

In Jesus Steps

Disciples for Life

Unit 2: Christian Leadership

How to positively influence the attitudes and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 5

Leading by Example

Day One

Good or Bad Example

It is exciting to see rainbows after the rain. The seven primary colors brighten and light up the sky in beauty and wonder. We usually are not thinking of the science behind this phenomenon—sunlight shining through water droplets and refracting or bouncing out of them. We just look up and enjoy the gigantic prism in the sky.

We may think of the story of the flood and how God gave the rainbow as a sign to Noah and all humanity that He would never destroy all life with waters. But have you ever considered the rainbow as God's visible presence among us? In our last lesson, *The Presence of God*, we learned that God is always with us, whether we see Him or not. Nevertheless, it is exciting to consider the rainbow as a visible sign of His personal and universal presence.

Read Genesis 9:15–17; Ezekiel 1:27–28; Revelation 4:2–3 and answer questions 1–4:

“I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” ¹⁷So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.” Genesis 9:15–17

I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. ²⁸Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. Ezekiel 1:27–28

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Revelation 4:2–3

1. What is the sign of the everlasting covenant between God and all creatures (Genesis 9:16)?

2. Why did God preserve a remnant of people through Noah (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23)? (A remnant is a portion of people left after a disaster, often because of divine judgement.)

3. What did the radiance around God appear like to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28)?

4. How did the apostle John see God on His throne when he was in the Spirit (Revelation 4:3)?

In addition to God's promise not to flood the earth and destroy all life, the rainbow reveals a brilliant and loving God who wants a relationship with us. He left a remnant through Noah and his family to ensure people would survive. God has also not forgotten His everlasting promise of Genesis 3:15. After Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, God promised humanity a Savior. Our Savior will save us from our sins so we can be in His presence face to face, forever.

After studying about the presence of God and living *daily* in His presence, we are ready to lead by example. God is with us and brings happiness and satisfaction as we listen and obey His instructions. Our joy will become more evident to others as we are led by the Holy Spirit and seek to glorify God. This alone can be a striking example!

Have you ever heard the expression, "Do as I say, not as I do?" It means that I will tell you the right way to behave and you need to conform, *but* I am going to behave or act in another way. Similar phrases about actions and words are, "Actions speak louder than words" and "Walk the walk and not just talk the talk." People watch what we do more than hear what we say.

Some years ago, I went whitewater rafting on the New River in West Virginia. On the bus ride to the river, one of the leader-guides gave us a set of rules we were to follow. Each raft would have a leader-guide; there would be about six rafts that would follow along together. One of the rules was not to use the paddles to splash another person in your raft or in another raft.

After we had gone through a few of the rapids, we paddled into a calmer part of the river. The six rafts were close to each other at this point, and we could all see the occupants of the other rafts. One of the guides started horsing around and good-naturedly used his paddle to splash another person in his raft. That opened the flood gates with people in his raft and in the other rafts as well, using their paddles to splash one another. Prior to this time the rafters had followed the rules without incident. Not only did the wayward guide have difficulty getting everyone under control again, but the other guides did also.

5. Why did the rafters stop obeying the rules when they saw the example of the leader?

6. Did the leader-guide display a good or bad example?

7. Why does what you do, rather than what you say, have a greater impact on people?

In this rafting experience, the people had accepted the guides as their leaders during the excursion (trip). They were willing to follow them and the rules that had been set up for everyone's enjoyment and safety. However, when the young leader broke the rules, others decided it must be okay to do the same. If the guide is doing it, then they should be able to do it also.

The wayward guide gave the impression that this was not a rule that mattered; they could disobey this one. This is the same logic or principle that others will use in following your example. Therefore, you have a grave responsibility to keep your example pure so that as others are watching and following you, they are not led into sin (1 Corinthians 10:32–33).

Another reason what you do has a greater impact on those you are leading is simply because they are *seeing* your behavior. Studies by educational researchers suggest that 83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses—11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch. This means that as a leader, your people will remember what they see you doing long after they have forgotten what you have said. In addition, the studies suggest that three days after an event, people retain 10% of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35% from a visual presentation, and 65% from a visual and oral presentation.¹

Read 2 Chronicles 21:11 and answer questions 8–10:

He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray. 2 Chronicles 21:11²

Definitions: The *high places* were elevated sites on hills or mountains that were dedicated to worshipping false gods. An *idol* is something or someone worshipped other than God. In the Old Testament idols are usually carved images or statues of some kind.³

8. What kind of an example did Jehoram, king of Judah, present to God's people by building the high places?

Jehoram had led the people away from God into idolatry (idol worship). He was representative of most of the kings in the history of the Israelites. Instead of being a good example and having a beneficial effect on those in his care, he was a bad example and poor influence on God's people.

¹ "Presenting Effective Presentations with Visual Aids" (May 1996 OSHA Occupational Safety & Health Administration U.S. Department of Labor) <<http://www.osha.gov/doc/outreachtraining/htmlfiles/traintec.html>> (accessed 10/5/2013)

² All Scripture is from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. All rights reserved worldwide.

