

COURSE ON SPIRITISM

WORKBOOK – 3 (Moral Laws)



A regular course on Spiritism would be given in order to develop the principles of Science and to promote the fondness for serious studies. This course would have the advantage of laying the foundation for the unit of principles, of forming enlightened followers, capable of spreading the spiritist ideas, and developing a great number of mediums. I consider this course of a nature to exercise capital influence on the future of Spiritism and its consequences."

-Allan Kardec ("Posthumous Works" - Project, 1868)



COURSE ON SPIRITISM

WORKBOOK 3:

Moral Laws

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This material is an adaptation of the “Systematic Study of the Spiritist Doctrine” (“*Estudo Sistematizado da Doutrina Espírita*”), edited by the Brazilian Spiritist Federation.

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This material is subject to improvement.

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INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

It is with great pleasure that the Spiritist Society of Baltimore (SSB), an educational non-profit organization established in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, offers this material for the implementation of Spiritism in English. The main purpose of this work is to fulfill, in the English language, the ideas of Kardec about a systematic study of Spiritism principles. Accordingly, the interested student has an opportunity to build up a main understanding of the scientific, moral and philosophic aspects of Spiritism, as well as a scholar of Spiritism, with knowledge acquired after many years of study, should also find interesting references in this material.

The material presented herein is an adaptation of the “Systematic study of Spiritism” as assembled by the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (BSF). This source was selected because of many years of experience with its use by SSB and of its widespread and unquestionable efficacy in disseminating Spiritism in Brazil. However, this work is not a direct translation of the material available in Portuguese. Great care was taken in order to adapt all lessons to the bibliography available in English at the time of its publication. With this in mind, and scrupulously adhering to Kardec’s work, many lessons of the original BSF work were combined as well as new lessons were included. All references used are clearly cited at the end of each lesson.

This material should be used in a regular study setting and many lessons were planned to be worked by students divided in teams. As much emphasis as possible was given to build active lessons that would involve and demand the participation of all students. This should foster friendship among all class members and allow all students to participate and to develop their knowledge as the course progresses. It is estimated that each lesson should take between 1 – 1 ½ hours to be completed. The lessons are assembled as instructions in how to develop and accomplished each topic. The use of projection resources, like overhead or slide presentations during the suggested brief introductions is recommended, but not indispensable.

Finally, we offer a special thanks to Mr. Jorge Godinho, BSF member, for his distinctive friendship and to all of our spiritual Mentors and Guides who supported us throughout this endeavor.

With Love to all,

The SSB family.

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LESSON 1**GETTING TO KNOW THE NATURAL OR DIVINE LAW
AND ITS SUBDIVISION****OBJECTIVES:**

- To define Divine or Natural Law.
- To cite the general laws which are consequences of God's Law and characterize them.
- To explain why the Divine Law is not mutable.
- To cite the mechanism that provides man the knowledge of the Natural Law
- To cite the necessary qualities for a man to be the revealer of God's Law
- To understand the subdivision of the moral laws and the most important of all

METHODS:

1. The coordinator shall begin with the following warm up activity. Ask participants to address in pairs the following questions:
 - a. Have any of your moral values changed in any way throughout this lifetime? How?
 - b. Have you heard of any change in the Human laws?
2. After participants have given their opinions, the coordinator shall start give an introduction based on the following topics:
 - What is Law?
 - What is Natural Law?
 - What is Human Law? - Are human laws mutable?
3. Divide the class in four groups:

Group I – Defining divine or natural law
Group II – Getting to know of the natural or natural law
Group III – Revealing the divine or natural law
Group IV – Subdividing the divide or natural law
4. After each group has presented their studies, the coordinator shall conclude with a quick summary of the major conclusions of this lesson.

Group I - Defining divine or natural law

Please, read the following excerpt of The Spirit's Book below and discuss them with your group. Also, prepare a short presentation summarizing the acquired concepts.

614. *What is to be understood by natural law?*

"The law of nature is the law of God. It is the only rule that ensures the happiness of man, for it shows him what he should or should not do, and he only suffers because he disobeys it."

615. *Is the law of God eternal?*

"It is eternal and unchangeable as God Himself."

616. *Can God have prescribed to mankind in one age what He has forbidden in another?*

"God cannot be mistaken. Men are obliged to change their laws, because they are imperfect ; but the laws of God are perfect. The harmony which regulates both the material universe and the moral universe is founded on laws established by God from all eternity."

617. *What are the objects embraced by the divine laws? Have they reference to anything but our moral conduct?*

"All the laws of nature are divine laws, since God is the author of all things. The seeker after science studies the laws of nature in the realm of matter; the seeker after goodness studies them in the soul, and practises them."

- *Is it given to man to fathom both these divisions of natural law?*

"Yes; but a single existence does not suffice for doing this."

618. *Are the divine laws the same for all worlds?*

"Reason tells you that they must be adapted to the special nature of each of those various worlds, and proportioned to the degree of advancement of the beings who inhabit them."

Group II – Getting to know of the divine or natural law

Please, read the following excerpt of The Spirit's Book below and discuss them with your group. Also, prepare a short presentation summarizing the acquired concepts.

619. *Has God given to all men the means of knowing His law?*

"All may know it, but all do not understand it. Those who understand it best are they who seek after goodness. All, however, will one day understand it; for the destiny of progress must be accomplished."

621. *Where is the law of God inscribed?*

"In the conscience." - *Since man carries the law of God in his conscience, where was the need of revealing it to him?*

"He had forgotten and misunderstood it; God willed that it should be recalled to his memory."

622. *Has God given to some men the mission of revealing His law?*

"Yes, certainly. In every age there have been men who have received this mission; spirits of higher degree, who have incarnated themselves for the purpose of advancing human progress."

624. What are the characteristics of the true prophet?

"The true prophet is an upright man who is inspired by God. He may be recognised both by his words and by his deeds. God does not employ the mouth of a liar to teach the truth."

Group III – Revealing the divine or natural law

Please, read the following excerpt of *The Gospel Explained by Spiritism* (chapter 21, item 7) and discuss them with your group. Also, prepare a short presentation summarizing the acquired concepts, in order to address the following question:

How do we recognize the true prophet?

Far from sanctioning the false Christs and false prophets, as some people take pleasure in saying, spiritual phenomena comes, on the contrary, to deal them a death blow. Do not ask Spiritism for prodigies or miracles, since it positively declares it does not perform them. In the same manner that physics, chemistry, astronomy and geology reveal the laws of the material world, so Spiritism reveals other unknown laws which govern the relationships existing between the physical and spiritual worlds; laws which just as much as those of science, are laws of Nature. By giving an explanation for certain types of phenomena, which until now had remained inexplicable, it destroys all that remains of the miraculous. Consequently those who feel tempted to exploit these phenomena for personal gain, by pretending to be messengers from God, will not be allowed to abuse the credulity of the general public for long, but will be quickly unmasked. Moreover, as has already been said, these phenomena alone prove nothing. Every mission is proved by its moral effects, and these cannot be produced by everyone. One of the results of the development of the Spiritist science is that through research into the causes of certain of these manifestations, many mysteries are explained.

