

# **CAREER DECISION-MAKING**

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**Grades 9-12  
Year 3  
Quarter 3**



# **THREE COMMON DIVING BOARDS**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students to understand and biblically evaluate three common culturally popular, yet wrong, motives for career planning.

## **Memory Verse**

**Ecclesiastes 5:19** - “Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work - this is a gift of God.”

## **Lesson Background**

What could be more unspiritual than talking about career planning? It will be evident as you progress through this quarter that helping young people do thinking in this area now is critical. Spurring them on to view themselves as stewards, those entrusted with resources to serve their Lord, must take career planning into consideration more today than ever before. Young people have many more choices and lots more opportunity to make plans from self-centered perspectives today, and these perspectives are much more popular than Christian motives for work and life planning.

In this quarter, you may want to use the metaphor of the diving boards (motives) and pool (the world of work) that I have sketched below. The main idea is that everyone makes his life plans about work with some biblical or unbiblical motives in mind. The metaphor is designed to help young people picture their own motives and goals in light of God’s priorities and true prosperity as He defines it.

These lessons will be addressing “career planning.” You will need to understand some common terms in order to keep them clear in your own mind throughout this quarter. A career is a series of work experiences, paid or unpaid, throughout life. A career is made up of occupations such as educator, missionary, social worker, auto mechanic, etc. A person may have a string of different occupations throughout his career. The job I have refers to my specific work role. An educator, for example, may have the job as administrator, learning disabilities specialist, counselor, teacher, teacher’s aid, curriculum supervisor, etc. Young people are urged to approach career (really “life”) planning from three popular perspectives - like diving into a pool of the world of work from one of three kinds of popular diving boards. But these diving boards aren’t good ones. Some are too firm and divers sprain their ankles when they try to bounce. Some are too springy and launch divers with so much force they lose control in the air and land on their bellies or backs. Some are simply unpredictable. You don’t know what will happen until you dive off.

All three have this in common: From the platform of each, the water looks refreshing but the dive is the first surprise. Because the water looks so good, many divers forget to pay attention to the board itself. Sadly, few truly come to enjoy the water like they thought they would when they were diving. Even those who seem to begin with a good dive become dissatisfied after a short time. The water looked good from the board platform, but it’s really becoming more and more murky and grimy, like swimming in polluted ocean water. The promises that the popular images of the world of work seem to make are disillusioning in a short while.

Young people need to make their decisions about career planning from God’s perspective, not popularly promoted ones from the TV or even those in common high school guidance programs. This is the only way their career plans will become the rich blessing God intends them to be and not the emptiness and vanity that Solomon experienced in Ecclesiastes.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. Common Life Goals

Have students read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. Then have them suggest phrases or parts of verses that indicate Solomon was seeking wealth, his interests and fulfillment - three common motives today that drive people in their career planning.

#### Wealth

- verse 4b - I built houses for myself; planted vineyards . . .
- verse 5 - . . . gardens . . . parks . . .
- verse 6 - . . . reservoirs . . .
- verse 7 - . . . slaves . . . herds and flocks . . .
- verse 8 - . . . amassed silver and gold . . . treasure of kings
- verse 8b - . . . singers and a harem

#### Interests

- verse 1a - I thought in my heart, “come now, I will test you with . . .”
- verse 3 - I tried cheering myself with wine . . .
- verse 10 - I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure . . .

## Fulfillment/Pleasure

- verse 1 - . . . I will test you with pleasure to see what is good
- verse 3b - . . . I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven . . .
- verse 10 - . . . I denied myself nothing my eyes desired
- verse 10b - . . . My heart took delight in all my work . . .

Now read verses 17-23. Ask, “What do you think Solomon is getting at in these verses? If life is as meaningless as he points out, why not commit suicide?” (Answer: This is the point of the entire book. It is written for the person who has only this life’s frame of reference in mind. To such a person, unbeliever or believer who has lost perspective, life is meaningless without God’s involvement and without recognizing His purposes.) What are some of the phrases in verses 17-23 Solomon uses to sum up all that goes on in this life as meaningless? Summarize with verses 24 and 25. Satisfaction, which is something God wants for His people, comes from God. His values and perspective about wealth, interests, pleasure and fulfillment are lasting. Everything else is meaningless.

NOTE: To use the sections below, you may wish to duplicate some or all of the next two pages for each student to be able to do personal evaluations of his or her own values and practices in these areas. First of all, you should review your own life in view of these questions and model openness and willingness to change as you believe God wants you to. Your openness will mean it is safe for your teens to feel they can be open, too. After all, if you are imperfect, maybe it’s okay for them to be struggling and not totally perfect too.

## 2. You and Your Money

Think of the last \$50 you have had to spend (this may not have been a lump sum of \$50, but the last \$50 to pass through your hands, even if it has been over several weeks or months).

List the sources and approximate amounts received:

Amounts	Sources
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List the ways you have used this \$50 or so, and as close an estimate as possible of the various amounts:

Amounts	Uses
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now figure, in percentages, how you used your money. Percentage can be found for each area by dividing the amount you spent on an area by the total you started with. For example, if you used \$10 for dates and \$50 was your total amount, then \$10 divided by \$50 equals .20 or 20% spent on dates. Calculate your percentages of spending in each of these areas:

dates:

snacks:

fast food:

clothes that are more “nice” than “necessary”:

clothes that are more “necessary” than just “nice”:

giving to your church:

giving to needy people:

savings:

possessions more “nice” than “necessary”:

possessions more “necessary” than just “nice”:

music:

books/magazines:

other uses:

other uses:

What is there about your spending habits that shows that your priorities are God’s? List the ways you used your money that fit with each of God’s instructions in the following passages: Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 4:4-5; I Timothy 5:8; I Timothy 5:17-18; I Timothy 6:17-19.

What spending changes would bring your spending more into line with God’s priorities? Have each student think of one or two specific changes to make in his or her spending habits. Ask them if they would like to share their intended changes.

### 3. True Satisfaction

Read Ephesians 6:5-8. From the Ecclesiastes passage above, it is clear that job satisfaction does not come from the job in and of itself. This is evident in Paul's thinking, too. Lead your group in trying to determine the answers to each of these questions:

- What is the difference between the choices a slave would have and those an employee today would have?
- What motives did Paul urge these Christian slaves to follow in their work? Would these apply to non-slave employees today?
- When Paul says "serve wholeheartedly" (verse 7), what attitudes and behaviors that you have seen in workers would this *not* include? What other attitudes and behaviors would it include?
- What "interest" is Paul urging as the chief motive for these workers?
- If a worker is in a job he or she, for one reason or another, does not like, but his or her motives are as one "serving the Lord," what are three worker traits you would expect him to display? Why?
- What are three traits a young man might exhibit if his attitudes were more greatly influenced by friends and others who kept telling him, "I wouldn't put up with a job I didn't have any interest in"?



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **THREE COMMON DIVING BOARDS**

This week, keep an eye open to the subtle ways in which the three motives discussed in today's lesson are repeated over and over. Especially note any TV or commercial pictures of people working - what observations can you make about the image the media presents about work?



# **THE RUDDER FOR CAREER PLANNING**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand their identity as stewards and to motivate them to plan to make their life decisions in view of that identity.

## **Memory Verse**

**Matthew 25:23** - “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”

## **Lesson Background**

Sadly, the stewardship concept is frequently limited to financial stewardship. This is understandable since the parables of Jesus about stewardship use wealth (talents were quantities of wealth) as key features. But like elements of all Jesus’ parables, the talents point to something greater than themselves. In other words, while wealth should be part of any application of the parable, it is only a small part. Jesus really has all of life in view. In career terms, the phrase “career stewardship” sums up what Jesus is talking about.

In preparation for this week’s lesson, read a commentary on the Matthew 25:14-30 passage and compare teachings found in the other related parables as well in Matthew 24:45 and Luke 19:12-27.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. The Parable of the Talents

First have students read the parable in Matthew 25:14-30. Ask them what they think the point of the parable is. They do not need to come to a conclusion at this point. Let them kick a few ideas around. Write them on the board and through your discussion allow them to narrow them down or refine them to come to the true purpose. Keep in mind that there is one main point that Jesus is addressing in a parable. Here it is our accountability to the Master with the resources entrusted to all (saved and unsaved) people.

Identify each of the parts of the parable and have the students try to come to an understanding about what each means.

- Servants (verses 14,19,21,26,30) - Are they just Christians?
- Talents (verses 14,15,27,28-30) - What do they and what do they not represent? Consider the judgment that comes on the unfaithful servant in verse 30 for a clue to what talents are intended by Jesus to picture. They are not primarily money. Nor are they special abilities that only a few people have (like outstanding basketball skill, musical ability, mathematical brilliance, artistic talent, etc.). They refer to all the resources God has entrusted to us to serve Him in obedience to the two great commandments, His will.
- The end of the long journey (verse 19) - This parable, along with the previous one, the Ten Virgins, has the Lord's return in mind. Accountability with all that God has entrusted to us is the focus. When He returns, all of us will be examined for how faithful and wise we have been with the trust of personal resources God has given to us. (These will be explained in the next three lessons in more detail.)
- The similarities among the three servants - All three servants were examined, not for how much they had after their investments, but for how faithful they had been with what each had been given. The same words were used for the servants with five and two talents.
- The excuses of the unfaithful servant - First he blamed the master for being too demanding (verse 24). Next he claimed to have emotional problems ("I was afraid . . ." verse 25). He felt his fears should justify his self-indulgence. But the master saw through the excuses. First, he called him a wicked and lazy servant. He was wicked because he violated his master's command to invest his talents. He was not good and faithful. Those qualities only belong to someone who does what his master wants him to do. He was lazy, in that he chose to use his talent as it pleased him - it didn't disturb his ease or relaxation to just bury his talent. He did what was least troublesome, what made no demands on him. That is the essence of self-indulgence. Even if he were afraid, as anyone who is accountable to someone else ought to be in a respectful sense, he did not need to be so neglectful with his trust. That was his choice and he was accountable for it.
- Outer darkness (verse 30) - This is a frequently used picture of Hell, especially with the figures of weeping and gnashing of teeth. This shows that this person was not a believer, for all who are Christians go to glory with Christ. It also shows that no unbeliever will be considered faithful and good or wise, since they are followers of their own interests and not those of the Master. [Clarification: Faithfulness does not make one a Christian. Salvation is by grace and through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). But this parable illustrates the accountability we'll all have at judgment. The

Christian, because of God's work in him (Philippians 2:12-13), will be faithful. By definition a Christian is a follower of Christ (John 10:27). The unbeliever follows only his own aims and desires, not Christ's. At judgment, therefore, God will only need to examine what we've done with our trust of resources committed to us for His purposes. Those who are faithful will be believers and those who are not, unbelievers. See Romans 2:6-11 for more of this same thought developed by Paul.]

- Faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things (verses 21,23) - The "Little to Much" principle. God gives greater opportunity for service and usefulness to those who are faithful with the first opportunities they are given. The "Use or Lose" principle is also illustrated in this parable. If you use what God entrusts to you, there are greater responsibilities ahead for service to the Master, but if you waste what you have, you lose, not only future possibilities, but even usefulness in the present (verses 28-29). This needs to become an important part of your students' understanding for how they make their career plans. They need to recognize that faithfulness with what they do know about their talents in the present (a focus for the next three weeks of lessons) is what is necessary for sound planning. What they don't know about themselves or their futures is okay. Our accountability is based on what we do know. And God will increase that knowledge and give us wisdom to use it as we are faithful with what we do know. However, be sloppy and neglectful with what we do have now, and we will forfeit God's gracious gift of greater understanding about wise choices and opportunities in the future.

