

The King's Ambassador - Lesson 19 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

Want to welcome you again, friends, to this special presentation in the Landmarks of Prophecy series. And we've been meeting together and developing friendships for several weeks and this is our final weekend together. I hope that you'll plan on being at each of the presentations - as well as you, who are watching online or one of the TV networks. We're very thankful that you've tuned in. Tonight's presentation is a very important one. We're going to be dealing with being ambassadors for the King. And these are themes that you do find in prophecy. Well, you know, in the Bible, God has principles for holy living that really do make a difference in our witness and our happiness. Sometimes people think you're eccentric when you talk about Christian standards, but the prophets talked about it. The Bible talks about it.

We're going to talk about, with your permission. You want the truth, don't you? Lesson #19: 'The King's Ambassador.' Now we've talked before about John the Baptist, but I want to direct your attention to - and this is, you know, our story - I want to direct your attention to the last prophecy in the Old Testament. If you have your Bibles, you go to the book of Malachi in Malachi chapter 4 it says - verse 5 - "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Then, when you read in Matthew 11, verse 4 - or verse 14, Jesus said, if you can receive it, John the Baptist was the first coming of Elijah to prepare the Jewish nation for the first coming of the Messiah. Now, I'm paraphrasing what Jesus said because later, in John 17, Jesus said, "If you can accept it, Elijah has come" - speaking of John the Baptist - and he said, "They did to him whatever they would." - He was killed by King Herod. And then Jesus said, "and Elijah will come." Future tense.

See, when John the Baptist was born, the angel spoke to his father and said, 'He will go forth before the Lord in the Spirit and power of Elijah.' The same way the prophet Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit - it doesn't mean Elijah was reincarnated into Elisha, or that Elijah was reincarnated into John the Baptist - matter of fact, when the religious leaders came to John the Baptist, they said 'Who are you, are you Elijah?' He said, 'No.' Because they thought - they were asking the question 'Are you Elijah reincarnated?' He said, 'No, I'm not Elijah reincarnated.' God doesn't teach that kind of reincarnation, does He? But Jesus said, 'If you can receive it, this was Elijah.' He came with the work of Elijah - of revival - and preparing people to accept the Messiah for His first coming. There are going to be an army of Elijahs in the last days that will prepare the world for the second coming.

Have you read about a number called the 144,000? It says, 'They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They are not defiled with women.' What does that mean? You know there's Babylon and her daughters in Revelation that have a defiling influence? The 144,000 are not defiled by the wine of Babylon. It's not talking about marriage and - I've heard some people say that the 144,000 have to stay virgins. That's not what it's talking about. Revelation is speaking in spiritual terms. So John the Baptist appears out of nowhere and if you read, like in the book of Mark - I'll jump there real quick. In Mark chapter 1 - Mark begins with a bang. It's the fastest moving of the Gospels. "This is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Son of God, as it is written in the prophets. I send My messenger before your face. He will prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.' And John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching the baptism of repentance." And what's interesting, you jump to verse 6, "and John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt and he ate locusts and wild honey." Well, that's a little eccentric, isn't it? No, I'm not going to tell everybody you've got to dress like that and eat locusts. You know, we're hoping that that was locust bean, which is like a carob pod. But, technically, grasshoppers are clean. Did you know that? So salad next week?

So before - the essence of what I wanted to share with you is - before Jesus came the first time, John the Baptist came out of this wilderness. And he had learned, through living in this close connection with

God, how to prepare people for Jesus' first coming. There's going to be a number of people that are going to help prepare the world for Jesus' second coming and the Lord might be wanting you to be one of those people. Well, I know He does. He wants us to do that work of preparing others for the Lord's coming. And, by the way, you know what you call it when you believe in the return of the Lord? How many of you believe in the return of the Lord? That means you are an Adventist. Any Adventist is a person who believes in the imminent return of the Lord.

So, let's get into our lesson for tonight. Let's examine some things we might learn about the one who came in the Spirit and the power of Elijah and learn about what kind of lives maybe we should be living in this day.

Question #1: What was one secret of John's spirit-filled life? You read in Luke 16 - I'm sorry, Luke 3, verse 16, "John answered, ...'I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.'" And it says He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire. Notice the humility in what John is saying. You can also read, in John 3, verse 30, speaking of Christ it said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." You see, as Jesus was baptized and people began to follow Christ and He was teaching and doing miracles, the thousands that had been following John, many of them gravitated over to Jesus and John's apostles said, 'Hey, that's not fair, His church is getting more people than our church.' And John said, 'No, that's the way it's supposed to be. I am supposed to be pointing to Him. He must increase. I must decrease.'

You know, that's a good verse for us to remember. He must increase. I must decrease. The more that He increases in your life, the happier you will be. Jesus said, 'He that seeks to save his life must lose it. He that would find his life must - if you would find your life, you must lose it.' And - for His sake - and that's where you really find it. So when we become less, we stop living for ourselves and selfishness - is when we really receive more happiness. He must increase. I must decrease. Humility.