Only those who prefer darkness rather than light have every interest in combating this progress. But truth is like the sun, which dissipates even the densest clouds.

Spiritism also reveals another far more dangerous aspect of false Christs and false prophets, which is to be found not amongst men, but amongst the discarnate. These are the deceiving, hypocritical, prideful and falsely-wise Spirits, who on passing from Earth into their spiritual wanderings, have adopted venerated names as masks under which to hide, in order to facilitate the acceptance of the most strange and absurd ideas. Before mediumistic relationships were understood they acted less conspicuously, by means of inspiration and unconscious mediumship heard or spoken. There are a considerable number who in various epochs, and above all in recent times, have presented themselves as some of the old prophets, Christ, the Virgin Mary and even God himself. John warns against these Spirits by saying: "Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Spiritism offers us the means of trying them when it shows us the characteristics by which we may recognize the good spirits which are *always moral, never material* (1) It is particularly to the manner by which the good may be distinguished from the bad that these words of Jesus may be applied. "It is by the fruits that you know the quality of the tree. A bad tree cannot produce good fruits." Spirits are judged by the quality of their works, just as a tree is judged by its fruits.

Group IV – Subdividing the divine or natural law

Please, read the following excerpt of The Spirit's Book below and discuss them with your group. Also, prepare a short presentation summarizing the acquired concepts, in order to address the following questions:

- What is the subdivision of the Moral Laws?
- What is the most important Moral Laws?

647. Is the whole of the law of God contained in the rule of love of the neighbour laid down by Jesus?

"That rule certainly contains all the duties of men to one another; but it is necessary to show them its various applications, or they will continue to neglect them, as they do at the present day. Besides, natural law embraces all the circumstances of life, and the rule you have cited is only a part of it. Men need precise directions; general precepts are too vague, and leave too many doors open to human interpretations."

648. What do you think of the division of natural law into ten parts, viz., the Law's of adoration, labour, reproduction, preservation, society, equality, liberty, justice, love, and charity?

"The division of the law of God into ten parts is that of Moses, and may be made to include all the circumstances of life, which is the essential point. You may therefore adopt it, without its being held to have any absolute value, any more than the various other systems of classification which depend on the aspect under which the subject is considered. The last of those parts is the most important; because the law of charity includes all the others, and it is therefore through the observance of this law that mankind advances most rapidly in spiritual life."

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book, questions 614-619, 621, 622, 624, 647, 648 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

LESSON 2	JESUS, THE MOST PERFECT REVEALER OF DIVINE/NATURAL LAWS
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OBJECTIVES:

- To recognize the names of revealers of human knowledge.
- To explain why Jesus is the most perfect revealer of divine laws.
- To correlate Jesus’ revelations with the spiritist principles.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall begin by brainstorming on the names of revealers in a diversity of fields on human knowledge.
2. Then, coordinator shall give an introduction on why Jesus is the most perfect revealer of Divine Laws.
3. Ask participants to form 5 groups of study. Distribute the following passages of the New Testament and ask each group to correlate them with the spiritist principles.

GROUP I – John 3:1-12 and John 14:1-3

GOSPEL’S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
<p>¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.^[a]" ⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." ⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? (John 3:1-12)</p>	

<p>¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God^[a]; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:1-3)</p>	
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GROUP II – Matthew 5:4 and Matthew 10:8

GOSPEL'S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
<p>⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)</p>	
<p>⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,^[a] drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8)</p>	

GROUP III – Matthew 16:13-17 and Mark 9:13

GOSPEL'S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
<p>¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ,^[b] the Son of the living God." ¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)</p>	
<p>¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him." (Mark 9:13)</p>	

GROUP IV – Matthew 17:2-3 and Matthew 5:25-26

GOSPEL'S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
<p>²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Matthew 17:2-3)</p>	
<p>²⁵"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. (Matthew 5:25-26)</p>	

GROUP V – Luke 11:2 and Mark 1:23-27

GOSPEL'S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
² He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come." (Luke 11:2)	
²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil ^[a] spirit cried out, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." (Mark 1:23-27)	

KEY TO GROUP EXERCISE

GROUP #	GOSPEL'S CITATION	SPIRITIST PRINCIPLE
1	John 3:1-12	REINCARNATION
	John 14:1-3	PLURALITY OF THE INHABITED WORLDS
2	Matthew 5:4	LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
	Matthew 10:8	MEDIUMSHIP
3	Matthew 16:13 / 17	MEDIUMSHIP (PETER'S)
	Mark 9:13	REINCARNATION
4	Matthew 17:2	EXISTENCE AND SURVIVAL OF THE SPIRIT
	Matthew 5:25	LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
5	Luke 11:2	EXISTENCE OF GOD AS FATHER
	Mark 1:23-27	EXISTENCE AND SURVIVAL OF THE SPIRIT & MEDIUMSHIP

REFERENCES:

1. <http://biblesources.bible.com> (New International Version)

LESSON 3

GOOD AND EVIL

OBJECTIVES:

- To elaborate the concept of what is morality.
- To establish the concept of Good and Evil.
- To correlate the practice of good to the level of man's responsibility.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator shall propose a brainstorm on the definition of morality.
2. Coordinator shall give an introduction on the concepts of ethics and morality.
3. Ask participants to read question/answer 629 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Let them discuss the Spirits' teachings.

629. What definition can be given of the moral law?

"The moral law is the rule for acting aright, that is to say, for distinguishing practically between good and evil. It is founded on the observance of the law of God. Man acts rightly when he takes the good of all as his aim and rule of action; for he then obeys the law of God."

4. Divide the class in two groups and address the following questions:

Group I: Read the following excerpt of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec and, after discussing it with your group, explain why the practice of goodness is related to the degree of the man's responsibility. Is it sufficient not to do any evil in order to be good?

639. The evil we do is often the result of the position that has been made for us by other men; where, in such a case, lies the greatest amount of culpability?

"With those who have been the cause of the wrong-doing. Thus the man who has been led into evil, by the position that his fellow-creatures have made for him, is less guilty than those who have caused him to go astray, for each has to suffer the penalty, not only of the evil he has done, but of that which he has caused another to do."

640. Is he who profits by another's wrongdoing, even though he took no part in its commission, as guilty as though he had taken part in it?

"Yes; to take advantage of a crime is to take part in it. He would, perhaps, have shrunk from committing the evil deed, but if, the deed being done, he takes advantage of it, it is

equivalent to doing it, and proves that he would have done it himself, if he could, or if he dared."

641. Is it as reprehensible to desire to do an evil deed as to do it?

"That is as the case may be. Voluntarily to resist the desire to do wrong, especially when there is a possibility of gratifying that desire, is virtuous; but he, who has only not done the wrong thing because the opportunity was wanting, is as guilty as though he had done it."

