

WALKIN' THE WALK

A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR CHRISTIANS IN PRISON

LENNIE SPITALE



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

Walkin' the Walk: A Practical Guide for Christians in Prison

Lennie Spitale

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Does it surprise you that the day-to-day life and conduct of a Christian in prison not only has its own set of challenges, but also some very special benefits?

The teaching, insights, compassion, understanding, and warm encouragement that Lennie Spitale has for the incarcerated in this unique course are based solidly on the Word of God and flow out of his personal experience behind prison walls and his later fulltime ministry to prison inmates since returning to the outside.

Lessons You Will Study

Introduction	5
About the Author	6
1. Christianity in a Fishbowl	7
2. Escaping the “Air of Negativity”	15
3. The House of My Master’s Relatives	21
4. Maintaining Unity Among Christians	27
5. Developing Your Christian Education	35
6. Serving Others	43
7. The Biblical View of Authority	51
8. Can Anything Good Come Out of This?	59
9. The Importance of Integrity	65
10. Jesus on the Main Line	73

Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has ten chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School. See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

INTRODUCTION

You are a Christian. You have repented of your sins and have received God's forgiveness through placing personal faith in His only Son, Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior. You are relying on the fact that Jesus died on the cross and shed His perfect life's blood to pay the penalty that God in His righteousness demanded for your sins. You believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and you willingly tell others that He alone is your Lord and Savior. You believe that no one can be saved *apart* from faith in Jesus Christ.

You are a Christian. You believe the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your life and that He is constantly at work in you, making you more and more like Jesus. He convicts you of sin and urges you to change those old patterns, and He gives you the power to do so. He assists you in understanding the Bible and fills your heart with joy and courage. You believe that He is one with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You worship one God who reveals Himself in three Persons.

You are a Christian. You believe that the Bible is God's only written communication to man and that there is no other. You believe that Jesus was born of a young virgin called Mary, and that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead. You believe that every person who has truly placed their faith in Jesus Christ is your spiritual brother or sister. You also believe that those who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ will never see the kingdom of God, and you have a growing desire in your heart that they, too, would come to know Christ.

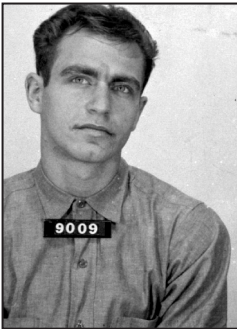
You are a Christian. This is your identity; it is who you are now, above all other things. You know God has made you His child by spiritual regeneration. You find your heart filled with gratitude for the eternal life you now have, and you are humbled that He chose to shine the light of the gospel of Christ into your heart. In response, you want to serve Him.

We, your brothers and sisters here at ECS Ministries, have chosen to commence this course by affirming that the most important thing is *who* you are, not *where* you are. You are a Christian; that is the important thing. Where you are in the physical sense is important only in that it helps to define the location of your mission field.

The purpose of this course is to provide some biblical principles for “walkin’ the walk” as a Christian in prison. It is our sincere desire that these lessons will provide you with some extra guidance as you “walk in wisdom” in the prison setting.

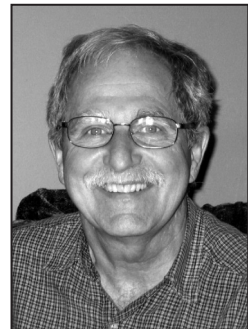
He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Before becoming a Christian in 1975, Lennie Spitale’s life was dominated by an explosive temper and problems with authority. By the time he was 30, the anger and rebellion had resulted in over 35 different jobs and several incarcerations. Upon release, Lennie continued to drift and get into trouble. But in the spring of 1975, a loving, merciful God broke into his angry, rebellious life and granted him saving faith in Jesus Christ.

He quickly began to experience God’s life-changing power. In 1977 he began leading weekly Bible studies at a local jail and visiting the men at their cells. Since then, Lennie has devoted his life to a wide range of prison-related ministries, including chaplaincy, training chaplains, and authoring several books to help inmates and their families. Lennie and his wife live in the Philadelphia area.



