

Leader's Manual

INTRODUCTION

Before you begin, perhaps you would like to check you spiritual mirror.

Where Am I?

1. What is your conception of an *ideal* Christian? (Write it out in your own words.)

In discussion you may wish to pursue the difference between an *ideal* Christian life and a *perfect* one. David was far from perfect, yet the Lord says he was "*a man after (His) own heart*". His weaknesses drove him to the Lord, never away from Him. He had a heart for God.

One of the dictionary definitions of *ideal* is "*an ultimate object or aim of endeavor; Goal*". Even though we will never attain perfection this side of those gates of pearl we should be careful to keep our eye on our heavenly goal, and, as David, let our short-comings drive us to the Lord, never in the other direction.

2. How do you think you measure up to such a benchmark?

3. Below is a line that we will consider represents that hypothetical *ideal* person. Put an "X" on the line to represent where you think you measure up in comparison to him.

----- *Ideal*

4. Where would you have placed the "X" one year ago? Five years ago? Place X's on the line along with the dates.

Are you satisfied with your progress? If are or not you can look to the Lord for good things as we proceed in this study. Know that you are about to launch into an exciting adventure that has been a life changing experience for many.

It seems that when God's children have shown the Lord they are serious about getting to know Him through memorizing His holy Word in its full context, He has been quick to bless in very special ways. Proceed and enjoy!

Lesson I

Chapter 1 - *Life in Fast Forward*

Read Chapter I and then apply it to your life as you work through these questions.

1. Consider carefully the section *A Slower Pace*. What is the purpose of the story about the poustinik? What did he have that would enrich our daily walk with the Lord?

The poustinik had a secret place where he could remain indefinitely, unhampered by the element of time and circumstances. There he could absorb the Scriptures, meditate on them and let their truths assimilate into his thinking and into his life. In this way they became part of him. He was enshrouded with an aura of tranquility that characterized his very being and purpose in life. It was not just an external, superficial quality that he carried around with him to flash at appropriate times, it was him. It was God's Word at work in his life.

It's true, such a pristine existence does not lend itself to (many cultures), but is there just a little tug at your heart strings to experience a "quiet place" to meet with your Lord alone in your own private poustinia? (Pg. 19, Par 2)

Jesus was raised in an orthodox Jewish home where He would be required, as a child, to memorize long portions and books of Scripture. (The five books of the Torah, the Psalms and "Writings".) When tempted by the evil one to use His powers for self gratification, His rebuff was swift and decisive with Scripture He had memorized:

*"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
(Matthew 4:4)*

Jesus had memorized this from Deuteronomy 8:3. As a man, He could not function without food for His physical body. Nor, according to this verse, could He, as a man, function spiritually without sustenance from God's Word. Because of the accumulation of Scripture He had memorized in His earlier years, He had a ready reserve to draw from. in His everyday life. This was demonstrated when He was confronted by the evil one. You may recall that He answered Satan with Scripture on all three of the encounters that are recorded.

Remember, He didn't have the luxury of *books* that we take for granted, and it is not reasonable that he toted around great handwritten scrolls in order to refer to the Scriptures when he needed them. Nor did Jesus live the serene life of a poustinik. He was actively involved with people constantly pressuring Him on all sides. His source of spiritual sustenance spoken of in Matthew 4:4 must have been Scripture hidden in His heart, Scripture He had memorized, Scripture on which He meditated and feasted for spiritual nourishment.

2. The poustinik was not encumbered with an appetite for this world's goods. His natural desires for what this world has to offer were abandoned in favor of a quest for eternal worth. Whatever he had in his meager existence was open for the world to share.

*In our culture, such actions would be considered unnecessary, unwise and irrational. One thing, however, is very clear: the poustinik put his money where his mouth was. What he had of this world's goods he held loosely. He kept nothing back. He was ready at any time to relinquish anything and everything if he perceived this to be the Lord's will for him.
(Page 19, Par 1)*

To abandon life as we know it and pursue a course of complete self abandonment as the poustinic is not something that many of us could relate to. Many of us live in a secure little world. Yet when you think of it, this is what the Lord asked his disciples to do, isn't it?

