

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #13

2 Cor. 11:3 / 2 Cor. 6:14-18 / Col. 2:8

AVOIDING AND OPPOSING CORRUPTING INFLUENCES

What is a corrupting influence? Eve faced one in the wonderful garden where God had placed her to live for Him. Satan's goal was to corrupt her thinking and influence her away from God's will and ways. He did. What a challenge God has given us by asking us to live for Him in the midst of a world that is **full** of corrupting influences that seek to turn our mind and hearts away from God, His will, and His ways.

A corrupting influence is a person or thing that influences us to devote less of our life to following and serving Christ.

If we are not actively **avoiding and opposing** these godless influences that abound in our world, we are in great danger of being **led astray** from our devotion to Christ just as Adam and Eve were. The apostles were very concerned about this and addressed it many of their letters.

³ *I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be **led astray** from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*
— 2 Cor. 11:3

⁸ ***See to it that no one takes you captive** through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*
— Col. 2:8

¹ *You foolish Galatians, **who has bewitched you?**...³ *Are you so foolish...having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*
— Gal 3:1-3*

¹⁷ *Be on your guard lest, **being carried away** by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness.*
— 2 Pet. 3:17

⁴ *For certain persons have **crept in** unnoticed,...ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.*
— Jude 1:4

¹⁷ *Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.* ¹⁸ *For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech **they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.***
— Rom 16:17-18

¹⁴ *We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, **by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming**; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.* — Eph. 4:14-15

God has raised us up in these last days to stand for Christ in an increasingly corrupt culture and an increasingly comprised church. He has called us to be a light shining in a dark place, both to our humanistic nation and to the compromised church in it. God has asked us to set ourselves apart for Him, and so to be “*vessels for honor, sanctified (set apart), useful to the Master, prepared for every good work*”. There are relatively few to stand with us and many to stand against us, even from within the Christian community, but that is not surprising given the nature of the age.

³ *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; ⁴ and will **turn away** their ears from the truth, and will **turn aside** to myths.* — 2 Tim. 4:3-4

¹² *Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in **falling away** from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*** — Heb 3:12-13

What a great challenge the Lord has given us. We are to called to live for Him in the midst of this fallen world **without being influenced by it!** But His instructions to us go even further than this. We are not only to **avoid** godless influences for the sake of our own godliness and usefulness, but we are to also to actively **oppose** these corrupting influences that we face in our lives, our families, and our churches.

¹¹ *I wrote to you **not to associate with** any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler— not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. **Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*** — 1 Cor. 5:11-13

²⁰ *“I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and **leads My bond-servants astray**, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols... ²² Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **unless they repent** of her deeds.*

And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.” — Rev. 2:20-23

⁹But **shun foolish controversies** and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰**Reject a factious man** after a first and second warning, ¹¹knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. — Titus 3:9-11

What Corrupting Influences Do We Face?

The four primary ones addressed to us in God's Word are:

1. Corrupting Philosophies Of Life

The culminating quality of a mature Christian is loving others in self-denial.

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.** — Phil. 2:3-5

In the starkest contrast possible to this life of living for others, the dominate philosophy of life now in America is **humanism**. This world view 1) puts God out, 2) then, puts the individual man at the center of life as the measure of all things, and 3) further, makes truth itself relative and to a person's self-interests, e.g. do you want to be a woman instead of a man?

For the last 50 years in America, **humanistic thought** has increasingly dominated all of the secular educational institutions in our land. Our schools openly and aggressively teach that "life is all about you." Self-fulfillment, self-interest, and self-happiness is the goal of life.

Moreover, consistent with putting God out, and therefore rejecting the idea of special creation, **evolutionary teaching** about man's origin, value, purpose, and future dominates all areas of study. This evolutionary world view has also corrupted our Christian educational institutions.

So, given that our secular educational institutions oppose Christianity and teach evolution and its inevitable corollaries about life as fact, where do you send your children for their education? Are these institutions a "corrupting influence"? Self, self, self, self. Six hours a day for twelve years, and we expect ...what?

2. Corrupting People

Are any of those described in the following passages influencing you in life?