## **2. Faithfulness or Excuses?**

In Matthew 24:45,47, Jesus asks, while teaching about accountability, "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Master has put in charge of his servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? . . . he will put him in charge of all his possessions." Joseph and Moses illustrate features of faithfulness and excuse-making. Keep in mind that while we are only referring to Moses in the excuse-making mode here, this was not the character of his life. In fact, even in this excuse-making situation below, he did humble himself and finally obey the Lord faithfully.

### **A. Joseph**

Read Genesis 39 and list the character qualities, skills and abilities that Joseph must have possessed that made him a faithful and wise steward in his master's and the prison guard's judgment. List the students' observations on the board. How is the "Little to Much" principle illustrated in Joseph's life?

### **B. Moses**

Commonly-used excuses, like those of the unjust servant, may sound convincing, but as Moses' experience teaches us, God is not put off by them. Summarize the story of Moses in Exodus 3:1-4:17 and have the students identify his four excuses (3:11; 3:13; 4:1; 4:10) and summarize them in their own words. Copy their summaries on the board. Then lead your students in a translation exercise: What would each of Moses' excuses sound like today if a young person were using them to avoid making the kind of investment of his talents that God desired?

## **Conclusion**

Our identity as stewards, managers of what God has entrusted to us, gives you, the teacher, the opportunity to challenge your students with their need to be Christians. Being a follower of Christ is not merely something that has heaven as its reward. Career planning itself, the very opportunities we will have for usefulness in this life, for making a difference that counts for this life and the next, depend on our devotedness to Christ's service. Eternity is in the balances too. But so is the fullness and meaning that God has created us to experience now.

Help your students to see that if they are not believers, they are "wicked and lazy" servants. They are servants, but those who will be cast out in the life to come and losers in this life as well. They need to trust Christ for forgiveness of their wicked self-centered living and commit themselves to follow Him with the resources He has entrusted to them.

## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **THE RUDDER FOR CAREER PLANNING**

This week keep alert to your temptation to make excuses for not using all the talents God has entrusted to you. Make a list of the five most common excuses you are tempted to use and bring it to class next week.





# **TALENT-WARP!!**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students gain confidence that Christian stewards have definite work they are uniquely suited to accomplish with their personality qualities and other talents.

## **Memory Verse**

**Hebrews 9:14** - “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.”

## **Lesson Background**

This lesson helps to clarify the talent concept by way of contrasts. Each of the students in the scenes below has a warped or distorted perspective or view of talents. Fundamentally their problems are all the same - they are viewing talents as “stand-out” types of abilities. Of course, most of us don’t have such notable qualities. The discouragement, frustration, confusion and overconfidence that this concept of talents can produce is illustrated in each student scene.

This lesson begins to widen the scope of what our young people think of when they think of talents. All that God has made them to be and allowed to come into their lives is part of their talent-trust of resources to develop and invest for the Master. The personality qualities, which this lesson introduces, are usually overlooked in favor of academic or skill qualities. This is first, however, because it is such a source of influence for Christ, the Master - often more than our stand-out abilities.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. Life After High School

This lesson begins with five vignettes or stories about five young people who are trying to put a plan together for the year after high school. Have different students read each before the class begins and then in class. Ask the readers to identify each student's thinking about "talents" after soliciting thoughts from the class. Summarize the thinking of each of the students in the stories on the board.

- **Tim:** Tim flopped into the chair beside my desk in the guidance office. He is six feet three inches tall, 17 years old, a senior who has scored more than 1000 points in his high school basketball career. He has been selected as the all-conference MVP two years running. "Basketball is all I know. I can't do anything else and yet I'm not good enough for any top college team. I don't know what to do about next year." [Teacher: Tim feels that his one and only talent is useless!]
- **Ann:** Ann has been selected for district, regional and state chorus from among thousands of public and private school Pennsylvania competitors. Her soprano performances have won her wide recognition while still in high school and a two thousand dollar a year scholarship for four years as a voice major in a Christian college. She seems confident about her next career planning steps. [Teacher: Ann's talent seems obvious and her course of action evident.]
- **Andrew:** Andrew gets average grades, plays intramural sports, has never been elected to an office or received an award for anything other than getting the largest number of his friends to go to a Vacation Bible School meeting when he was in fourth grade. "I've been thinking that maybe I'll just try to get a job after graduation." [Teacher: Andrew simply feels talentless.]
- **Cecilia:** "Everyone says I'm attractive and musically, academically and athletically talented, but I'm totally confused." Cecilia wasn't exaggerating others' opinions. "I have no idea what I should do the day after graduation." Cecilia is graduating as valedictorian. She is a National Merit Finalist and has SAT scores totaling more than 1450. She has scholarship offers because of her field hockey skill, her writing ability and, of course, her academic performance. [Teacher: Cecilia feels *too* talented.]
- **Tammy:** Tammy knows what she wants is to "just get married and have kids." The idea of talents seems too complicated to her. "I have loved kids for as long as I can remember. I believe that's right for me." [Teacher: Tammy isn't even thinking about her talents.]

Each of these five young people is suffering from the same condition: Talent-warp. Ask, "From what you have seen here, what do all of these people seem to have in common?" (Answer: They all have a too-narrow definition of "talent.") Ask, "In what way is their definition narrow?" (Answer: Each student is thinking of stand-out types of abilities as talents. These are talents too, but they are only stand-out types. Most of us don't have these kind, but all of us have many talents. We are required not only to develop and invest the stand-out ones, if we have them, but the rest of what we have as well.) The general spectrum of our talents includes our personalities, our sex role identities as young men and women, the unique life experiences God has given us, the spiritual gifts that each Christian has, the interests that we are aware of and our school-related abilities and skills. Not many of us have stand-out types of abilities in any of these areas, but all of us have a unique blending of all of these just as God determined for us.

Read Ephesians 2:10. Note the identity of each Christian - "We are God's workmanship," His project. Note the key to our identity - "... created in Christ Jesus . . ." Note the purpose for which the Christian is saved - "... to do good works . . ." Note the planned intent of God for our involvement in these good works - "... which God prepared in advance for us to do." Our works are not an afterthought in God's mind. He didn't save us and then shake His head, thinking, "Wow, what a mistake. Maybe I shouldn't have saved that one. What in the world am I going to do with him (or her)?" The point of this verse and the memory verse in Hebrews 9 is that God's intention in saving His people is to use them for eternal purposes. Their lives matter. Their lives will make a difference in this life and in the one to come. Our unique blends of talents (and spiritual gifts, which we'll discuss later) are God's supply of what we need to accomplish His purposes.

## **2. Biblical Characters with Talents for God's Purposes**

[You may want to photocopy the back of this page for class work and small group involvement.]

## **3. People Who Are Important to You**

Tell the class: "Think about the one or two people in your life who have had the most impact on you" (Give them a minute to think privately about this). Now instruct them: "Write the qualities of the people you are thinking about on this paper. What about them has made the most impact upon you? If you cannot summarize your feelings in a word or two, that's okay. Use a phrase or sentence if necessary." Now have the group share, as they would like, the people and qualities that they have found so significant in their lives. Conclude by reinforcing the lesson that each of them also has qualities that God intends to be useful in the lives of others. But like many people who cross our paths without a positive influence, they too may be without significant impact if they are not seeking to develop and faithfully use who God has made them for His purposes.

Next week we'll give each student a chance to identify his or her own personality qualities of which they and their friends are becoming aware.



## **BIBLICAL CHARACTERS WITH TALENTS FOR GOD’S PURPOSES**

Each of the following people exhibits talents that God has chosen to use or, due to their unfaithfulness, that illustrate the “Use or Lose” principle we discussed last week. Look up each passage and put a check in the column that is illustrated by each person. Does this passage show how the person listed has uniquely suited talents for God’s purposes in his life? Or does it best illustrate the “Use or Lose” principle that we discussed last week? (The “Use or Lose” principle teaches there is greater opportunity or less and less opportunity for service depending upon how faithful we are with what we have been given.)

<b><u>Person</u></b>	<b><u>Passage</u></b>	<b><u>Personalized Talents</u></b>	<b><u>Use/Lose</u></b>
Saul	I Samuel 13,15		
Ruth	Ruth 3; 4:13-22		
David	I Samuel 17		
Abigail	I Samuel 25		
Moses	Exodus 3:1-4:17		
Ehud	Judges 3:12-30		
Nehemiah	Nehemiah 1:11b-2:10		
Esther	Esther 3-4		
Haman	Esther 7		
Daniel	Daniel 1		
Amos	Amos 7:14-15		
Jonah	Jonah 1,3		



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **TALENT-WARP!!**

During the week, think about what you consider to be the most important aspects of your own personality. Write a list of four or five things that seem to you to characterize who you are. Then ask some of your friends to do the same thing for you. Were their lists the same as yours? In what ways did they differ? Bring your lists to Sunday School next week.





# **CLUES TO YOUR TALENTS - PERSONALITY AND EXPERIENCES**

## **Lesson Aim**

To encourage students to think confidently about their own personality qualities and experiences as part of the resources God has given them to invest in service for Him.

## **Memory Verse**

**Romans 12:3** - “. . . Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”

## **Lesson Background**

The passages that stress the sovereignty of God in the particulars of our lives are important here. Verses such as Ephesians 2:10, Romans 8:28, James 1:2-5, Acts 17:26-27, Genesis 50:20, and Psalm 139:13-16 teach His sovereign involvement in the details of our lives. Even the hairs of our heads have His attention (Matthew 10:30), so that no circumstances can seriously threaten the servant’s usefulness and significance.

This lesson and subsequent ones, on the clues to talents, are not intended to pump up young peoples’ “self-concepts” artificially. They are to help kids think with “sober judgment,” i.e., accurately about themselves. But accurate self-evaluation for the Christian can only be done in the context of faith, trust that God is planning to use me as He’s created me. Without that perspective, the best we have is unprincipled optimism or pessimism. Young people must be taught and, in our age, reminded over and over that God intends to use them for eternally significant purposes if they are His people. Stewards or servants who live with the commitment to be faithful and wise with their trust of resources are not on a fool’s errand. They will never get to the end of their lives and be filled with the sense that their lives counted for nothing.

In our age in which there are many causes for insecurity (family breakdowns, conflicts, abuse, early sexual experimentation, moms and dads who are rarely home, poor discipline, TV fantasy about life,

relationships and fulfillment, etc.), our young people need to see that there is great security, worth and significance to those committed to Christ and His service with their lives. God intends to use them in ways that will have eternal consequences for themselves and others. That is significance. Among those things God will use to accomplish these consequences are the unique combinations of our personalities and experiences. This lesson is to build hope.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. The Sovereignty of God in Our Lives**

Set the stage with biblical teachings about the sovereignty of God in the particulars of our lives and personalities. Have each student read one of the passages below and write the class' observations about God's involvement in our lives on the board beside each reference.

- Ephesians 2:10 - . . . His workmanship (project), . . . planned from eternity for good works.
- Romans 8:28 - All, not most, things work together for good to those who love God. All things can only work this way if all things are under God's control in our lives.
- James 1:2-5 - How can trials of all sorts and sizes work for our maturity? God is the tailor of our trials. He fits them to us for His glory and our good.
- Acts 17:26-27 - Even the geographical boundaries of our lives are included in His plan. Our racial, ethnic, economic, and political heritage is not an accident.
- Genesis 50:20 - Other people may have had it out for you, like Joseph's brothers, but God is still in control and allows only what is for your good and His glory to occur in your life.
- Psalm 139:13-16 - The most delicate and intricate parts of our personalities and our experiences have God's involvement from even before birth. Nothing surprises Him.

### **2. The Personality Qualities Inventory**

With these observations in view, pass out the Personality Qualities Inventory accompanying this lesson. Read the instructions and have each member of the group match as many qualities with each group member as possible. Then have the group share qualities they believe each member of the group seems to possess "as they have been impressed by him or her." Each person should note the qualities he or she has been identified as having as the group members share their impressions.