³ The average high place would have an altar, a carved wooden pole that depicted the female goddess of fertility (Asherah), a stone pillar symbolizing the male deity, other idols and some type of building. At these places of worship, the people sacrificed animals and at some high places even sacrificed children. Trent C. Butler, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, 1991), 645.

9. After considering how your example affects others, list one thing about your behavior that you recognize will have to change.

10. How can your team pray for your behavior change (answer #9) for setting a better example?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #9–10 with your discipleship team.

Sometimes God will miraculously cure a person of a bad habit or sinful pattern. Other times it takes years of persistent prayer and hard work to change an ingrained (rooted deeply) behavior. Do not give up if you fall into this second category. God's grace is sufficient (enough), and your determination will be rewarded with powerful living (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Action Step

11. Ask God to show you a Christian brother or sister who has a bad or sinful habit that is harming their good example. Connect with the person as God leads, share your own struggles and successes in Christ and ask how you might pray for them. Be cautious that you are not tempted to sin (Galatians 6:1). Share what happened:

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #11 with your discipleship team next week.

In lesson 1, *A Leadership Model*, we learned that Jesus is our leadership model. Another word for model is example. Jesus powerfully and perfectly demonstrated what He valued. He did not say one thing and do another. He was consistent and persistent in His teachings and His actions. He never asked anyone to do something that He had not already done or was not prepared to do.

When we follow someone, we are acknowledging that he or she is worthy of imitation. Jesus is worthy to be followed. He is the supreme model. He is the ultimate and good example to follow. No one else even comes close. He is the One that we strive to imitate or copy. By God's Spirit and grace, we endeavor to think, act, and behave in the same way as Jesus.

Read John 12:25–26 and answer questions 12:

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. John 12:25–26

12. In order to serve Jesus, be where He is, and receive honor from God the Father, what *must* we do (v. 26)?

Read Luke 9:22–24 and answer questions 13–15:

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." ²³Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it." Luke 9:22–24

13. What was the example that Jesus set for us (v. 22)?

14. Do you think following Jesus is easy or difficult (v. 23)? Easy Difficult (Underline One)

15. Explain your answer about whether following Jesus is easy or difficult in #14.

16. How do you save your life and how do you lose it (v. 24)?

Following Jesus is radical and continuous. It is a full-time commitment to His Lordship and teachings. If we try and save our lives by seeking security, entertainment, approval, and worldly pursuits, we will lose it in the future when Christ returns. However, if we place our trust in Jesus and devote ourselves to kingdom tasks, no matter the hardship, then we will gain everlasting life and reign with Christ in the future.

Is following Jesus easy? No, it is not. He tells us to take up our cross and follow Him. The cross represents humiliation, pain, and death. It also represents Christ's selfless offering so others may have everlasting life. In the same way, we should be willing to sacrifice and die for the gospel.

"During China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900, nearly one hundred students barricaded themselves inside a mission station. Every gate was blocked, except for one. The insurgents placed a wooden cross on the ground in front of that lone open gate. The students were told that if any of them came out and trampled the cross beneath their feet that they would be granted—not only their freedom—but their lives as well. Any who refused to do so, however, would be immediately shot and killed.

Slowly, a handful of terrified students walked through the gate and trampled the cross beneath their feet. True to their word, the insurgents allowed those students to walk away unharmed. Another girl soon followed but, instead of trampling the cross, she knelt before it in prayer, petitioning her Lord for strength during this trial of certain death.

Having renewed her trust in the Savior, she stood up, made her way around the cross, and walked toward the firing squad where she met her end. Emboldened by her example of faith in the Savior, each of the remaining students made their way out through the gate, around the cross,

and into the hands of the firing squad where every one of them forfeited their lives for the glory of God.”⁴

Definition: “*The Boxer Rebellion*, (1899-1900) was an anti-foreign/Christian movement by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists in China. In response to imperialist expansion and missionary evangelism, local organizations began to emerge in Shandong in 1898. At first, they were suppressed by the Qing Dynasty but later, the Empress Dowager tried to expel western influence from China with aggressions aimed towards foreign missionaries. Boxers across North China attacked mission compounds killing foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians.”⁵

Living for Jesus can be dangerous. We may be called to give our lives over to physical death for His name’s sake. If this is our calling, may we be faithful and not waver in our decisive moment.

We do not know the future, but one thing is for sure—we are called to absolute surrender. Following Jesus demands sacrifice. God is not looking for “fair weather” disciples. He is serious about commitment. This means giving up whatever is necessary to follow Christ and honor God. It could even mean losing family, friends, reputation, money, and possessions.

One difficulty in following Jesus is the fear of man (people). Fearing man is being afraid of humiliation, rejection or physical harm from others. When we fear others, we can act in ways to impress or satisfy them. Although we should not fear people, sometimes it is not easy. We must rely on Jesus to strengthen us and empower us to die *continually* to self and even physically as we follow Him. Remember, Jesus taught we should fear God and not man (Matthew 10:26–28).