642. In order to be acceptable in the sight of God, and to insure our future happiness, is it sufficient not to have done evil?

"No; it is necessary for each to have done good also, to the utmost limits of his ability; for each of you will have to answer, not only for all the evil he has done, but also for all the good which he has failed to do."

643. Are there persons who, through their position, have no possibility of doing good?

"There are none who cannot do some good; the selfish alone find no opportunity of so doing. The mere fact of being in relation with other human beings suffices to furnish the opportunity of doing good, and every day of your lives provides this possibility for every one who is not blinded by selfishness. For doing good is not restricted to the giving of alms, but also comprehends being useful to the full extent of your power, whenever your assistance may be needed."

Group II: Read the following excerpt of *The Spirits' Book* by Allan Kardec and, after discussing it with your group, define Good and Evil. Elaborate guidelines for a virtuous attitude.

630. How can we distinguish between good and evil?

"Good is whatever is in conformity with the law of God; and evil is whatever deviates from it. Thus, to do right, is to conform to the law of God; to do wrong, is to infringe that law."

631. Has man of himself the means of distinguishing what is good from what is evil?

"Yes, when he believes in God, and desires to do what is right. God has given him intelligence in order that he may distinguish between them."

632. As man is subject to error may he not be mistaken in his appreciation of good and evil, and believe himself to be doing right, when, in reality, he is doing wrong?

"Jesus has said: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.' The whole moral law is contained in that injunction. Make it your rule of action, and you will never go wrong."

633. The rule of good and evil, what may be called the rule of reciprocity or solidarity, cannot be applied to a man's personal conduct towards himself. Does he find, in natural law, the rule of that conduct, and a safe guide?

"When you eat too much, it hurts you. God gives you, in the discomfort thus produced, the measure of what is necessary for you. When you exceed that measure, you are punished. It is the same with everything else. Natural law traces out for each man the limit of his needs: when he oversteps that limit he is punished by the suffering thus caused. If men gave heed, in all things, to the voice which says to them 'enough!' they would avoid the greater part of the ills of which they accuse nature."

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book, questions 630-643 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define liberty.
- To define slavery and its consequences.
- To establish the relationship between liberty and free will.
- To get to know liberty of conscience.
- To establish the difference between freedom of thinking and of acting.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall propose that participants write down two columns on a paper. On the left one they shall write the things that happen to them that make them feel free. On the right column they shall write the things that make them feel enslaved. Participants may share with other participants.
2. Then, the coordinator may give an introduction to the lesson based on question/answer 825 and 826 from The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec.
3. Divide participants in two groups.

GROUP I - Read the questions from 829 to 832 (The Spirits' Book), Freedom of Slavery, discuss them with your group and answer questions at the bottom of the text. Prepare a synopsis to be presented to the big group.

829. Are any men intended by nature to be the property of other men?

"The absolute subjection of any man to another man is contrary to the law of God. Slavery is an abuse of strength; it disappears with progress, gradually, as all other abuses will disappear."

The human law which sanctions slavery is a law against nature, because it assimilates man to the brute, and degrades him physically and morally.

830. When slavery is already established in the habits of a people, are those who profit by that institution to blame for conforming to a usage which appears to them to be natural?

"What is wrong is always wrong, and no amount of sophistry can change a bad deed into a good one; but the responsibility of wrong-doing is always proportional to the means of comprehending it possessed by the wrong-doer. He who profits by the institution of slavery is always guilty of a violation of natural law; but in this, as in everything else. The guilt is relative. Slavery having become rooted in the habits of certain peoples, men may have taken advantage of it without seeing it to be wrong, and as something which appeared to them altogether natural; but when their reason, more developed and

enlightened by the teachings of Christianity, has shown them that their slave is their equal in the sight of God, they are no longer excusable."

831. Does not the inequality of natural aptitudes place some of the human races under the sway of other races of greater intelligence?

"Yes, in order that the latter may raise them to a higher level, but not that they may brutify them still more by slavery. Men have too long regarded certain human races as working animals furnished with arms and hands, which they have believed themselves to have the right of using and selling like beasts of burden. They fancy themselves to be of purer blood; fools, who see only matter! It is not the blood that is more or less pure, but only the spirit." (361-803.)

832. There are men who treat their slaves humanely, who let them want for nothing, and who think that freedom would expose them to greater privations; what do you say of such persons?

"I say that they have a better understanding of their own interests than those who treat them cruelly; they take the same care of their cattle and horses, in order to get a better price for them at market. They are not so guilty as those who treat them badly, but they none the less treat them as merchandise, by depriving them of the right of belonging to themselves."

Answer the following questions:

- 1-Why is any type of slavery condemnable?
- 2- Can pain be an obstacle to liberty? Why?
- 3- What are the principles that help us avoid slavery?
- 4- What is the worst type of slavery?
- 5- What can we do to be really free?

GROUP 2 - Read the following questions: 833-845, Freedom of thinking/ action, discuss them with your group, answer the questions at the bottom of your text and prepare a synopsis to be presented to the big group.

833. Is there in man something that escapes constraint, and in regard to which he enjoys absolute liberty?

"Yes, in his thought man enjoys unlimited freedom, for thought knows no obstacles. The action of thought may be hindered, but not annihilated."

834. *Is man responsible for his thoughts?*

"He is responsible for them to God. God alone can take cognisance of thought, and condemns or absolves it according to His justice."

843. *Has man freedom of action?*

"Since he has freedom of thought, he has freedom of action. Without free-will man would be a machine."

844. *Does man possess freewill from his birth?*

"He possesses free-will from the moment when he possesses the will to act. In the earliest portion of a lifetime free-will is almost null; it is developed and changes its object with the development of the faculties. The child, having thoughts in harmony with the wants of his age, applies his free-will to the things which belong to that age."

845. *Are not the instinctive predispositions that a man brings with him at birth an obstacle to the exercise of his free-will?*

"A man's instinctive predispositions are those which belonged to his spirit before his incarnation. If he is but little advanced, they may incite him to wrongdoing, in which he will be seconded by spirits who sympathise with that wrong-doing; but no incitement is irresistible when there is a determination to resist. remember that to will is to be able." (361.)

Answer the questions:

- 1- Human beings were created free and for happiness destined to perfection. However human's freedom is not absolute, but restricted. Why?
- 2- How can men be happy without interfering in others' actions?
- 3- What are the immediate and future consequences of people's irresponsible actions?
- 4- What is the relationship between freedom and free will?
- 5- Why is free will important?

