

Serpents and Doves



Mapping our Spiritual Growth

**High School Class—Summer 2014
Embry Hills church of Christ**

Serpents and Doves: Mapping Our Spiritual Growth Course Outline

Goals of the Study

1. To evaluate our spiritual strengths and weaknesses in preparation for our increased independence
2. To grow in spiritual skills like Bible study, leadership, and resisting temptation
3. To understand and overcome the temptations common to our age group
4. To learn and use Spirit-led decision-making criteria for all of our life-decisions

Lesson Schedule

| LESSON | TITLE | CLASS | TEACHER | LOCATION(S) | DATE(S) |
|---|---|-------|---------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | Introduction: Making Spirit-Led Decisions | 1,2 | MB | Main Classroom | 4/20, 4/23 |
| PART I: Living by a Different Standard in My Relationship with God | | | | | |
| 2 | Growing in My Belief (Knowledge-Faith) | 2 | MB | Main Classroom | 4/23 |
| 3 | Growing in My Trust (Action-Faith) | 3 | MB | Main Classroom | 4/27 |
| 4 | <i>Identifying Temptations</i> | 4 | RP | Split | 4/30 |
| 5 | <i>Overcoming Temptations</i> | 5 | RP | Split | 5/4 |
| 6 | Working in a Local Congregation | 6 | MB | Main Classroom | 5/7 |
| PART II: Living by a Different Standard in Confusing Situations | | | | | |
| 7 | Glorifying God in Grey Areas | 7 | RP | Main Classroom | 5/11 |
| 8 | Dealing with Doubt | 8 | RP | Main Classroom | 5/14 |
| PART III: Living by a Different Standard in My Relationships with Others | | | | | |
| 9 | <i>Dating</i> | 11,12 | MB | Split | 5/25, 5/28 |
| 10 | Having Godly Fun; Review | 13 | RP | Main Classroom | 6/1 |

Serpents and Doves: Mapping Our Spiritual Growth
Lesson Objectives

1. Introduction: Making Spirit-Led Decisions
 - i. Name the two foundational goals people can base their decisions on
 - ii. List the three areas (in this study) where we will live by a different standard
 - iii. Recite our theme verse for the study and explain how it applies to us right now
2. Growing in My Belief (Knowledge-Faith)
 - i. List the steps for easily memorizing a passage of Scripture
 - ii. Name your accountability partner for Bible-reading and prayer
 - iii. Name at least two study resources you have access to
3. Growing in My Trust (Action-Faith)
 - i. Describe the two kinds of faith
 - ii. Name at least one spiritual weakness and one spiritual strength you have
 - iii. List two ways anyone can be a leader
4. Identifying Temptations
 - i. Name three temptations common to teenagers, and list the Bible verses that address them
 - ii. Explain why some temptations are more common to teenagers than other age-groups
 - iii. List the temptation(s) you struggle with
5. Overcoming Temptations
 - i. Name two strategies for overcoming temptations
 - ii. Distinguish between strategies for short-term and long-term victories
 - iii. Describe your plan for overcoming the temptation(s) you struggle with
6. Working in a Local Congregation
 - i. Name two goals (benefits) of Congregational Fellowship
 - ii. Describe the “must-have” criteria for evaluating a local congregation
 - iii. List at least two ways to be immediately useful in any congregation
7. Glorifying God in Gray Areas
 - i. Name two passages of Scripture that help us make decisions in “grey areas”
 - ii. List Paul’s three criteria we should use to evaluate our actions
 - iii. Describe three “grey area” topics where you can use these criteria today
8. Dealing with Doubt
 - i. Identify common areas where we can experience doubt
 - ii. Describe how we can glorify God even when we doubt some of His plan
 - iii. List two passages that give us strategies to overcome doubt
9. Dating
 - i. Describe the Romantic Myth and why it is wrong
 - ii. Explain the purpose of dating for a Christian
 - iii. Name the ultimate goal of a dating relationship, and the secondary goal this implies
10. Having Godly Fun
 - i. Identify the easiest way to find godly friends
 - ii. List some unique spiritual opportunities you will have during the next 5-10 years

Lesson 1 Making Spirit-Led Decisions

- I. “Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves”
- a. Read Matthew 10:1-22. What important transition were these new apostles facing?
 - b. Imagine how the apostles felt about this new phase of their lives. What might have been exciting? What might have been scary?
 - c. Does Jesus try to make this new phase of their lives sound intimidating, or does he make it sound easy?
 - d. List some ways that being in high school or college might be like this new phase of the apostles’ lives.
 - e. Who does Jesus say will help them know what to say (and presumably also what to do) in difficult circumstances, vv.19-20?
- II. Making Spirit-Led Decisions
- a. The Christian’s worldview is fundamentally different from the non-Christian’s. Find a *reputable* dictionary’s definition of worldview, and copy it here:
 - b. Read Romans 8:5-14. What does Paul argue are the two choices about where we set our minds? What image does he use to illustrate the two (vv.6, 10, 11)?
 - c. Read Colossians 3:1-17. Where does Paul say the things we should seek exist? In vv.12-17, what are some indications in the way we think about where our mind is set?