Action Step

Pray the following prayer or your own prayer about not fearing people:

My Lord and My God, I pray for the courage and strength to follow You perfectly and without fear of man (people). Give me the grace I need to take up my cross and follow you daily. I pray that my thoughts, actions and deeds are pleasing in Your sight. Be glorified in my life and make me a holy and good example to others. Thank You for answering my prayer and for being with me all the days of my life. Amen.

17. I prayed to follow God and not fear others. Yes No (Underline One)

—End Day One—

⁴ Charles Specht, “Dying for the glory of God,” <<http://www.charlesspecht.com/dying-for-the-glory-of-god/>> (accessed 08/2/2020).

⁵ The Alliance website, “About History,” <<https://www.cmalliance.org/about/history/in-the-line-of-fire/boxer-rebellion>>(accessed 08/2/2020).

Day Two

The Light of your Example

Read John 8:12 and answer questions 18–19:

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Definition: *Darkness* is the absence of light. In the Bible it is used in both real and figurative ways. Figuratively, *darkness* symbolizes chaos, sin, ignorance, judgment, and punishment.

18. Who is the *light of the world* (v. 12a)?

19. How can you never *walk in darkness* but have *the light of life* (v. 12b)?

Light and darkness seem like such simple concepts but in fact, they are profound. These concepts give meaning and purpose to all life. Jesus keeps His followers in the light and out of the darkness. Let the truth of John 8:12 and its ramifications seep into our souls.

Jesus is YHWH, the great "I AM" (John 8:58). The letters YHWH (יהוה), or Yahweh, is the transliteration⁶ of the proper name of the God of Israel from Hebrew into English. When Moses asked God for His name, He answered, "I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

YHWH is light (Psalm 4:6; 1 John 1:5). In the new city of God, after the old things have passed away, there will be no need of the sun or the moon, for the glory of God will give forth all the light (Revelation 21:23).

Light has several meanings. For the scientifically minded, physics⁷ defines light in two ways: 1. Electromagnetic radiation⁸ that has a wavelength in the range from about 4,000 (violet) to about 7,700 (red) angstroms⁹ and may be perceived by the normal unaided human eye. 2. Electromagnetic radiation of any wavelength.¹⁰

We tend to think of light as a simple concept but when we consider a scientific definition and how it travels throughout the colossal universe, we gain a new respect for the God and Savior who is the light of the world (Psalm 8:3–4). For example, it has been estimated that there are 100

⁶ Transliteration is representing letters or words from one language to another.

⁷ Physics is the science of matter and energy and of interactions between the two. It includes mechanics, heat, light and other radiation, sound, electricity, magnetism, and the structure of atoms.

⁸ Electromagnetic (EM) radiation is a form of energy that is all around us and takes many forms, such as radio waves, microwaves, X-rays and gamma rays. Sunlight is also a form of EM energy, but visible light is only a small portion of the EM spectrum, which contains a broad range of electromagnetic wavelengths. Wavelength is a measurement of light and energy.

⁹ Angstrom (ång'strem) is a unit of length equal to one hundred-millionth (10⁻⁸) of a centimeter, used especially to specify radiation wavelengths. Also called angstrom unit after Anders Jonas Ångström.

¹⁰ Britannica, "Light Physics" < <https://www.britannica.com/science/light>>(accessed 08/27/2020)

billion stars in an average galaxy and 10 billion galaxies that are observed by man. That would give us 100 billion trillion stars! Think about that the next time you gaze into the night sky and see light from some of the stars in our galaxy.¹¹

God is the Creator, the Scientist, the Designer, the Builder, and the Architect of everything. Light is God's concept and one that is both complicated and simple at the same time. Light is the absence of darkness. It dispels (drives away) darkness. It is a brightness that comes with the rising of the sun, the lighting of a candle, the building of a fire, or simply flipping an electric switch.

The word light is also used to illustrate enlightenment¹² or understanding (Daniel 2:21–23). You might recall seeing older cartoons with a light bulb over a character's head indicating that they have a "bright idea." Usually, the character is in deep thought about a difficult problem when all of a sudden, he thinks of a solution.

20. Read 2 Corinthians 4:6. After considering the simple and complex nature of light, what meaning does this verse have for you personally?

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #20 with your discipleship team.

Read Matthew 5:14–16 and answer questions 21–23:

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14–16

21. What does Jesus mean when He says, "You are the light of the world?"

22. What does Jesus mean when He says, "Let your light shine before others" (v. 16)?

23. When your good deeds are recognized, who should be glorified (v. 16b)?

¹¹ UCSB Science, "How Many Stars in Space?" < Line [HTTP://SCIENCELINE.UCSB.EDU/GETKEY.PHP?KEY=3775](http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=3775).>(ACCESSED 09/24/2020). A galaxy is a system of billions of stars that together with gas and dust are held together by gravitational attraction.

¹² Enlighten is defined as clarifying information or freeing someone from ignorance.