Urge each young person to take his or her Inventory home and try to group the qualities the group shared with them with other similar qualities. This will result in each having a few summary qualities to keep in mind and to be used in their prayer times in which they may regularly ask the Lord to help them cultivate these for His service.

### **3. What About Your Life Experiences?**

Now turn your focus to experiences as clues to their talents. As the verses on the board stress God's involvement in the details of each of our lives, it is clear that all of our earlier experiences are by His design

and purpose - for good. Ask the group to list individually as many factors as possible that they think can influence decisions made regarding career planning. Try to have them be as specific as possible (Factors may come from categories such as people, geography, economics, church background, etc. Specific factors in the people area, for example, may be an aunt, boyfriend, parents, school friends, youth pastor, a grandparent, etc.). Have each copy the list of factors from the board that applies to them and rank each in terms of which they think is having or will have the most influence upon their decision-making (rank the #1 factor of influence as a #1, etc.).

Now ask the group to share the #1 factors in each of their rankings and hypothesize about what could happen to cause one of the other factors to become more important. Example: A student may indicate that a pastor or grandparent has been a #1 factor in his or her life up to this point. Through the death of the grandparent or a forced move to another part of the country, God may bring another person or pastor into his or her life as a powerful influence. This exercise may have the effect of helping them think about the uncertainty of environmental and other factors and the importance of being dependent upon God and faithful to Him in each situation. Situations affect us, but God is the one who controls events that come into our experience (Psalm 37:6, Proverbs 16:9). It is the Lord who orchestrates our circumstances and it is to Him alone we are ultimately accountable. The stewards were accountable for what they had, not what they did not have. A young person will not be accountable for being intimately acquainted with a Hispanic culture if he or she was not raised with that kind of exposure. He will be enriched (truly benefitted because of God's providence), however, by the experience of his dad being transferred or losing his job and his having to leave Christian school or not being able to attend camp this summer because of less family income.



# Personality Qualities Inventory

## For Group Work

Directions:

1. Read through the list of qualities and put the initials of others in your group beside qualities that you think you have seen in some useful ways in their lives. (These don't have to be spectacular qualities or things that make them stand out among all the rest of the class. Rather, they should be qualities that seem to stand out somewhat *among others they individually possess*.)
2. Next, share these with each other in the group. Mark those that the other class members suggest seem to be some of your personality features.
3. Finally, do some further thinking at home about your personality qualities by using the uncompleted sections of this Inventory. Make the personality qualities you identify with these exercises a regular part of thanksgiving and prayer, that God will help you develop them and be faithful with them.

<input type="checkbox"/> adaptable	<input type="checkbox"/> aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/> ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/> animated
<input type="checkbox"/> attractive	<input type="checkbox"/> calm	<input type="checkbox"/> carefree	<input type="checkbox"/> caring
<input type="checkbox"/> cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/> clever	<input type="checkbox"/> competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> confident
<input type="checkbox"/> conscientious	<input type="checkbox"/> controlled	<input type="checkbox"/> creative	<input type="checkbox"/> decisive
<input type="checkbox"/> dependable	<input type="checkbox"/> dignified	<input type="checkbox"/> determined	<input type="checkbox"/> disciplined
<input type="checkbox"/> diplomatic	<input type="checkbox"/> discreet	<input type="checkbox"/> efficient	<input type="checkbox"/> energetic
<input type="checkbox"/> enterprising	<input type="checkbox"/> enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> expressive	<input type="checkbox"/> extrovert
<input type="checkbox"/> flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> follower	<input type="checkbox"/> friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> gentle
<input type="checkbox"/> giving	<input type="checkbox"/> gregarious	<input type="checkbox"/> hard worker	<input type="checkbox"/> honest
<input type="checkbox"/> humorous	<input type="checkbox"/> imaginative	<input type="checkbox"/> independent	<input type="checkbox"/> innovative
<input type="checkbox"/> inspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> intellectual	<input type="checkbox"/> introvert	<input type="checkbox"/> kind
<input type="checkbox"/> leader	<input type="checkbox"/> lively	<input type="checkbox"/> logical	<input type="checkbox"/> loyal
<input type="checkbox"/> mature	<input type="checkbox"/> methodical	<input type="checkbox"/> meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/> non-committal
<input type="checkbox"/> observant	<input type="checkbox"/> optimist	<input type="checkbox"/> organized	<input type="checkbox"/> organizer
<input type="checkbox"/> patient	<input type="checkbox"/> perceptive	<input type="checkbox"/> personable	<input type="checkbox"/> persuasive
<input type="checkbox"/> pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/> practical	<input type="checkbox"/> precise	<input type="checkbox"/> punctual
<input type="checkbox"/> questioning	<input type="checkbox"/> quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> rational	<input type="checkbox"/> realistic
<input type="checkbox"/> relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/> reliable	<input type="checkbox"/> respectful	<input type="checkbox"/> responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> secure	<input type="checkbox"/> self-motivated	<input type="checkbox"/> sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> serious
<input type="checkbox"/> sincere	<input type="checkbox"/> sociable	<input type="checkbox"/> stable	<input type="checkbox"/> supportive
<input type="checkbox"/> systematic	<input type="checkbox"/> tactful	<input type="checkbox"/> tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/> trustful
<input type="checkbox"/> tough	<input type="checkbox"/> wise	<input type="checkbox"/> youthful	



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**CLUES TO YOUR  
TALENTS - PERSONALITY  
AND EXPERIENCES**

Ask each student to talk to a parent sometime this next week and ask what some of the most influential circumstances in their lives have been. Have them ask, "As you reflect on these experiences, how do you think God used this in your life to be more useful for Him?"





## **CLUES TO YOUR TALENTS - SEX ROLE IDENTITY**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help young men and women develop a perspective about the roles and characters young men and young women should consider in their career planning and future relationships.

### **Memory Verse**

**Proverbs 31:30** - "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."

**I John 2:14b** - "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

### **Lesson Background**

Because of the dissolution of the extended family and, more recently, the nuclear family, the absence of parents due to career goals and demands, the TV images of men and women and an educational system that blurs or denies distinctions between the sexes or even the legitimacy of gender identity, young people don't know what a young man or woman ought to be, or even how to relate to a member of the opposite sex.

This lesson seeks to clarify some biblical priorities God has set for men and women that ought to be kept in mind as young people think about their career plans. Sexual identity as a man or woman is part of what God has uniquely given to each of us for our service to Him. No two men are alike and no two women are alike. But within each sex, God has sketched, by His design, some priorities that He wants each sex to fulfill.

Sexual distinctions in the Scriptures seem to be predominantly domestic and church-related. That is, in the home and in the church roles for men and women are taught. Roles in the work world seem completely indistinguishable. Every worker function men do, women seem to do, and without any sanctions or restrictions. Women's occupational roles range from ruling a nation to having their own businesses and servants - as wives and mothers.

There are important cautions for both men and women that young people must heed. The Western culture's approach to career planning plays down sexual identity distinctives. God's Word does not. Men and women who enter the occupational world are still men and women. Their functions may be interchangeable in the work world, but their character qualities and identities as men and women should not be blurred. A woman should not deny her special uniqueness as a woman any more than a man should his as a man. Both should give much attention to developing qualities God says each should have so that their future lives in relation to each other in the family, church and work world may be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

## **Lesson Procedure**

A multi-page handout is necessary for this lesson. You will need to have this duplicated for each of your students before class. All the class, guys and girls, should receive all the pages. Part of the value of this exercise is for guys to think about young women's roles and for girls to think about young men's roles. The handout is prepared for students to complete on their own but is easily adaptable to group work. Before class, go over all of the items for the "young woman" and the "young man" and *select a few* that you would like to use for class exercises and discussion. Encourage each student to complete the exercises and use the results as part of his or her own daily devotional prayer time. The following are specific suggestions for class use:

### **1. For the Young Woman**

Have the class read through Proverbs 31:10-31 one verse at a time and discuss which of the five roles the Proverbs 31 woman is fulfilling in each verse (You may want to skip exercises #2 and #3 for class).

Have the group summarize each of the roles in exercise #2.

Now identify the Proverbs woman's priorities with exercise #3.

Is being a wife and mother a bore? Is there no fulfillment in it? How would the Proverbs 31 woman respond to these questions? Use exercise #4 to help guys and girls identify the variety of talents that this woman exercised in her life.

Have the kids engage in some role play discussion as consulting counselors considering how to advise this young woman about her future. Remember all these roles are in her future, but she is beginning, as a high school senior, to show many of the qualities that will equip her for these future roles. How would you advise her? Should she go to college? To business school? Just get married?

Urge the girls in class to think privately and complete the last part of exercise #5 on their own. Remind them that what they will become, in future years, they are becoming now.

## **2. For the Young Man**

Your use of this section will need to be a bit different. Again it is designed for the students' individual use, but it is easily adapted.

In exercise #1, with its seven passages of Scripture, modify the exercise so that as each verse is read, you ask for an example of how these mature qualities of a young man might show up in a high school young man.

Then urge each fellow to fill these evaluations out personally at home and use them as sources for his prayer life in his daily devotions.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the class by stressing to your students the fact that they will be what they are now becoming. Ask them, "Why do you think we had the guys and girls think through the questions that pertain to the opposite sex? Why didn't we just separate guys and girls for this week's lesson?" (Answer: It's not only critical for a young woman to consider what principles she should cultivate in her life, but it's just as critical for a young man to have biblical expectations for a young woman. The same is true for young women. They need to know what God says is important in young men.) Urge your students to make use of these worksheets for their own prayer lives.



## CAREER STEWARDSHIP AND THE YOUNG WOMAN

No passage of Scripture is more descriptive of the balanced life of a fulfilled and fulfilling woman than Proverbs 31. This exercise is intended to help you think about how she balanced her life and give you a model to imitate as you proceed with your career stewardship planning.

### Question #1

For each of the verses in the passage, check the appropriate box or boxes in the table to identify the role or roles in which she seems to be serving.

VERSE OR VERSES	PERSONAL LIFE	MARITAL ROLE	FAMILY ROLE	WORK ROLE	SOCIAL ROLE
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28-29					
30					
31					

## Question #2

Now list the verse numbers relating to each role on the lines below (the same verse number may be listed for more than one role):

**PERSONAL LIFE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**MARITAL ROLE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**FAMILY ROLE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**WORK ROLE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SOCIAL ROLE** \_\_\_\_\_

## Question #3

What did this woman's priorities seem to be? By the amount of attention (number of verses in which a role is suggested) the writer gives to each of these areas, what does the order of her priorities seem to be?

**FIRST PRIORITY** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SECOND PRIORITY** \_\_\_\_\_  
**THIRD PRIORITY** \_\_\_\_\_  
**FOURTH PRIORITY** \_\_\_\_\_  
**FIFTH PRIORITY** \_\_\_\_\_

## Question #4

“Being a wife and mother is going to be such a bore! What a waste of your many talents!”

How true is this comment of the Proverbs 31 wife and mother? Read through Proverbs 31:10-31 again. Scan all of the descriptive terms below and place a check mark or the verse number in the space beside each activity in which she engaged.