Question #2: Did John the Baptist read the Bible? Was he an example for us in that? The Bible says so. You look in the New Testament in John 1, verse 23, John said, "I am the" - what? - "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," - now we just read that to you. He's quoting Isaiah - "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." - It says Esaias there - that's the King James way of saying 'Isaiah.' So John lived a godly life and he had a personal relationship with the Lord. He read his Bible. He prayed.

Now, you know why this is important? Jesus made it very clear, Matthew chapter 5, verse 8, "Blessed are" - the who? - "Blessed are the pure" - where? In heart. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. So when it says 'pure in heart' is it talking about your pump? As we get older our pumps start to atrophy and we - they get a little bit calcified and it's not talking about this. Of course, sometimes these get calcified too. But we're talking about as a man thinks in his mind. Purity of heart - purity of soul is something that comes through the Holy Spirit. We are transformed by what we behold. We become like what we worship. And if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus - your soul is like a photographic plate. It becomes transformed into the image of what you look at. The more you fix your eyes on Jesus, the more you behold Him - Christ said, 'If I'm lifted up I will draw all men unto Me.' You keep Him lifted up in your life, you start becoming like Him.

But if you become like Christ you're going to be called 'odd' and 'eccentric.' You're not going to fit in in the world because you'll be different. Jesus said, 'If they've hated Me, they'll hate you.' Christians are in the world, but the world is not supposed to be in us. Kind of like a boat in the water. It's normal for a boat to be in the water, but it's not good if the water gets in the boat, right? God has sent us into the world to be witnesses, but He doesn't want us being changed by the world into the world. We are supposed to be influencing the world. He said, 'You are the light of the world.' You are to be like salt in the world, preserving and changing things.

Question #3: Not only did John pray, he lived a holy life, he read his Bible - the Bible says John the Baptist was willing to tell others about Jesus. These are the basics of being a Christian, right? 1 John verse 29, when Jesus came, he pointed to Christ and "...John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, 'Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" This is an example for every follower of Christ - that we are, by our lives and our example and our words, pointing others to Jesus.

Now, how many of you believe what we're talking about in this seminar where Jesus said there are two destinies. There's only two. There's no three or four options. The two destinies are life and death. Moses, before he died, he said to Israel, 'I set before you this day life and good and blessing and death and evil and cursing. Choose life.' People, all the time, every day, are making choices for eternity. If they only knew. If you love the Lord and if you love your neighbor, will you want to be a witness for Jesus? If you're a Christian and you never talk to anybody about the One that died for you that you love, you wonder if you love your neighbor very much. And you need to wonder, do you love the Lord very much? We should be willing, if - it should be the most exciting, motivating thing in our lives, amen? Telling others about Jesus. Did John the Baptist do that? He absolutely did.

Question #4: Was the straight preaching of John the Baptist popular among the political and the religious leaders? Well, it says in Luke chapter 7, verse 30, "The Pharisees and the lawyers" - these were not attorneys, these were the ones who specialized in the Hebrew law - they "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him." - by John. Furthermore, not only did John speak out against the church and its compromises, but it says, "But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him...for all the evils which Herod had done, ...shut up John in prison." John was bold, John was fearless. He wasn't afraid to tell the church - you know what John the Baptist said, I mean, this doesn't get you ahead. He called the religious leaders - he said, 'You're a brood of vipers.' Boy, you're not going to make friends that way, but he told the truth. He told them to repent. Some did. And he had the audacity to tell the king, 'You have no right to take your brother's wife. That's adultery.' So he was bold. That means that God's people, in the last days, need to speak up for the Word of God, even though it may be unpopular. I'm not suggesting that you just go around and start judging everybody, but you also need to have a little holy boldness not to be afraid to share your faith.

Now, I'm getting ready to launch into something - even as I looked at the lesson I thought, boy, this dives right into that subject without much segue. Let me just tell you something before we get into some difficult subjects here. We're going to talk about Christian standards - practical things about 'What does it mean to be a Christian?' These are things that are actually addressed by the prophets. The Bible says that Christians should be a holy people. John the Baptist, he stood out. He was different in what he ate. He was different in where he lived. He was different in what he said. He was different in what he wore. And if you're a Christian in the world, you actually need to take time and, every now and then, think about what best pleases the Lord - some practical tangible things Christians almost never hear about - pastors rarely talk about because, you know what? It gets to the core of our everyday lives and there's a risk that some may be offended. Let me tell you in advance, friends watching, I hope I don't say anything unnecessarily, that will offend you. I don't want to offend anybody. I'm like everyone else, I like to be liked. But I'm more concerned with the Lord liking me and being faithful to His Word. So we're going to talk about a lot of practical things about Christianity and what do Christians talk about, how we dress, how we spend our time, how we spend our money, what we watch, and should Christians be different from the world? What does the Bible say?

Now, with that introduction, Question #5: Does the Bible discourage the wearing of jewelry and fancy clothing? Was there something simple and modest about the attire of John the Baptist? Let's just read some verses. These are just Bible verses so don't be made at Pastor Doug, take it up with the Lord, okay? 1 Timothy 2:9, "In like manner also, that women" - and this would apply to men too - "adorn themselves in" - what kind of apparel? Modest. Christians ought to be wearing modest apparel. Is there an emphasis in the world today to accentuate people's sexuality in the styles and clothing? Why? I mean, doesn't the

Bible say - follow me, stay with me - doesn't the Bible say, 'If a man looks on a woman to lust after her in his heart he can commit adultery with his attitude?'