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book, questions 629-845 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define the state of nature.
- To explain what is the objective of the Law of Evolution or Progress and the means used to achieve it.
- To explain why man cannot regress.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall present questions 776 and 778 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Let the group answer the questions, then, present the Spirits' answers. Then, define the state of nature.
2. Make the class into a single group and read the following text extracted from the book Life and Destiny by Leon Denis. Then answer the following questions:
 - a. Why is work one of the means of human progress?
 - b. In which way suffering may favor the evolution of human morality?
 - c. What is the objective of evolution?
 - d. Why is it wrong to say that human beings can retrograde?
 - e. Why does isolation delay the progress of spirits?
 - f. What is the role of reincarnation in the progress of humankind?

EVOLUTION AND FINALITY OF THE SOUL

The soul, we have said, comes from God; it is the principle of intelligence and life in us. Mysterious essence, it escapes analysis, like all things which come from the Absolute. Created by love, created for love, so tiny it can be restrained in a fragile form, so great that with the flight of a thought, it embraces the Infinite, the soul is a portion the divine essence projected into the material world. From the hour of its descent into matter, what has been the way it followed to remount to the point of its actual course? It has been obliged to pass through obscure paths, reclothe forms, animate organisms it rejected at the end of each existence as one does with a mantle which has become useless.

All its bodies of flesh perished; the winds of destiny scattered the dust. It pursued its ascending march through the innumerable stations of its journeys, and goes toward a goal grand and desirable, a goal divine, which is perfection. The soul contains in its natural state all the germs of its future developments. It is destined to know all, to acquire all, to possess all! And how can it achieve this in one existence? Life is short and perfection is long! Can the soul in one life develop its understanding - enlighten its

reason - fortify its conscience - assimilate all the elements of wisdom, holiness, and genius? No! To achieve its ends it must, in time and space, have a field without limits to travel; it is by transformations without number, after millions of centuries, that the coarse mineral changes to the pure diamond, shining with a million fires. It is so with the human soul. The aim of evolution, the reason of life and being, is not earthly happiness, as many erroneously think, but the perfecting of each one of us. And this perfection we must realize by work, by effort, and by alternating joy and sorrow until we attain the celestial state.

If there is on earth less joy than sorrow, it is because sorrow is the instrument par excellence of education and progress. A stimulant for the being which without it would be retarded in paths of sensuality. Pain, physical and moral, forms our experience; wisdom is the price of it. Little by little the soul is elevated, and in the measure that it mounts, there accumulates in it an always-growing sum of knowledge and virtue. The soul feels itself united more and more to its own world, and communicates more intimately with its planetary center.

Eventually by powerful ties it unites itself with the company of space, and then with the Eternal Being. So the life of conscious being is a life of solidarity and liberty. Free in the limit assigned to it by the eternal laws, it becomes the architect of its own destiny. Its advancement is its work. No fatality oppresses it, knowing that only the consequences of its own acts fall upon it. It can grow and develop but in the collective life, with the assistance of, and to the profit of all. The more it mounts, the more it feels and suffers with all and for all.

In its need of its own upliftment it attracts to it all the human beings who people the world where it has lived, to help them attain the spiritual state. It seeks to do for them what the older brothers, the great spirits, have done for it in guiding its progress. The law of justice desires all souls to be emancipated in their turn and freed from that lower life. Each soul which arrives at full consciousness should work to prepare for its brothers a social condition which eliminates all save the inevitable evils. These necessary evils, operating as a law of general education, will never be completely suppressed in our world; they represent one of the conditions of terrestrial life. Matter is a useful obstacle; it provokes the effort of developing the will - it contributes to the ascension of beings by imposing on them the necessity to work. How learn joy without pain? Without the shadow, how appreciate the light? How, without privation, enjoy acquisition? Behold why difficulties in all forms are found in us and around us. It is a grand spectacle, this strife of the spirit against matter, this strife for the conquest of the globe, this strife against the elements, the floods, life and death. Everywhere matter opposes itself to the manifestation of thought. In the domain of art, it is the indiscernible, the infinitely tiny particle which hides itself from observation. In the social order, there are obstacles without number, epidemics, catastrophes, and conflagrations; and facing the powers which menace him on all sides, man stands a fragile being, with no resource but his will. By the aid of this unique resource, through all time the fierce strife is pursued without truce, without mercy; when one day, by human will, the formidable power is vanquished. Man has willed, and matter is subdued. At his gesture, the enemy elements, water and fire, are united and toil for him. It is the law of effort - the law supreme by which spirit asserts itself and triumphs and grows. It is the magnificent epoch of history, this exterior strife which fills the world. The interior strife is not less moving. With each rebirth, the

spirit must fashion a new envelope which will serve its dwelling and express the conceptions of its genius. Often the instrument resists, and the thought falls back on itself, powerless to lift the burden which smothers it. But accumulated efforts of thought and desire through centuries will develop the soul's high faculties.

There is in each of us a silent aspiration, an intimate mysterious energy which carries us toward the summits and pushes us toward the beautiful and the good. It is the law of progress, of eternal evolution, which guides humanity across the ages and spurs each one of us on. For humanity in all ages is composed of the same souls. They come from century to century, to follow in new bodies their work of self-perfection, until they are ripened for better worlds. The history of one soul does not greatly differ from that of all humanity; the ladder only differs, the ladder of relative proportions. Spirit moulds matter; it communicates its life and beauty. So evolution is par excellence the aesthetic law. The forms we have acquired are the point of departure for more beautiful forms. Yesterday prepares tomorrow. The past gives birth to the future. The human work reflects the word divine which will blossom in more beautiful and perfect form.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book, questions 776-778 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Denis, Leon. Life and Destiny, Love, Chap IX, SAB 2002.

OBJETIVES:

- To indicate the two main types of progress.
- To justify why moral progress does not necessarily follow intellectual progress.
- To characterize the main obstacles to the march of progress.
- To establish the difference between a complete civilization and intellectually advanced people.
- To qualify the features of an evolved civilization.
- To explain the necessity of the human laws.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall a brainstorm on the following expressions:
Moral versus intellectual progress and civilization.
2. Divide the class in two groups.

GROUP I - March of Progress. Read questions/answers 365, 751, 779-780 and 785 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec and address the following questions:

- a. Why is moral progress harder to be achieved that the intellectual one?
- b. Why evolution is a gradual, rather than sudden, process.
- c. What are the greatest obstacles to progress? Justify.

365. How comes it that some men, who are very intelligent, which shows that they have in them a spirit of considerable advancement, are also extremely vicious?

"It is because the spirit incarnated in a man is not sufficiently purified, and the man yields to the influence of other spirits still worse than himself. The upward progress of a spirit is accomplished by slow degrees; but this progress does not take place simultaneously in all directions. At one period of his career he may advance in knowledge, at another in morality."

751. How is it that the custom of infanticide prevails among peoples of considerable intellectual advancement, and is even recognised as allowable by their laws?

"Intellectual development is not always accompanied by moral rectitude. A spirit may advance in intelligence, and yet remain wicked; for he may have lived a long time without having improved morally, and gained knowledge, without acquiring moral purification."

779. Does man contain in himself the force that impels him onward in the path of progress, or is his progress only the product of instruction?