Jesus commands us to let others see our good deeds so that they may glorify our Father in heaven. Our *light*, that is, our good deeds, come from God. Without Him, each one of us is like a single, *unconnected*, light bulb. We have no energy, no power, and no illumination. Rightly, God is glorified for the good He enables and empowers us to do. In the same way, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

24. How do you respond when you are complimented for a kindness or good deed?

Maybe you already answer humbly and give God credit when you are complimented. But if not, consider responding or volunteering answers like these. *You're kind, but it's Jesus who enables me to help you. It's my pleasure to help as I try to honor God. God just wanted you to know that He loves you. Jesus is my example and I follow Him.*

My cousin, Cookie, liked to say, "Jesus is my hero, and I hope He'll be yours too!" Whatever you choose to say in response to your good deed, you may not always get a nice response back. There are those who love darkness and *are not interested in the light*. They do not want you to give credit to the Lord. Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, a member of the Pharisees (a Jewish religious-political party).

Nicodemus went to see Jesus to ask him some questions. The text specifically states that he went at night. Among the words that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, the following verses are noteworthy.

Read John 3:19–21 and answer questions 25–28:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.
John 3:19–21

25. Why do men love darkness instead of light (v. 19)?

26. Who hates the light (v. 20a)?

27. Why will evildoers not come into the light (v. 20b)?

28. Jesus says, *But whoever lives by the _____ comes into the _____ so that it may be _____ plainly that what they have _____ has been done in the _____ of _____* (v. 21).

Nicodemus went in the dark of night to see Jesus (John 3:1–18). He was a member of the Jewish ruling council and maybe was overly concerned with what the others might think of this personal visit. We know the majority of the council did not believe in Jesus and the truth God was revealing through Him. Jesus takes the opportunity afforded by Nicodemus' nightly visit to teach on the subject of darkness versus the light.

Jesus also instructs Nicodemus on the spiritual truth of being born again. When Nicodemus does not understand, Jesus questions his right to be called Israel's teacher or spiritual leader. In other words, Jesus is saying, *If you do not understand spiritual truth, how can you teach or lead others?* A leader must understand spiritual truth in order to model it and guide others.

Definition: The word born refers to one's physical birth. *Born again* refers to the spiritual rebirth of human hearts by the Holy Spirit's action when someone makes a profession of faith in Christ. Being *born again* results in a transformed life and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Salvation (saved from God's wrath, sin, and death) is another term for being *born again*.

29. Why is it important to understand spiritual truth?

A Christian leader has the most important job in the world: *leading the sheep to the Shepherd*. No shortcuts, secret tunnels, or river cruises, but a direct path to God. He is their real Leader, not you, me, or anyone else.

If you, a lead sheep, are in the front and the younger (new believers) are behind, what happens if you stray or wander down a wrong path? It does not even matter if you wander off by mistake or walk-off intentionally. Those new believers who do not have a full view of the Shepherd *yet*, may just keep walking behind you and away from God.

The Shepherd was in Israel, but Nicodemus was not bringing the flock to Him. He was in danger of leading the flock (Israel) astray. He was a religious leader and should have been so close to God that he would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Nicodemus should have been in the middle of the crowd in the *light* of the day honoring and agreeing with everything Jesus taught. Sometimes the Bible does not clearly state that a person coming into contact with Jesus repented and followed Him. For example, the woman caught in adultery (John 8:4–11) and the centurion at the cross (Mark 15:39). Of course, we like to believe the woman followed Jesus' instruction to leave her life of sin and that the centurion, witnessing the crucifixion, understood and believed his own words that Jesus was the Son of God.

With Nicodemus, we get a clearer picture of a transformed life. He took Jesus' words to heart that fateful night and dramatically stepped out into the light. When Jesus was taken down from the cross, it was Nicodemus who accompanied Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, in asking Pilate, governor of Judea, for His body (John 19:38–39). After receiving permission, they prepared Jesus' body on the first *Good Friday* before the sun set. Nicodemus also brought 75

pounds of myrrh¹³ and aloes¹⁴ for His burial; a large and royal amount of spices. Recall that Jesus was also presented myrrh at His birth.

Action Steps (Personal inventory)

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer the following questions (25–28) and to personally change anything in thought or deed that is not appropriate for a disciple of light. This section is between you and God. However, if you want help and prayer from your team, share as the Spirit leads.

30. Is there anything that I am doing under the cover of darkness?

31. Are there sinful things that I am doing in the light of day?

32. Does my conduct transcend (surpass, exceed) in holiness and purity those I am leading?
Yes No (Underline One)

33. I have reviewed questions #30–32 with God, confessed, repented, and prayed to be a good example and never lead anyone astray. Yes No (Underline One)

34. If you could not answer yes to #33, please explain why.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #33–34 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Two—

¹³ Myrrh is a sap-like substance extracted from various trees and bushes and used for perfume, incense, and burials.

¹⁴ Aloe is a succulent, flowering plant used in ancient times to clean dead bodies and prepare them for burial.