Now, ladies, we all agree it can work both ways, right? Men may be a little more visually stimulated than women in that category, and men are attracted to certain curves - that's why guitars are popular. But you never talk about a box-shaped car as being sexy, do you? If it's a square car, no one would ever call it a sexy car, isn't that right? But a Corvette, why? Okay. It's self evident. So, if it's a sin for a man to look on a woman to lust, what if a woman deliberately dresses in a way to get men to look? Who's more responsible, that one man who fell or that one woman who had fifty men fall during the day? So should Christian men and women be conscious that we're dressing modestly? That we don't specifically try to attract attention? We want to reflect attention to Jesus not to ourselves, right. It goes on to say - same verse - "...not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array." It doesn't mean that Christians need to wear the cheapest clothing. You can buy quality clothing that will last. That's sometimes actually more economical. But we shouldn't be wanting to be so flamboyant that we just distract everybody around us. Isn't that a simple principle for Christians?

Let me read you a few other verses. Peter 3:3, "whose adorning" - this is the New Testament - apostle Peter - "let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair" - that's not saying that there's anything wrong with braiding your hair, it's talking about they used to weave chains and gold in their hair - "of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;" it shouldn't be that kind of outward adorning, but what should it be? "Let it be the inward man of the heart, ...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Now your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Did God have gold in the Old Testament temple? Lots of it. Matter of fact there was more there than anywhere. Does God like gold? Who made gold? Who made silver? Will we walk on gold in Heaven? Where was the gold in the temple, on the outside or on the inside? Pretty much on the inside if you study the temple. And so what kind of adorning does God want? He wants the valuables on the inside.

But the emphasis of the world is to kind of bedeck ourselves on the outside. It used to be just women, but now it's sort of everybody. Isaiah 3:18 to 21, "In that day the Lord will take away" - now this is a prophecy of Isaiah, speaking of the last days - "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet," - he's talking about the daughters of Zion that are proud. He'll "take away the bravery of the tinkling ornaments about their feet, ...the chains and the bracelets, and the mufflers [veils], the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels." There's a lot more of that in India. Now, I know, there's probably a lot of people that are folding their arms right now and saying, 'Doug, how dare you, in this society, today, to even - you're going to hurt someone's feelings.' At some point, somebody's got to tell the truth. And what did the Children of Israel make their golden calf out of? Have you ever? Not just gold, where'd they get it? Aaron said, 'Break the jewels off from your sons and your daughters.' When they spoiled the Egyptians and they took all the pay - that's what the Bible says - the Egyptians paid them to leave - because they hadn't paid them for their slavery - they just ladened them. They said, 'Please go. Here, take this money. Leave.' And they gave them all this jewelry. They didn't have paper money back then. It was gold and silver and precious stones.

Well, by the time they got to Mount Sinai they were wearing it all. And, as a result of that, it was all available. They turned it into a god and worshiped it. The two women in Revelation - Revelation 12 is a woman clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. Who does she represent? The church. She's the church. In Revelation chapter 17 is a woman with the gold and the pearls and the precious stones and the purple and scarlet. Who does she represent? Do either of those women ever speak in their prophecies? You know how we know who they are? By what they wear. Do some of you remember a few years ago when a number of evangelists, they were in the headlines quite a bit, because there were several scandals back to back. I won't mention any names, but I think many of you remember. People were even writing songs and making fun about the televangelists. I know, it's awkward for me because that's what I am.

But you know what they were making fun of? Someone wrote a song, 'Did Jesus wear a Rolex?' And they looked at the ostentatious clothing and the jewelry of these televangelists that were begging their supporters to give their last dime. And they said, 'What hypocrisy! Would Jesus do that?' And the bottom line is what is a Christian? What is a Christian? It's a follower of Jesus.

So should Christians look different? I know that God looks on the heart and man looks on the outward appearance - that's right, you shouldn't look at other people and judge them, but you ought to live a life that people can look at. There's a difference. We ought to say, 'Look, I want to be a representative for Jesus.' Isn't that right? You know, I pastored a church - I pastored a Navajo Indian church up in, off, near Shiprock and they made the most beautiful turquoise and gold - silver mostly - jewelry. And they'd all wear it and I'd labor with them. I'd say, 'Brother and sister,' - I said - 'you know, would Jesus have a belt buckle as big as a pick-up truck hood?' They'd say, 'Pastor Doug, this is our money.' I'd say, 'There's nothing wrong with that, but do you wear your money?' Would it distract you if I went through the sermon or if pastors came out like this? This is a new suit, I haven't cut that open yet.