¹⁴Do not be bound together with **unbelievers**; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, ¹⁵or what fellowship has light with darkness?...
¹⁷“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.” — 2 Cor. 6:14-17

Leave the presence of **a fool**, or you will not discern words of knowledge.
— Prov. 14:7

³I hate the work of **those who fall away**; It shall not fasten its grip on me. ⁴A **perverse heart** shall depart from me; I will know no evil. ⁵**Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor**, him I will destroy; No one who has **a haughty look and an arrogant heart** will I endure.
— Psalm 101:3-5

²⁴Do not associate with **a man given to anger**, or go with a hot-tempered man, ²⁵lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself. — Prov. 22:24-25

Do your friends influence you to devote more of your time and life to Christ - or more of it to something else? Do your friends say to you “imitate me, as I imitate Christ”?

²⁰He who walks with **wise men** will be wise, but the companion of **fools** will suffer harm.
— Prov. 13:20

In contrast to a corrupting influence that causes us to devote less of our life to God, **a godly influence** is a person who influences us to devote more of our life to following and serving Christ.

3. Corrupting Activities And Material

² *I will give heed to the blameless way... I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.* ³ *I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.* ⁴ *A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil...*

⁶ *My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.*

⁷ *He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house.— Psalm 101:2-7*

How many hours a day do you watch television? The answer for the average American today is 4.6 hours! The average screen time spent by users aged 16 to 64 across all media platforms and different devices is estimated to be **6 hours and 37 minutes per day!**

Would you say that today's television and internet is designed to influence those who watch it to give more of their life to God, or to influence them to do something else with their mind, their money, and their life? Is it a powerful godly – or corrupting influence? Silly questions.

4. Corrupting Christians and Churches

It is hard to find a body of believers who are standing steadfast, immovable for the truth, in the face of a culture that is selling out to wickedness and evil. It is hard to find church leaders who are fully committed to Christ and proclaim His Word as inspired and inerrant.

¹¹ *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches... ¹⁴ I have a few things against you, because you have there **some** who hold the teaching of Balaam... ¹⁵ you also have **some** who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ **Repent** therefore.'* — Rev. 2:11-17

¹⁵ *'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot.*

¹⁶ *So because **you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold**, I will spit you out of My mouth.*

¹⁷ *Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,*

¹⁹ *...Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and **repent.**'* — Rev. 3:15-18

Opposing, As Well As Avoiding, Corrupting Influences

As **spiritual leaders** of others, as husbands, parents, pastors and elders, we are called upon to protect those under our care. By clear warning, by example, and by strong opposition, we are to keep godless influences and people away from them.

²⁸ **Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves' men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

³¹ **Therefore be on the alert**, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." — Acts 20:28-31

^{3:1} But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and **avoid such men as these**.

^{4:1} I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort**, with great patience and instruction... ⁵ Be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry**. — 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:1-5

UNIT 13 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study, read the study material and complete the following.

My Commitments Regarding The Corrupting Influences I Face In Life

1. I purpose to avoid or remove the following corrupting influences from my life that God has brought to mind: _____
To what extent? _____

2. I purpose to be a godly influence to others, and to do this I purpose to _____

3. I am responsible for _____, and I purpose to **lead** them to avoid and oppose those things and people that will corrupt them and destroy their usefulness and fruitfulness for Christ. Yes _____ No _____
To do this I must change the following _____

Discussion Questions for Unit 13 Study Session #1

1. Is isolating ourselves as much as possible, even completely, from contact with the non-Christian world what God tells us to do? _____
2. We are to be “in the world, but not of it” (John 17:11, 14-15). If this is true, when is a young Christian ready to go out “into the world” alone, either for activities, education, or work? _____
3. Is sending your children to a humanistic school to be taught, a violation of Eph. 6:4? _____
4. How can I work in a job that is requiring me to do what God says I cannot? What are the biblical principles related to this? _____

5. Are women who dress immodestly, rather than discreetly, a corrupting influence for men? _____ To be avoided and opposed? _____
6. What is the difference between “avoiding” and “opposing” corrupting influences?

Prayer Together

UNIT 13 STUDY SESSION #2

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for Session #2, consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share what you learned.

1. Memorize Ps. 101, noting the “I wills”. Be prepared to share what commitments this led you to make regarding corrupting influences.
2. Choose one of the following areas where the world’s “influence” can be very strong and completely remove it as described.
 - a. Your cell phone for 12 waking hours. Twice during the week. Completely. Do not carry it with you. Turn it off.
 - b. Watching TV for 5 consecutive days.
 - c. Spend a day alone, fasting, praying, and seeking the Lord. Leave all electronics at home, away from any availability to you during the entire time.

Discussion Questions for Unit 13 Study Session #2

1. If you were able to pursue one of the projects, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together