Matthew 10:1, 5-8, 16-22 (ESV)

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

*“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so **be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

- d. Read Philippians 3:15-21. What do you think it means to “walk by the same rule” and “be of the same mind” in v.16? It may help to consider what Paul says is the opposite of this.

III. Example of Making a Spirit-Led Decision: Paul’s Decision to Go to Rome

- a. Look at the following verses where Paul discusses his decision to go to Rome. In the numbered list, summarize the reason (**bolded**) Paul states in the verse.

Acts 19:21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "**After I have been there, I must also see Rome.**"

II Cor 5:9-10 Therefore we **make it our aim**, whether present or absent, **to be well pleasing to Him**. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to **bear My name before Gentiles**, kings, and the children of Israel. "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Rom 15:20, 22-25, 28,32 ²⁰ And so I have made it my aim to **preach the gospel, not where Christ was named**, lest I should build on another man's foundation...

²² For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴ whenever I **journey to Spain**, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to **be helped on my way there by you**, if first I may **enjoy your company for a while**. ²⁵ But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ...

²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall **go by way of you to Spain**.

³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may **be refreshed together with you**.

Rom 1:9-15 ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I made mention of you always in my prayers. ¹⁰ making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may **impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established** -- ¹² that is, that **I may be encouraged together with you** by the mutual faith both of you and me. ¹³ Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hinder-ed until now), that I might **have some fruit among you also**, just as among the other Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, **I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome** also.

0. PAUL'S DECISION: GO TO ROME

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- b. Consider John 10:37-38. What does Jesus say the Jews would be able to do if they could believe in Him, or even just in the works He did? In the diagram below, draw an arrow to indicate which comes first in this scenario, knowledge or belief.

BELIEF

KNOWLEDGE

- c. Next, look at John 16:28-30. Draw an arrow to indicate which comes first in these verses.

BELIEF

KNOWLEDGE

- d. Now look at John 4:39-42 and John 6:69. What distinction to the Samaritans and Peter make between knowledge and belief?
- e. Read Romans 10:13-17. Are knowledge and belief always synonymous? Look back at your definitions, and at this passage. How could someone have knowledge and not have belief? Consider also Hebrews 4:2.
- f. On the other hand, is it possible to have belief without knowledge? Explain your answer, and find a verse in Romans 10:13-17 to support your answer.
- g. Which of the events in Gideon's story do you think occurred to increase his knowledge of, and therefore his belief in, God's power to deliver Israel?
- h. Application: Building My Skills
- i. For each of these activities that build our knowledge-based belief, think of two ways you could build your skills in that area.
 1. Bible Reading
 2. Bible Study
 3. Memorization
 4. Prayer
 5. Bible Teaching

Lesson 3

Growing in My Trust (Action-Producing Faith)

- I. Gideon's Battles
- a. Read Judges 6-7 again. In each case where Gideon was required to act, how did God prepare him for the task?
 - b. Besides God's signs, what else happened in Gideon's story to give him the courage to act (or trust)?
 - c. If Gideon had not acted on his belief in each case, do you think he would have been presented with greater signs and greater challenges to his trust?
 - d. Based on Gideon's example, what do you think we need to do to grow in our trust?
- II. Applications
- a. In each of the following passages, explain how the person demonstrated trust. Also indicate whether the person understood what the result of their trust would be. (That is, did they know *how* their trust would be rewarded?)
 - i. Matthew 8:5-10
 - ii. Mark 5:25-34
 - iii. Luke 5:17-20
 - iv. Romans 4:18-22
 - v. Hebrews 11
 1. Abel
 2. Enoch
 3. Noah

James 2:14-26 (ESV)

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.***

*But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that **faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;** and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

4. Abraham
5. Sarah
6. Isaac
7. Joseph
8. Moses' parents
9. Moses
10. Israel (vv.28-30)
11. Rahab

III. Principles of Trust

- a. Look at Hebrews 11:1. Does this explanation of “faith” seem like a more reasonable description of *trust* or *belief*? Explain your answer.
- b. Read James 2:14-26.
 - i. When James posits that “faith without works is dead,” is he talking about trust or belief?
 - ii. James cites the faith of the demons as evidence that faith alone is insufficient. Is he talking about belief or trust?
 - iii. What are some things the New Testament tells us to do that take trust—that is, that require action based on our knowledge of truth?
- c. Look at Romans 4:19-22. Do you think Abraham could explain rationally how God was going to fulfill His promise of a son? What belief was Abraham able to latch onto as a basis for trusting action in this case?