What do you think angels see when they look down on earth? What are we going to walk on in Heaven? What's the asphalt in Heaven? Gold. Gold. The angels are going, 'Lord, why are they wearing the asphalt?' Why are we wearing money? What are we trying to say when we do that? I've got to give this back to somebody - now that I stuck it in my ears. I probably ought to just give them a receipt for - I do that because it sticks in your mind. Let's face it, do some people wear jewelry because they're wanting people to know how much they have? Not everyone, but, I mean, some jewelry's cheap. It's the costume stuff. Some is just for - they say, 'It's part of my attire.' You know, I don't wear any because some people are insecure about their appearance and because of that they cover themselves to try and distract attention or they believe, maybe, that they increase their worth by putting valuables on.

But what makes you valuable to God is who you are, it's not what you wear. And Christians ought to be - let me give you another verse in the Bible: Jacob came to meet with the Lord, in the book of Genesis, and he told his family, 'We're going to go meet with God.' They buried their idols and their jewels. You know where most of that stuff comes from? The wearing of jewelry was all, kind of, connected with paganism in the past. And most of the jewelry - not most - some of the jewelry, in order to get it on, you've got to poke holes in your body. You know, the Bible says your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. They're doing a lot of body piercing and tattoos these days.

What does it say in Leviticus 19:28? This is the New King James version. "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord." Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What would you think if you saw somebody going up to the temple that David and Solomon built, taking a can of spray paint and putting, you know, gang graffiti on there? They say, 'I'm just expressing myself.' That's the temple of God. It's pure. Don't do that. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Or if someone were to take a jackhammer to it and start poking holes in it. You'd know there was something wrong with that, right? But today, people are doing a lot of piercing.

There's a picture here of a baby - fortunately that is Photoshop and special effects. I really don't think that's real. Let's hope not, right? But how many of you agree that there's something wrong with that picture? What do you think God sees when you're a baby and you're born again in Christ? He wants us to have a simplicity and a purity. Isn't that right? Now, I know the devil believes in body piercing because look what happened at the cross. Who was pierced by the devil for you and me? Simple principle. God created you at the beginning with the appropriate number of holes in your body and He wants you to just leave it like it is. I'm sure that's the best for you, right there. You're not going to hear too many pastors say these things.

Question #6: Was there a connection between John's spirit-filled life and his simple diet? You look, for instance, in Luke chapter 1, verse 15, it says, "For he ...shall drink neither wine nor" - what? - "nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with" - what - "the Holy Ghost." You know, when you go to some of these

stores it'll say, 'Beer, wine, and spirits.' What kind of spirits are those? Not the Holy Spirit, right? Have you noticed when people drink those spirits they get a different spirit. Paul makes a contrast. He says, 'Don't drink alcoholic drinks, but instead do the opposite. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Because when we use drugs and alcohol, what we do is we lower our natural resistance to the devil. There's not a guy out there that doesn't know that his chances of getting a young lady to go against her values increase if he can get her to drink a little bit. So why would you want to put yourself in a situation, as a Christian, where your power to resist temptation is lowered by any kind of drugs or alcohol, amen? John the Baptist, he didn't drink any wine. Didn't eat anything unclean, furthermore.

Question #7: why is God concerned about what we eat and what we drink? This is from the book of Judges, chapter 13. This is dealing with the parents of Sampson. "Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any" - what? - "any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death." God was getting ready to take a human body and make it the strongest physical sample of a human being who had ever lived, and He told the mother some very practical, prenatal care. 'Your son is going to be so strong he can take on an army single-handedly. But you've got to cooperate with me and don't eat any unclean food. Don't drink any alcohol. You can't do anything that is going to interfere with the potential health of this human who is eventually going to be a superman.' That was a combination - he was a perfect specimen as well as when the Holy Spirit came on Sampson he was unbeatable. Wow, wouldn't you - when I get to Heaven I want to see a video of Sampson taking on a thousand men. Can you imagine? That's what it said.

1 Corinthians 6:19, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy ghost?" - You are made in the image of God. You've been bought with a price by the blood of Jesus, which is in you, which you have of God.' He says, 'Therefore, glorify God in your body.' So John the Baptist was spirit filled. Jesus said he was the greatest of the prophets - surrendered to the Lord. And yet, he ate a simple diet. He wore simple clothing and he took care of himself and he was full of the Spirit. You know, the devil knows that in this world today, that we can become so distracted with the worldly things that we're not prepared to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Let's read number - Question #8: What else does the Bible say about worldly behavior? James 4:4, "Whosoever therefore will be a" - what? - "A friend of the world is the enemy of God." And you can read in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 17, "'Come out from among them and be ye separate,' saith the Lord, 'and touch not the unclean thing;'" Now is this New Testament or Old Testament? New. 1 Corinthians - 2 Corinthians 6:17? It's New Testament. Come out from among them. Be separate. Now Paul, obviously, believed that Christians should be in the world and be witnesses, but at the same time he said, you need to know how to live a separate - a different kind of life. You can't be like everybody else, friends, and get to the Kingdom. God is calling us to lives of holiness. What the real challenge is - living in and among people and mingling among people and being a witness for Christ and being different. Yes, some people will mock you. Some people will make fun of you.