"Man is developed of himself, naturally. But all men do not progress at the same rate, nor in the same manner; and it is thus that most advances are made to help forward the others, through social contact."

780. Does moral progress always follow intellectual progress?

"It is a consequence of the latter, but does not always follow it immediately." (192-365.)

- How can intellectual progress lead to moral progress?

"By making man comprehend good and evil; he can then choose between them. The development of free-will follows the development of the intelligence and increases the responsibility of human action."

- How comes it, then, that the most enlightened nations are often the most perverted?

"Complete and integral progress is the aim of existence; but nations, like individuals, only reach it step by step. Until the moral sense is developed in them, they may even employ their intelligence in doing evil. Moral sense and intellect are two forces which only arrive at equilibrium in the long run." (365-751.)

785. What is the greatest obstacle to progress?

"Pride and selfishness. I refer to moral progress; for intellectual progress is always going on, and would even seem, at the first glance, to give redoubled activity to those vices, by developing ambition and the love of riches, which, however, in their turn, stimulate man to the researches that enlighten his mind, for it is thus that all things are linked together, in the moral world as in the physical world, and that good is brought even out of evil; but this state of things will only last for a time, and will change, as men become aware of that, beyond the circle of terrestrial enjoyments, there is a happiness infinitely greater and infinitely more lasting."

There are two kinds of progress, that mutually aid one another, and yet do not proceed side by side intellectual progress, and moral progress. Among civilized peoples the first is receiving, at the present day, abundant encouragement; and it has accordingly reached a degree of advancement unknown to past ages. The second is very far from having reached the same point; although, if we compare the social usages of periods separated by a few centuries, we are compelled to admit that progress has also been made in this direction. Why then should the ascensional movement stop short in the region of morality any more than of intelligence? Why should there not be as great a difference between the morality of the nineteenth and the twenty-fourth centuries as between that of the fourteenth and the nineteenth? To doubt of the continuity of moral progress would be to assume either that the human race reached the summit of perfection, which would be absurd, or that it is not morally perfectible, which is disproved by experience.

GROUP II - Civilization. Read questions/answers 790-797 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec and address the following questions:

- a. What is the difference between complete civilization and peoples who are intellectually advanced?
- b. What are the signs of an evolved civilization?
- c. What is the need for Human laws?

- d. Could civilization be a state of decadence as some philosophers say?
- e. Why cannot the current civilization be ruled under the natural laws?
- f. Why are the human laws subjected to changes?
- g. In which moral code shall Humans base themselves in order to achieve an evolved and complete civilization?

790. *Is civilization a progress, or, according to some philosophers, a decadence, of the human race?*

"A progress, but incomplete. Mankind does not pass suddenly from infancy to the age of reason."

- Is it reasonable to condemn civilization?

"You should condemn those who misuse it, rather than condemn the work of God."

791. *Will civilization be eventually purified, so that the evils caused by it will disappear?*

"Yes, when man's moral nature shall be as fully developed as his intelligence. The fruit cannot come before the flower."

792. *Why does not civilization produce at once all the good it is capable of producing?*

"Because men are not as yet either ready or disposed to obtain that good."

- May it not be also because in creating new wants it excites new passions?

"Yes, and because all the faculties of a spirit do not progress together; everything takes time. You cannot expect perfect fruit from a civilization that is still incomplete." (751-780.)

793. *By what signs shall we know when a civilization has reached its apogee?*

"You will know it by its moral development. You believe yourselves to be considerably advanced, because you have made great discoveries and wonderful inventions, because you are better lodged and better clothed than the savages; but you will only have the right to call yourselves 'civilized' when you have banished from your society the vices that dishonour it, and when you live among yourselves like brothers, practicing Christian charity. Until then, you are merely enlightened nations, having traversed only the first phase of civilization"

Civilization has its degrees like everything else. An incomplete civilization is a state of transition which engenders special evils unknown to the primitive state; but it none the less constitutes a natural and necessary progress, which brings with it the remedy for the evils it occasions. In proportion as civilization becomes perfected. It puts an end to the ills it has engendered, and these ills disappear altogether with the advance of moral progress.

Of two nations which have reached the summit of the social scale, that one may be called the most advanced in which is found the smallest amount of selfishness, cupidity, and pride: in which the habits are more moral and intellectual than material; in which intelligence can develop itself most freely; in which there is the greatest amount of kindness, good faith, and reciprocal benevolence and generosity; in which the prejudices of caste and of birth are the least rooted, for those prejudices are incompatible with the true love of the neighbor; in which the laws sanction no privilege, and are the same for the lowest as for the highest; in which justice is administered with the least amount of partiality; in which the weak always finds support against the strong; in which human life, beliefs,

and opinions are most respected; in which there is the smallest number of the poor and the unhappy; and, finally, in which every man who is willing to work is always sure of the necessaries of life.

794. Would the laws of nature be sufficient for the regulation of human society, without the help of human laws?

"If the laws of nature were properly understood, and if men were willing to practice them, they would be sufficient. But society has its exigencies, and requires the co-operation of special laws."

795. *What is the cause of the instability of human laws?*

"In times of barbarism the laws were made by the strongest, who framed them to their own advantage. It has therefore become necessary to modify them, as men have acquired a clearer comprehension of justice. Human laws will become more stable in proportion as they approach the standard of true justice; that is to say, in proportion as they are made for all, and become identified with natural law."

Civilization has created for man new wants, and these wants are relative to the social state he has made for himself. He has found it necessary to regulate by human laws the rights and duties appertaining to this state but, influenced by his passions, he has often created rights and duties that are merely imaginary, that are contrary to natural law, and that every nation effaces from its code in proportion as it progresses. Natural law is immutable and the same for all; human law is variable and progressive; It alone could consecrate, in the infancy of human societies, the right of the strongest.

796. *Is not the severity of penal legislation a necessity in the present state of society?*

"A depraved state of society requires severe laws, but your laws, unhappily, aim rather at punishing wrong doing when done, than at drying-up the fountain-head of wrong doing. It is only education that can reform mankind; when that is done, you will no longer require laws of the same severity."

797. *How can the reform of human laws be brought about?*

"It will be brought about by the force of things, and by the influence of the men of greater advancement who lead the world onward in the path of progress. It has already reformed many abuses, and it will reform many more. Wait!"

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book, questions 365, 751, 779-797 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain how Spiritism will become a common belief in the future
- To analyze the influence of Spiritism on Human progress
- To understand the safest way that God gives man to achieve goodness

METHODS:

1. Begin with a brainstorm on the following question:
Can Spiritism help human progress? How?
2. Read questions/answers 798-802 of *The Spirits' Book* by Allan Kardec and, after discussion, ask participants to address the following questions:
 - i. What sort of difficulties will Spiritism face in order to become a common belief?
 - ii. What should be done that Spiritism can reach out to the greatest number of people?
 - iii. Give examples of different ways to combat materialism.
 - iv. Why wasn't Spiritism revealed in more ancient times?