1

CHRISTIANITY IN A FISHBOWL

As someone who is doing time, no one needs to tell you that it's a bit crowded where you live. You swim in a fishbowl with hundreds, if not thousands, of other fish. You are crammed together like sardines. True privacy is a rare jewel. One of the stark realities of prison life is that everything you do is constantly under observation, 24/7.

As a Christian, you read your Bible, attend Bible studies, and go to the chapel services. As soon as you began these activities you were, in effect, telling everyone around you that you were now identifying yourself with “the Christians.” The culture in prison has forced you to draw a line in the sand.

Lines in the Sand are Helpful

A story is told about the men who defended the Alamo, that on the evening of March 5, 1836 (the night before Santa Anna's overwhelming forces were to attack the small Spanish church where the Texans were holed up), Commander William Travis took out his sword and drew a line in the sand with it. He told his men that the Mexican general had demanded complete surrender or he would kill them all in the upcoming attack. Travis then gave his men a choice. He said that if any of them chose to go home, they could leave at once. But if they chose to stay, they were to step over that line in the sand and join him in defending the Alamo. The men knew they were vastly outnumbered and that crossing the line meant they would be giving their lives for the cause of Texas. According to the story, all but one person did cross the line, and after courageously repelling two major attacks, every last man was killed in the third and final assault.

Professing to be a Christian in prison is like crossing a line that has been drawn in the sand for all to see. Some people who are weak in the faith or who aren't quite ready to be identified as serious Christians will try to explain away their attendance at the chapel services by asserting some "cool" reason for attending. (To see the female volunteers, drink the coffee, whatever.) They aren't ready to "cross the line." But if you truly *are* a Christian, then the fishbowl world of prison will quickly force you to identify yourself. Although it may be socially difficult at first, this "outing" of your faith is actually a good thing for you. It helps to serve as a further confirmation of the sincerity of your commitment. And once you have identified yourself as a Christian, "showing your colors" will actually make it easier for you to continue to operate under that banner. All the other fish will know that you are choosing to identify with "the Christians."

If you try to go back and forth over that line in the sand, however—that is, if you try to be cool one day and a Christian the next—you will eventually find that it just doesn't work. None of us can serve the world and the Lord at the same time. Jesus said it was impossible to serve two masters (Matt.

6:24). *This is the same reality that Christians face on the outside as well.*

————— ❧ —————
**None of us can
serve the world
and the Lord at
the same time.**
————— ❧ —————

If you go back and forth over the line in the sand, not only will you notice that your heart is growing colder toward the things of God, but the other fish will lose respect for your sincerity. A general misperception that many unbelievers hold is to think that once a person says he's a Christian, his behavior should now be automatically—and instantaneously—perfect.

The fact of the matter is, (a) you *have* been made perfect in one sense, and (b) you *are being* made perfect in another sense. At this point in our study, let's consider how two great doctrines of the Christian faith—justification and sanctification—have been working themselves out in your life.

————— ❧ —————
**Professing to be a
Christian in prison
is like crossing a
line that has been
drawn in the sand
for all to see.**
————— ❧ —————

Justification and Sanctification

By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

This is an amazing verse of Scripture which points out two great theological truths in one verse: Justification and Sanctification.

Justification is a one-time action with a completed effect in the believer's life. God, our holy Creator, has taken the initiative to make guilty sinners right with Him. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross in our place and for our sins made it "legally" possible for Him to do this. When we put our faith in His Son and His sacrificial work on the cross for us, God applies that "payment" to our account, justifying us in His sight. As a result of this one-time transaction, we enter into a permanent standing and relationship with Him that can never be changed.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1)

Justification brings us peace with God. That means we are no longer viewed by God as His enemies (Rom. 5:9-11). Jesus Christ voluntarily paid the price by His suffering and death to satisfy the fierce anger of God against our sins. And God is not into double jeopardy. When He judged His own Son for the believer's sins, He let the believer go free. Oh, the amazing love and grace of God!

Sanctification, however, is the ongoing work of God the Holy Spirit in making us more and more like Jesus. It is the process of becoming ever holier in our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions, and it is a lifelong journey.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. (Rom. 8:29)

As the second half of Hebrews 10:14 says, we are in the process of "being made" holy. Our *position* before God is perfect, or complete (justification); our lives here on earth are in *process* (sanctification).