Fantasizing for just a moment, how would you react if you were rushing around about your daily duties, as were the disciples, then suddenly the Lord appeared out of nowhere and asked you to follow Him. If He asked you to walk away from all your attachments in this life, your security, your wealth, your possessions, your family, your social life, your whole way of life, to just walk away and leave it behind what would be your reaction? (For just this moment eliminate your commitment to your family.)

Which of these would best describe your reaction?

- a) Sheer panic. I don't think I could handle it.
- b) It wouldn't be easy, but I think I could do it if I was sure it was what the Lord wanted me to do.
- c) I would do it gladly. It would be a relief to leave it behind.
- d) (other) _____

A Chinese proverb tells of a man whose only earthly possession was a large water jar which he always carried on his head. One day he stumbled while climbing up a hill. The jar tumbled to the ground and shattered in pieces. The man threw up his hands in joy, exclaiming jubilantly, "At last, I'm free! I'm free!"

I made a great discovery when we moved from California to Idaho. I had many years accumulation of antique treasures that I dearly loved. But I knew I had to sell them. When they were gone, I was quite surprised. Instead of the enormous sense of loss that I had anticipated, it was almost a relief. I realized, I didn't have them, *they had me*. When they were gone, I didn't have to worry any more about breaking them or damaging them or having them stolen. It was actually a freeing experience. I guess this was the experience of the man in the proverb and perhaps also the poustinik. I think it will be a great time when we ultimately leave all the accumulation of this old world in the past and go on to better things.

3. In many ways we are like computers. We constantly feed data into the computer of our heart and mind. Nor is our biological computer ever turned off. Everything we see, everything we hear, everything we read, or say — basically everything we feed into our mind — goes into a memory bank to form our own personal database. And just as an electronic computer performs on the basis of what is fed into it, the database we have accumulated in our heart and mind predictably determines our attitude and actions. (Pg 20, Par 2)

Satan is very aware of this. This is why he systematically works to control what we see, hear, read, and think about, any communication that exposes us to his deception and perversion. He knows that if he can control the input of our computer, he can control our life.

(Pg 20 Par 4 - Pg 21 Par 1)

a) To help alert you to the plammed strategy that is being applied against your mind, try listing the ways you see the enemy subtly but progressively attacking your mind. List the things that you see and/or hear every day that draw your thinking away from purity and godliness. Include both things over which you have no control as well as those you have knowingly or inadvertently accepted as part of your life.

Suggestions:

Obscene and suggestive material designed to heighten our carnal passions. Also, a world and a media that is bent on bating our desires for more and more of this world's goods and this world's agenda.

Commercials and ads on TV; in newspapers, tabloids, magazines and periodicals

Magazine and tabloid covers, pictures and articles

Marquees and billboards

TV: movie promos as well as drama content

Daily News: Killings, heinous crimes, child abuse, corruption . . .

In the work place: profanity, blasphemy; obscenities, vulgar and suggestive stories and communications.

A stressed agenda designed to usurp our time and energies.

b) In view of your answers, what tactics do you see the devil using to influence your thinking and what do you think he aims to accomplish through them?

He arouses carnal (sensual, lustful, greedy, covetous) thinking and desires in ways and places that are difficult to avoid:

through what we see, hear and read

through the influence and actions of other people - family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, business associates, people in the news

He dulls our godly focus as evil becomes progressively more acceptable in social, business, educational and political circles. pornographic stock is now being sold on the New York Stock Exchange, homosexuality is being forced on us a perfectly acceptable life style, and is introduced even in the lower grades of some schools; scandal flourishes even (perhaps, especially) in high political circles.

