only produce works (good or bad), and that only the Spirit can produce fruit?

Because the desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the Spirit. The flesh produces that which is in accordance with the desires of man. He who wishes to satisfy the law in his own strength is merely seeking to justify himself by the law. But because of his fleshly desires, he can never attain perfection. Until he lives under grace, he lives under the law of sin. So, he can only produce fleshly works. He cannot produce fruit until he is transformed and living by the Spirit.



In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) Jesus shows us the example of a man full of ‘good works’ who, nevertheless, did not please God and another with no ‘good work’ but who found grace in God’s eyes.



Fill in the table below.

What are the nine evidences of the fruit of the Spirit?	Are they on the list of ‘good works’ that you mentioned above?		How well are you bearing this fruit (1-10)? 1=bad / 10=good	Do you have room for improvement?	
	Yes	no		yes	No
<i>Love</i>					
<i>Joy</i>					
<i>Peace</i>					
<i>Patience</i>					
<i>Kindness</i>					
<i>Goodness</i>					
<i>Faithfulness</i>					
<i>Gentleness</i>					
<i>Self-control</i>					

Note for the group leader:

Similar to the note on the personal evaluation chart in lesson 3, think about whether or not reviewing each one’s personal answer to the group will be helpful as you work through the chart.

You could point out that if anyone is lacking a number of these qualities/attitudes, the solution is not to increase their efforts! Instead, they should confess to God that they have been controlled by their flesh and ask Him to fill them anew with the Spirit (see the application section of lesson 1 of 103 Growing in Christ). Then, they should put off the fleshly attitude and put on, by faith, the quality of the renewed person (see the previous lesson).



In John 15:9-17 one commandment is repeated: Which one?

Love each other.



Where in the last reading (Galatians. 5:16-26) did we see it?

In verse 22.



Explain whether keeping this commandment is a result of a ‘fruit’ or a ‘work’.

Keeping the commandment of Jesus is a result of a ‘fruit’.



Explain the importance of Galatians 5:24 in being able to produce fruit.

Fleshly works are the ‘fruit’ of sin. In order to produce the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit, we must no longer live according to the flesh, no longer live for ourselves but live for Jesus. We must crucify – or put to death – our old self. This means we must totally separate ourselves from the old fleshly self and its passions and desires. Then, and only then, can we walk in the fruit of the Spirit.



How will abiding with Christ and producing the fruit of the Spirit affect our relationships with other believers in Christ’s Body?

Rather than producing rivalry and factions we will be gentle, patient, and forbearing with our brothers and sisters, seeking ways to do acts of kindness out of a deep abiding love for God’s people.



Optional activities

1. Memorise the list of the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Sing the song [‘You are the vine, we are the branches’](#) as a prayer.



Applications

1. Read Acts 5:1-11. Then, discuss the following questions as a group:
 - a. What was the ‘good work’ of Ananias and Sapphira?
They sold a field and gave part of the sale proceeds to the apostles to benefit the Church.
 - b. Was it motivated by the fruit of the Spirit or by their own flesh? Explain your answer.

It was largely to promote their own fleshly glory in the sight of all the others. They wanted to compete with Barnabas as a generous saint who gave all of the sale of a field to the Church. They falsely insisted that they had likewise given the full value of the sale to the Church. Along with building their own spiritual pride they likely were seeking to gain greater power and influence over the Church.

- c. What should they have done differently in order to truly glorify God by their work?
*They should simply have told the truth about the sale price.
Even better, they could have made the contribution discretely to the apostles and deacons overseeing the offerings without the whole Church knowing who gave it.*

Now, reflect on any good works you have done in the last month. Examine whether it has been motivated by the desires of the flesh (i.e. done for your own glory, power or material gain). Confess this to God and, if applicable, to those who were affected by it. Then, do what is possible to glorify God and make the situation right this week.

2. Draw a tree with 9 fruit and label each one to represent the fruit of the Spirit. Meditate on your drawing and ask God to show you which fruit needs to grow more in you. Then, pray that God will produce it in you in abundance. In groups of two pray for one another and encourage each other. Then, continue to pray for this fruit to grow in you this week.

Note to the group leader:

If you have not mentioned the necessity of confession, of renewed filling of the Holy Spirit and of the putting on the character of the new nature (see group leader’s note above), you could do so now.



Review of Course 106

Review the five lessons of this Course. What is the most helpful thing you have learned? Share your discoveries with the group.

Then, ask the students to play a drama that shows what you have learned about discerning the will of God through this course.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



End of Course Evaluation

Please note:

This End of Course Evaluation is there to help you improve your skills as a group leader.

Put a check next to the issues that you need to work on.

You may want to discuss some of these with your mentor/coordinator.

Number of the Course that you finished teaching:

Title of the Course:

Think about the following questions:

A. This course

Is there something that was not covered sufficiently or that you need to cover again in this course? What are you going to do about it?

B. Your role as a group leader

Is there anything you should change in the way you prepare your lessons?

Is there anything you should change in your teaching method? (Are you leading the students to discover the answers for themselves?)

Is there anything you should change in your attitude as a group leader? (Are you dominating or moderating the group?)

C. Preparation and participation

Are the students attending the meetings regularly? If this is not the case, why not? Is there anything that can be done to enable them to do so?

Are the students preparing their answers thoughtfully before coming and eager to share what they've learned? What can you do to encourage and further motivate them?

D. Group dynamics

Are there students who do not participate or do not feel free to share at a deeper level in the group? If this is the case, why?

Are there some who cause problems in the group? In what way? How can you deal with that?

Are the students taking responsibilities within the group and serving others using their gifts? If not, what can you do to encourage this?

E. Review & progress evaluation

Are you ensuring students can understand and express what they have studied? If so, how?

- Answers in class Review questions Oral exam Written exam

Are you keeping a record of the students’ progress? If so, how?

- Attendance Students’ workbooks Exams Course register Student register

Are students achieving in their evaluations? If not, why not? How can you help them improve?

F. Application

Are your students putting the biblical truths into practice? If not, why not?

What difficulties are your students facing on their spiritual journey? How could you help them overcome these difficulties?

Does anyone need personal follow-up? If you cannot do this, whom could you ask?

G. Multiplication

Are the participants sharing with others about what they learned? If not, how could you help them to do this?

Are others seeking to join a study group? If so, how can you best integrate the newcomers?

Have you identified any participants who could become future group leaders? How are you going to equip them?

H. Further group leader training & equipping

Note any areas you would like to receive further training in.

What else would you like to discuss with your mentor/coordinator?

What next?

- ✓ Praise God and intercede for each of your students.
- ✓ Pray for your own ministry as a discipleship group leader.
- ✓ Look at each of the issues that you want to work on. Decide what you have to do to address these issues. Then start implementing the necessary changes.
- ✓ If you want to discuss something, make an appointment with your mentor/coordinator.

We would love to hear about your experiences as you taught this Course.
Please contact the Progressing Together team: info@progressingtogether.com