Day Three

Battling for the Good Example

A leader must be brave and courageous. Setting the right example is not always easy. Satan is smart. He targets those who are affecting the kingdom for good. If he can take out the leader, he has the potential to destroy a lot more folks or an entire flock. Satan even had the audacity to target God's Son. We should not be too surprised because the devil even had the impudence (nerve) to try and compete with the all-powerful triune God (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:12–18).

Satan is like a fiery dragon on a chain. God has Satan's chain securely fastened so that his range is powerfully and permanently controlled. The serpent of old can only move or roam within the boundaries of what our sovereign God allows (Job 1–2).

God not only allowed Jesus to be tempted, but it was part of His plan. Jesus had to be made fully human in every way so He could be our high priest (Hebrews 2:17). The temptation also gave Jesus an opportunity to stand up under intense pressure and model right behavior while using spiritual combat weapons.

It can be God's plan for Christians to be tempted to be strengthened in our faith. However, God is not the one who tempts, but only *allows* the devil to do the tempting (James 1:13). God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability but will provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Definition: *Tempt* is a verb meaning to invite or try to persuade a person to sin by making the wrongdoing seem attractive.

Read Matthew 4:1–4 and answer questions 35–39:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:1–4 (Jesus' answer is quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3.)

35. How long had Jesus gone without food (v. 2)?

36. Was Jesus hungry after not eating for 40 days and nights (v. 2)? Yes No (Underline One)

37. Have you ever been hungry? Yes No (Underline One)

38. How does *your* Christian example hold up when you are hungry or tired?

39. What was Jesus' reply to the devil's temptation to turn stones in to bread (v. 4)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to 35–39 with your other disciples.

Jesus gave us an excellent example of not giving into temptation under difficult circumstances. The Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He fasted and prayed. Although Jesus gave up food voluntarily and in obedience to the Spirit's leading, that does not mean that He did not experience hunger and even fatigue (weariness) because of lack of nourishment.

When you or I are hungry, tired, sick, or experiencing any physical pain or ache, our bodies can certainly cry out for attention: *Feed me, give me rest, heal me, comfort me, and whatever happens, don't let me go through any pain!* In the same way our mind and emotions can cause havoc: *I'm angry and someone is going to pay. I'm frustrated and I don't feel like trusting God. I'm lonely and I will feel sorry for myself. I feel neglected and I'll force the attention I need from others. I'm afraid and I won't do what God desires of me.*

It is when we experience such times that Satan or his followers try to enter into our lives. Think of yourself on a theatrical stage going through one of the above situations. The beautiful, thick, red curtain is parted, and you are playing to a packed house. All eyes are on you as the devil, or one of his demons, starts giving you suggestions on how you should think and act. You can be sure that the suggestion will *not* be to think, act and respond like Jesus. Your tempter wants you to sin.

The Bible tells us that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and the Holy Spirit of God (Romans 8:12–13; Galatians 5:22–23). We *can* think, act, and respond like Jesus. We can and we *do* think, act, and respond like Jesus! The tempter, the demon slithers off stage and the people in the audience roar in applause.

We never know exactly who will be in our audience when the curtain is drawn back; there may be believers, nonbelievers, holy angels, or demons. There is, however, one who will *always* be in your audience. You can always count on God being there, watching and desiring your victory and success in everything the devil throws at you. God loves you the most and will never take His eyes off of you. When you do resist the temptation, His applause comes like this: *Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master's happiness!* (Matthew 25:21)

Leaders may not always *feel* like doing the right thing. It may seem easy or expedient (useful) to act or go along with how we are feeling at a particular moment in time. But remember Jesus had a real body and was really hungry. He put God above His human feelings and would not take anything from Satan, not even a suggestion to ease His hunger by turning stones into bread (Matthew 4:3–4). Jesus only followed God. The Father had *not* told him to turn rocks into food and He would not. Jesus lived on every word that came from God.

40. Are you struggling with any kind of temptation? Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)

41. What steps are you taking to overcome this temptation?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to 40–41 and pray for each other in overcoming temptations and standing firm in Christ.

Christians may struggle with various kinds of sins and temptations. Sexual immorality is but one powerful device that Satan uses against God's people. He will tempt a person to start thinking or lusting after someone. He may suggest, *No one will be hurt by your thoughts*. But thoughts can be sinful, and they can give rise to actions, good or bad (Matthew 5:27–30, 15:19–20; Colossians 3:5–7; Proverbs 4:23).

Sex is a God-given gift and only to be engaged in, by mutual consent, between a man and a woman *after* they are married (Genesis 1:27–28; 1 Corinthians 7:5). Rape is not only a sexual sin but a violent act against another who bears God's image. It is a sin inside or outside of marriage vows.

Satan perverts (distorts, misinterprets) the good with evil in many ways to destroy lives. This is not to say our own sin-nature does not play a part in our transgressions. For example, a man and woman love each other and are planning to be married. They justify their situation and engage in premarital sex (fornication) since they *will* be getting married. They have transgressed God's law. Sex before or outside of marriage is sin no matter how "clever" the reasoning (1 Corinthians 6:12–20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6).

