

APOSTOLIC INSTITUTE OF MINISTRY

MINISTERIAL TRAINING COURSE

Ministry in the 21st Century

Lesson One

READ: Proverbs 23:23; Ecclesiastes 1:9-11; Isaiah 5:20

THINK: If one of the original Apostles were suddenly to find himself in our century, it wouldn't take him long to figure out that it's not the same old world he lived in. Although King Solomon correctly pointed out that there is nothing that is really new, many of the things we regularly deal with today were not understood at all in the first century. Back then, no research had been done in the field of sexuality, so although things like homosexuality, transgender, etc. did exist, no one really understood anything about them.

Over the centuries, the church came to regard almost every aspect of sexuality as evil, and has twisted, distorted, misused, and even mistranslated scripture in order to defend personal prejudices about sexuality. As a direct result, millions have been branded as evil, cast out of churches, ostracized, and even tortured and killed, all in the name of Christian righteousness. This continues in full force today. (Just as a point of information, this type of religious campaign had once also been waged against people with red hair, who were thought to be evil!)

Being honest with ourselves, with God and with His word, we must acknowledge that the church's hate-filled campaign against sexuality cannot be what God intended. If we are to be true to our label of "Apostolic," then we have an obligation to determine exactly what the Bible does say (or rather, what it said before the church tampered with it -- more on that in later lessons), and to act only upon that, not on our own opinions, prejudices or preconceived notions.

In this class, we'll be looking at several different aspects of ministry in the 21st century. This will include information on sexuality, proper dress, racial prejudice, errors in Bible translation, and Apostolic warfare. Some of the things we'll look at are good, but are called bad by much of the church world, and other things are bad, but are called good by much of the church world. But we are the Apostolic church, and we have an obligation to stand for what is true, no matter what the rest of the church world says or does. This class may challenge some students' ideas of right and wrong in areas of morality -- but once again, the Apostolic church can't hold on

to beliefs and ideas that are not biblical, no matter how much of the church world believes them.

WRITE: Read Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34:10 and then answer the following:
If someone is falsely branded as evil by the church, is thrown out of the church, and then dies without really knowing God, whom do you think God will hold responsible -- that person, or the church?

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Lesson Two

READ: Galatians 3:28

THINK: When a baby is born, the very first words the new mother hears are *It's a boy!* or *It's a girl!* The determination of sex is made by looking at the genitals, for the organs of the male are not the same as the organs of the female. To a large extent, a person's whole life is predetermined, based solely upon which genitals he/she has. Sex roles in our society are less rigid than they once were, but still hold a great deal of power.

This lesson is about gender and gender identity. For centuries it was believed that a person's gender was solely a matter of genitals. In fact, many people today still refuse to see gender as anything else. If you have a penis, you're male; if you have a vagina, you're female. But gender isn't quite that simple; it never has been. Physical gender is only one half of the picture. Psychological gender, or what we call gender identity, is the other half. Ideally, a person's physical gender should match his/her gender identity. For example, a person with male genitalia should also be mentally and emotionally male. In other words, he should know that he is a man. Likewise, a person with female genitalia should be identified in her own mind as a woman. And for most of the human race, physical gender does match psychological gender.

There are two conditions that can interfere with this match. One of these is when someone is born intersexed (formerly known as a hermaphrodite). The other is when a person is born transgendered. Please understand that these are **medical** conditions, *not* moral conditions. Believe it or not, both conditions have been classified as evil in some churches, despite the fact that no one has any control over either one. Let's look at both conditions:

Being intersexed is a congenital anomaly in which a person is born with the genitals of both sexes. Usually, one sex appears dominant, and surgery may be done to remove the organs of the other sex. In cases where neither gender predominates, a chromosome test may help decide which gender would be removed. There is no way

to tell at birth, however, what the psychological gender is, so there is no guarantee that the physical gender chosen will match the gender identity. This can lead to a later diagnosis of being transgendered. Sometimes, in rare cases, there is no evidence of being intersexed at birth, but a diagnosis is made in puberty or early adulthood, either because secondary sex characteristics develop abnormally, or because sterility is discovered. (Intersexed people are usually sterile.) Sometimes, again, in rare cases, a diagnosis of being intersexed is discovered only after a diagnosis of being transgendered has been made and sexual reassignment surgery is done. (An actual example of this is related later in this lesson.)

Being transgender (or transsexual) is a condition in which the physical gender and psychological gender do not match. Although this *may* occur in conjunction with being intersexed, it usually does not. It may, however, have a similar cause. Although being intersexed can be triggered by chromosomal defect, it can also be caused by a hormonal imbalance during the mother's first trimester of pregnancy. This is the period during which a fetus' gender develops. It is quite possible that psychological gender develops at this time also, and a hormonal imbalance not severe enough to affect physical development may be enough to alter psychological development. Whatever the cause, certain facts are known: There is a difference between the structure and function of male and female brains. This difference seems to account for a significant amount of gender identity, the rest being environmentally determined. It is also known that in a number of individuals, through no fault of their own, physical gender and psychological gender are mismatched from earliest childhood.

Two important facts before we go on: First, being transgendered is not homosexuality. A transsexual has approximately the same chance of being homosexual as a person whose physical and psychological genders do match. In other words, somewhere in the neighborhood of 90% of transsexuals are heterosexual. Second, transgendered individuals are not transvestites. (More on transvestites in a later lesson.)

Being transgendered is not a moral failing or a sin, and it will not "go away" if ignored, nor will counseling change it. Medical science does not have the technology to alter psychological gender, but it can alter physical gender so that it matches psychological gender. This is called gender reassignment surgery, or a "sex change." Such surgery is not sinful, any more than surgery to remove extra genitals from a newborn intersexed baby is sinful, or repairing a cleft palate is sinful. It is simply medical science's way of correcting a birth defect.

For transgendered Christians, there is one other option: There is at least one documented case in which God has altered a person's psychological gender (gender identity) to match the physical gender. But if God does not choose to intervene in this fashion, there is no reason the transgendered Christian should not seek surgical remedy. A person diagnosed as transgendered should be addressed (Brother or Sister) in the church according to **psychological** gender, regardless of physical gender, and should dress and live according to psychological gender. (This does not apply to transvestites, only to transgendered individuals. More on that in the lesson on transvestites.)

The following is the true story of a male to female transition. It is presented here both to offer an example of the phenomenon, and to show what can happen when ignorance and fear are allowed to govern the church's actions.

(Note: As in other stories, we've changed people's names.) Timmy grew up in a fairly average Catholic family in a small town. He was raised like the other children in his family, but something was very different about Timmy. Unlike most little boys, Timmy believed he was a little girl. Not physically; he knew he was a boy physically. Inside, however, in his thoughts and feelings, his self-identity of who he was, he was a girl.

When many other boys became interested in girls, Timmy became interested in boys. He thought this meant he was a homosexual, and that's how he began to think of himself. In his late teens, though, that theory fell apart: In talking with gay men, he found that they all identified themselves as men. None of them believed they were women. Confused, Timmy went to see a psychiatrist. After talking with Timmy over a period of time, the psychiatrist diagnosed him as transgendered. Timmy believed he was female because, psychologically, he was.