IV. Case Study

A brother named Diasporo who is about your age has not been at services for several weeks now. The elders have tried to contact him several times, but he won't talk to them. Finally you text him, and when you ask why he's been gone so much, he says he is having a “crisis of faith,” and that “the old-fashioned CoC worship doesn't do it for me anymore.” When you ask him why it doesn't work for him anymore, he says it “doesn't build his faith like it used to,” and that he's looking for “something more meaningful in worship.” He agrees to meet you for coffee on Sunday to talk about it. Come up with a list of questions you want to ask him in your conversation.

Lesson 4 Identifying Temptation

- I. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John a little farther than the rest of the disciples. (Use Mark's account in chapter 14).
- a. What concern did He have for His disciples at this time?
 - b. What does Jesus tell them to do that might indicate forethought is necessary when dealing with temptation?
- II. In Galatians 6, Paul indicates the need to restore a brother who has fallen into temptation.
- a. Is the one who restores immune to temptation?
 - b. Consider Paul's command to look at oneself during the process of restoring a brother. What is the purpose of this restoration?
- III. In James 1, we are told about the path that leads to sin.
- a. Where does temptation begin?
 - b. How does sin come about?
 - c. Does this passage indicate that it is wrong to be tempted? Use other passages to defend your thoughts.
- IV. In 1 Peter 5, the devil is described as a roaring lion who is seeking to devour us.
- a. What message do you think Peter intends to convey to us by using this imagery?
 - b. What does it mean to be of "sober spirit" in v.8? Why is that important considering the way the devil is described?

Mark 14:38 (NASB)

*"Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but **the flesh is weak.**"*

Galatians 6:1 (NASB)

*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one **looking to yourself**, so that you too will not be tempted.*

James 1:13-15 (NASB)

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God;" for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.** Then when lust has conceived, it **gives birth to sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NASB)

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

Break Out Session Material for Identifying Temptation

→ Boys read the story of Joseph's temptation by Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.

→ Girls read Luke 10:38-42 and Acts 5:1-11.

Identify the following from the story (if applicable):

- I. **Who** – What person/persons was/were tempting the main character? What characteristics did that person/those persons have?

- II. **What** – What was the temptation they were being tempted with?

- III. **When** – What occasion was being used as an opportune time for temptation?

- IV. **Where** – Where did the temptation occur?

- V. **How** – How was the temptation presented?

In the same way, list examples in your life where temptations may arise:

- I. **Who** – What characteristics might be in a person who tempts you, or brings you a temptation?

- II. **What** – What temptations do you struggle with as a high-school-aged teen?

- III. **When** – What occasions are used as an opportune time for temptation?

- IV. **Where** – Where are temptations frequently presented to you?

- V. **How** – How are temptations presented to you?

Lesson 5 Dealing with Temptation

- I. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul begins his lesson on dealing with temptation by giving a short history lesson. He is teaching the Corinthians how to (and how not to) deal with temptation.
- a. What past sins did Paul point out from the Israelites in this sermon?
 - b. From v.7, what attitude did they have about sin? What attitude should we have toward sin?
 - c. What does Paul indicate might be a character trait that leads to one “falling” into sin during temptation?
 - d. What does Paul tell the Corinthians about “new temptations”?
 - e. From this passage in 1 Corinthians 10, where does the strength to overcome temptation come from?
 - f. What do the words “flee” and “escape” in vv.13-14 teach us about dealing with idolatry (temptation)?

1 Corinthians 10:6-14 (NASB)

Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

- II. Applications
- a. Read the story of Jesus’ temptation in Luke 4. In what ways did He deal with temptation?

- b. Look back at your Lesson 4 outline, which used a method of identifying temptations by asking the questions of who, what, when, where and how, and identify the best ways to deal with those temptations. Use the thoughts and scriptures from this lesson and any others that may be helpful to the situations to create a detailed plan to overcome one temptation that you face.