798. Will Spiritism become the general belief, or will its acceptance remains confined to the few?

"It will certainly become the general belief, and will mark a new era in the history of the human race, because it belongs to the natural order of things, and because the time has come for it to be ranked among the branches of human knowledge. It will nevertheless have to withstand a good many violent attacks-attacks that will be prompted rather by interest than by conviction, for you must not lose sight of the fact that there are persons whose interest is to combat this belief, some from self-conceit, others from worldly considerations; but its opponents, finding themselves in a decreasing minority, will at length be obliged to rally to the general opinion, on pain of rendering themselves ridiculous."

Ideas are only transformed in the long run, never suddenly. Erroneous ideas become weakened in the course of successive generations, and finish by disappearing, little by little, with those who professed them, and who are replaced by other individuals imbued with new ideas, as is the case in regard to political principles. Look at paganism: there is certainly no one, in our day, who professes the religious ideas of pagan times; and yet, for several centuries after the advent of Christianity, they left traces that could only be effaced by the complete renovation of the races who held them. It will be the same with Spiritism; it will make considerable progress, but there will remain, during two or three generations, a leaven of incredulity that only time will be able to destroy. Nevertheless, its progress will be more rapid than that of Christianity, because it is Christianity itself that opens the road for it and furnishes its basis and support. Christianity had to destroy; Spiritism has only to build up.

799. *In what way can Spiritism contribute to progress?*

"By destroying materialism, which is one of the sores of society, and thus making men understand where their true interest lies. The future life being no longer veiled by doubt, men will understand more clearly that they can insure the happiness of their future by their action in the present life. By destroying the prejudices of sects, castes, and colours, it teaches men the large solidarity that will, one day, unite them as brothers."

800. *Is it not to be feared that Spiritism may fail to triumph over the carelessness of men and their attachment to material things?*

"To suppose that any cause could transform mankind as by enchantment would show a very superficial knowledge of human nature. Ideas are modified little by little, according to the differences of individual character, and several generations are needed for the complete effacing of old habits. The transformation of mankind can therefore only be effected in the course of time, gradually, and by the contagion of example. With each new generation, a part of the veil is melted away; Spiritism is come to dissipate it entirely. But, meantime, if it should do no more than cure a man of a single defect, it would have led him to take a step forward, and would thus have done him great good, for the taking of this first step will render all his subsequent steps easier."

801. *Why have not spirits taught, from the earliest times, what they are teaching at the present day?*

"You do not teach to children what you teach to adults, and you do not give to a new-born babe the food which he could not digest; there is a time for all things. Spirits have taught many things that men have not understood or have perverted, but that they are now capable of understanding aright. Through their teaching in the past, however incomplete, they have prepared the ground to receive the seed which is now about to fructify."

802. *Since Spiritism is to mark a progress on the part of the human race, why do not spirits hasten this progress by manifestations so general and so patent as to carry conviction to the most incredulous?*

"You always want miracles; but God sows miracles by handfuls under your feet, and yet you still have men who deny their existence. Did Christ Himself convince His contemporaries by the prodigies He accomplished? Do you not see men, at this day, denying the most evident of facts, though occurring under their very eyes? Have you not among you some who say that they would not believe, even though they saw? No; it is not by prodigies that God wills to bring men back to the truth; He wills, in His goodness, to leave to them the merit of convincing themselves through the exercise of their reason."

3. Coordinator shall give final conclusions on the influence of Spiritism on Progress.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 798-802 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain why it is necessary that humans live in society
- To identify human progress in social relationship
- To justify why life in isolation is not compatible with the spiritist teachings
- To describe the spiritual consequences of life in isolation and in the vow of silence
- To understand how human conduct should be in the world

METHODS:

1. The coordinator shall start with an activity in pairs. Propose that each pair list five reasons why they think life is more joyful when lived in society. Then, they shall discuss advantages and disadvantages of living in isolation.
2. Coordinator shall give an introduction on the gregarious forces of nature. Think of the microscopic world and the macroscopic one.
3. Divide the class in two groups:

GROUP I – The Need for Social Life. Read the following excerpt of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec (questions/answers 766-768), discuss them with your group and then address the following answers:

- a. Why is it necessary to live in society?
- b. How can the social interchange be means of progress?

766. Is social life founded in nature?

"Certainly; God has made man for living in society. It is not without a purpose that God has given to man the faculty of speech and the other faculties necessary to the life of relation."

767. Is absolute isolation contrary to the law of nature?

"Yes, since man instinctively seeks society, and since all men are intended to help forward the work of progress by aiding one another."

768. Does man, in seeking society, only yield to a personal feeling, or is there, in this feeling, a wider providential end?

"Man must progress; he cannot do so alone, because, as he does not possess all faculties, he needs the contact of other men. In isolation he becomes brutified and etiolated."

No man possesses the complete range of faculties. Through social union men complete one another, and thus mutually secure their well-being and progress. It is because they need each other's help that they have been formed for living in society, and not in isolation.

769. We can understand that the taste for social life, as a general principle, should be founded in nature, as are all other tastes; but why should a taste for absolute isolation be regarded as blameable, if a man finds satisfaction in it?

"Such satisfaction can only be a selfish one. There are also men who find satisfaction in getting drunk; do you approve of them? A mode of life, by the adoption of which you condemn yourselves not to be useful to any one, cannot be pleasing to God."

GROUP II – Life in Isolation/Vow of Silence. Read the following excerpt of The Gospel Explained by Spiritism by Allan Kardec (Chapter 17, item 17), discuss them with your group and then address the following answers:

- a. Why is life in isolation against human nature?
- b. What are the moral consequences of life in isolation as the one adopted by some religious people?
- c. Why does the progress of society demand that humans live gregariously?
- d. Explain why the vow of silence is not a virtue.
- e. Tell the importance of living accordingly to our present time.

THE WORLDLY PERSON

A sentiment of pity should always animate the hearts of those who gather together under the eye of the Lord, imploring the assistance of the Good Spirits. Therefore purify your hearts. Do not allow yourselves to be perturbed by futile and mundane thoughts. Lift up your Spirits towards those you are calling, so that they, having encountered favorable dispositions, may launch a profusion of seeds which should germinate in your hearts so as to produce the fruits of charity and justice.

Do not think, however, that in constantly urging you to pray and meditate we wish you to lead the life of a mystic, or that you should maintain yourselves outside the laws of the society in which you are condemned to reside. No. You must dwell with the people of your time in the manner in which they live. Sacrifice wants, even frivolities of the day, but sacrifice them with a pure sentiment which can sanctify them.

You are called upon to be in contact with Spirits of diverse natures and opposite characters.

Do not enter into conflict with anyone with whom you may find yourself. Always be happy and content, with the happiness which comes from a clear conscience and the contentment of one who will inherit Heaven and is counting the days till they receive their inheritance.

