

Jacob's Well**Lesson Title:** Biblical Principles—One Master

Key Concept: Applications may change, but biblical principles are useful in all times and locations. The principle of One Master demands that we worship God alone and reject all other masters as idolatry.

**Scriptures:**

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

(Romans 6:16 *New Living Translation*)

⁷For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. . . . ⁹But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.

(Romans 8:7, 9 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Romans 1:1; 6:16–19; 7; 8; 1 Corinthians 6:12; Galatians 5:16–25; Colossians 2:20–23; 3:1–11; Ephesians 4:17–31; Proverbs 23:29–35; John 8:32–37

**Lesson Thoughts:**

The Bible is starkly clear that we must only worship the one true God; worshiping anything else is idolatry. This principle can be checked by asking, “What am I a slave to?” or “What controls me?” Paul answers that he is “a slave of Christ Jesus” (Romans 1:1), and that he “will not be mastered by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Whatever controls you, and whatever you give yourself over to, reveals what you worship. Paul often returns to the principle of worshiping God and God alone in his Epistles. He recognizes the ongoing spiritual battle with our sinful nature and admits, “I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate” (Romans 7:15). Every one of us can relate to our human nature that is controlled by sin and

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death—but thank God that is not the wretched end! Paul passionately exclaims the answer to freedom from sin and death is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This spiritual battle is about choice, responsibility, and surrender. At the crossroads of temptation, we choose sin or God. We make an active choice, the consequence is our responsibility, and the follow-through reveals what we surrender to. What we worship. However, the dominant, modern-day secular view is that sin is not sin at all, but a disease or a disorder. And while addictions are real physical and psychological problems, treating them as only diseases removes the responsibility of choice and consequence, and blocks the path for surrender to God. Think about the language used: a person is addicted to alcohol, drugs, or pornography. A person has a substance use disorder. Gambling, promiscuity, lying, and stealing are obsessive-compulsive disorders. Notice that in this secular view the language of sin and responsibility never appears. Yet these behaviors are identified as “desires of your sinful nature” in Galatians 5:19–21. What the world calls addiction, the Bible also calls sin.

Despite society’s relabeling of sin, we must confront sin with truth. Jesus said the truth will set you free. Free from what? Being a slave to sin. Truth: Jesus is the healer of every disease and sickness. Truth: when we confess our sins and are baptized in Jesus’ name our sins are washed away. Truth: when we are filled with the Holy Spirit our mind is renewed. “Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves” (Galatians 5:16). Truth gives hope and directs our choice, response, and surrender to the One Master.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How does the way sin is referred to—not even calling sin *sin*—affect the way we deal with it?
- 2) Read Proverbs 23:29–35 about the emotional despair of the struggle with drunkenness and the slavery to sin. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? How would you help someone else in a similar situation?
- 3) How can a principle’s truth confront subjective feelings to overcome sin?
- 4) Ephesians 4:22–24 says to put off the old sinful nature and put on the new nature created to be like God. What does that mean? Share your experience.

*Jacob's Well***Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Read Romans chapters 7 and 8. Ask yourself, "What am I a slave to?" "What controls me?"

- 2) In addition to the context Scriptures, below are more Bible verses that are powerful encouragers at the crossroads of temptation. Use them in your prayer time or with an accountability partner, or perhaps they can be a springboard for reaching out to someone who is struggling with sin.
Matthew 9:35, Acts 2:38; Romans 5:3–5; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 4:22–24; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8; James 1:12–15; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:16

- 3) Listen to the lyrics of the song "The Heart of Worship" by Matt Redman. The chorus touches on the principle of worshiping One Master: *I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about you, It's all about you, Jesus.*
What are some other songs and hymns that express worship to God? How do you feel when we sing these songs and worship God in community?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.