But you know what I found? Our neighbors and friends that know us, they know we're different. There's neighborhood parties where they drink and things and we'll visit and we'll try and fellowship with people, but they just know that we're different. But when there's a crisis, as much as they might laugh and talk about us behind our back, they call us up and they say, 'Will you pray for us?' Because they know we're serious about our faith with God. And if you live a Godly life - yeah, you'll have neighbors and people that will talk and your friends at work will jeer and tease and - but you know what? When they really have a life and death experience or when they're really wanting some spiritual guidance, they're going to say, 'This man, this woman, they really know God. And they're going to come to you. They're going to talk to you. They'll take what you say more seriously.

If you say one thing and you live another, no one's going to pay attention to you. Let's face it, is the world full of hypocritical Christians that don't practice what they preach? Jesus said, 1 John 2:15, "If any

man loves the" - the what? The world. "The world, the love of The Father is not in him." John goes on to say that "All that's in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but of the world" - here's the rest of it - "and the world is passing away and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God will abide for" - how long? - "forever."

I want to just read you a few verses. Now, I actually print them out before we come to the program because it's quicker, but these are all from the Bible. Thessalonians 3:13, "So that He might establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. God wants to establish our lives in what? Holiness. Ephesians 4:24, "That you put on the new man who is created, according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." Being a Christian is wonderful - the grace - you come to the Lord no matter how you lived - just as I am, with all your sins and all your problems. You come to Jesus. But a lot of churches leave it there. They don't talk about 'Then what?' Then He transforms you. Coming to Christ the way you are is called 'justification.' But then when you walk with the Lord it's called 'sanctification.' He makes you holy it's not just a cover up, He transforms you.

A few more verses, 1 Thessalonians 4:7 and 8, "For God did not call us to uncleanness but to holiness. Therefore, he who rejects this does not reject man but God who has given us his Holy Spirit." God's called us to holiness. Hebrews 4, verse - Hebrews 12, verse 14, "Pursue peace with all people and holiness" - notice this - "without which no one will see the Lord. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, they will see God.' I want to see God in peace, don't you? Holiness, without which, no one will see the Lord.

Now, you might be thinking, 'Oh, Pastor Doug, you don't know me. It's hopeless.' Oh, don't you believe it. With God, all things are possible. He can change you.' And you might say, 'How can I make these changes?' - Oh, let me read you one more verse. 1 Peter, 1:15, "But as He who has called you is holy" - who's that, Jesus? - "As He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all of your conduct. Because it is written, 'Be holy for I am holy.'" If the Lord did it for me, he can do it for anybody. I believe that. I believe - I've got a ways to go, don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying 'I've arrived.' But I try and play it safe. I know, for instance, when I get to Heaven, or I stand before the Lord in the judgment day, and God says, 'Doug, why did you go to church on the seventh day? I'll say, 'Lord, because you did.' 'Oh, okay. Doug, you didn't wear enough jewelry.' 'What do you mean I didn't wear enough jewelry? I don't have to wear any.' If you're in doubt, play it safe.

My brother gave me a gold Rolex watch before he died. He was a jeweler. Beautiful watch. I still have it. \$19.00 - Walmart - Casio - I'm not boasting about it, it's actually very dependable. And I wreck them frequently so - I don't want to make anybody stumble. You see what I'm saying? People - you don't want to - you know, look at people and be judging people, but you have to be aware, people are going to look. So as a Christian, you want to be an example. And so in whatever I do I say, 'I don't care what the world's doing, I'm going to look at Jesus and say, 'What did He do?' "As He who called you is holy, so be ye holy." 'How could I ever be like Jesus?' You can't without Him. You can do nothing without Him. But through Christ, Paul says, 'All things' - 'I can do all things' - Paul said - 'through Christ Jesus.' He can change you. You can be a new creature and it starts one day at a time. One thing at a time.

You know, I didn't get to where I'm at all in one day. I mean, for me to quit smoking and drinking, that took a couple years, actually. You don't have to take that long. I was dumb. And, no, but I'm just saying, you know, I was surrounded with that. I grew up just totally saturated in that lifestyle. I had a foul mouth. The words that I spoke - all the curse words that you can think of, I knew them all. I probably still know them all. I don't say them anymore because the Holy Spirit came into my life and he put some kind of brakes on my tongue where - where it came out without even thinking, now whenever those words were about to happen, it's like there was a big emergency brake going 'errr' and I'd so, 'Oh, praise the Lord. Don't say that.' And then it became natural. First it was an effort. When I first quit smoking it was tough. You know, when I finally quit - I'll just tell you a little quick story.

I had stopped smoking several times and now I'd finally gone a month without smoking. I knew God wanted me to quit and I was thinking about baptism and I knew that I needed to have that behind me. And I was driving cross country and I stopped at like a Denny's coffee shop because it was the middle of the night and I wanted to stay awake and I was driving. And the guy - back then you could smoke in the coffee shops - this is thirty-something years ago - and the guy right next to me, he was smoking my brand, which was Marlboro back then, and I thought, 'Nobody's around. I'm by myself. I could ask him for one cigarette and he'll give it to me. Oh, that'd be so good right now.' And I just got ready to ask for it. And I was talking to this guy at the counter and it - the Holy Spirit said, 'Now Doug, wait, wait, wait. You've gone a month. You haven't had a cigarette. Think about it. Think this through. He'll give you a cigarette, you'll light it up and smoke it. You'll feel that little buzz for a few minutes - it'll last five to seven minutes and then the rest of the way to Texas you're going to feel terrible because you failed. You've gone so long.' And I thought, 'What am I? - How can I be so crazy? I've gone so long. Why would I want to go back to it again? I've got a new life now.' And I - that was the last hard temptation and then it got easier and easier. I don't even think about it anymore. So with any change you make in your life, it's a new habit. You notice, no one's born smoking. Have you noticed that? You have to learn it. And the way you quit is you unlearn it.