Up to that point, Timmy's case was typical for a transgendered individual. After the diagnosis, those opting for surgery begin hormone therapy and go through a waiting period during which they dress and live according to their psychological gender. They then have the surgery. The results of male to female surgery are usually excellent, while female to male results are usually less satisfactory. (An excellent autobiographical book by a female to male transsexual is *Emergence*, by Mario Martino & Harriett [Harriett is an author and medical journalist]. It was published in 1977 by Crown Publishers, Inc., New York.) After sexual reassignment surgery, individuals are sterile.

Timmy's case took a turn away from the usual path when his doctor ordered a chromosome test. (This is routinely done to check for a possible intersex condition.) Timmy's results were contradictory: Genetically, he was male *and* female! Hormone therapy was started, and Timmy had surgery to reduce the size of his adam's apple, which was large even for a man. Voice retraining was done so that Timmy would sound like other women. The hormones caused breast development and the development of a more feminine shape, and electrolysis was begun to remove Timmy's very heavy facial hair. The waiting period was reduced to one year because of the chromosomal abnormality.

The real surprises, though, came not from the chromosome test, but during the actual surgery. During male to female surgery, the external male organs are first removed (some of this tissue is reused to form the new genitalia), and then the internal organs, such as the prostate gland, are removed. After Timmy's external organs were removed, an amazing discovery was made: He had no prostate gland. But "he" did have a uterus, ovaries and the upper portion of a vaginal tract! The surgeon needed only to extend the vagina to the outside, do some cosmetic surgery to create the proper appearance, and the surgery was complete. To add to the surprise, once the testicles were removed, the ovaries, long inactive due to the abundance of male hormones, began to function! Timmy, now "Lois," lacked fallopian tubes, but if she had had them, theoretically, she could have borne children! (As a male, Timmy had been sterile, lacking a prostate gland.)

After legally changing the gender on Timmy's birth certificate, Lois was now physically, psychologically and legally female. Although over six feet tall, Lois was attractive and quite feminine.

Having been invited to an Apostolic Pentecostal church by a friend (who was terrified that she would go to hell for having the surgery), Lois was filled with the Holy Ghost and baptized in Jesus' Name. She loved the church and fell head over heels in love with Jesus. Then the trouble started: A busybody in the church discovered that Lois had once been known as Timmy, and, without asking for any explanation, began to tell others in the church that Lois was a homosexual man in "drag" (women's clothing). When word reached the Pastor, Lois was called to the office. The Pastor also failed to ask Lois for an explanation. Instead, she was told to stop dressing as a woman and to stay out of the women's restroom. Lois explained that she had had surgery and that she was physically and legally female. The Pastor then agreed to allow her to dress as a woman and to use the women's restroom, but she was to sit in the back of the church, so that if the service were being videotaped, she would not appear on camera. In addition, she was told to stay away from the

children, and, even though tremendously gifted in music, she was not to go near the piano. Because she loved the Lord and His church so much, Lois agreed to these ridiculous and unChristian conditions.

Lois met a young man named Ed, whom she invited to church. He was saved, and he and Lois began to date. When she told him of her past, he had no difficulty with it, and asked her to marry him. The church, however, refused to marry them, claiming that Lois was male in God's eyes, ignoring the fact that she was born half female, and had always been psychologically female. Lois and Ed were forced to travel to another city to be married. Since the marriage was legal, the church did recognize it, but the rumors about Lois didn't stop. Eventually, she and her husband were forced to leave the church because of them.

It is hoped that we, as Apostolic people, can learn from the tragic mistreatment of Lois, and that no transgendered person will ever again be mistreated by the church.

WRITE: Define the following terms:

Gender Identity

Intersexed

Transgendered

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MINISTERIAL TRAINING COURSE Ministry in the 21st Century Lesson Three

READ:

THINK: This lesson seeks to define certain terms and, for some of them, relate them to Christian teaching.

1. **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** - (Sometimes called "sexual preference." Orientation is a better word, because preference implies something arbitrarily chosen. Both modern science and scripture [which we'll look at in a later lesson] teach us that sexual orientation is an integral part of a person's nature, is not "chosen," and cannot be altered. [The scripture condemns any attempt to alter it. Again, we'll look at that in a later lesson.]

The term sexual orientation is used to specify to which gender(s) a person is sexually attracted. There are four possible orientations:

- a.) Heterosexual - attracted to the opposite sex
- b.) Homosexual - attracted to the same sex
- c.) Bisexual - attracted to both sexes
- d.) Asexual - attracted to neither sex

2. **MONOGAMY** - Having only one spouse.

3. **BIGAMY** - Having two spouses.

4. **POLYGAMY** - Having more than one spouse. (Although rare, polyandry, that is, a woman having more than one husband, does exist.)

The average Christian may be shocked to learn that the Bible does not forbid polygamy, except to ministers and deacons. Polygamous marriages were quite common in the first century, even in the church. Nevertheless, the scriptures make it clear that monogamy is preferable, and is what God ordained in the beginning.

5. **MASTURBATION** – The private manipulation of one's own genitals for sexual

release and gratification. There is no biblical mention of masturbation. (Some people claim that the story of Onan spilling his seed on the ground [Gen. 38:7-10] refers to masturbation. Those people never read the story. Onan was not masturbating.)

Is masturbation sin? Since there is no biblical mention of it, we have no authority to declare it sin. The best we can say is that each person will have to deal with this issue for him/herself. A couple of thoughts, though: According to research, almost every person masturbates at some time during his/her life. If masturbation is sin, then it is a sin nearly every person commits. Doesn't it seem odd that the Bible would have no mention of something so common and widespread? The silence of scripture on the subject seems to suggest that it is not sin. Again, this is something each person must decide for him/herself. Since there is no scripture on it, the church is not in a position to take a stand against it.

WRITE: Define: Monogamy, Bigamy, Polygamy, Asexual

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Lesson Four

READ: “Gay and Christian? Yes!” pp. 41-58

THINK: Before beginning this lesson, we'd like to ask the student to put aside any prejudices or preconceived notions, and concentrate only on what the scriptures actually say. The things taught in the next few lessons contradict the teachings of nearly every fundamentalist Christian church in the world. In considering the actual teachings of scripture, as well as historical evidence, it becomes clear that the churches have been misled, and are misleading others. We have an obligation to stand for truth, no matter what. With that thought in mind, let us discuss the subject of homosexuality.

Before turning to scripture in the next few lessons, we're going to look at a few little known (or covered up) historical facts: (Some of these facts can be easily verified by reading books on ancient history. Other information presented here is from research conducted by the late theologian John Boswell in his book “Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe.”)