<input type="checkbox"/> Accounting	<input type="checkbox"/> Building things	<input type="checkbox"/> Competing	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Creating	<input type="checkbox"/> Dealing	<input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making
<input type="checkbox"/> Designing	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing projects	
<input type="checkbox"/> Empathy	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate people	<input type="checkbox"/> Examining	<input type="checkbox"/> Fashion
<input type="checkbox"/> Foresight	<input type="checkbox"/> Initiating	<input type="checkbox"/> Informing	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovating
<input type="checkbox"/> Instructing	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading	<input type="checkbox"/> Making things
<input type="checkbox"/> Managing	<input type="checkbox"/> Negotiating	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Persuading	<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/> Promoting	<input type="checkbox"/> Rapport
<input type="checkbox"/> Researching	<input type="checkbox"/> Selling	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolving conflicts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Serving others	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervising	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching

## Question #5

If you were this young woman's counselor in high school or college, what suggestions would you have given her for her career planning after graduation? How would you have encouraged her to think about occupational planning if she said that she hoped marriage and family matters would be in her future too? List one of the character qualities in each of the five areas above that you would like to develop in your career stewardship as a young woman.

## CAREER STEWARDSHIP AND THE YOUNG MAN

These exercises are designed to help you think through your personal identity as a young man. Who are you and who are you becoming? The kind of person you are as a man will have definite bearing upon the quality of your career stewardship.

### Question #1

Mark the appropriate letter in each box in response to the qualities related to the following verses. Write **N** if the quality is **not really evident**, **I** IF IT IS **inconsistently evident**, and **G** if it is **generally evident** in your life. What do your answers tell you about your progress as a faithful and wise steward?

[CAUTION: Some of these passages describe what a husband or church leader should be like. Actually, all of these qualities ought to be evident in everyone. Other passages command these character qualities for all Christians. These passages simply indicate the nature of a mature man and what must be true of a church leader. The important point is that if you are not on the way to developing these qualities now, you may not possess them in any degree of maturity later either.]

PASSAGE	QUALITY	RESPONSE
I JOHN 2:14b	Your strength of character and commitment show up when friends make decisions to do things that you know are wrong for you.	
	You want the standards of the Word of God to be lived out among your friends and in your private life.	
	You battle with temptation and do find yourself overcoming the tempter - not always, but many times.	
EPHESIANS 5:25	Men are to love as Christ did - sacrificially. Your love for a special girl, or the members of your family, looks out for their benefit, even at cost to your convenience and desire.	
EPHESIANS 5:26-27	Like Christ, men are to have a nurturing, building-up effect on others. You use the Word of God in the lives of people close to you - especially young women you date.	
	Christ's sacrifice was for His bride's - the church's - benefit. Your efforts are aimed at helping others, especially girlfriends, to grow to be better persons for Christ. You pray for, encourage, and challenge them.	
I TIMOTHY 2:8	All Christians may pray, but there is a special place of responsibility for men to be leaders in this area among believers. You show initiative in prayer when there is an opportunity to pray publicly. You don't have to be coaxed or pushed to pray.	

PASSAGE	QUALITY	RESPONSE
I TIMOTHY 3:1-13	Above reproach - you are not open to blame for consistent flaws that detract from a clear commitment to Christ as Lord of your life.	
	Temperate, self-controlled - you do not have a pattern of going to extremes. You are well-balanced.	
	Respectable - you are well-ordered and disciplined. You are not generally disorganized in your life.	
	Hospitable - you are kind to all types of people, especially those not in the “in” group.	
	Not violent, not quarrelsome, but gentle - you do not lose your temper easily or look for a fight. You react in gentleness to difficult situations and generally argumentative people.	
	Not a lover of money - everything does not have to have a dollar sign or some benefit to you for you to be interested in it. There is a clear servant aspect to your spirit.	
	Keeping hold of the deep truths of the faith - you have a growing knowledge of God’s Word - more than Sunday School stories. You find yourself seeking to answer people’s questions with the truths of Scripture.	
PROVERBS 4:23	You are careful about what you allow to fill your thinking. You give thought to the kind of music you listen to, the programs and movies you watch, and the things you read.	
PROVERBS 5:8; 7:25; 13:20	You are careful about the character of the girls you date or with whom you are most friendly. The friends you choose to get closest to have attitudes and make choices that show they are serious about God and His will.	

## Question #2

Go back over your ratings and make a list of those you marked “inconsistently” or “not really evident.” Keep this list in your Bible and use it as a prayer reminder of qualities you want the Lord to help you develop.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**CLUES TO YOUR  
TALENTS - SEX  
ROLE IDENTITY**

Urge each student to complete and review the exercises you skipped in class.



# **CLUES TO YOUR TALENTS - INTERESTS, APTITUDES, AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand the role of interests, aptitudes and spiritual gifts in career planning.

## **Memory Verse**

**I Corinthians 7:21, 23** - “Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you - although if you can gain your freedom, do so. . . . you were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

## **Lesson Background**

The desire to be faithful and wise with the talents God has entrusted each of us with means we will think about the most advantageous options open to us. In this week’s memory verse, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that it is not at all wrong for them to try to improve their situation for Christ’s sake. But improvement didn’t necessarily mean a job at a higher salary. It meant greater opportunity for service with the talents they had. In any role they would have, slave or free, they needed to view themselves as servants of God.

The object of this lesson will not be to help your students identify their interests or aptitudes, but to help them define what interests and aptitudes are and how they should be used in their career stewardship planning. Spiritual gifts, too, will be discussed and put into a high school student’s Christian perspective.

After teaching about the biblically-principled perspective your students need to have about their interests and aptitudes, you can encourage them to take advantage of their high school guidance programs to gather specific information about themselves in these areas.

For your information, aptitudes are abilities to learn in various areas such as the verbal and the numerical. Aptitude tests such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT (college entrance examinations) are supposed to provide college admissions personnel with information that tells them whether a particular student has the ability to succeed in their academic program. These tests don't say a student does or does not have ability in an area, but only whether he or she can be expected to succeed in a particular major in a particular school. There are other aptitudes, too, as the lesson points out, but verbal and math aptitudes are the two most predictive ones for general college success.

Interests are the least stable parts of the personalities of young people. Like emotions, they can change with the weather or the last person in an occupation who impressed us. I use the analogies of beauty and taste for food below. Familiarize yourself with them and repeat them frequently. The world popularizes the ethic of "do what you want to do when you want to do it." "Do whatever you are interested in" is common advice. The problem with this counsel is that it urges young people to make serious life-planning decisions on an unstable aspect of personality. Talents, in the wider sense, are considered less important. The secular system doesn't ignore other talent areas, it just makes them subservient to interests. How unstable! God gives a much sounder basis for decision making - the whole person's talent trust (which will include interests, but will keep them in a less prominent role). Interests aren't wrong to have and follow - with caution. They simply aren't the most stable and sound basis upon which to build your career. Interests can be learned and developed like tastes for food.

Spiritual gifts in this lesson are viewed as clues for career planning wisdom, but these too must be considered in general by most young people. There are two categories of gifts, Peter tells us - speaking and serving. That is just about as specific as most young people can become. The context of discerning spiritual gifts is ministry among God's people in His church. All the spiritual gift passages are in the context of the body members serving each other with their gifts. Discernment doesn't come by passive thought, but by active love for other members of the body that motivates me to get involved in whatever ways are profitable and edifying to them. Some exercises are given here for students to discern tentatively their general category of giftedness.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Interests and Aptitudes**

Begin the lesson by asking the students, "What is the difference between interests and aptitudes?" (Answer: Interests are what you like to do, aptitudes are what you have the ability to do, e.g., abilities in math, science, music, athletics, speaking, organizing, relating to people, detail work, logic, etc.) "Which are the more stable parts of your personality, interests or aptitudes?" (Aptitudes, though these too can be improved. Interests, on the other hand, are the least stable part of personality factors that should be considered in career stewardship planning.)

Review the Matthew 25:14-30 parable of the talents and ask, "Do you think interests or aptitudes fit more with the concept of talents in this parable?" (Answer: Aptitudes, since my decisions for faithful service are based upon what I am able to do more than what I like doing. When we stand before God, our Master, He'll not be asking, "How completely did you satisfy your interests?") "Does this mean interests

are wrong to explore?” (Answer: No, but they must not be the rudder for your career planning. They are unstable and change very quickly.)

“How can interests be compared to beauty or attractiveness?” They can be useful, like beauty or good looks that attract a guy to a girl or vice versa. It is foolish for a guy or girl to make a major decision based upon what they see. There is much more to a person than his or her appearance. That is why Proverbs 31:30 says “beauty is fleeting.” Beauty or good looks are pleasant and the Lord uses them to get our attention, but major decisions about whether we should go with a guy or girl or marry him or her should be based upon much more solid information. Interests are like this. They get our attention. But we need to do more investigation to see whether our interests are giving us an accurate picture of what an occupation is really like, what demands it makes, the opportunities for service to Christ in it, etc. Decisions must be based on talents, not just one unstable part of our personalities.

As an illustration of the fickleness of interests, ask some of your students when was the last time they changed their minds about what they might like to do. You might also give your own testimony about how your own occupational role has developed over the years.

“How can interests be compared to tastes for food?” Interests are like tastes for food. Children can learn to like most kinds of food if they are made to eat them when they are young. If left to themselves, they will develop tastes only for a limited number of things. But by exposure to a wide variety of foods they cultivate a taste for many. Interests are like friendship. Some people turn us off the first time we meet them. Our first impressions of them are judgmental and negative. But after we get to know them we develop a deep respect for them and perhaps a rich friendship and love.

Your high school will be administering interest inventories and aptitude tests to you throughout your high school years. When your guidance counselor reviews your results, keep in mind that your score reports may be helpful indicators of some of your talents. But remember, they are only some of your talents. There is more to you than a test of any kind can measure or report.

Consider the memory verse passage for this week. Is it wrong for a person to pursue his interest to better his position in a work role? Why or why not? (Answer: No, it is not wrong. “If you can gain your freedom do so.” The idea is that if there are advantages you can obtain by a job change, by all righteous means take them.) If a person seeks to better his position, from verses 21-23, what should his motive be? (Answer: Service to the Lord, or, in other words, faithful and wise stewardship. Our work role, whether there is much freedom with it (as free) or whether there is little freedom with it (as slavery), is not really as important as using whatever opportunity we have for service with our talents for the Lord (as the Lord’s freeman or slave)).

## **2. Spiritual Gifts**

### **A. What Are Spiritual Gifts?**

Read I Corinthians 12:7. They are talents that all Christians are given for the benefit of the body, Christ’s church. Only Christians have these talents or gifts.

Have the group read Ephesians 4:3,7,11-16 and make as many observations about gifts as possible. Record these on the board. There are some difficult verses here so you may want to lead them through some of the key items to show them what you mean about observations. This will get them ready for the easier

I Corinthians passage to follow. The following list indicates what your students should be able to glean from this passage, with your help:

- they contribute to unity
- they are from Christ to His people
- some were given to specific people to prepare other workers among the body
- God's people are to be built up by these gifts of service to each member
- unity is an end goal of giftedness
- stability is a result of body members using their gifts for the body's benefit
- every part of the body has gifts to contribute for the body's growth

Divide your group up into smaller groups of two or three students and give each one or two paragraphs of I Corinthians 12. Have them make observations about spiritual gifts from their paragraphs and then have them report them in the larger group while you record their observations on the board.

After reviewing these passages and your students' observations, conclude with a few summary comments. Emphasize that gifts are not for me, they are for the Body of Christ, therefore all practice of gifts needs to be for the Body's benefit, not primarily for my personal enjoyment or edification. Furthermore, gifts seem to be identified and used in the context of the church, not the home, Christian school, organization, etc. This does not mean they will not show up or be useful in these places. But confident identification of gifts and use of them takes place within the local assembly of God's people.

## **B. Detecting Your General Category of Spiritual Gifts**

There seem to be two general categories of gifts, according to I Peter 4:10-11 - what are they? (Answer: speaking gifts and serving gifts) While you may not be able to detect specific gifts at this time in your life, if you have been involved in the church in some ways, you may be able to get a feel for the general area in which God has equipped you to serve others with spiritual gifts.