Now what I'm saying about cigarettes applies to whatever it might be in your life - whether it's a diet change or whether it's a dress change, or anything - any habit. It's usually learned behavior. The words that you speak - you can change. I mean, do you want to go through the rest of your life thinking you're going to be a slave to the devil and Jesus is just going to say, 'Well, you're forgiven, I won't look, I'll pretend that you're different.' He really changes you. He makes you a new creature. Do you believe that? You don't hear it anymore in the churches. All we hear about is the part of grace where God forgives. There's another part of grace where God empowers. He gives us grace to be different. And he wants to do that for you.

Alright, we've got to keep moving. I've got some lesson left here. Romans 12, verse 2, Paul says, "I beseech you, brethren, therefore, by the mercies of God that you present yourselves a living sacrifice. Do not be conformed to this world: but be" - what? - "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind," - that's the rest of that - "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might prove" - test - evaluate - "what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." That's what we're doing here. We're being specific. We're testing, we're evaluating how does God want us to live if we're His followers? Does it make a difference? Some of these practical things. There's a lot of things I'm not covering, but I'm just talking about the big areas, about what we eat and what we wear and what we think, what we say, what we watch.

Question #9: What should a Christian choose to think about? The Bible tells us - New Testament, Philippians 4, verse 8, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now is that the criteria for most American entertainment? Most of the entertainment in the world - most of the videos and the movies - do they meet this criteria of things that are good and lovely and true and honest? You know King David said, in Psalm 103 - 101, verse 3? "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."

But what do most people watch in the world today? I got, well, I just - I jotted down a couple of facts here. You know, the most comprehensive survey that was done regarding television and violence was done by - this was reported to the Kaiser Foundation website. The Surgeon General did a scientific advisory committee on television and social behavior. The committee concluded that the evidence supports a preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behavior for children - especially those who are predisposed to be aggressive, in some environmental context.

They went through on the study and they said children that watch - first of all, two out of three cartoons are excessively violent. They noticed that children that watched violent cartoons, they then studied them when they interacted with other children during the day. They were much more disposed to do violent things - pushing, shoving, kicking, being violent in their speech. And they saw the kids who were not watching that got along much better. Matter of fact, they had some kids watching Mr. Rogers - any of you remember him? He was actually a former pastor - did you know that? - He was a Presbyterian pastor - very gentle. And then they had the other kids watching these rock 'em-sock 'em-kill 'em space cartoons - you know, the super heroes - all the shooting and killing. They put them all together and there was a noticeable difference. The kids who had been watching Mr. Rogers were sharing. The other ones were taking and they were hitting and kicking and yelling and - it does make a difference.

It's not just the kids. They noticed it among teenagers. And the video games that they play - violent video games. They've noticed a direct connection between some of the violent lyrics of music and the behavior of the teenagers - young adults that are listening. Some kids have gone from playing games - shoot 'em video games - and they've gone and shot - walked right away from these games and they've shot their family members because - and the later, when they were investigated, they said, 'I couldn't separate reality from the game.' These things affect us. So we've got to be careful what we're choosing to watch. Games that people play - are we preparing our minds to be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit?

Let me see, I've got one more thing here. National Institute of Mental Health - the institute concluded, the consensus among the research community - violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers. There's a lot more on that, but it's a - pretty well established that you become like what you look at. We are affected by our environment. A lot of people are going to be saved and lost based on choices they're making in little things about what they choose to watch and listen to. We get - we have a free choice. You know why you speak English or Spanish now? Because that's what you heard growing up. What goes in comes out. It's like a computer. You now, as an adult, have a free will. You can make a choice of what you put in. You want to see yourself transformed? Change the input and you will change the output. You'll find it's so much easier to serve the Lord and to think about spiritual things, if you stop feeding yourself the wrong things spiritually - and physically as well.

Question #10: While we're on this subject, what type of music will a genuine Christian enjoy? Now, this is a difficult subject because music is such a broad subject. There's so many dimensions to it. As I shared earlier, there's music for all different kinds of occasions. Let me just see. Maybe I'll ask the studio - get ready for an audience shot. I'm going to ask them a question. Alright, how many of you, by show of hands, how many of you would agree that there is probably some music that God would prefer Christians do not listen to? How many of you believe that? That's just about everybody, okay. Some never raise their hand no matter what the speaker asks so I'll put you in that category.