1. Both the Greek and Roman Empires considered exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality to be abnormal. They believed that all people should be bisexual.
2. The Hebrew Old Testament clearly indicates that King David was married to Jonathan, the son of King Saul.
3. The Hebrew Old Testament documents a sexual relationship between the Prophet Daniel and a man named Ashpenaz, and indicates that God put Daniel into that relationship.
4. Much to the embarrassment of the Vatican, the late theologian Boswell uncovered proof that, up until the fourteenth century, the church was routinely performing wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples.
5. The social tide in Europe began to turn against homosexuals around the thirteenth

century. Up until that time, there was no organized opposition to homosexuality, either from society or from the church.

6. The religious tide did not turn against homosexuals until after the social tide. The change in society's attitude toward homosexuals was the only reason the church stopped marrying them and began to persecute them.

7. Boswell found that same-sex marriages continued in certain parts of Eastern Europe up until the nineteenth century, and that in a few villages, they still continue.

8. King James, who ordered the English translation of the Bible which bears his name, was a homosexual, a fact of which the translators were well aware. This fact displeased them, but since he was the king, they could not express their displeasure openly. Although on the surface, they were careful to be certain that their translation flattered and pleased the king, they also used it to attack him in a way he could not fight. (More on that thought in a later lesson.)

In regard to the scriptures, here are a few more facts, which we will, further on, explore in more detail:

1. There is absolutely no condemnation of homosexuality in the Hebrew Old Testament.

2. There is absolutely no condemnation of homosexuality in the Greek New Testament.

3. All English translations (one of the very earliest being 1611 AD, more than 200 years after the social tide turned against homosexuals, and more than 100 years after the church stopped performing most homosexual weddings) have been deliberately mistranslated to make it appear that God condemned homosexuality.

4. The Hebrew and Greek scriptures never connected Sodom and Gomorrah with homosexuality. The idea that those cities were destroyed for homosexuality is a man-made notion, and is unsupported by scripture.

5. The Greek New Testament, while not condemning homosexuality, does forbid people to attempt to alter their sexual orientation.

In the next few lessons, we will examine verses that have been mistranslated.

WRITE: When did the social tide in Europe begin to turn against homosexuals?

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Lesson Five

READ: Genesis 19:1-9; Ezekiel 16:49-50; "Gay and Christian? Yes!" pp. 9-22

THINK: From the verses in Genesis and the reading in the textbook, it can be seen that:

1. Every man, woman and child in Sodom was outside the house of Lot.
2. While it is evident that this was a violent mob scene, there was no mention of homosexual activity.
3. The mob would have killed Lot's guests, not had sex with them.
4. The people of Sodom were not homosexuals.
5. The book of Genesis does not connect these cities with homosexuality.
6. English translations that put homosexual references in Genesis 19:4-5 are not being true to the Hebrew text, and are deliberately trying to deceive the reader.
7. Jude connected the cities with fornication (sex outside of marriage, usually heterosexual, quite common in idol-worshiping societies).

The verses in Ezekiel in this lesson's READ section list the sins of Sodom. Homosexuality is not on the list. What about the unspecified "abomination?" In the Law of Moses, many things were classified as abominations, including pork and lobster. But Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed centuries before the Law was written, so we need to take our definition of abomination from outside the Law. In such a context, i.e., outside the Law, abomination usually refers to idol worship and the practices associated with it, including human sacrifice, temple prostitution, and eating food sacrificed to idols. These things are more in keeping with the character of Sodom and Gomorrah than unsubstantiated allegations of homosexual assault.

The Hebrew word for Sodomite (which, by the way, means "a person from Sodom") does not appear in either of the verses where the King James translators put

it. By mistranslating these verses, the translators hoped to bolster the myth that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of homosexuality. Through the centuries, Christianity has continued the deception, claiming that "Sodomites" are in fact homosexuals.

WRITE: According to Ezekiel, what were Sodom's sins?

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Lesson Six

READ: Lev. 18:22; 20:13; “Gay and Christian? Yes!” pp. 25-40

THINK: There are two verses in the Law of Moses that are used today to condemn homosexuality. As the verses have been translated in every English version, they clearly seem to convey an anti-homosexual message. But as the reading from the textbook demonstrates, the actual message of these verses in the original Hebrew is quite different. Rather than forbidding homosexual activity, they simply restrict where such activity may take place. Once again, the intention of the translators was to deceive.

WRITE: What is the one restriction the book of Leviticus places on male homosexual activity?

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Lesson Seven

READ: Romans 1:7, 26-27; "Gay and Christian? Yes!" pp. 59-63

THINK: Ignoring context when reading scripture invariably leads to incorrect ideas. For example, Paul instructed Timothy, who had frequent stomach trouble, not to drink water any longer, but only wine. (1 Tim. 5:23) It's quite likely that bacteria in the water was what caused Timothy's trouble. But Paul was speaking only to Timothy, and only because Timothy couldn't tolerate the water. It would be incorrect for us to read this verse and assume that anyone with stomach trouble should not drink water and only drink wine.

Ignoring context in 1 Cor. 11 has caused many Apostolic churches to set rules about hair length for all members, without regard to why Paul instructed the Corinthians on the subject, and despite the fact that no other Gentile church was similarly instructed. Once again, context was ignored, and incorrect ideas resulted.

This is also the case with the way in much of Christianity reads Romans 1:26-27. Instead of understanding Paul's words in the context of first century Roman society and the specific custom he was addressing, they ignore that, and use it as a blanket condemnation of a significant portion of society.

WRITE: Why can't homosexuality be called "unnatural?"

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Lesson Eight

READ: 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; "Gay and Christian? Yes!" pp. 65-70; "About Sex" (Immediately follows this lesson)

THINK: What the King James Version called "effeminate," we translated "soft ones." What does it mean? The Greek word was a "coined" word, taken from an adjective meaning "soft" or "fine," an adjective which can only be used in reference to material or clothing. (That is, the type of material worn only by the very wealthy.) By creating a noun from this adjective, and applying it to people, it is probable that Paul was referring to wealthy people who lived in luxury. Compare this thought with the words of Jesus in Mark 10:23-25 and Luke 16:19-31.

In 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10, the KJV took a single Greek word and translated it differently in each verse. But their error is nothing compared to later translations. In the New International Version, you'll even find the word "homosexual" used to translate this word, even though ancient Greek had no word for "homosexual." The fact that the translators of that version used such a word tells us first of all that they were dishonest in the extreme, and second, that they knew most Christian scholars were so anti-homosexual that no one would expose their dishonesty.

So what *does* the word mean? After re-translation, it can be seen that the word means "those who have sex with males." But does it mean men who have sex with males, or women who have sex with males? All of the translators of the English Bibles wanted us to believe these verses were speaking of men having sex with males. But is that what the verses really mean? The majority of the evidence says no.

Based on this evidence, we can be certain that Paul was referring to women having sex with men.

WRITE: Offer two reasons why these two verses are probably speaking of women having sex with men.

About Sex...

No word captures the attention of the American public quite the way the word "sex" does. Whether the mind is attracted by the prospect, or offended by the thought of promiscuity, almost everyone's eye can be caught by the prominent display of the word "sex."