I am reminded of a former board member with CLI Prison Alliance. It came to our attention that he was living with his girlfriend outside of marriage. Another board member and I talked to him on several occasions. He refused to marry as he had a successful business and did not want to risk giving up his wealth. The board member had gone through a divorce previously and had to give up a lot of his money in the settlement. He justified his behavior and was unrepentant. He got extremely angry with me and CLI Prison Alliance even though we were kind but adamant (firm). We could not allow him to be part of the board or ministry. The point is that we must all be vigilant (on guard) against sin.

Adultery (sex with someone other than spouse) is wrong. Jesus taught that by even looking at someone lustfully, we commit adultery (Matthew 5:27–28). Looking at or listening to anything sexually explicit or implicit will be hazardous to pure thoughts. Stay away from such media.

If you have an issue thinking about children in a sinful way, cry out to the Lord for help, and pray for a plan of action to overcome it. Understand: sex or sexual touching is *not* an appropriate way to show love to children but instead these kinds of things are acts of hate against them. Sex with children will alter and hurt their little souls with untold damage (Matthew 18:6–9).

Marriage and sexual relations between the same gender is sin (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Do not be misled by Satan's lies. You may have strong feelings in this area and want to believe that since God made you this way, it must be right. I cannot address your particular DNA (hereditary characteristics) or what makes you tick. I do not even know what makes me tick. Everyone is born with certain characteristics, both physically and mentally, that present certain challenges in life. The devil uses these characteristics, along with environmental and life circumstances, to tempt people to act on same sex attractions.

Same-sex activity, whether engaged in a sporadic (irregular) or permanent type lifestyle, is sin. Like any sin, seek help from Jesus. He understands your difficulty. He was not looking forward to being nailed to the cross and having humankind's sin poured into Him. But Jesus overcame by focusing on the Father's will and the glory set before Him. In the same way, you too can overcome by focusing on God's will and the glory that awaits you in heaven.

What if you are not a perpetrator (doer) but instead you are a victim of sexual sin? The serpent of old is shrewd. After someone has been hurt in this way, either by adultery, rape, incest, or some other heinous (terrible) transgression, the devil will use the pain to tempt the victim away from God. Demons might whisper: *If God really loved you, He would not have let this happen to you. God could have kept you from all this pain.* The truth is God does love you and yes, He could have prevented it.

These two statements are compatible. God created everyone out of love. We live on this fallen earth for an exceptionally brief time contrasted with eternity. When our time is up, we Christians will be free of all evil, pain, and heartache. Until then, our sin and the sins of others will adversely (unfavorably) affect lives. God prevents some things and allows others; He is God, and He is good (See *Unit 1: Who Is God: Lesson 1, God Is Good*).

The important thing to remember is that no matter what you are facing: *you will overcome (triumph) through the Holy Spirit.* That is why God commands us to be strong and courageous. He promises to be with us wherever we go. Even if you were raised in a hellish home or had unspeakable things done to you, *you do not have to follow in those evil steps.*

Instead, follow Jesus. He surrendered to God and resisted the devil. Jesus placed Himself under the authority of God the Father and took a subordinate (lesser) role while He was on earth. Even though Jesus is equal to the Father in every way, He subjected (submitted) Himself to the Father and obeyed all God said or commanded while He walked the earth as a man.

Read James 4:7 and answer questions 42–43:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

41. In your opinion or personal experience, what is the most difficult aspect of resisting the devil?

43. How do you overcome or triumph when you are in a difficult situation?

In the Matthew 4 account of Jesus' temptation, our Lord quoted Scripture (Bible verses). We can also oppose Satan and his followers by memorizing, meditating on, and quoting from the Holy Scriptures. A handy way to have Scripture available at all times is to copy and paste verses in your phone or tablet or write them on index cards or in a small notebook. When you begin to have wrong, sinful, or depressing thoughts, read the verses and think about what God is saying.

Action Step

44. Memorize Joshua 1:9 and Romans 8:15:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."
Romans 8:15

Accountability: Be prepared to recite your memory verses with the other disciples next week.

We should not fear temptation because in a sense it can be a good thing. When we face, and overcome sin, we become stronger and healthier in mind and spirit. Temptations can be a godly training camp in spiritual warfare not only to strengthen ourselves but others as well.

Through fiery trials, we learn to depend on God, rely on the Holy Spirit, use Scripture, call on other trustworthy disciples, and praise God. These trials may be fierce as in the case of sexual sins discussed earlier, or they may be relatively tame, like ignoring someone. Yes, it is still sin, however, it is easier to correct some behaviors more than others. Plus, we are tempted in different ways depending on our individual weaknesses.

All temptations are devious, but here is one you may have overlooked—the company you keep. Who are you hanging out with? Do the people you spend time with edify you? Are you learning about God or helping them learn about God?

We want to be with nonbelievers to share the truth with them. Jesus hung out with sinners, but he never compromised His witness. He always talked about God and His kingdom. He never pretended to be someone else to gain their friendship. He spoke the truth in love. If we are not careful, we will become part of the world in trying show the world we are only regular people.

45. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. What does bad company corrupt?

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33

Meditate on Psalm 1:1–3 and consider the company you keep:

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:1–3

—End Day Three—

Day Four

Setting the Example

Christian biographies (true accounts) are inspiring to read. They give us good examples of holy people who have gone before us and produced good and lasting fruit. Christian fiction can serve a similar purpose even though the characters are not real. Here is a letter CLI Prison Alliance received regarding a fictional story:

“I just completed reading *Land of the Brave and Free*, and wanted to write and tell you how it blessed me! My prideful arrogance put me here (prison) and here is exactly where God needed to put me to learn what the two main characters demonstrated: Corrie’s complete and total trust and surrender of her life and future to God’s care and Christopher’s unwavering faith and patience to allow God to work His plan, in His way, in His time, in his life.” Fred

Fiction authors can capture the essence of being a good Christian example by basing their work on the Bible. The stories are helpful and motivating. However, as a leader, please remember that you must always seek God’s Word first.

Read 1 Peter 5:2–3 and fill in the blanks for number 46:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:2–3

46. Peter commands the elders among the church to “Be _____ of God’s _____ that is under your _____ watching over them—not because you must, but because you are _____, as God wants you to be; not pursuing _____ gain, but eager to _____; not _____ it over those entrusted to you, but being _____ to the _____.”

An overseer is one who keeps watch over and directs the work of others, especially laborers. He sees over others like a supervisor or superintendent. Shepherd, elder, leader, and overseer are really terms for the same kinds of responsibility. Peter is writing to early Christians scattered throughout much of Asia Minor, part of modern-day Turkey. His epistle (letter) is known as a circular letter because it is meant to be circulated to more than one church.

Perhaps Peter had church organization in mind when he wrote his letter, but his instruction still pertains to all Christian leaders, whether serving inside or outside of the church. We are to lead with a willing spirit, eager to help others who are laboring with us in the field for Christ.

Pray: O God, teach and empower me to be the kind of leader You desire. Amen.

In God's sovereignty He places individuals in a leader's life for their care and protection. He expects the leader to help these people know Him and to produce fruit. God wants both the leader and the follower to perform well. He has all the power, knowledge, and ability to enable us and the individuals we are leading to succeed.

Peter had learned how *not* to lead in a domineering, bossy, or authoritarian way from Jesus (Mathew 20:25–28). Leaders are *not* to act like a lord, noble, or aristocrat. Leaders are to serve for the good of their people. The good of the people is found in trusting Christ as Savior and continuing to trust Him all the days of our lives.

47. Read 1 Peter 5:4. When the Chief Shepherd Jesus appears, what will faithful leaders (good examples to the flock) receive?

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:4

Faithful leaders will receive the reward of sharing in Christ's glory—forever. Being a good leader is a difficult and challenging job. When criticism, persecution or danger comes, it usually strikes the leader first.

48. Read 1 Peter 5:5–7. Name some practical ways that you can be submissive (yield, agree, defer) to those who are older than you?

In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:5–7

Just as leaders are not to "lord it over" the flock, those who are being led should follow in humility and submission. The basic principle is to submit (yield, agree, defer) to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21). Question 41 is designed for you to think about this principle and how you might work it out in practical ways in your own life.

The principle works very well in discussing relationships between younger and older people. If you are older, you may have experienced some age discrimination. Socially you may be patronized (considered inferior) or ignored altogether. Younger folks, you may have been guilty of discrimination by not trying to talk, listen, or pay attention to those who are older.

Some practical ways to take a subordinate (lesser) place with another is to listen carefully. Seek out older people and actively include them in conversations. Take their advice and prayerfully consider what they have told you. Always show them respect.

Older Christians, you also have a responsibility in taking a subordinate role. You also need to actively listen and try not to monopolize the conversation. Allow the younger people to discuss topics that are meaningful to them without making critical or derogatory remarks. Do not arbitrarily dismiss a younger person's advice but be willing to take it to the Lord.

Read 1 Peter 2:20-24 and answer questions 49–51:

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²²"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:20–23 (Retaliate is fighting back.)

49. In this passage Peter was giving advice to first century slaves. The principle is appropriate in Christian leadership today. When you are doing good, and then you are mistreated, and suffer unjustly for it, how are you to respond (v. 20, 23)?

50. Who suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps (v. 21)?

51. Share a time in your Christian walk when you suffered for following in Jesus' steps:

Action Step

52. Memorize 1 Peter 2:21: *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

Critical to walking in Jesus' steps and following His example is entrusting yourself to God. During the next couple of days meditate on how well you give yourself over to God for His direction, guidance, protection, comfort, care, and performance. Then answer questions 53–54.

53. What, if anything, is missing in your complete trust and dependence on God?

54. What will you do to walk more fully in Jesus' steps?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your memory verse #52 and answers to #53–54.