In the time that remains, pass out the Spiritual Gifts worksheet, explain it, and have your students begin to work through the exercises.

## PRELIMINARY SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

### Question #1

Read through the list of ministries below and rate your involvement in each. In the space to the left of the ministry, write the letter that best describes your level of involvement in it. Write **L** if you have **little or no service** in a particular area, write **S** if you have **some involvement** - more than three times a year but not on a regular monthly or weekly basis, and write **R** if you are involved in the service on a **regular weekly or monthly basis**.

- \_\_\_ 1. leading Bible studies
- \_\_\_ 2. visiting newcomers
- \_\_\_ 3. assisting with Sunday School
- \_\_\_ 4. leading youth meetings
- \_\_\_ 5. being an active secretary for a group
- \_\_\_ 6. nursing home / jail / children's home ministry
- \_\_\_ 7. passing out tracts
- \_\_\_ 8. singing before a group, leading singing
- \_\_\_ 9. playing / accompanying with an instrument
- \_\_\_ 10. help with book room / church library
- \_\_\_ 11. church office work - filing, typing, etc.
- \_\_\_ 12. help with Bible clubs, Vacation Bible School
- \_\_\_ 13. helping older / needy people in the congregation
- \_\_\_ 14. being a good listener to people with concerns
- \_\_\_ 15. hosting, assisting as a host(ess) to church groups
- \_\_\_ 16. helping with maintenance of the buildings
- \_\_\_ 17. helping with transportation needs
- \_\_\_ 18. nursery and child care work
- \_\_\_ 19. discipling someone
- \_\_\_ 20. writing for church or youth publications
- \_\_\_ 21. running a meeting
- \_\_\_ 22. leading a discussion
- \_\_\_ 23. tutoring someone in an area of your strength
- \_\_\_ 24. doing art work for posters / publications / projects
- \_\_\_ 25. taking charge of publicity for events
- \_\_\_ 26. calling people to remind them of needs, programs, etc.
- \_\_\_ 27. being a receptionist
- \_\_\_ 28. visiting people in the community to witness
- \_\_\_ 29. cleaning for needy people
- \_\_\_ 30. purchasing supplies for groups
- \_\_\_ 31. sewing for needy people or projects
- \_\_\_ 32. printing / photocopy work
- \_\_\_ 33. mailing / stuffing envelopes
- \_\_\_ 34. leading prayer meetings
- \_\_\_ 35. writing to missionaries
- \_\_\_ 36. organizing activities for retreats
- \_\_\_ 37. working on a short-term missions project
- \_\_\_ 38. Other:

## Question #2

Go back over your ratings and circle the numbers of the items you marked with an **S** or an **R**. In the left margin next to each of your circled **S** and **R** responses, write “speak” or “serve” (“speaking” activities involve mostly speaking and “serving” activities involve mostly other kinds of help. Some may involve serving and speaking equally; if so, write both words).

Does your involvement give you awareness of one gift emphasis or the other? If so, you might want to pursue development of that gift further in your service to the church. If both areas seem to have equal emphasis, continue a broad range of service in order to discover more clearly those areas for which God has gifted you. If your experiences of service are too limited to discern any gift emphasis at all, you should plan to become more involved in your church.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**CLUES TO YOUR  
TALENTS - INTERESTS,  
APTITUDES, AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Have students complete the Spiritual Gifts worksheet this week at home. Ask them to involve a parent or spiritually-minded adult whom they respect.



# **WORK, THE CURSE, AND YOU**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students distinguish between biblical and Western cultural values regarding work.

## **Memory Verse**

**Genesis 1:28** - “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.’”

**Exodus 20:8-9** - “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.”

## **Lesson Background**

Work is not the curse or part of it. It is affected by the curse, like all the rest of life, but it must be distinguished from the curse. It has value because we were created as workers by a working God and because of the things work enables us to do.

But these teachings contrast significantly with the value of work in our culture. Today, work is for making pleasure possible (not in the workplace but in leisure that work helps us purchase) and for giving us a sense of fulfillment. Work, by our culture’s definition, has meaning because it produces both of these. But these are both promises that work cannot deliver in anything but a shallow, temporary way.

Several of the passages of Scripture to which students will be directed will refer to “slaves.” It is acceptable to use these and draw the principles out of them for employees. The point is that slaves had to do the complete will of their masters at all hours. Employees must do the same, but only during their working hours.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. The Origin of Work**

Begin the lesson by asking the students, “Where did work come from?” (Answer: Try to get the students to suggest common misconceptions - from the curse, from sin, out of necessity to eat, etc.) Then have students read Genesis 1:27-28; 2:2,4-7,15. List all the observations they are able to make about work. They should be able to notice the following:

- Man is created in the image of a working God.
- God commanded man to work before sin occurred in Chapter 3.
- Adam was a worker in the garden before sin occurred.
- Adam’s work was work.

### **2. Work and the Fall**

What did sin do to work? Read Genesis 3:17 where God pronounces the curse upon Adam because of his sin. (Answer: The ground is cursed, not work. Man is cursed with a body that begins to die and will suffer weakness. Man’s weakness will create a toilsomeness, a laborious, painful element to his work. The creation will not respond to man’s efforts to subdue it nearly as quickly as it did before sin occurred.)

Sin made worker harder, with a less cooperative environment. Have students give examples of things that make some of their work harder. They may suggest things like imperfect teachers, tiredness, headaches, heat/cold, etc.

Sin also made life and its work “futile,” vain, or empty. Have students read Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 and Romans 8:20. These passages show the futility of work that does not embrace God’s perspective and purposes. It all means nothing. But Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 and 5:18-19 paint an entirely different picture for the person who is working in subjection to God. Work becomes a “gift” for this person. Read these passages and see what God “gives” these workers who are his servants.

Students should also be aware that sin affects our coworkers and the work world system. Have students reflect on ways sin has affected our work world. For example: extensive government agencies to check on safety in industry; safety in food and drug production; income tax dishonesty; discrimination against minorities due to race, sex, or age; white collar thievery (taking paper, paper clips, materials and tools from the work site, making personal phone calls on company time; hiring favorites, relatives, or friends instead of the most qualified applicants, etc.).

### **3. The Value of Work**

From each of the following passages, have students as one group or in smaller groups determine the values or purposes of work for mankind:

- Psalm 8:3-8 - Man is given co-laborer status with God. He is delegated the authority to rule and work with God's creation to accomplish God's purposes. God has the purpose to bring all things into subjection to Himself by his Son, Jesus, and by his children, Christians (I Corinthians 15:25-27). Christians are created in Christ for good works in every sphere of their lives.
- Matthew 22:37-40 - Man is commanded to love God and his neighbor - the two great commandments. Work is therefore a way of serving one's neighbor (i.e., anyone with need).
- II Thessalonians 3:6-12 and I Timothy 5:8 - Work is a means of meeting our own and our family's material needs.
- Psalm 37:25-26 and Ephesians 4:28 - Work has the purpose of providing for needy people - Christians and non-Christians.
- Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:29-30 - Loving God is something that is to include our strength/might. Work is a way of showing our love for Him.
- I Thessalonians 4:11-12 - Work will not only help meet your own material needs but also provide a ministry platform for the Gospel in the lives of unbelievers who come to respect you for your work.

#### **4. Work and the Christian**

When someone becomes a Christian, does this mean he or she is no longer affected by sin's consequences? What is different? (Answer: Not the world about us. The work environment is still uncooperative; there is still toil and difficulty. The curse is still on the ground.)

Work is still marked by a degree of futility. There are unfulfilling aspects to all work. Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-4. The same futility marks believers' and unbelievers' work. There is purpose for the believer, as indicated above, but there is also futility. For the unbeliever futility is all he has. For the believer, there are many more significant purposes. But from an earthly perspective (from which Ecclesiastes is written), futility marks the labor of both Christian and non-Christian.

Work associates are still sinful and the work world is still marked by the sinfulness of man. There is still conflict and exploitation, etc. But, for the worker who is now a Christian, there are also important differences. Christ puts the worker in a right relationship with Himself. His life now takes on the significance of a being a co-worker with God to accomplish His purpose - glorifying Him (I Corinthians 10:31). This new relationship gives the believer a new perspective for the purposes of his work. Boredom and futility come from not knowing why I am doing what I am doing. The Christian has definite purposes for his work, as cited earlier. Read Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-25 and list the phrases that show the Christian's motivation coming from his relationship to the Lord (e.g., "as to Christ," "as slaves of Christ," etc.).



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **WORK, THE CURSE, AND YOU**

Your culture pictures work in either very dull or very spectacular colors. On TV, for example, it is either seen as being the dramatic and exciting work of the detective, surgeon, politician, business executive, etc., or is ignored. Most people on TV who are not in the spectacular professions are never seen working. This week, take note of any TV, advertisement, or other media presentations of how the world thinks about work.





# **INTERFACE**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand that work interfaces or interacts with every area of life.

## **Memory Verse**

**Romans 12:1-2** - “Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

## **Lesson Background**

This lesson begins by giving your students a chance to try to determine what decisions seven adults could have made earlier in life to help them avoid some of the pain and wrong priorities they developed in later life. Some of them are worshipping the god “career” without realizing it. All of them are in danger of diluting their Christian identity and bringing difficulties upon themselves and their families because of wrong or absent thinking they did about work and life when they were younger.

“Careerism,” a term one writer has coined, refers to making your occupational and training plans the center of all your life planning. It determines your interaction with people, how you’ll spend your money, your lifestyle, your work-world morals and ethics, how you use the Lord’s day, whether you get married, or, if you do marry, when, how you relate to your spouse and what size family you’ll have, if any. Is an occupation a god that should have the controlling influence in all these areas? Doesn’t this sound like idolatry? That, in essence, is what “careerism” is - making an idol of occupational planning or opportunity,

bowing down to occupational demands for every, or nearly every, area of life, and making decisions about everything in light of what is good for your career advancement and security.

The point of this lesson will be to help your students draw the conclusion that their thinking and decision-making about work and life interactions now, as teens, will set the stage for the quality of their career stewardship later. No area of life is left untouched by our work. They interface at every point. The commitment toward which you should urge your students is to make God's perspective about all aspects of their lives their dominant concern. The temptation in our culture is to be a faithful idolater at the shrine of "careerism," making an occupation or job the hub around which all their lives rotate instead of God's priorities for faithful stewardship.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Careerism and Idolatry**

Ask your students to imagine themselves living in a culture that worships at a shrine called "career." If the citizens of this country were truly dedicated to this god, what areas of their lives would it affect? (Answer: Every area - how they spent their time and money, who their friends were, what kind of morals they'd practice, where they'd work, live and play, relationships with family members, etc.)

Have students read Isaiah 44:12-20. From the last two verses, what is Isaiah's point? (Answer: "No one stops to think." That is, these idolaters have invested so much of themselves in their idol-building that they cannot even be honest with themselves. They cannot say to themselves, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?") Thinking - what the idolater cannot do. Why not? Because it is threatening to him. If he thinks and realizes what he has built, that it has no power to save or help, this will lead to great turmoil and personal insecurity, fear, anxiety and uncertainty. So he builds his idol and devotes his life to it.

How can career thinking be like an idol? (Answer: All of life is lived and decisions are made from the standpoint of how my work will be affected by what I do. If doing something might hinder my career advancement toward the "Great American Dream," then I should avoid or change it so that it helps me toward success.)

### **2. Examples of Careerism**

Read each little paragraph below and have the students identify the *thinking* that each person could have done when he or she was younger that could have helped he/she face his/her life situation better as an older adult. Ask after each narrative, "What could \_\_\_\_\_ have thought about earlier in life that may have helped him/her avoid some of his/her problems now?" All of these people are professing Christians. Feel free to ask follow-up questions in addition to the ones in the commentaries below each narrative to spark further thought and to help the students consider God's priorities for them in their career planning.