In addressing the topic of sex from a Christian perspective, it is important for us to be honest and realistic. We must not fall into the puritanical trap of thinking of sex as something hideous and sinful. In fact, there are some people who have been so indoctrinated into that type of mentality, that it is a wonder that they are even capable of reproduction! Nowhere in the Bible is sex depicted as hideous. On the contrary, upon reading the Song of Solomon, it can be seen that sexual activity can be quite beautiful and fulfilling. Our sexuality is a wonderful gift to us from God, intended not only for purposes of reproduction, but even more importantly, intended to forge a powerful bond of intimacy between two people in a committed relationship. Like any gift, our sexuality has the potential for misuse. Beyond the use of sex as a tool of violence (rape) or control (pedophilia), misused sexual activity can hurt people. Even in a consensual relationship between two adults, there is the potential for harm if sexuality is misused. If this were not so, we would not have been given rules instructing us in the proper use of this gift. When these rules are followed, sex is a powerful and fulfilling experience, creating the closest bond two human beings are capable of. When the rules are ignored, sex becomes cheap, people feel used, and the full potential of the gift is lost.

Our church is called *Apostolic* because we believe in following the example and teaching of the Apostles in every way. This must go beyond matters of doctrine into behavior. If our way of life does not also mirror that of the Apostles, we have failed to be Apostolic. The Apostles of the first century taught a standard of holy living that we don't find mirrored very often in the twenty-first century. In a sense, that is to our advantage: Because so few live that kind of holy life, when we do live it, our lights will shine that much brighter.

The scriptures teach only one standard of behavior. Although the passages of scripture we will be looking at seem to address only heterosexual couples, no separate standard

was included for homosexual couples, and therefore the one standard must apply to all.

There was a time when all branches of Christianity taught a high standard of sexual morality. Sometimes this went too far: There are almost no Shakers left today, because they taught that there should be no sexual activity of any kind. They are dying out because they do not reproduce. Obviously, the scriptures don't teach such enforced abstinence. Other groups, such as the Puritans, tended to view all sex as evil, even in the marriage bed, but did not abstain from it. In many denominations, sexual activity was seen to be a means of reproduction only, and was to be shunned if reproduction was not the intention. Scripture doesn't teach that, either.

In the mid-twentieth century came the sexual revolution. Although this is almost universally viewed as evil by churches, it did have some positive effects: For the first time, America as a whole "came out of the closet." Americans learned what other Americans had been doing all along, but had never dared to tell. The most important benefit of this was increased education. The ignorance of years past was appalling. This writer is acquainted with a woman who received no sex education at home, other than being told that she should not use tampons (which her mother called "candles"). While on the surface that may seem amusing, it is actually tragic. She was taught nothing else, and had no idea what to expect when she began to date, and later married. But her mother was hardly to blame: she'd had even less sex education; she didn't learn until she was more than fifty years old that there was a direct connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy! Such ignorance seems impossible to us today, and yet apparently was not uncommon at one time.

The writer's acquaintance passed on her heritage of no information. Although she was a vocal opponent of sex education in the schools, she was incapable of providing such information herself. The usual "questions children ask" were not answered, and, like countless generations before, her children were left to find out about sex on their own.

The sexual revolution did much to do away with sexual ignorance. Unfortunately, it also did away with sexual morality. Many churches stopped teaching any concept of it, and began to teach that sexual activity between consenting adults was fine, regardless of their marital status. The scripture doesn't teach this brand of morality, either.

Jesus gave us the command that we were to love one another. (John 13:34; 15:12) Since this was a direct command, to disobey is sin. When we treat others in a manner inconsistent with this commandment, we have sinned. What does this have to do with sex? Plenty! A common phenomenon in our age is the "*one night stand*." (Actually, this has *always* been a common phenomenon; we just got around to naming it in the last century.) Some people don't feel there's anything wrong with the one night stand. After all, if it involves two people who mutually consent to have sex together, what's wrong with it? Let me ask you this: Why are they doing it? What is the motive? Is it love? Obviously not: They're strangers who have just met. They couldn't possibly love each other. Then they must have another motive. Obviously, they're doing it because they have a physical desire for sex (which is quite normal). They are using each other to fulfill that desire. The key word in that sentence is "using." Is it any wonder that so many people feel "used" after that kind of sex? They have been! "Using" someone, even with their permission, cannot be consistent with loving them. Sexual activity within a committed, monogamous relationship is altogether different (or at least it should be). When two people do love each other, and have pledged to be faithful to each other, the sexuality no longer has the quality of "use." Their physical needs are still met, but the emphasis shifts from getting one's needs met to giving, sharing, expressing love, etc. It adds a dimension to sexuality that is not possible in a one night stand.

In the first century, polygamous marriage was quite common, even in the church. The Apostles recognized, however, that such marriages weren't ideal. Although they never forbid polygamy to the church people, they did forbid it to the clergy (1 Tim. 3:2,12). They believed that monogamy was preferable, and taught it. (Had they outlawed polygamy for all, it would have plunged the church into chaos. What would they tell a man with two wives? Choose one and divorce the other? Therefore, they wisely chose to forbid it only to the clergy, and to "phase it out" gradually.) This is why polygamy became less and less common after the first century. Today, the Apostolic church continues to teach that monogamy is the best way.

When it came to teaching right from wrong, the Apostle Paul didn't pull any punches. This is especially true in his letters to the church in Corinth. Over the years, Paul has gotten a rather unflattering reputation in many circles. He has been unfairly accused of misogyny, homophobia, lack of sensitivity, etc. In defense of the Apostle, we would like to say that his reputation is undeserved. His comments about women, etc., have

frequently been taken out of context and misunderstood. There is no question that he was tough on the Corinthian church. But before we write him off as a hard-nosed, uncaring, hateful man, let's look at the situation he was dealing with in Corinth: The people of the church were "sleeping around," one man was having an affair with his stepmother, some of them were still worshiping idols, and the church as a whole didn't seem to think anything was wrong with the situation! (1 Cor. 5:1-2,11)

In 1 Corinthians, he is very clear about the type of sexual activity the church people should not be involved in. In 1 Cor. 6:9-10, he mentions both fornicators and adulterers among those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. *Fornicators* is a fancy word for people who have sex with people they aren't married to. (We'll talk about what it means to be "married" further on; the modern definition of the word isn't quite accurate.) Adulterers are married people who have sex with someone other than their spouse. In both cases, people are "using" other people to meet their needs, which is inconsistent with loving them, and is therefore sin. In the case of adultery, the adulterer has also failed to treat his/her spouse in a manner consistent with love. Once again, it's sin.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul talks about marriage and the responsibilities of marriage partners to each other. But what is marriage? Is it a piece of paper that says the government recognizes your relationship and will let you file your taxes together? That definition doesn't seem to be in the Bible. Then is it a ceremony where a minister, priest, rabbi or judge informs a roomful of onlookers that you are now a married couple, as if some magical transformation had just taken place? Again, such a definition is not found in the Bible.