Virtue does not consist of having a severe and gloomy appearance, or in repelling the pleasures which the human condition permits. It is sufficient to refer all your acts to God, Who gave you your life. It is enough that at the commencement and at the end of each task you lift up your thoughts to the Creator, asking Him with a heartfelt impulse for His protection in order to execute the work, or His blessing on its termination. On doing

anything at all, take your thoughts up to that Supreme Source. Do nothing without first thinking of God, so that this thought may come to purify and sanctify your acts.

Perfection, as Christ said, is only to be found in the practice of unlimited charity, since the duties of charity cover all social positions from the most lowly to the most elevated. The person who lives in isolation will have no means of exercising charity. It is only by being in contact with one's fellow creatures, in painful battle, that we are able to find occasion to practice it. The one who isolates himself therefore is entirely deprived of the most powerful means of perfection. In only having to think of oneself, life becomes that of a selfish person. (See chapter 5, item 26.)

Therefore do not imagine that in order to be in constant contact with us, to live under the watchful eye of God, you must wear a hair shirt and cover yourselves with ashes. No, no, and yet again no! Be happy within the picture of human needs, but in this happiness never allow a thought or an act which could offend God, or cause a shadow to fall upon the face of those who love you or direct you. God is love and He blesses all who sanctify their own love. - A Protecting Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863).

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 766-769 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Kardec, Allan. "The Gospel Explained by Spiritism", chapter 17, item 10, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define life in family.
- To explain the importance of life in family.
- To point out the difference between physical and spiritual ties.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator shall ask participants to read together the following text. After reading it, let them brainstorm on the main ideas of the text.

NATURAL SOLUTION

The spiritual benefactors do not know any more how to help the poor obsessed woman.

Persecutor and pursued were mentally associated as a pulp and rind in a fruit.

The disincarnated friends tried to move the obsessor away by inducing the woman to forget about him, but it was all in vain.

If she stumbled in the street, she thought of him...

If she pinned her finger at work, she attributed it to him...

If her husband was irritated, she said she was being victimized by the invisible executioner...

If she had a headache, she blamed it on the obsessor...

If a cup broke during house cleaning, she imagined herself being attacked by him...

If any financial difficulty appeared, she would transform her prayer in criticism to the unhappy disincarnate...

Observing that the woman could not encounter freedom due to her stubbornness, the spiritual instructors bond both – the sick woman and the invisible companion – in deeper fluidic ties until he was reborn as her son in need for compassion and care.

The benefactors finally rested.

The obsessor also rested.

The obsessed woman rested.

Her husband also rested.

Often, the solution is to transform obsessor into the parents' children with the Divine Providence's blessings in order to bring peace to the hearts and equilibrium at home.

By Hilário Silva (spirit)

Through the mediumship of Francisco C. Xavier (from the book *Vida e Sexo*)

2. Then, coordinator shall propose discussion on the following questions/answers of The Spirits' Book (773-775):

773. Why is it that, among the animals, parents and children forget each other, when the latter no longer need the care of the former?

"The life of the animals is material life, but not moral life. The tenderness of the dam for her young is prompted by the instinct of preservation in regard to the beings born of her. When these beings are able to take care of themselves, her task is done; nature asks no more of her, and she therefore abandons them in order to busy herself with those that come afterwards."

774. Some persons have inferred, from the abandonment of the young of animals by their parents, that the ties of family, among mankind, are merely a result of social customs, and not a law of nature; what is to be thought of this inference?

"Man has another destiny than of the animals; why, then, should you always be trying!g to assimilate him to them ? There is, in man, something more than physical wants; there is the necessity of progressing. Social ties are necessary to progress; and social ties are drawn closer by family-ties. For this reason, family-ties are a law of nature. God has willed that men should learn, through them, to love one another as brothers." (205.)

775. What would be the effect upon society of the relaxation of family-ties?

"A relapse into selfishness."

1. Now, propose participants to read the following excerpt of The Gospel Explained by Spiritism (Chapter 14, item 8). After reading it, coordinator shall guide participants to address the following questions:

- 1- Are the spirits that incarnate in the same family always sympathetic to one another?
- 2- What should be the parents' behavior toward their rebellious children?

- 3- What are the means that parents should use to encourage moral and intellectual progress of their children?
- 4- In what manner does the Spiritism contribute to family education?
- 5- What are the differences between corporeal and spiritual relationship?
- 6- If parents and children do not belong to one another, what is the important that should be give to the terrestrial family?
- 7- What should be understood by universal family?

CORPOREAL RELATIONSHIP AND SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP

Blood ties do not necessarily create bonds between Spirits. The body comes from the body. But the Spirit does not proceed from the Spirit, since the Spirit already existed before the formation of the body. The parents do not create the Spirit of the child; they do nothing more than supply the material wrapping, although it is their duty to help the intellectual and moral development of their child, in order to further its progress.

Those incarnated in the same family, especially as close relations, are as often as not congenial Spirits linked by past relationships, which express themselves during their earthly lives by their reciprocated affections. But it can also happen that these people are complete strangers to each other, or they may be distant from each other due to past aversions which while on Earth are translated into mutual antagonisms which serve as probations. The real family ties are not those of blood then, but those of mutual sympathy and the communion of ideas which hold spirits together, *before, during and after* their incarnations. From this it follows that two people born of different parents may be more like brothers or sisters than if they were of the same blood. They can attract each other, search for each other and so feel happy together; whereas two blood brothers may be repelled by each other, as is frequently seen. This moral problem is one that only Spiritism can resolve through the explanation of the plurality of existences. (See chapter 4, item 13.)

So, there are two kinds of families: *Families through spiritual ties and families through bodily ties*. In the first case these ties are durable and strengthen with purification, perpetuating in the spiritual worlds by means of the various migrations of the soul. In the second case, the ties are as fragile as the physical body itself, extinguishing with them and in many instances dissolving morally even in the actual existence. This was what Jesus was trying to make comprehensible when He said to His disciples: "Here is my mother and my brothers by spiritual ties, because all those who do the bidding of My Father, who is in Heaven, are my brothers, my sisters and my mother."

The hostility felt by His blood brothers is clearly expressed in this narrative from Saint Mark, when it says that they had intentions of laying their hands on Jesus, under the pretext that He had *lost His Spirit*, or gone out of His mind. On being informed of their arrival and knowing full well the sentiments they harbored against Him it was only natural for Jesus, speaking in spiritual terms, to refer to His disciples as His brothers and sisters. Although His mother was accompanying His brothers, Jesus generalized the

teachings which in no way implies He intended to declare that His mother, according to the physical body, was nothing to Him in spirit nor that she deserved only indifference, as He proved on many occasions.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. “The Spirit’s Book”, questions 773-775 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Kardec, Allan. “The Gospel Explained by Spiritism”, chapter 14, item 8, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify in work a divine or natural law.
- To explain why work is one of the means of human progress.
- To compare the nature of work in less and more evolved.
- To comment about the limit of work and need of rest.
- To interpret the following biblical situation according to Spiritism - Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27 and Luke 13:14-17

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall begin with a brainstorm on the following questions:

- Why is work a natural law?
- What should be the limit of work?
- Why is rest as necessary as work?