#### **A. Jim, 41, Accountant**

Jim leaves home about 7 A.M. each day and returns about 8 or 9 P.M. He often works on Saturday and Sunday. He has two teens and an elementary school child. His wife has come to a pastor at church for counsel because their communication level is at a low ebb.

(Jim and his wife should have made some decisions early on in their lives about the priorities of God, family, church and work. Jim is not thinking carefully about his roles as spiritual head of his family, husband, father or his part in the body of Christ, the church. Are these things he could have thought about and made some decisions about earlier in life? Certainly. Perhaps not in detail, such as exactly how much time in minutes and hours he'd play with his children, talk to his wife, serve with his church, etc. But the basic priorities could have been decided upon and used as a blueprint for how he'd allow work to interface with all his roles in life.)

## **B. Sandy, 46, Pediatrician**

Sandy has been divorced for eight years. Her husband was also a physician. They were married just before she started medical school and were divorced within five years of completing it. She says medicine and marriage don't mix and has resigned herself to *either* medicine or remarriage (if the opportunity presents itself again).

(Sandy's thinking should have included the stresses and demands of medical school on a marriage if just one partner is involved in medicine. With two, the pressures multiply even more. Does this mean she should not have pursued medicine? Even medicine and marriage? Not necessarily. But it does mean that she (and her husband) needed to think through their Christian commitment and God's priorities for their lives as married people and how they would handle the pressures of their profession when they would arise. Would the marriage bend for the profession or the profession bend for the marriage? Both husband and wife needed to think this through and make some hard decisions - before marriage and probably before beginning medical training.)

## **C. Wayne, 35, Programmer-analyst**

Wayne has been with a public utility since college. He is single, has a strong position at work and is advancing steadily. His hours seem to be always, since he is on call 24 hours a day and puts in a lot of overtime. Because of his demanding schedule, he feels he is not able to commit himself to any consistent involvement with God's people, or even consistently regular church attendance. Since he works so much and has plenty of money, he does like to travel and has provided a very comfortable lifestyle for himself. Outsiders might call him a "Yuppie."

(Wayne isn't feeling any problems right now. He's on his way up. Perhaps he may be lonely sometimes, but he's in more difficulty than he knows. Does Proverbs 1:32 have anything to say about Wayne? The small deviations of trajectory of a rocket at the early stages of its launch come to have profound influence later - even though nothing may seem to be wrong with the vessel itself, it may be seriously off course and heading for irretrievable disaster. I Timothy 6:6-10 is a warning about riches and concludes, "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." People don't intend to pierce themselves with anything, usually, unless they are addicted to something and need relief by another fix. But whether it is intended or not, people who don't think about their Christian commitments for their lives as top priorities can expect subtle, but serious, consequences from their choices. Wayne needed to think about God's priorities for his relationship to Christ's church, his wealth, his time, and the extent to which he allows a job's demands to upset God's priorities for him.)

## **D. Steve, 24, Unemployed**

Steve graduated from college with a degree in English. He had a layout job with a printer but the shop closed down recently and he has been on unemployment for three months. He plans to remain on

unemployment for the next five months and travel a bit, because, he reasons, “I’ll be working all my life and never have this kind of opportunity again.” Unemployment funds run out in nine months, so Steve plans to begin looking for work again in that last month before his government support runs out.

(Steve has never thought through what God says about work - its place in the life of the believer. He also has a problem with honesty - a form of stealing is going on. Unemployment was never intended as a support for an extended vacation - even if other people use it this way, this is a violation of the law. Suppose Steve had enough money put away (without the government’s program) so that he didn’t have to work for several months. Would he be wise just to take off and travel or enjoy his time off for a few months before looking for work? Keep in mind the place of work for all God’s creatures - created in God’s image as workers, commanded to work six days and warned against idleness in the New Testament both because of the temptations it poses and the positive purposes work has. See the previous lesson. This doesn’t mean that there is no place for a vacation, but it does mean that, like everything else in the believer’s life, even vacationing and relaxing must contribute toward my being a wise and faithful steward. I am accountable with all my life, always. I “have been bought with a price . . .”)

### **E. Andrea, 40, Widow with three sons**

Andrea’s husband died in a tragic auto accident, leaving her with her three children - one in high school, one in elementary school, and one just four years old. She and her husband were married right out of high school. He handled all the finances, completely. She didn’t even know how to write a check when he died. Her husband had minimal life insurance coverage and she had no job training or experience. She is overwhelmed and depressed.

(Seventy percent of the women in the work force today are there because they feel they have to be, not because they really want to be. They are there because they are single and need to support themselves, single parents by death, divorce or out-of-wedlock pregnancy, or simply feel they must work to supplement the inadequate income of their husbands. In addition, it has been estimated that women who graduate from school today and enter the work force will work outside the home an average of 28.9 years, while men will work an average of 39.8 years. Should women be trained for some work outside of the home? Andrea needed to think about the advisability of having some training for work outside the home whether she would use it immediately or not. She needed to think about the responsibilities of being a wife and mother, running a household and being equipped for the wide range of joint-management tasks that would involve. She needed to think about the kind of man she’d marry and the ways the two of them would work together to have a Christian home.)

### **F. Bill and Kathy, 31 and 32 respectively, one three-year-old child, married 5 years**

Bill and Kathy both work outside the home. Bill is a sales representative and Kathy a part-time dental hygienist. They live in a comfortable three-bedroom home in the suburbs of a large city. They both spend time with their child and with each other regularly. They have a good marriage and are consistent in their attendance at their church. Bill often teaches adult classes and Kathy serves in primary-age classes. They also meet with a group of believers twice a month for a Bible study that travels among the homes of the group members.

(Assuming this narrative sketches the major roles both have, what is missing? They seem to be a well-balanced family. Read James 1:27, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 4:28 and Proverbs 28:27; 11:24-26; 24:11-12. What is missing? Also, read Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:21 and II Corinthians 5:15;

Ezekiel 3:17-21; I Corinthians 3:11-15. What is missing? Are these two areas of ministry to the poor and to the lost options for the Christian? What are some of the insulating forces that kept Bill and Kathy from ministering to either group? Their busyness, their full schedule with Christian people, their middle-class lifestyle among other people with a middle class lifestyle that had little contact with others of a needy/poor lifestyle all contributed to this situation. Earlier in life, Bill and Kathy needed to think about these other priorities that God established for them. They needed to make some decisions about how they were going to use their marriage as a witness and means to serve needy people. What warnings are there in these passages regarding reaching out to the poor and witnessing? What promises?)

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by reminding the students that work interfaces with every area of life. Think of all the areas affected by work (preparation for it; lack of preparation for it; the demands of it or even the meaning we understand it to have for the Christian). How many can you name that we've touched upon? Be sure they include the following: personal time with God, time with people (both quality and quantity), spending habits, relationships with the church of Christ and service to God's people, standards of living, attitudes toward material things, attitudes about education and training, relationships with family members, marital communication, effectiveness of testimony, and ability to provide for family. Ask your students to think about all these areas and memorize one question that they will ask to themselves about all their decisions: *What are my career stewardship priorities?* Remind them that those who are faithful with a few things receive greater opportunities. Now is the time to put your priorities in the order God desires. What you will be later you are now becoming.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **INTERFACE**

Memorize the memory verses and choose one area in your life that needs to be reprioritized. Pray daily, presenting yourself in this area as a living sacrifice.





# **“CRYSTAL BALLISM” - FAULTY WAYS OF DETERMINING GOD’S WILL**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand what determining the will of God is NOT.

## **Memory Verse**

**Romans 12:1-2** - “Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

## **Lesson Background**

It’s said that the 500 most used words have more than 14,000 meanings. Words can certainly give people different meanings even though they hear the same sounds. The concept of the will of God confuses many because of well-meaning people using biblical terms inaccurately and because of wrong meanings we attribute to the words they use. It’s easy to take scriptural words and put meanings to them that sound correct but that are, in fact, partially or completely wrong. The focus of this lesson will be on some of these common errors and then, next week, students will study God’s guidelines for determining His will.

In the narratives of the lesson in section 1 below, have the students try to discern what they all have in common about decision making. In each case they are looking to a strategy that takes responsibility away from them to have to “think” about their decisions.

Next, focus on the contexts of each of the passages that are listed and allow the students to determine how Paul and others are using the words in contrast to ways they may be misused by people trying to determine God's will today.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Five Examples of Decision-Making**

Ask the members of your class what the following students have in common? Each is trying to make decisions about college. What do their different strategies have in common?

- “The Lord is leading me to the University of Delaware,” Trevor said confidently. But when the counselor asked him how he knew this was the Lord's leading, he looked a bit embarrassed and said, “well, that's where Anne (his girl friend) is going and everything she tells me about it seems positive.”
- “I'm not sure which door the Lord is opening for me,” Sheila confided. “I have been accepted at all these schools and I don't know which to choose. My parents say it doesn't matter to them, but that I should just do what the Lord wants.”
- Sam started to speak dejectedly, “My folks want me to go to Covenant College but I don't have any peace about it. If I go there I may not be in the center of God's will.”
- Nathan was vibrant. “Everything points to Messiah College. The money, my folks, my pastor, even the extra-curriculars that they offer. I don't know what the big deal is about deciding what to do next year. I just prayed and God made all the circumstances work together perfectly. Messiah, here I come!”
- “I applied to four schools,” Pete said. “Whichever one accepts me first is the one the Lord will be leading me to attend. I've put out fleeces like this before and the Lord has helped me.”

### **2. Passages commonly used to help people make life's important decisions**

Examine the following passages with your students and make sure they understand what they do and do not teach about Christian decision-making.

#### **A. “The Lord led me to . . .” (Trevor's idea)**

Have your students turn to Romans 8:13-15. What does the Spirit's leading relate to in these verses (holiness and godly living)? Why isn't this passage appropriate for someone such as Trevor who may be waiting for the Lord to “lead” him in a given direction? The leading spoken of here isn't for decision-making in areas in which believers are to think, but it is teaching that the Holy Spirit, when present in one's life, leads him or motivates him to pursue a morally upright and spiritually holy life. Compare this to Acts 8:26-39. Was this simply speaking of a mild sense or even a strong impression that Philip had when the Spirit led him in a different direction? Or do these verses tell us that the Holy Spirit clearly communicated words of guidance to Philip? When people today talk about being led by the Lord, do they usually mean they heard voices, saw visions or dreamed dreams? Where has God spoken to His people today?

**B. “I’m waiting for the Lord to open a door for me” (Sheila); and, “I just prayed and God made all the circumstances work together perfectly” (Nathan)**

Have your class turn to I Corinthians 16:8-9. What is Paul doing while praying for a door to open? Is he waiting for it to open before he begins to serve? What does this tell us about the functions of “doors” and making decisions? There is no indication that Paul waited for a door to open, i.e., for an opportunity to present itself before he began serving. He was already serving and making decisions about service. He is acknowledging here that God was providentially giving him even greater opportunities for him to serve in a specific way.

Did having an open door mean that God had smoothed the way and caused all his circumstances to fit nicely together? Nathan had this idea. The end of verse 9 makes it clear that there was opposition. The way wasn’t without difficulty. It’s evident that much of Paul’s ministry was in the midst of opposition. Is that because he wasn’t following the open doors? No. Open doors don’t mean smooth sailing.

**C. “I just don’t have any peace about it” (Sam)**

Turn now to II Corinthians 2:12-13. Does having an open door mean that I will automatically have peace of mind? No. An open door, the way the Scriptures use it, simply means that there is an opportunity to be had in one way or another. It may not always be the best thing to take the opportunity. Life often presents us with many opportunities. God intends another strategy to be practiced by His people for making decisions and coming to conclusions. Sometimes we’ll experience some unrest even though a decision is the right one to make. Our feelings are the most unstable part of our personalities and, while there may be a feeling of peace about a decision we make, there may also be unrest even though the decision is a good one.