Sanctification is described in the Old Testament in this way:

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. (Prov. 4:18)

The “first gleam of dawn” that Proverbs 4:18 refers to was when the Spirit of God first shone the light of the gospel in your heart and you responded by putting your trust in Christ for your salvation. That was *justification*. And now the process of *sanctification* is taking place, which the second part of that wonderful verse describes as “shining ever brighter to the full light of day.”

If you are a Christian, you have already experienced changes in the way you speak, think, and act. Things that you once had no conscience about seem “wrong” to you now. Negative and foul language that once spilled so easily from your lips has become more and more absent from your speech. You are becoming less dishonest, less self-serving, less proud. And when you do take part in these old things, you immediately feel badly about them.

This very experience is proof that Someone holy has taken up residence in your life. Christians experience the very real and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. It is this way for every man, woman, and child who has been genuinely converted to Christ. Unbelievers feel sorry only for the *consequences* of their sins; believers feel sorry for *sinning*. And even though we continue to struggle with sin, the general trend of our lives is ever upward.

————— ❧ —————
**The power of Christ
is greater than
the sinful cravings
of the flesh.**
————— ❧ —————

The Inward Struggle

Christians are not made perfect in this world. The presence of sin still resides in us, in the “members” of our physical bodies (mind, hands, mouth, etc), and we will not be totally free of sin’s influence until we die and go to be with Christ. But be encouraged—the power of Christ is greater than the sinful cravings of the flesh. Just as we shared in the sin and fall of our first father, Adam, so shall believers in Christ share by faith in the victory of the “second Adam,” Jesus Christ. He is the Head of the new family line into which we have been born spiritually (1 Cor. 15:44-49).

————— ❧ —————
**God wants us to live
in light of the fact
that He has freed us
from the controlling
power of sin.**
————— ❧ —————

God wants us to not only know that Christ paid the penalty for our sin, but to live in light of the fact that He has freed us from the controlling power of sin. (And one day we’ll be free from sin’s presence!).

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. (Rom. 6:6-7)

Our part is to *know* (vs. 6) that we are no longer slaves to sin. The power of sin over our lives was broken at the cross of Christ where He paid the penalty sin demanded—which was death. So now we, too, by being united with Him in that same death, have been freed from its penalty *and* its power. Romans 6:7 says that anyone who has died is freed from sin. Now *there* is a Declaration of Independence!

Sanctification—a Foreign Concept to Unbelievers

It is very important to not confuse the two doctrines of justification and sanctification. Failure to make the distinction between them can result in slowly falling back into thinking our good behavior (sanctification) has a part to play in maintaining our salvation (justification). Confusing the two will usually lead to discouragement, error, and an inconsistent Christian life.

The unbelievers around you certainly don't understand that the sanctification process in the life of a Christian is a process of ups and downs. But because you live in a fishbowl, they have a front-row seat to all your failings and imperfections. "What?" they say, "You call yourself a Christian? I heard what you said the other day! I thought Christians don't talk like that anymore!" Or you might hear, "You call yourself a Christian? I saw what you did last night! If the chaplain could see you now—Hah! What would he say about *that*?" Or perhaps you responded to someone in an angry way, and although you now deeply regret having done so, you were still teased for your lack of "Christian" self-control.

You feel badly about these occasional responses and choices because the Holy Spirit is doing His work of convicting you about them, just as He convicts *all* believers when they sin, both inside and outside prison walls. The difference is, when believers in the outside world sin, *they* are not always observed by the people who know them or interact with them on a daily basis the way *you* are. Be assured of this: *no* Christian would be found acting perfectly if he or she were observed every hour of every day.

Although this unfortunate aspect of the prison culture does not provide you with an excuse for sinning, it should at least provide some perspective.

You are under an unusual level of scrutiny by unbelievers and scoffers, a level that far surpasses the normal observation experienced by Christians on the outside.