He lures innocent people into his web not only by making sin more acceptable, but by making it more accessible. Sometimes even unavoidable. (e.g. There are approximately 2000 porn sites on the web. It appears in our e-mails as spam. Young people searching the web for science projects are sometimes confronted with porn sites; porn is sold with innocent covers to lure kids and avoid detection by their parents; music and rap with unspeakable lyrics are sold on the open market.)

He introduces gross evil to make lesser transgressions seem inconsequential, even though they may be explicitly condemned in Scripture.

He speeds up and crams our daily life with this world's concerns, affairs and activities in order to monopolize our thinking and keep us focused on the temporal rather than the eternal.

4. Solomon said: . . . as (a man) *thinks in his heart, so is he . . . (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV). If you are what you think, and you are aware that your mind is consciously and deliberately being targeted, do you consider it important for you to take conscious and deliberate steps to combat this aggression? As Joyce Meyers says, "Where his mind leads man will follow." What tips do the psalmists give that would be helpful for us in our constant struggle against evil?*

Yes, Solomon said: *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)* History is full of examples of countries that were overrun by an aggressive nation because they were not on guard. They were thus ill prepared and unable to defend themselves. In recent

history we have seen Hitler's takeover of weaker European countries, Syria's takeover of Lebanon, China's takeover of Tibet. We must carefully guard our thinking and what goes into the computer of our mind if we are going to hold our ground against an enemy who is bent on dominating our agenda.

The psalmists said:

"I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

Why did the psalmist delight to do God's will? Because he had God's Word planted in His heart. (He memorized it.)

"I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart. (Psalm 40:8)

Why did David say he hid God's Word in his heart (memorized it)? He wanted victory over sin.

5. Many people rely on what I call "external input" They find it much easier to rely on outside sources to sustain their inner strength, rather than nourishing the inner man and letting the Holy Spirit work it out in their life. Without looking at your Bible, notes or any other helps . . .

- a. what specifically do you remember from the sermon you heard last Sunday?**
- b. what specifically do you remember from the last time you read your Bible**
- c. what recent teaching or new thoughts has the Lord used to make a lasting impact on your life? (Specify whether it was from reading a book; hearing a sermon, participating in a Bible study, during personal devotional time or through other means.)**

6. How much time do you estimate you have actually spent thinking about things you listed above? Write your "guesstimate" alongside each answer.

7. When you hear teaching about God's Word presented by others you may experience a challenge, encouragement, inspiration, blessings, lots of warm "fuzzies". But if you want to permanently change the direction of your life, it must grow from deeper roots. (Pg 22, Par 3)

So says the author. What has been your own personal experience? What vehicle has the Lord used to make the greatest impact on your life?

A testimony borrowed from another chapter reveals the experience of a grandmother who was born to missionary parents and converted as a young child. She had moved in Christian circles her entire life. She had lived and taught in Christian circles, heard sermons, attended Bible classes, conferences and retreats since childhood, yet she says this about a recent revelation in her life:

When I attended a Sword of the Spirit workshop and heard the book of Philippians quoted from memory I wept the entire time because of the power of the Word. I went home resolved to memorize for myself. Although learning John 14 was a real struggle, I found it to be a life changing experience. The Word came alive in my heart and life. Even though I had been a

Christian since early childhood, I discovered a new dimension to my Christian experience that was completely unknown to me. Even the deep, intensive nature of inductive Bible study (with two hours of homework each night) didn't compare with the power of the Word written on

my heart as I memorized it and came to experience more of the very heart of my God. (Page 81)

In our ministry we have heard these same sentiments expressed many times by many different people as they have experienced God's powerful Word come alive in their life through memorizing Scripture in its full context. They have testified that because of it, their spiritual growth and maturity were enhanced and new exuberance characterized their daily walk.

8. You are about to begin an awesome adventure as you start to experience the blessing of memorizing God's holy Word in its full context. Spend a few moments in prayer asking the Lord to give you His mind as you proceed in this course and begin your journey of branding His Holy Word on your heart and soul.