Now the next question: What is that music? Every one of us is going to draw that line somewhere different. How do you know what's appropriate? Does music affect us physically? Have you ever looked at a bunch of young people when they go to a rock - I used to go to rock concerts and I just - it was bedlam - and the music was usually just the same way. It was wild music turned up so that it's probably still affected my hearing to this day. Wild music, all amped up, everyone jumping around, there just raucous and loud - you could barely make out any words and then you look at how all the young people - the rebellious - almost satanic environment that I was in - I was in it, friends. I know that what was going on at these places, it was bad. People being stomped and fights and rapes and - that doesn't usually happen at a classical concert. You never read in the headlines, crowd crushes ten people - mad dash from the exits of classical music - there is Beethoven. I'm not saying that Beethoven is the answer for everything, I'm just saying, obviously music does affect behavior. Your heart rate changes based on the music you're listening to.

Some of you know - you've heard of Dr. Ben Carson - brain surgeon. I talked to him earlier this year.

When he would do brain surgery he would put classical music on because he found it kept him calm and focused while he was doing very delicate surgeries. Matter of fact, I know a few doctors that do that. Music very definitely does affect us. And you get to choose what you listen to. Now, some of you out there - I'm in New Mexico - you're sort of like across the spectrum here. You're not quite the South, but some of you are out there thinking, 'Pastor Doug, you tell 'em. That rock n roll music, that's from the devil! Country music - that's from the Lord!' You know, but not all that country music's from the Lord, I can tell you. You listen to the words to some of that stuff - it's just 'Oh, I'm in the bar, I'm getting drunk 'cuz you done me wrong one more time.' And, you know, it's always - romance - he's cheatin' on her 'cuz she's cheatin' on him with all the others that are cheatin'' - and everybody's cheatin' - so you've got to ask yourself - the difference is you can understand the words in some of the country music, but they're not that good either. They can make adultery rhyme with the rhythm, but some of the rock music, you can't even understand what they're saying. But you have to ask yourself, 'What would Jesus do?' Isn't that the question? What would He listen to? And you listen to some of the words - there's some beautiful music in the world but the words are diabolical. Trying to remember his name - wrote that song 'Starry, Starry, Night' years ago. Don - Don McLean - beautiful song, but the song is about Vincent van Gogh committing suicide. I thought, that's sort of pathetic that's too bad. So I rewrote the words. I'll share them with you some time. I said, 'What a beautiful song it's kind of wasted on Vincent van Gogh killing himself.' This beautiful song. And so some music out there is great.

And then there's some - I've heard what they called rock music where people take - they take worldly music and they say, 'We're trying to reach the young people so we're putting Christian words to this music that's just...and you're going...you can't understand - every now and then year hear...Jesus...Lord. Just a few scattered words you can recognize - you're going, 'What is this?' And then you say, 'What are you doing?' And they go, 'We're trying to create a bridge. They recognize this music and we're trying to bring them into the church. I'm going, that bridge goes both ways. You've got the young people in the church that'll listen to that stuff there saying, 'Oh, these Christian rock artists aren't any good. We may as well go and get the ones in the world, they're really good.' And so instead of it creating a bridge to bring people - I don't know a lot of people that have been converted by Christian rock concerts. Maybe some, not a lot. But there's a whole lot of young people that are hearing the Christian rock in the churches and they're going the other way. They develop an appetite for it. And so, when you're in doubt, do the safe thing.

What would Jesus do? What would he listen to? And, you know, if you're going to be a real Christian, you might think, 'Oh, Pastor Doug, I'd have to think about that all the time.' Yep, every day. Every day I think about, 'Lord, what pleases You? Should I say this?' And I pray for the Holy Spirit to guide me even in conversations. 'Should I go this place? Should I do this? Should I listen to this?' And sometimes I make bad decisions. I say, 'Oh, Lord, I shouldn't have done that.' And then you try and do better, right? But God has called us to holiness. He's called us to live lives that represent Him.

So, I already answered the question, what type of music will Christians enjoy? Psalm 40, verse 3, "He hath put a" - what? - "a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." You know, when I became a Christian - I grew up with the music of the world. My mother was a songwriter. Great composers came to our house. And when I became a Christian and I started going to church, I remember going to this little country church and when they would sing I'd go, 'Oh man, this is like a funeral.' They'd sing hymns and I'd be sitting in there...and they'd - you know, there weren't a whole lot of talented people in this little church, you know, and the pianist was sort of on key and everyone's kind of...and I'm going, 'Oh, man.' And I remember one time, because I was so used to the music of the world and I remember one time, I used to actually look in the bulletin and say, 'What song are they singing?' I'd flip through the hymnal and find the song. I'd say, 'Oh, it's got more than three verses, I'm going to the bathroom and I'll wait until they're done and then I'll come in.' Because I loved the Lord, but oh, the music. I'm telling you the truth. And then one day, I was flipping, I saw what the song was, and it was 'I Will Sing of Jesus' Love.' I

thought, 'I don't know that one. I'll see how many verses are there.' And I turned to it and there wasn't that many verses. And, all of a sudden, for the first time, I started actually reading the words in the song: 'I will sing of Jesus' love, sing of Him who first loved me, for He left the realms above and died on Calvary.' I started thinking - my eyes started to puddle up with tears - thinking about Jesus dying for me and I realized why these people were singing. And not everybody can sing. God made canaries, he also made crows, didn't he? And so some of us made a joyful noise. But then, all of a sudden, I realized it's from the heart and it's part of worship. And you know what happened? It didn't happen overnight, but over time, that which I once loved, I now hate. And that which I once hated, I now love. And that's what it means to be a new creature - to get a new heart. He changes you. You become transformed.