Marriage in Bible times was considerably different from marriage today. Most importantly, perhaps, it had nothing to do with the government. No authority issued a license to a couple permitting them to have a ceremony. Rather than a license, a couple had a contract. It outlined the pledge they had made to each other to be faithful and to live the remainder of their lives together. Such a contract would be written out and signed at a small ceremony and banquet, the forerunner of the modern wedding and reception. But the contract, ceremony, and banquet were not what constituted the marriage. Indeed, before any of those things happened, the couple was already married and morally bound to each other. How did this happen? What actually constituted their

marriage? The marriage was formed at the moment the two people made the commitment to each other, before any contract was written or public acknowledgment was made. This is why Joseph, who had not yet had a wedding ceremony, would have had to divorce Mary, rather than just cancel the wedding. (Matthew 1:18,19) Even though no ceremony had taken place, no contract had been signed, and no sexual activity had taken place, they were morally bound together, because they had made a commitment to each other.

Many couples today do not have wedding ceremonies or licenses, but live together all their lives in love and fidelity. Are they living in sin? Not according to the biblical definition of marriage. If they have made a commitment of love and faithfulness to each other, then, in the eyes of God, they are indeed married. (The government may disagree, but the scripture gives the government no authority to regulate marriages.)

What is the purpose of a wedding ceremony, if the marriage already exists? It is simply a way of publicly acknowledging a relationship that already exists. It does not make that relationship more "binding," for indeed, it should already be so. Although we encourage couples to have such a ceremony to share their commitment with loved ones, it is by no means required by scripture. We will perform such ceremonies for heterosexual and homosexual couples. Couples are encouraged to obtain a marriage license if available to them, but this is not required by scripture, either. We will not perform a ceremony for a couple if either partner is married to someone else.

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Mid-Term Exam Follows This Lesson.

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Mid-Term Exam

1. If someone is falsely branded as evil by the church, is cast out and falls away from God, whom will God hold responsible?
2. Define Gender Identity.
3. What is transgender? What is intersex?
4. Name the four possible sexual orientations.
5. Does the New Testament actually forbid polygamy to everyone?
If not, to whom does it forbid it?
6. Which sexual orientation was the only one considered "normal" in ancient Rome?
7. Do the Hebrew and Greek scriptures associate Sodom and Gomorrah with homosexuality?
8. Which Prophet listed the sins of Sodom?
9. What did the Book of Leviticus say about male homosexual relations (before it was tampered with by the translators)?
10. Is God anti-homosexual?

Name

Date

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Lesson Nine

READ:

THINK: Pederast and pedophile are names applied to an adult who has sexual contact with a minor (someone under the age of consent). It may surprise the student to learn that the Bible says nothing about this. The reason is that age of consent has always varied from culture to culture. Throughout history, it has been normal in many cultures for girls to marry at the first sign of puberty, or even earlier. While this may horrify some in our culture, it is important for us to realize that in such cultures, children, particularly girls, were raised with the expectation that they would marry very young, and were supposedly more prepared for it.

Today, in western culture, it has become more common for women to delay marriage until at least eighteen years of age, and many choose to wait even longer. The important thing for us to remember in relation to age of consent is this: Since the Bible does not instruct us in this area, age of consent must be determined by each culture according to the needs of society. If a culture determines that a seven year old girl should marry, a man who marries her is not legally a pedophile and has not sinned. While the wisdom of allowing (or requiring) a seven year old girl to marry may justifiably be questioned, there is no *scriptural* basis upon which to forbid it. Again, the culture must set its own norms in this area.

In our culture, there are also specific ages of consent for sexual activity and for marriage. Because of cultural norms in western society, children are not raised to expect marriage before their late teens, and are encouraged to postpone sexual activity until that time. Being raised with these values, children in our society are not emotionally prepared to deal with the realities of a sexual relationship prior to their mid to late teens (their own urges and tendency to experiment notwithstanding). This reality, coupled with legal age limits, causes any adult having sex with a minor to be classified as a pederast or pedophile.

Regardless of an individual's views regarding legal age of consent, these limits do reflect the current norms of our society, and until such time, if any, that society as a whole changes them, they **must** be respected.

Organizations which advocate sexual relations between adults and minors disregard the fact that minors in our society aren't ready for such relationships, because our culture has not raised them to be ready before their late teens. Not unless such a change were to occur in society as a whole to raise children with the expectation of early marriage should legal age limits for sexual activity be lowered. (As little as two hundred years ago, it was not uncommon for twelve year old girls in America to be married. In the opposite extreme, in biblical times, a man was often over the age of thirty before he could marry. While Mary, the mother of Jesus, was probably around fourteen years of age at the time of her marriage, her husband, Joseph, was probably twenty years older than she.)

The legal age limits for sexual activity and marriage do not in any way conflict with scripture, and do not place any undue burden on the church. Therefore, Christians **must** respect those limits.

There are people in our society who are attracted predominantly to children. Although they usually choose one gender over the other, such choices are not always consistent. The majority of reported cases involve adult males and minor females. Frequently, such adults were sexually victimized as children themselves, or were placed in situations where they were powerless and unable to control what was happening to them. By having sex with a child, the adult is able to reverse the situation: He or she is in control, and the child is powerless. Thus, the cycle is repeated, and the child may grow up to victimize other children.

Treatment for a pedophile should involve helping him/her to regain a feeling of being in control of his/her own life and sexuality, and to explore and deal with childhood experiences that may have precipitated the problem. Known pedophiles should not be left in the presence of children unsupervised. Not only would the children be at risk, but it could present the pedophile with temptation too strong to resist. It would be like placing a stumbling-block in his/her path.

WRITE: In a culture which expected female children to marry, what would make a girl ready for marriage, when a girl of the same age in our society would not be ready until years later?

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Lesson Ten

READ: Deuteronomy 22:5; Galatians 3:28

THINK: A transvestite is a person who wears the clothing of the opposite sex. This may be done as a form of entertainment (drag shows), as a form of sexual gratification (fetishism), or simply as a temporary means of escape from the pressures and responsibilities of one's own gender. Just as a point of information, the majority of transvestites are heterosexual men.

Does the scripture forbid cross-dressing? Many churches insist that it does, and some churches have very strict gender-defined dress codes. (We will examine proper attire for Christians in the next lesson.) In reading Deut. 22:5 in the King James Version, it would appear that cross-dressing was forbidden under the Law of Moses. This concept, however, does not appear in the New Testament, and Christians are not bound by the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:24-25). (Some churches attempt to divide the Law into three parts: Moral, Civil and Ceremonial, claiming that the Moral Law is binding upon Christians. Such a division of the Law is not scriptural, but is a human invention. Paul was clear in his warnings to Galatia that allowing oneself to be bound by any portion of the Law placed one in bondage to all of it.)