**D. “Whichever one accepts me first is the one the Lord will be leading me to” (Pete)**

Lastly, have your students turn to Judges 6:36-39. Read the context of Gideon’s request to the Lord. Did Gideon already know what God wanted him to do? Yes, the Lord had told him. Was his request of the Lord regarding the fleece an indication of his faith or his doubt (verse 36)? What new information about His will did God communicate to Gideon through His wet and dry fleece acts? (There was no new information. God had already promised victory. This request was due to Gideon’s weak faith.) Is this verse a guarantee that God will meet such conditions or tests of God’s will today? (No. He did do it in Gideon’s case but there is no indication in Scripture that believers today are encouraged to doubt God when He says something plainly in His Word.)

List some commands God has given in the Bible that need no “fleeces” of proof for being sure of what His will clearly is. (II Corinthians 6:14 - having my closest relationships, including boy and girl friend romances, with believers only; Matthew 5:37; Psalm 15:4b - keeping your word at all costs; Ephesians 6:1-2 - honoring our parents, irrespective of their behavior, standards or example.)



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT                    “CRYSTAL BALLISM”**  
**FAULTY WAYS OF DETERMINING**  
**GOD’S WILL**

List five decisions that you think you’ll be making in the next year (as minor as the kind of shoes you’ll wear to school or as major as whether to break up with your boy/girl friend) and five major decisions that you’ll be making in the next 10 years. Come to class with these in mind. You may be surprised to find out that the same principles are important for making all of these decisions, though some are certainly more important than others.



# **MAKING DECISIONS GOD'S WAY**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand how prayer, Scripture, circumstances, experiences and counsel should be used to help us make wise decisions.

## **Memory Verse**

**Proverbs 4:7** - "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding."

## **Lesson Background**

Too often Christians put their thinking in the background and depend upon others or look for short-cuts, some of which may sound spiritual, to help them with decision-making.

The focus of this lesson is on the important role played by thinking in the decision-making about life and work done by those who are disciples of Jesus Christ. If you have access to Gary Friesen's book *Decision Making and the Will of God*, you will find it a helpful resource for this lesson. Christians are to think. Their thinking is to be affected by other factors that the Lord brings into their lives, but none of these can replace their need to think for themselves for wise decision-making.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin class by asking students for their lists of important and not-so-important decisions. Record several in both categories on the board and ask the students to tell you how decision-making for serious and not-so-serious issues is the same and how it is different. (For example, both types of decisions have consequences, both require thinking, both may affect other people, both take time. They differ in that one may have more serious consequences than the other, one may affect people more than the other, one may require more input from other people, one may take much longer than the other to think through.)

Next, turn their attention to the place of thinking. The verses in the exercises below are to help young people draw the conclusion that they must think for themselves and live with decisions they make. In the first section of verses below, lead them through the verses by having them look them up and record on a blackboard or chart the terms or phrases in each that refer to thinking. If possible, have the kids also note the context of each verse. Many will be similar, but there is quite a variety, too.

Instructions: look up each of these passages below and list, in two columns, the words that indicate that thinking is to be done and then, in your own words, the matters about which people are told to think and make decisions.

Proverbs 2:12-13  
Proverbs 4:13-15  
Proverbs 5:1-3  
Proverbs 6:6-11  
Proverbs 6:20-26  
Proverbs 7:4-5  
Proverbs 9:7-9  
Proverbs 10:5  
Proverbs 10:9  
Proverbs 10:19,32  
Proverbs 11:14  
Proverbs 11:22  
Proverbs 13:16-20

Proverbs 13:24  
Proverbs 14:8  
Proverbs 14:15  
Proverbs 17:9  
Proverbs 19:2  
Proverbs 19:17  
Proverbs 21:3  
Proverbs 21:5  
Proverbs 21:13  
Proverbs 22:24-25  
Proverbs 23:1-2  
Proverbs 24:27  
Proverbs 24:30-34

Proverbs 25:20  
Proverbs 27:12  
Proverbs 27:18  
Proverbs 27:23-27  
Proverbs 29:7  
Proverbs 31:8-9  
Proverbs 31:26-28  
Romans 12:1-2  
I Peter 3:15  
II Corinthians 10:4-5  
Matthew 7:6  
II Corinthians 6:14-15

Keeping in mind the importance of thinking, ask the students what place the Scriptures, prayer, circumstances and counsel ought to have in our decision-making. (Each of these help us “think” more clearly so we can make decisions in harmony with God’s wisdom.) Without answering, have students look up the verses below and then arrive at this conclusion. You want to stress that while all of these are important, none is to be a substitute for thinking.

While sound thinking is critical to a Christian’s career decision-making (and any other decision-making), there are other important factors that Scripture says must be involved. From each of these groups of verses below, identify these indispensable factors.

1. Psalm 119:105, 130; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3
2. Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 26:12
3. Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5; 4:1-3
4. Proverbs 27:22-27



To “get wisdom” a young adult must cultivate certain attitudes that set him or her up for it. From these passages, describe the attitudes that are implied as requirements for being wise, that is, a good decision-maker - Proverbs 4:5-8; 8:34-36; 14:8,15.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MAKING DECISIONS GOD'S WAY**

Begin to use the Book of Proverbs as part of your devotions this week. There are 31 chapters, one for each day of the month. Begin tomorrow with the chapter (or simply five or ten verses of the chapter) that has the same number as the date and continue throughout the month. If you miss a day, don't sweat it. You can pick it up next month. Begin this reading and continue it for the rest of your life. As you read this first month, underline the words that stress wise thinking. This will help you to impress yourself with the importance of wisdom for the decisions that you'll need to be making over the coming years.



# **THE WILL OF GOD AND YOUR WORK**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students connect the concept of wisdom and God’s resources (Scripture, the counsel of other believers, etc.) to the concept of occupationally-related work.

## **Memory Verse**

**Colossians 3:23-24** - “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

## **Lesson Background**

The past two lessons have focused on clearing up common false or confusing ideas about determining God’s will and sketching the principles that help us accurately assess it. As students move along their career planning paths, they need to consider the understandings and attitudes that the Scriptures say godly workers possess.

You may want to refer to Lesson 7, “Work, The Curse and You,” for some background. The exercises in this lesson do not duplicate but do overlap and take the student another step closer to using the principles in his or her own career planning. The book *Your Work Matters To God* by Sherman and Hendricks is especially helpful. Also, *Choosing Your Career* by Martin Clark has some helpful sections about work and God’s purposes for the Christian. The following exercises are an adaptation from “God’s Will For Your Work” in *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Gary Friesen.

## Lesson Procedure

Before class, call several of your students and ask them to share in class a few insights they may have gained from their readings in Proverbs during the past week. Use this occasion to review key concepts from the last lesson. Then divide your class up into small groups and assign each group one or two of the questions below - without the Scripture passages. Have each group write out answers to their questions as they think someone without biblical values would answer them and then as they think someone with biblical values would answer them. As each group reads its responses, have others look up the related passages and then critique the original responses.

- A. What obligation does a believer have to find gainful employment? What if he or she does not? (II Thessalonians 3:10-11).
- B. How is the believer described who does not provide for his family? (I Timothy 5:8).
- C. How is the Christian's work and attitude to be characterized regardless of how well he "likes" his work? (Ephesians 6:5-7; Colossians 3:17, 22-23; II Thessalonians 3:8, 11-12; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Titus 2:9-10; Ephesians 4:28; 5:16).
- D. What are major goals that a Christian worker ought to aim to fulfill in any work he or she does? (II Thessalonians 3:8-10; I Timothy 5:8; 6:1; Ephesians 4:28; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; Titus 2:10).
- E. What kind of relationship is the Christian worker to have with his or her employer, whether he or she likes the work or not? (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-23; I Timothy 6:1-2; I Peter 2:18).
- F. What kind of relationship is the Christian employer, boss or supervisor to have with his or her employees? (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1; James 5:4).
- G. What is the Christian worker's attitude to be toward opportunities for advancement or a change of occupational status? (I Corinthians 7:21-22).
- H. What kind of work does God value as the most important or his "highest calling"? (I Corinthians 7:21-23; 10:31; Colossians 3:22-24).

## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **THE WILL OF GOD AND YOUR WORK**

This week continue your readings in Proverbs, noting words that urge you to think about the decisions of your life. Take note of at least three situations in real life, on TV, or in something you read that display attitudes very different from those you've studied today. Make note of at least two that seem to reflect the balanced views the Scriptures encourage as well.





# **SCARY SHADOWS AFFECTING CAREER PLANNING**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand some of the common misconceptions that often make career planning a high-anxiety exercise.

## **Memory Verse**

**James 4:13-15** - “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

## **Lesson Background**

This lesson begins with a short story about a girl who was scared of some shadows she saw on her tent wall. In the morning she discovered that her fears were unfounded. Many young people (and their parents, too) have some biblically unsound ideas about career planning. These, if left unchallenged with biblical truth, can produce fear, apprehension and anxiety about the whole career planning process. You’ll be using many of the same passages of Scripture that you’ve used in past lessons, but this time, with a different goal.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin class with this story: Stacy lay in her sleeping bag in the tent alongside her best friend Brenda in the state park. They had started this adventure three days ago, but the unknowns of their hiking and white-water rafting did not cause fear anything like the shadows on the tent walls. “Was that a man’s arm? a bear’s head? a skunk’s body?” she questioned while her active imagination made chills run up her spine. “I’m sure that shape is moving. It wasn’t that big before,” she reasoned. She did not remember when she dozed off, but at dawn when she awakened she slid the sleeping bag from over her head and shimmied the rest of her body out. She unzipped the tent flap a couple of inches from the bottom and peered out at the campsite. The towels, sweat shirts, pants and wool socks that they had hung on the higher branches of a fir tree were scattered on the ground and among lower branches. The wind had blown them from their higher places into the ominous shapes she had seen by moonlight the night before. Her sigh of relief awakened Brenda.

What was Stacy afraid of? What are some fears people have about making career plans? (What if it doesn’t work out? nobody hires me? if I make a mistake and pick something I don’t like? etc.) Is it possible for fears such as these to hinder someone’s career planning? (Yes. They may procrastinate; they may select things that have little “risk” involved in them and not stretch or put themselves into challenging situations.)

### 1. The “You Gotta Know Now” Shadow

Have the class answer each of the following questions in small groups of two or three students. Then bring the groups back together and have them share their thoughts with the class.

- How much of your future do you need to know before you can make wise and faithful decisions now? Read James 4:13-15. How much certainty about the way a job will work out is necessary in order for these Christians to be faithful? What attitudes are encouraged by this passage for the faithful and wise steward?
- From each of these passages about work and the Christian, how certain did they need to be about their occupational futures before they could begin working as faithful and wise stewards? Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; II Thessalonians 3:11-12; I Timothy 5:8.
- From the same passages, what attitudes and knowledge seem to be most important for the Christian steward?

### 2. The “Once-In-A-Lifetime” Shadow

This shadow is similar to the former one. It causes problems because of the pressure young adults will feel if they believe that their choices now as juniors or seniors will be what they are “stuck” with for the rest of their lives. “A mistake now,” in one senior’s words, “could ruin my future.”

Making wise choices is important for a junior or senior, but mid-course corrections are part of mature career development. God does not reveal the future to us. We have to make daily decisions about what it means to be a servant that pleases Him. Our culture, socio-economic situation, occupational world, the public’s expectations and the supply and demand for goods and services change. All of these force us to be continually making choices that affect our careers.

