

Lesson 15: The straight path

Aims for each learner:

- Commit to live for God not for himself or herself.
- Agree that we cannot walk in the 'straight path' by our own efforts.
- Understand why slavery to Christ brings true freedom.
- Memorize 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Cultural clues:

- Shariah & lawkeeping in Islam
- Muslims & the straight path
- Major & 'minor' sins

Opening

Last week's practical task: Did you get advice on taking baptism, or give advice on this? What did you decide? *If any member wants to get baptized soon, discuss arrangements after the meeting.*

Lesson 15 home study review:

Question 1: a) law of Moses; b) law of Christ

Question 2: Holy

Question 3: a), b) and c) are all forbidden in Christ's shariah (law); for d) and e), ask what they wrote.

Question 4: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. See question 21.

Introduce today's topic: Do you think the rules in Christianity are easier or harder than in Islam? *Discuss. Let members express any opinion. Over the next 3 weeks we'll learn about a different kind of shariah.*

Discussion

Why can't people follow the Straight Path? (Questions 1-4)

Look at the picture of the drunk man.

- Why can't this man walk in a straight line? *He is under the control of alcohol.*
- What is the spiritual meaning of this example? *Humans are under sin's control and addicted to it. They cannot walk straight even if they want to.*
- In the ritual prayers (salah or namaz), people pray 'guide me on the Straight Path'. They think God sent thousands of prophets for guidance. But is guidance enough to make them walk on the Straight Path? Why not? *Prayer & prophets are good, but people need power to walk straight.*



Question 3: Read the question.

- The book says answer d) is correct, but do you agree?
- How would you explain to a Muslim friend that extra laws, extra prayers and extra work aren't enough to rescue people from their addiction to sin?

These things help a little at the human level, but they can't deal with the fundamental problem which needs God's power.

Clean and unclean (Questions 5-6)

Question 5: Read the question.

- Which words did you underline in the box?
- Did halal (clean) food make the Pharisees clean inside? Why not?
- What matters more, unclean food or unclean thoughts?

'evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly'.

No, because their inner sins made them dirty on the inside.

Unclean thoughts matter more, because they defile our hearts, then unclean words and deeds come out.

Question 6: What did you write?

- Is it easier to clean our hands or our hearts?

When learners write their opinion, they think more deeply about it and are ready for discussion.

God's cure for the unclean heart (Questions 7-10)

Question 7: Read the question and repeat the verse together with each person saying their name.

- Who makes us *want* to walk in the Straight Path? Who makes us *able* to do so? *God's Spirit.*

Living for God (Questions 11-16)

Question 15: Look at the options together.

- Answer a) is obviously true, but what about b)? Do minor sins matter? Why or why not?
- What about answer d), telling a lie, or e), sinful thoughts?
- If we have the intention for a sin but don't act on it, is this still sin?

Maybe they don't matter under Islam, but they do in Christ's shariah because his standards are very high.

If Satan tempts us with an evil thought and we resist, it is not sin. But if we deliberately go on thinking about it or plan to do it, this is sin.

Question 16: Read the question.

- Which answers in the list do you think are important? Why? *Answers b), c), e) and g) are from 1 Peter, so they are in Christ's law. a), d) and f) are not from the Injil, so are optional for Christ's followers. Also b), c), e) and g) are about our attitudes and behaviour towards others. In Christ's shariah, these things are more important than a), d) and f) which concern our external appearance or ritual.*

True freedom (Questions 17-22)

Read Romans 6:11-18: *This is a hard passage, read it twice or in two versions to help learners grasp it.*



- Who can explain the main points of this passage?
- In v.11, we should be dead to what and alive to what?
- Verses 12, 13 & 14 tell us three times to fight against sin in our lives. What are these three commands?
- According to verse 14, why is sin no longer our master?
- If we are 'under grace', does this mean that we can do whatever we want? Why or why not? See verses 15-16.
- Verses 17-18 say we are now slaves to righteousness. In your experience, is this a burden or a joy?
- Stop and think: Do you want to be someone who is a slave to sin or who is free to obey God?

Dead to sin, alive to God.

'do not let sin reign' (v12), 'do not offer any part of yourself to sin' (v13), 'sin shall no longer be your master' (v14). We are not under law but under grace.

No! Because we must offer ourselves to God as our new master. We are free to obey God, not free to sin.

It's a joy. Discussion should include the positive joy of living for God, not just the challenge of fighting sin.

Question 17: Read the whole question.

- What did you write here?

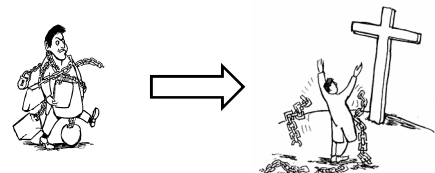
1 Peter 4:2-3 tells us to stop living for our desires and start living for God.

Question 19: Look at the man in the picture.

- Is this man truly free or not? What did you write?

Question 20: Here is the same man as before.

- What has happened to his chains? *broken at the cross.*
- How do we get true freedom, by living for ourselves or by living for Jesus Christ? *true freedom comes by becoming Christ's slave. It's strange but true.*
- Let's share examples from our own lives of how Jesus set us free from some bad habit. *As the advisor, give a real example from your own life too and tell the joy of living for God.*



Question 21: Read & practice the memory verse (an extract from 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Each group member should say the verse to the next person in turn, using their name. e.g. 'Umar, you are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body.'

Conclusion

Obeying today's teaching: What is the most important thing you have learned today? What difference will it make in your life?

Read together the practical task. It can help us to be accountable to others about specific sins. In pairs, share briefly your personal struggles with anger. This week keep a (honest!) daily record of how you controlled your anger. You could even text each other about it.

Pray for each other in pairs: Thank God that he has set us free from slavery to sin. Ask for his help to be slaves to Christ this week.