But did Deuteronomy 22:5 actually forbid cross-dressing? Some translations make reference to women not being permitted to wear the clothing of a man, and vice versa. If translated correctly from Hebrew, however, the message of this verse is very different. It says that a woman may not put on the *k'li* of a warrior. *K'li* is a Hebrew word which means *weapon* or *tool*. It does *not* mean garment or clothing. The verse goes on to say that a warrior may not put on a woman's garment. But there's an added shade of meaning lost in the translation. First, the word for garment is *simplah*. In modern Hebrew, *simplah* means *dress*, and is women's clothing. In biblical Hebrew, however, *simplah* was simply the standard robe worn by both men and women. So this verse is forbidding a warrior to put on a *simplah* that actually *belongs* to a woman. It says nothing about, for example, a man wearing a garment designed for a woman, but not actually owned by one. The purpose of the verse had nothing to do with

men's clothing vs. women's clothing, but like so many other things in the Law, was in reality a blood issue: The warrior's weapon would be defiled by the blood of an enemy. This could not be allowed to mix with a woman's menstrual blood. To prevent this, a woman was not to wear a warrior's sword. The woman's garment might be defiled by her menstrual blood, and this could not be allowed to contact the warrior or his weapon so that it would not mix with an enemy's blood. So the warrior was not permitted to wear a simlah belonging to a woman.

Galatians 3:28 indicates that, in Christ, there is neither male nor female, but rather, we are all one. God does not regard us according to our physical gender, but according to our hearts.

Since there is no scriptural condemnation of cross-dressing, the church should not forbid it. But keep in mind that church services are not places of entertainment, nor places of sexual gratification, nor places of escape from the responsibilities of one's own gender. Therefore, transvestites should not cross-dress when attending church services or functions. (Remember, this applies ONLY to transvestites, NOT to transgendered individuals.)

WRITE: Under the Law of Moses, would a male warrior be permitted to wear his wife's clothes? Would he be permitted to wear feminine attire that belonged to him?

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Lesson Eleven

READ: I Corinthians 11:4-16; Philippians 4:5; I Tim. 2:9

THINK: When it comes to proper attire, a great many extremes can be found in the church. Most of us are familiar with a certain female Pentecostal televangelist who wore excessive amounts of makeup and jewelry and huge false eyelashes. On the other end of the spectrum are the women of certain Apostolic churches who wear dresses below the knee, no makeup or jewelry, and who never cut their hair. The men in those churches dress conservatively, wear their hair very short, and have no mustaches or beards. We've also seen Pentecostal preachers with huge rings, bracelets, etc., and bouffant hairdos. With so many extremes, how can we know the proper way to dress?

As always, the scripture will instruct us in this area if we only allow it to, and if we're willing to put aside our own ideas and the prejudices and pet doctrines made by men.

The scriptures ask two things of us in regard to attire. The first is modesty, and the second is moderation. Modesty requires that the Christian be properly covered. But the scripture doesn't specify exactly how covered we should be. Therefore, exactly what "modesty" means must be defined in cultural context. In some cultures, uncovered arms are considered obscene, and the church in such places should reflect that. In other cultures, short pants are perfectly acceptable. In every culture, however, the Christian should be open to the leading of the Holy Ghost in such matters, and must refrain from judging others on their attire.

Moderation means not excessive. Again, the scripture doesn't specify exactly what constitutes excess, but in certain areas, it does offer guidance. In the matter of jewelry and overly elaborate hairstyles, the scriptures are fairly plain. A small amount of jewelry is acceptable, but large amounts, or large, gaudy pieces, huge gems, etc., are excessive and therefore inappropriate for the Christian. Hairstyles, regardless of length (which we'll discuss in a moment), should not call undue attention to themselves. Hair color should also not attract undue notice. For this reason, unnatural colors, such as purple, pink and green, should be avoided. Makeup

(cosmetics) should also be used only in moderation, and should not attract attention. (The scripture does not address the issue of cosmetics, because in biblical times they were worn mostly by prostitutes or by men and women in idol worshiping cultures. Obviously, this is no longer the case.)

Some churches draw a sharp distinction between male attire and female attire. These churches generally forbid women to wear pants. What they overlook, however, is the fact that the scriptures never attempt to define acceptable attire for the genders, leaving that task to each society. In Arab cultures, pants were first worn by women, and were considered feminine attire. In Scotland, men may wear kilts, which are, for all intents and purposes, skirts. In western culture, pants are generally considered acceptable attire for both sexes. Therefore, the church has no basis upon which to forbid them to women.

There is no scripture whatsoever forbidding men to grow beards or mustaches, and even those churches which forbid facial hair acknowledge the lack of scripture to justify the prohibition. They base it on their perception that western society does not trust men with facial hair. While that may have been true once, it no longer is. A dangerous development in this ban on facial hair is the fact that the churches enforcing it do so as if it were a scriptural ban, and equate it with holiness, considering any man with facial hair unholy. In some of these churches, a minister who tried to grow a beard or a mustache would probably have his license revoked. Were Jesus, who wore a full, untrimmed beard (according to Jewish law and custom), to walk into one of those churches, He would find Himself at a distinct disadvantage!

In the first century, Jewish custom dictated that a man would wear his hair cut short and his beard long. The only exceptions were men under a vow. This included Nazarites, like Samson and John the Baptist, who had life-long vows and did not cut their hair, and also men who had made short-term vows, and who would shave their heads when the vow was fulfilled (See Acts 18:18; 21:23-24). Jesus was not a Nazarite, and therefore He wore His hair short, the many long-haired paintings of Him notwithstanding. (A Nazarite is not the same as a Nazarene. Jesus was a Nazarene because He grew up in Nazareth.) Jewish women in the first century never cut their hair. (Modern Jewish practice differs from this.)

Gentile customs of hair length varied from place to place, and, with one exception, scripture made no attempt to interfere with those customs. That one exception was Corinth. The people of Corinth were worshipers of Diana, as were the people of Ephesus. Unlike the Ephesians, however, the Corinthians had an odd custom associated with their worship. This involved both men and women growing

their hair long, then cutting it off and burning it as a sacrifice to Diana. When the Gospel came to Corinth, the Corinthians were very slow about changing their behavior and abandoning heathen ways. Whenever possible, they tried to adapt heathen practices to Christianity. (Centuries later, much of the church did the same thing, modifying the doctrines and customs of Babylon to "fit" Christianity.) The Corinthians began to offer burnt hair sacrifices to Jesus.

In one of his letters to the church there (I Corinthians), Paul attempted to correct many of the errors of the Corinthians. The eleventh chapter contains his correction of the hair issue. Since their custom was evil, Paul needed to replace it with another custom. Being Jewish, he taught them the custom he had known all his life. But he imposed that custom on none of the other churches. Churches that attempt to enforce that custom today overlook the fact that scripture teaches us that we need two or three witnesses in agreement in order to teach something as a doctrine and to enforce it in the church. The hair length scriptures in I Cor. 11 stand alone. With no other scriptural witnesses, they cannot be imposed on the church.

WRITE: What should the church be teaching about makeup and jewelry?