A career is not like a satellite that can be left alone when it is in its proper orbit. It is more like a rocket that needs to be boosted a few degrees one way or another after launch. Mid-course corrections are

part of the program that technicians plan for the rocket. They are not necessarily the result of careless mistakes, just part of the imperfection that comes with anything constructed by a human being. The Bible recognizes human limitation and urges wise people to recognize it also in their planning. But because of God's divine management (His sovereignty), even if our planning includes poor judgment or factors we could not know, such as the collapse of an industry or the oversupply of workers in a field, we can be confident that "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28).

Isaiah expressed this same confidence to the people of God who had adversity in their future. "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isaiah 43:1b,2).

These passages do not guarantee that we will never go through the waters, or that we will never feel the heat of the fire. Factors as serious as these may come unexpectedly into our lives and force some changes to be made. But those things will never destroy us or separate us from the love and caring control of our Father.

Read each passage and explain the changes that each person or group of people had to accept as part of God's plan for them, difficult as some of the changes may have been. What kind of feelings do you think you might have had if you were the person in each situation? What negative reactions might you have been tempted to have if you followed these feelings?

- Hebrews 10:33-34 - the reaction of the Hebrew Christians to changes they had not expected due to persecution.
- Genesis 50:15-21 - Joseph reviewing his brothers' jealous actions toward him in his younger years.
- Judges 6:11-7:25 - God raising up a ruler in Israel.
- Ruth 1:19-2:3; 4:13 - Ruth's departure from her homeland in Moab and later marriage to Boaz.
- I Samuel 9 - A change in Saul's occupational role.
- I Samuel 16 - David's role change.
- Amos 7:14-15 - his job.
- Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9 - disciples who changed occupations.

How would you finish this statement: In each of these people's cases they experienced occupational change of one sort or another. Their changes were not failures or caused by mistakes but were . . .

Think about adults you know who have undergone occupational changes (please use no names). What are some of the reactions you've witnessed? What kind of thinking and feelings do you think could have contributed to these kinds of reactions? What biblical principles do you think these people might have been helped by if they had meditated upon them?



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**SCARY SHADOWS  
AFFECTING CAREER PLANNING**

This week keep your eyes open to other people who undergo occupational changes. What kind of thinking do you think they may be tempted to engage in? Identify at least one person who has undergone a job or occupation change and has done so in a spiritually mature way, demonstrating the goodness of God.



## **HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR WORK AS A STEWARD?**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help students think about the alternatives for work preparation that are open to them.

### **Memory Verse**

**James 4:13-15** - “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

### **Lesson Background**

The earlier lessons about motives and talents are important for this lesson. Review the key thoughts from those lessons in the first third of this class period. For reference you may also want to have copies of the “Personality Qualities Inventory” and the “Spiritual Gifts Worksheet” from lessons four and six.

The balance of the period will be used to help students think about the different kinds of schools that are available to them after high school graduation and how to choose wisely. In preparation for the class it would be good to talk to a Christian school guidance person or the pastor and try to get catalogues of different types of schools. You don’t need catalogues from all schools, just different types. Duplicate the page below that lists and describes different types of post-high school training programs.

At one point in the lesson you'll be asking the young people to list the reasons that some students may have for wanting to attend either a Christian or secular school. Prepare for this by either drawing the diagrams before class or by being familiar enough with them to draw them in class on the board.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by listing the different types of schools high school graduates attend to get training. Have students list the variety of schools or training alternatives of which they are aware (apprenticeship, Bible college/institute, business, trade, technical, community, junior college, secular colleges, Christian colleges, specialized schools and colleges, the military). You may have copies of the school descriptions provided with this lesson. Pass them out only after the students have had a chance to think about the variety.

Next have students meet in small groups and make up a description of a fictitious person who would attend one of these schools. Assign each group one type of school. Then have them report back to the larger group and share their profiles. Allow the larger group to add, edit or argue with the group that developed the profile. Each profile may include student aptitudes (abilities to learn in areas, e.g., high math aptitude, i.e., the ability to pick up math easily), interests, sex, skills and experiences, spiritual gifts, personality qualities (e.g., is she organized, relaxed, comfortable in front of people, etc.). You may refer to the "Personality Qualities Inventory" and the "Spiritual Gifts Worksheet" to help with your profile.

After the profiles have been discussed by the class, go over the following steps for making a decision about post-high school education or training.

### 1. What Kind of School is Best for Me?

Decide which type of school may be best able to help you develop as a faithful and wise steward. Which of these conditions best describes you?

- You have a general occupational direction in mind.

Explore several schools/colleges that can move you in this direction. Be sure to keep your whole person - the whole range of your talents - in mind.

- You have no idea about a general occupational area to pursue, but have an average to strong academic/college prep record.

You need to explore alternatives that will help you generally develop academically and spiritually. You know that both of these will be important in your future career and life planning decisions. For example, you could choose the major category "undecided" in a Christian or secular school or choose to spend a year in a Bible college. Any of those choices could give you another year to do some thinking about a wise direction to pursue while allowing you to test your college academic ability. Both would probably also give you training that would be largely transferable to the major you choose later and would be generally useful in your later life.

- You have no idea about a general occupational area to pursue but have a weak or non-academic/college prep record.

You need to make plans that could help you develop the skills or gain the background training for skills in occupational areas that fit best with your talents. The specific occupational area isn't as important

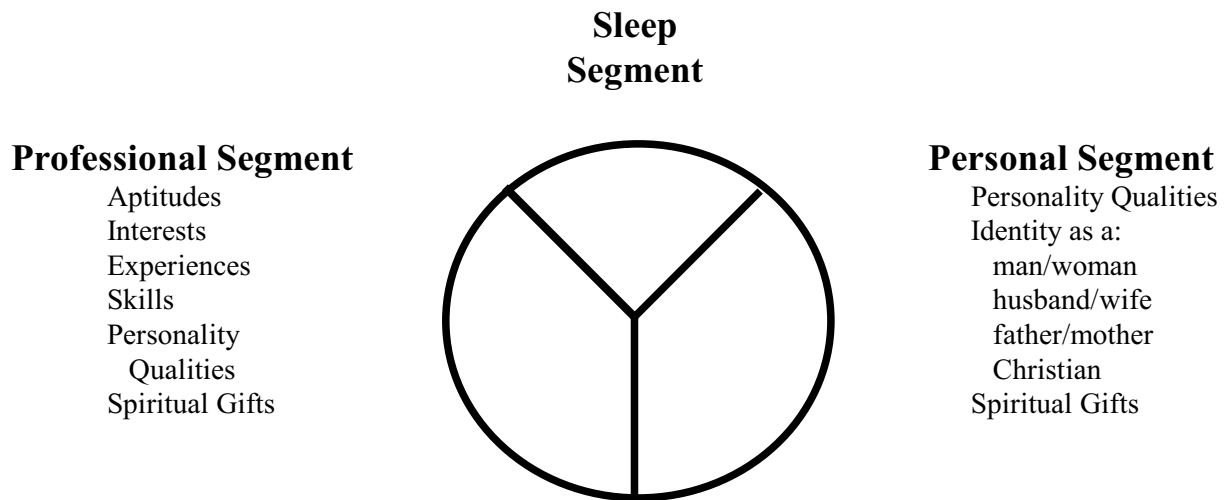


as your commitment to use the talents God has given you. The slave, who had no options, and the free man, who had a wide array from which to choose, were to use the opportunities they had for the Lord (I Corinthians 7:21-23). As you are faithful with the little you do know about yourself, in His time, God will give you greater opportunities and more of a sense of the wise ways to plan for your future (Matthew 21:21,23). For example, you could attend a radiology program in a local teaching hospital, enter a special non-degree Bible college or institute program for advanced training, begin a business or early childhood major in a community college, enroll at the two-year associates degree program in automotive technology, etc. Because programs like these are often close to home, you could become more deeply involved in your church's ministry so that you are not neglecting to develop or use any of your talents.

## 2. Christian School or Secular School?

Determine whether a Christian or secular program is best for your development. Sketch the diagram below. It identifies three segments of our lives. We generally give a third of our lives each to sleeping, to our personal lives and to our professional or work lives.

### SEGMENTS OF OUR LIVES



**Personal segment:** Think of the talents that contribute to this area. These include personality qualities (e.g., whether you are a detail person, sensitive, organized, casual, intense, disorganized, comfortable in front of people, etc.), your identity as a man or woman (God says the roles are different from each other, not inferior to each other), your Christian identity, and your spiritual gifts.

**Professional segment:** The talents here include your aptitudes (e.g., your speaking ability, your math or reading abilities, your athletic, music, or art abilities, your ability to put people at ease, to write, etc.), skills and experiences (e.g., your socio-economic background, your health, travel opportunities, special interests that you have developed such as astronomy, sewing, etc.), and your interests (e.g., in law, helping people, teaching, building, medicine, witnessing, etc.).

Think about the best alternative to develop all of you, not just one segment. Write the titles “Secular schools” and “Christian schools” below the diagram. Ask your students which segment a secular program will give most of its attention to? Answer - probably the professional segment [draw an arrow from “secular schools” to the professional segment]. Which segment will a Christian program give most of its attention to? Answer - hopefully both [Draw an arrow to both segments from the Christian schools]. Good Christian programs will be concerned to provide you with strong professional preparation and the opportunities and challenges to develop personal Christian values and qualities that will affect all of life. Does this mean every Christian must attend a Christian college? Answer - no, but if a person doesn’t attend a Christian college, he or she must make special efforts to develop and grow in the personal segment because the secular institution won’t. Groups such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Navigators, and Cru, etc. can help. Caution: Just attending a Christian school won’t ensure that a student will grow. A good Christian school, however, will provide the opportunity and ready support from staff for growth. Caution #2: Just because a school calls itself “Christian” doesn’t mean that it, in fact, is really providing the support and encouragement for growth. Examine them carefully.

## **WHAT KINDS OF SCHOOLS ARE THERE TO CHOOSE FROM?**

### **Apprenticeships**

Instruction combined with full-time work opportunities; usually provided by labor unions; can last 2-6 years; leads to occupations for plumbers, bricklayers, print-shop workers and most “trade” craft persons.

### **Bible Colleges / Institutes (1-4 Year Programs)**

College-level work; four-year programs are usually intended for preparing men and women for full-time ministries such as youth pastors, Christian school teachers, ministers of music and Christian education, etc.; shorter programs equip students with advanced biblical training for ministry that is often performed while in a work role such as that of a social worker, engineer, nurse, etc.

### **Business, Trade, and Technical Schools**

Practical training for specialized jobs; usually includes job placement services; can last from several weeks to two years; leads to occupations such as secretary, dental assistant, welder, cosmetologist, computer programmer, radiologist, hotel and restaurant services.

### **Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges**

Two-year programs with a wide variety of offerings; often comparatively inexpensive; include general liberal arts courses that can be used as a stepping stone for transfer to a four-year college; high school diploma often the only requirement; demanding and selective programs can be offered leading to associates’ degrees in areas like hotel and restaurant management, computer programming, travel and hospitality services, dental hygiene, medical assistants, nursing (RN and LPN), early childhood education, etc.

### **Four-Year Colleges (Christian and Secular)**

Contain programs leading to advanced occupational and professional areas such as social work, teaching, engineering, medicine, law, accounting, and other business professions. Acceptable GPA, class rank, and tests such as the ACT or SAT are usually required for admission.

### **Specialized Schools and Colleges**

Training is usually offered in a specialized field leading to a specific kind of work. Such schools include art institutes and Bible colleges. Training can last from three to five years.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT                      HOW CAN I PREPARE  
FOR WORK AS A STEWARD?**

Talk to two people whose Christian maturity you respect, one who attended a Christian school and one who attended a secular school. Ask them to tell you about their experiences and what they felt to be the advantages and disadvantages for them.