—End Day Four—

Day Five

Follow My Example

The apostle Paul became a role model that exemplified Christ. He lived out his beliefs so well that he had no problem telling others to follow his example. Paul was not looking for followers for himself but wanted to give others the encouragement of living a life dedicated to God. He wanted others to imitate (copy, reproduce) Christ just as he was doing.

Read Philippians 3:17 and answer questions 55–58:

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. Philippians 3:17 (The apostle Paul is speaking)

56. Are you comfortable telling people to follow your example? Yes No (Underline One)

57. Explain your answer for #56 about telling others to follow your example.

58. Who does Paul tell the Philippians to keep their eyes on?

Paul not only followed Christ in life but followed Him in death. Although the New Testament ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome, tradition and evidence point to his martyrdom by decapitation (beheading) in the late sixties.¹⁵ In the first few centuries, men and women were regularly put to death for their faith in Jesus. There was intense persecution, and people were taking note. Pagans, as well as other Christians, were watching martyrs spill their blood in the arena and in the streets of their cities. *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe includes some of these accounts as well as recent accounts about some of the 160,000 martyred in 2001.

In the early church, the majority of leaders were following Jesus by living a life of poverty and lovingly pasturing the sheep. They were true shepherds who died regularly for their sheep. They died because Christian leaders were the first to be imprisoned or put to death for their faith in Christ.

The flock paid attention to their leaders and followed suit. Around 200 A.D., Perpetua and Felicitas were two young women in Northern Africa (Roman province) who were watching their leaders closely. They stood firm in their faith for Christ and were killed in the arena. Both Perpetua and Felicitas were married. Perpetua, of noble birth, was nursing a baby son and Felicitas, a slave, was 8 months pregnant. Even with intense maternal emotions, they both knew that God was to be served first, even above family.

Perpetua was thrown into a dungeon (prison). She was given two chances to recant (take back) and sacrifice to idols. Her father came with her baby and pleaded with her to go ahead, sacrifice

¹⁵ Merrill F. Unger, "Paul," *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 977.

to idols, and deny Christ. She would not. Felicitas was also placed in the dungeon with Perpetua. They had prayed she would give birth early and, at 8 months, she gave birth to a healthy baby.

Both Perpetua and Felicitas were placed in the arena with a wild bull that tossed Perpetua and gored Felicitas but did not kill them.¹⁶ The authorities then sent in gladiators who killed them with their swords. Before Perpetua died in the arena that day, she encouraged the others *to stand fast in the faith and love one another*.¹⁷

The church actually grew and flourished under this intense persecution. People observed that those under intense persecution were Christians. They took note that their lives were different. They saw Christians calmly, and with great courage, meet their death in triumph. They watched and took note that these disciples lived what they professed to believe. Just taking note of your example may save a person from a mediocre (lukewarm) witness, or from the fires of hell.

59. What did Perpetua encourage the other Christians to do?

60. How was Perpetua a leader in God's kingdom?

61. Both the noble woman and slave woman died the same death in standing firm for Christ. Does your birth status, gender, wealth, natural intelligence, athletic ability, artistic talents, or sparkling personality give you an edge in leadership in God's kingdom? Yes No (Underline One)

62. Explain your answer #61 regarding having an edge in leadership because of talents.

It was God's plan for Christ to suffer death for our salvation. He is our Leader. The servant is not greater than his master. The apostles also suffered in order to bring the sheep, the people to the Master. They laid down their lives in love for Him and their neighbor. Now they are in heaven enjoying God forever.

Action Step

63. Be an example of Jesus today or tomorrow. What did you do and what was the result?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to #63 with the other disciples next week.

¹⁶ John Foxe, updated by Harold J. Chadwick, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, (Gainesville, Florida: Bridge-Logo Publishers, 2001), 20.

¹⁷ Frontline, "The Martyrdom of Saints Felicitas and Perpetua,"
<<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/perpetua.html>>(accessed 08/10/2020).

Discipleship is difficult. Who could stand up under the pressures, dangers, and temptations that assail us? In the flesh, no one has that ability. That is why God keeps us from failing and falling into Satan's hands. He enables us to endure persecution, even to death. This truth is called the *Keeping Power of God*.

Definition: *Keep* means to retain in one's possession or power; hold as one's own. If someone *keeps* or is *kept* in a particular state, they remain in it. In Christian terms, *kept* would mean God's power to cause a person to stand firm and not fall into temptation or sin. *Kept* is also a term used to confirm a believer's place in heaven.

64. Read Jude 1:24–25. Who can keep you from stumbling and falling into temptation?

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—²⁵to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.
Jude 1:24–25

65. Read 1 Peter 1:4–5. What is our part in God's keeping power?

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:4–5

If you would like to study and meditate more on the *Keeping Power of God*, the following Bible verses will be helpful: Psalm 37:23–24, 39–40, 97:10, 121:2–8; Zechariah 2:8–10; Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:23–24; John 10:27–29; Romans 8:1–10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:5–6.

—End Day Five and Lesson 5—

Next—Unit 2: Christian Leadership, Lesson 5: Holy Spirit

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