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Lesson Twelve

READ: Genesis 3:20; Luke 10:29-37; Acts 17:24-28; I Cor. 13; Gal. 3:28

THINK: If we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves, we have sinned, having broken one of the commandments of Jesus. His parable about the Good Samaritan demonstrates clearly that our neighbor is not just the person who lives next door, or the person who dresses like we do, thinks like we do, believes like we do, speaks the same language we do, or has the same color skin we do. Our neighbors are Black, White, Yellow, Red and Brown. They speak English, French, Russian, Vietnamese, Swahili, Navajo, and thousands of other languages. They are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Animists, Atheists and Agnostics. They are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and asexual. They are tall, short, fat, thin, male and female. They are young and they are old. They live in the United States. They live in China. They live in Uganda and many other countries. They orbit the earth in shuttles and an international space station. And we are expected to love each one of them.

But what kind of love are we talking about? There are different kinds. Look up Mark 12:31. The Greek word used in this verse is *agapisis* (thou shalt love). The student may recognize the root of the Greek word as being that of the Greek noun *agape*. *Agape* is one of the Greek words for love. But again, what kind of love? There are three aspects of *agape*:

1. Unconditional ("no matter what" love)
2. Consuming (Like the love both David and Jesus demonstrated for the things of God. See Ps. 69:9 and John 2:17.)
3. Self-sacrificing (See John 3:16)

A good description of *agape* can be found in I Corinthians 13:4-8. In Greek, verse 4 begins "*Hi agapi makrothimi...*" Love is patient...

Many American and European Christians cannot divorce themselves from the notion of a white Jesus with long, flowing brown or blond hair, blue eyes, and a

closely trimmed beard. While on the surface, it may appear harmless for people to envision Jesus in that manner, there is an underlying danger. White supremacist groups frequently preach their brand of anti-Black and anti-Semitic hatred in the Name of Jesus, having just such a Caucasian image of Him in mind. Let us, for a moment, look at the man Jesus from an honest historical perspective:

Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and died as a Jew. His early followers were all Jews, and never once denied their Jewish identity. The first century Jews were a purer Semitic race than they are today. This means they were darker skinned, like some Arabs are today. Jesus had short hair, probably black and curly. He had a full, untrimmed beard, again probably black and curly. His eyes would have been dark brown or black. The average height of men then was about five feet five inches, short by today's standards. Jesus was a carpenter, so he had rough, callused hands and large muscles. Isaiah indicated that Jesus was not attractive by human standards (Is. 53:2).

Is interracial marriage wrong? In the Old Testament, the Jews were forbidden to marry non-Jews. Does this mean that we may not marry outside of our own ethnic groups? No. While the Old Testament command to the Jews was physical, i.e., not to marry people of other nations, the New Testament command is spiritual, and concerns marriage to persons of other faiths, not other nationalities (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

In the beginning, God created one Adam and one Eve, and all people, regardless of race, color or nationality, are descended from them. Therefore, we are all related to each other already, and there is no legitimate reason to forbid interracial marriage.

WRITE: What are the three aspects of agape?

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Lesson Thirteen

READ: Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19; II Timothy 2:15

THINK: God gave three warnings against tampering with His word. One was toward the beginning of the Bible, one in the middle, and one at the very end. Did He put these warnings in there just to fill up space, or because He knew that people would tamper with the word? Obviously, God doesn't waste words. Those warnings are there because dishonest people have tampered with scripture, and continue to do so.

The earliest indication we have of deliberate tampering was in the Latin translation known as the Vulgate. Begun in AD 383 by Jerome, it was completed in 405. Jerome was acutely aware, as were all fourth century theologians, that the scriptures could not support the doctrine of the Trinity, which had been made official church teaching fifty-eight years earlier at the Council of Nicea. However, rather than taking on the admittedly formidable task of trying to alter the church's erroneous teaching, Jerome chose instead to alter scripture to try to force it to back up the church. He did this by writing a phrase in support of trinitarian thinking and inserting it into John's first epistle. As it appears in the King James Version, this verse says:

"For there are three that bear record in heaven: The Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." (I John 5:7)

We need to emphasize here that this "verse" cannot be found in **any** of the ancient Greek manuscripts, and is *without scriptural authority*. (The earliest Greek manuscript containing that verse is from the eleventh century, but even there, it's not in the text, but was scrawled into the margin as an afterthought.) The translators of the King James Version (AD 1611) knew that, but chose to include the verse in their English translation, knowing that, without it, the case for trinitarianism was shaky at best.

What were the motives of the translators of the world's most important English

Bible? If you have an older edition of the King James Version, it may contain a copy of a letter written to King James by the translators. The letter begins with the words, "To the most high and mighty prince, James, by the grace of God King, etc." The letter goes on to describe James as King of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and even France (although he wasn't king of France), as an important defender of the faith, flattering him and disparaging Catholics. It is obvious from the letter that one important motive was to flatter the king. (In a previous lesson, we examined an ulterior motive of the translators, that being to attack the king for his homosexuality. While that was an important hidden motive, the motives we'll be looking at in this lesson were more overt.) Why did they need to flatter the king? The King of England in those days wielded a lot of power. He was also the head of the Church of England. If he were not pleased with the attitude of the translators, they could have been imprisoned or executed. After attacking homosexuality and the homosexual king, they had to make it appear that the anti-homosexual statements in their translation were actual scripture, and not a personal attack on the king. By pouring on the flattery, they gave the impression, at least on the surface, of being great admirers of the king, and therefore above suspicion of making a personal attack.

To what extent would they carry this flattery? The answer to that question may surprise some students. Turn in your Bible to Acts 1:13 and then to James 1:1. After reading those verses, consider the following fact: Nobody in the Bible was named James. Every time an English Bible says James (or a French Bible says Jacques, or a Spanish Bible says Santiago), it should say Jacob (Hebrew - Ya'akov). Why do our Bibles say James? What better way to flatter King James than by putting his name in the Bible? The name James is an English form of the Gaelic name Seamas, and neither is an acceptable translation of the Hebrew Ya'akov. (Both French and Spanish have forms of Ya'akov, therefore their use of Jacques and Santiago is also incorrect.)

Other mistranslations in the King James Bible bring us to another motive of the translators. It was essential that the English Bible agree doctrinally with the king and with the Church of England. If it did not, it was conceivable that the king would have made them start over. Retention of the previously discussed verse in I John was one of several attempts to bring the scriptures into line with the trinitarian beliefs of King James and the Church of England.

Another attempt was the mistranslation of Colossians 1:19. By inserting the words "the Father" into the verse, and making them the object of the verb "pleased," the translators attempted to create a sense of division in the Godhead - a distinction between "Persons" in the Trinity. What the verse said in the Greek, however, was this:

"For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him."

Compare this with Colossians 2:9.