1 Samuel - no, catch this. This is really clear, "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp," - these evil spirits were plaguing Saul - it says, "David took an harp, and played" - I don't know that it was an electric harp, either - "David took an harp, and played with his hand:" - and it says - "so Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Now if it's true that the right kind of music can chase evil spirits away - isn't that what we just read? And boy, I'd like to hear David play - he was good - he wrote songs in the Bible - oh, not quite that many - some of them were written by Asaph - if the right kind of music can chase the devil away, does it stand to reason the wrong kind of music can invite the devil in? That's my point. You've got to ask yourself, 'Is this growing my spirit? Most of the modern music doesn't meet that criteria. With that thought in mind, it's probably - I mean, I've gone this far, may as well go all the way, right? You're still here. I only saw a couple people leave.

Is the typical - Question #11: Is the typical dancing good recreation for a Christian? Now, the Bible says David danced before the Lord. David danced by himself, before the ark, but most of the dancing that's happening in the world today is this kind of sexually suggestive dance. In the Bible, the women dance with the women - Miriam led the women out in dances. The men would dance - folk dances - have you ever been to a Jewish wedding? The idea of men and women dancing - even like a mating ritual, gyrating, is not the kind of thing I picture Jesus doing. John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." And dance as He danced. You can read Titus 2, verse 12, "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly, in this present world." How does the Lord want us to live? Soberly, righteously, godly. Now, again, there's biblical dancing and some of the dancing that was done in the Bible probably was close to the typical American square dance - it was more of a folk thing. It wasn't this stuff that was very obviously wiggling and gyrating and - enough - that's enough about that.

Alright, Question #12: Will a Christian play the lottery and gamble? I know, I'm getting close to home. I hope you come back tomorrow. 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." I looked it up online - it must be true because I found it online, right? Your chance of winning the lottery on a single ticket is about one in 175 million. You've got a better chance of being bitten by a shark on dry land. So many people are putting their money down the drain. And where do you think it's going? They don't have the lottery to make you rich, they do the lotteries and gambling just to make the house win. It's for the government. They get the money. And now they're talking about even legalizing sports gambling. Many "have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And I know some people that are bankrupt because they got addicted to gambling. Something you get addicted to - that's a sign, right there. 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10, "This we commanded you, that if any would not" - what? Work. "neither should he eat."

God wants us to be productive. He wants us to, you know, getting your money quick is not how the Bible teaches. I mean, every now and then there's an inheritance or some windfall and God blesses, but the idea of playing these games of chance - that's not the way to do it. Furthermore, Proverbs 28:20, "He that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent." The whole concept of gambling in a casino is you're winning because many others are losing. You are exploiting their losing and they're not getting anything

for their money. It's not like you're selling a product. And why would you want to participate in an industry where people lose their families and their marriages and their homes and their income through chance.

Question #13: What should be the aim of God's people today? This is just kind of summing it all up. 1 John 3:22, "We" - do what? - "We keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." The Bible talks about laying aside the sin and the weights that so easily beset us. That's in Hebrews 12.

So we're wanting to please God. That's what we're talking about tonight, friends. Practical things about 'What does it mean to live a Christian life?' It's not just going to church once a week, singing a song, and going home and living like the world. If you're going to be a real Christian and really be a witness and be ready when Jesus comes, I need to tell you the truth. He's calling you to holiness. He forgives you. Anybody can come to Jesus the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you the way you are. He wants to transform you. Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." That's what Solomon said is a summary of the judgment. 'Fear God and keep His commandments - whole duty of man.'

Question #14: What makes it easy to obey God in these matters of lifestyle that we talked about in this lesson? It's all easy if you love Him. John 14, verse 15, Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Even in the Ten Commandments it says, 'Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments.' That's in the second commandment. Showing mercy to them that love Him and keep His commandments. Do you love the Lord? John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous. Psalm 40, verse 8, he says, "I delight to do thy will, o my God: yeah, thy law is within my heart."

And last question: Why is the Christian life such a high calling? 1 Peter 2, verse 9, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." That's what the Christian life is. He's called us to be peculiar. John the Baptist was - I don't mean you have to act like you stand on your head. John the Baptist was unique. God has called us to be holy. He's called us to be like Jesus. Amen, friends? That's what it's all about. And, you know, during this study today, we've talked about a number of things and I'm assuming, to those that are listening, this is going to seem crazy if you don't love Jesus. This study is for those of you who say, 'I do love the Lord. And I want God to teach me how to walk in a new way of life.' Is that your prayer? Why don't we ask Him before we close?

Loving Father, we think about what it means to be holy and we look at Jesus and we see how far we have to go. But we know that Jesus died to make it possible for us to be new creatures and to live holy lives. Bless each person that is here and those that are watching that we might experience this transformation and sanctification through Christ. We pray in His name, amen.