The Goal Is Consistency

Although the prison world is often crude and unforgiving, one positive aspect of the culture is that it tends to respect authenticity. In other words, if a person is genuine and consistent about what he or she claims to be, then most others will tend to respect that position over time. Even though they are not Christians themselves, they will eventually come to admit that you at least seem to be genuine about your faith. And even if some may be quick to condemn your shortcomings, most inmates have a keen sense about who is sincere and who is not. Over time, they will tend to judge you by your overall consistency. And by God's grace you may even see the day when an unbelieving inmate will actually defend you against the accusations of others because he has come to see that your Christianity is a serious matter to you.

Don't waver about "crossing the line," though! If you try to be a Christian one day and "cool" the next, they will observe your hypocrisy and not take you seriously. The same negative opinion will also result if they see you continuing in a lifestyle that you know God opposes.

A Marathon, Not a Sprint

The key is to remember that you are in it for the long haul. View your Christian faith as a marathon, not a sprint. Like someone who hopes to successfully compete in a race, you must engage in discipline and daily training.

We commit to training our bodies, souls, and minds to the one goal: making our lives count for Christ. We keep our eyes on the finish line in order to win the prize. The apostle Paul used the same imagery in his first letter to the Corinthians.

————— ❧ —————
**View your Christian
faith as a marathon,
not a sprint.**
————— ❧ —————

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Did Paul succeed? Listen to what he wrote to his close friend, Timothy, just before he was put to death in Rome for his faith:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Tim. 4:7)

What a statement! Every true Christian in every place on the globe hopes to be able to say those same words as they approach the end of their individual races.

Be patient and faithful. Give yourself time to learn the ways of the Holy Spirit, and submit to His urgings and disciplines. And when you fall, don't allow the devil (or yourself) to beat you up about it. The Bible says:

*... though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again.
(Prov. 24:16)*

Always remember that sanctification is a *result* of justification; it can never *produce* it. Our improving lives do not purchase salvation, and our present sins cannot lose it. Only faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, can save us. Remember Hebrews 10:14:

By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (emphasis added)

Your consistent “long-haul” devotion to Christ will reflect your sincerity. This is called *perseverance*, another grand doctrine of the Christian faith. And take additional encouragement from this: the visible changes that are taking place in your life by the power of the invisible Spirit at work within you will bring hope to others that God's power could possibly change *their* lives as well.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:16, KJV)

WALKIN' THE WALK

EXAM BOOKLET AK '12 (1 UNIT) WTW

STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

I.D. #

INSTITUTION

H.U.

CELL #

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

TRUE / FALSE

For these questions, circle the correct answer.

T F

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

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Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

CHRISTIANITY IN A FISHBOWL

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. To publicly identify yourself with other Christians in prison is
 - A. unnecessary, as your faith is a private matter
 - B. cool, as Christianity is a popular religion these days
 - C. worthwhile, as it helps define your decision to be a Christ-follower
 - D. foolish, as you'll get persecuted for doing so_____

2. Justification is
 - A. an ongoing process
 - B. a one-time action with a permanent effect
 - C. based upon my ability to do more good things than bad things
 - D. the same as being made sinless_____

3. To be justified by God means
 - A. to have your bad deeds outweighed by your good deeds
 - B. to be made more and more like Jesus
 - C. to be excused from the penalty of all your sins because God loves you
 - D. to be made right with God based on Jesus' sacrificial death_____

4. The work of sanctification
 - A. is the ongoing process through life of becoming more like Christ
 - B. is a permanent, one-time action
 - C. is the process of being made a saint
 - D. is when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a person_____

5. In Christ, we have been
- set free from the controlling power of sin
 - set free from the presence of sin
 - made sinless
 - set free from the influence of sin

Directions: Read each statement carefully and circle the letter of the correct answer: T—if true, or F—if false. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Romans 8:29 states we are personally responsible for becoming more like Christ. | T | F |
| 7. Sanctification plays a part in maintaining our justification. | T | F |
| 8. Unbelievers understand that Christians do not become perfect overnight. | T | F |
| 9. One way I know the Spirit is doing His sanctifying work in me is that I feel badly when I sin. | T | F |
| 10. Running a good race for Christ involves having a “long haul” perspective. | T | F |

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Give an example of a change in your life that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit has brought about.