No English Bible has ever translated the first two verses of John's Gospel properly. English speaking Christians have become so used to the mistranslation of these two verses, that an entire doctrine has grown up around the errors, that being *the Logos doctrine*. In order to undo the damage done by the translators, we need some background information:

Like their twentieth century counterparts, the Jews of the first century had great respect for the Name of God (Jehovah or Yahweh; Hebrew: YHVH). So profound was their respect, that they believed the Name too holy to be written in any language other than Hebrew, the holy tongue. Even when the Old Testament was translated into Aramaic, a sister language to Hebrew that used the same alphabet, the Aramaic translators usually would not write God's Name in Aramaic. Instead, they used a "codeword" to represent the Name (much the same as the King James Version uses the word LORD in all capital letters to represent the Name). The Aramaic word used was *memra*, which means *word*. A reader of the Aramaic Old Testament would mentally insert the unspeakable Name of God in place of the word *memra*.

John, a devout Jew, reasoned that if God's Name were too holy to write in Aramaic, it was also too holy to write in Greek. When he wrote his Gospel, which, of course, he did in Greek, he needed a way to refer to Jehovah in order to have a frame of reference by which to explain who Jesus was. But he could not write Jehovah in Greek. (Not only would Jewish custom not allow it, but the Greek alphabet is incapable of representing the name: It lacks two of the four necessary letters!) Taking his cue from the Aramaic Old Testament, he used the word *word*. The Greek equivalent was *logos*.

At this point, let's correct the translation errors of John 1:1-2, and then determine what they mean. All English Bibles say that "the Word was with God." The Greek says that the Word was *pros ton Theon*. Literally, this means *toward God*. Idiomatically, it means *pertaining to God*, or *meaning God*. (See Hebrews 2:17, where the same Greek phrase was translated correctly as *pertaining to God*.)

Let's look at the verses in John, correctly translated:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word pertained to (or meant) God, and the Word was God. This meant God in the beginning."

Rather than attempting to establish a doctrine (like the erroneous logos doctrine that claims that Jesus existed as a plan in the mind of God in the beginning -- claiming eternal pre-existence of the son in contradiction of Psalm 2:7, Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5), John was merely using the first two sentences of his Gospel to define his codeword. By these verses, a reader would know that Word was being used as a synonym for God. A reader familiar with the Aramaic Old Testament would have understood immediately that Word was being used in place of God's Name.

It was in verse 14 that John took his codeword and established a doctrine: "And the Word (i.e., Jehovah) became flesh and dwelt among us..." That's pure, unadulterated Oneness teaching, hidden for centuries by the deliberate mistranslations of the translators. It can be seen why God was so adamant that no one should tamper with His word.

One final error, albeit a minor one, has led to some confusion among Apostolic people as to what Acts 2:38 actually means. Here is a more accurate translation than that of the King James Version:

"Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized each of you in (or *using*) the Name of Jesus Christ into the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (This correct translation makes it clear that the purpose of baptism is forgiveness of sins.)

WRITE: Why did Jerome add a verse to the Bible?

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Lesson Fourteen

READ: II Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:11-18

THINK: The scriptures make it clear that we are involved in fighting a war. The topic of this lesson is Apostolic warfare. While nearly all fundamentalist Christians will acknowledge that the church is expected to fight, a significant percentage of them are fighting the wrong war! Misunderstanding (or ignoring) the verses we read above, they fight against people and attempt to coerce others to accept their moral standards. They fight with carnal (physical) weapons, such as picket signs and voting booths.

You won't find any scriptural mention of the Apostles running for political office or attempting to influence legislation in any way. They never asked the government to enforce Christian moral standards. The Apostles never picketed an adult bookstore, bombed an abortion clinic, or lobbied for laws to imprison or execute people whose moral standards were different. Yet the church today does those things. Why?

The early church understood that the battle was spiritual, not physical, and that the real enemy was the devil and his legions of demons, not the people he has in bondage. The early church understood that the battle had to be fought with spiritual weapons like prayer, fasting, and using the Name of Jesus to take authority over the devil. The church today, however, seems to have no insight at all into the spiritual warfare in progress around them. Being carnal, they fight the only kind of war they know how: A carnal war with carnal weapons. You may be assured that Christians who run for political office, attempt to legislate morality, or try to make the government enforce Christian principles are not acting by any inspiration of God, but by their own carnal natures.

Our first citizenship is in the Kingdom of God, and it takes priority over earthly affiliations. We are in this world, but not of it, and should not become too overly involved with its politics. All the efforts of right-wing Christians to enforce their beliefs through legislation will serve only to make the church more like the world, not vice versa. In other words, the so called "religious right" is not helping the

Kingdom of God, but weakening it. Political might does not equal spiritual strength. Only when the church learns to fight spiritual enemies with spiritual weapons will it see victory.

A look back at history shows us that as the early church became more and more involved with the Roman government, they became less and less involved with the Spirit of God. They eventually united with the Roman Empire, but fell into terrible false doctrine and became a harlot church. The American "religious right" insists that the United States is a Christian nation, and they are trying to inject a venomous and judgmental form of Christianity into the government. If they succeed, they may well unite with the government, but they will lose out with God. They currently have significant political strength, but almost no spiritual strength. Lacking spiritual sight, they do not see their situation as being wrong. Like the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:13-22), which means *people of judgment* (in the sense of people who judge others), they think themselves to be rich and powerful, and cannot tell that they are miserable and poor and blind and naked. Blindly, they continue to fight against the people Jesus died to save, using His cross as a sword.

The Apostolic church must not follow the pattern of Laodicea, but that of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), which means brotherly love. Politically we may be weak, but our battle is spiritual, and in that victory we are strong! (See Romans 8:37) The battle is not against flesh & blood, nor against people or bookstores or pornography or abortion clinics or politics or politicians. It's not against secular humanism or communism or Democrats or against imagined threats to the family. It's a battle against Satan and his angels (as in Rev. 12:7-9), and *only* against them. The battle isn't fought with picket signs, billboards, ballot boxes, voting machines or legislation. It's not fought with fire-bombs tossed into clinics, nor with hate-filled rhetoric about family values. It's fought on our knees with prayer, fasting, the Name of Jesus and the whole armor of God. (See Matthew 17:14-21 and Ephesians 6:10-18)

WRITE: Final Exam follows this lesson.

APOSTOLIC INSTITUTE OF MINISTRY

MINISTERIAL TRAINING COURSE

Ministry in the 21st Century

Final Exam

1. What is a pedophile?
2. What is a transvestite? Should a transvestite attend church services in "drag"?
3. What are the two key words that scripture requires of Christians in regard to proper dress/appearance? (Hint: Both words begin with the letter "M")
4. Does the church have sufficient grounds upon which to enforce rules about hair length?
5. Is interracial marriage wrong? Why or why not?
6. Should Christians marry outside the faith? Why or why not?
7. Name one of the ways in which the translators of the King James Version attempted to flatter the king.
8. Why did Jerome add a verse to I John? Why did the King James translators choose to keep that verse in their translation?
9. With what kind of carnal weapons has the church been fighting?

10. Whom should the church be fighting, and with what spiritual weapons?

Name

Date