2. Divide participants in two groups:

Group I - The Necessity of Work. Read questions/answers 674 – 681 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec and address the following questions:

1. What should be understood of work?
2. In which situation can work be considered an expiation?
3. What the main objective of work? Justify
4. Why does the nature of work may be different in more evolved worlds?
5. How can one explain the condition of people that are physically and intellectually impeded from working?
6. Why is work a human necessity?
7. How can a severely handicap person work?
8. What is the difference between the work performed by animal and human?
9. Should a materially rich person be exempt from work? Why?
10. In which situation is men impeded from work?
11. Why would idleness be a torture/torment?

674. Is work a requirement of the law of nature?

"Work is a law of nature, which is proved by the fact that it is necessary for survival and that the maintenance of civilization requires that you perform it. Through work, you provide for both your needs and your enjoyments."

675. Should we understand that "work" only defines material occupations?

"No; the spirit works, just as the body does. Every sort of useful occupation is work."

676. Why do we have to work?

"Because of your physical nature, and because through work you develop your intelligence. Without work, you would remain children intellectually. This is why God has arranged it so that you owe your food, your safety, and your well-being entirely to your labor and activity."

677. Why does nature provide for all the needs of animals?

"Everything in nature is in a constant state of activity. Animals, too, have their tasks, but their 'work' is limited to the furthering of their own preservation. Unlike human beings, whose work is aimed at both self-preservation and intellectual development, animals do not intentionally work to promote progress. Unknowingly, however, animals fulfill their share in the divine plan. Humans often don't realize the extent of animals' contribution to the work of nature."

678. Are the inhabitants of realms more evolved than Earth subject to the same need to work?

"The nature of work is always related to the needs it supplies. The less material those needs are, the less material is the work. But do not suppose that the inhabitants of those realms are inactive and useless. Idleness would be a torture to them rather than an enjoyment."

679. Are the rich exempt from the law of work?

"From material work perhaps, but not from the obligation of becoming useful, according to their means, and of developing their own intelligence and that of others, which is work in itself. If God has given you enough wealth to assure your earthly existence and you do not have to win your bread by the sweat of your brow, your duty to make yourself useful to others is all the greater. Given much, you have a greater amount of time for doing good."

680. Aren't there some people who are incapable of working at anything whatever and whose existence is entirely useless?

"God is just and disapproves only of someone who is voluntarily useless. Such a person lives on the labor of others. God wills, however, that each of you make yourselves useful according to your abilities."

681. Does the law of nature require that children care for their parents?

"It does, just as it requires that parents work for their children. For this reason, God has placed in you the seed of filial and parental love. Through this

love, the members of a family are led to help each other - a duty that, in the present state of your society, you too often lose sight of."

Group II - The limits of work and the need of rest. Read questions/answers 682-685 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec and the following biblical citations (Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27 and Luke 13:14-17):

682. Since rest is always required after work, is it also a law of nature?

"Rest restores strength to the body. And it is necessary in order to give a little more freedom to the mind, enabling it to raise itself above matter."

683. What is the limit of work?

"The limit of your strength .But God gives you liberty to decide on this point individually."

684. What should we think about people who misuse their authority, overworking those under them?

"They commit one of the worst mistakes. If you exercise authority over others, you are answerable for any abuses of your responsibility. Such abuses are against the divine law."

685. Do we have a right to retire in old age?

"Yes, you are only obliged to work according to your strength."

What resources should there be for the elderly who need to support themselves but cannot do so?

"The strong should assist the weak. Where family help is unavailable, society should take its place. Such is the law of love and charity."

Biblical citations

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Mark 2

²⁷Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Luke 13

¹⁴Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

¹⁵The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? ¹⁶Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

3. Coordinator shall finish lesson with the reading of the following Kardec's comment extracted from question/answer 685 of The Spirits' Book.

To say that it is necessary for man to work is not to make a complete statement of the subject for it is also necessary that he who has to get his bread by labor should be able to find occupation, and this is far from being always the case whenever the suspension of labor becomes general, it assumes the proportions of a famine. Economic science seeks a remedy for this evil in the equilibrium of production and consumption: but this equilibrium, supposing it to be attainable, will always be subject to intermittences, and during these intervals the laborer must live. There is an element of the question which has not been sufficiently considered. viz., education, not merely the education of the intellect, not even that of the moral nature as given by books, but that which consists in the formation, of characters and habits; for education is the totality of the habits acquired. When we consider how great a mass of individuals are thrown each day into the torrent of population abandoned, without principles or curb. To the impulses of their animal instincts, can we wonder at the disastrous consequences thence resulting? When the art of education shall be rightly understood and practiced, each man will bring into the sphere of daily life habits of order and forethought for himself and for those dependent on him, and of respect for what is worthy of being respected ; and these habits will enable him to traverse periods of difficulty with greater ease. Disorder and improvidence are social sores that can only be cured by education rightly understood; the generalization of such education is the starting-point and essential element of social wellbeing, the only pledge of security for all.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 674 –685, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

2. <http://www.bible.com/>

OBJECTIVES:

- To define destruction
- To establish the difference between necessary destruction and abusive destruction
- To explain why humans are instinctively afraid of death

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall begin with a brainstorm on the word DESTRUCTION.
2. In a big group discussion, start reading questions/answers 728 to 736 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec.
3. After that, participants shall address the following questions:
 1. What is the Spiritist concept of destruction?
 2. What is the difference between natural destruction and abusive destruction?
 3. What is the importance of the natural law of destruction?
 4. How useful are the "agents of destruction" as cited in the text?
 5. Why are human beings afraid of death?
 6. Why isn't destruction identical in all worlds?
 7. What are the consequences of abusive destruction on Nature and Mankind?

728. Is destruction a law of nature?

"It is necessary that all things should be destroyed that they may be re-born and regenerated; for what you call destruction is only a transformation, the aim of which is the renewing and amelioration of living beings."

- The instinct of destruction would seem, then, to have been given to living beings for providential purposes?

"God's creatures are the instruments which He uses for working out His ends. Living beings destroy each other for food; thus maintaining equilibrium in reproduction, which might otherwise become excessive, and also utilizing the materials of their external envelopes. But it is only this envelope that is ever destroyed, and this envelope is only the accessory, and, not the essential part, of a thinking being; the essential part is the intelligent principle which is indestructible, and which is elaborated in the course of the various metamorphoses that it undergoes."

729. If destruction be necessary for the regeneration of beings, why does nature surround them with the means of self-preservation?

"In order that their destruction may not take place before the proper time. Destruction that occurs too soon retards the development of the intelligent principle. It is for this reason that God has given to each being the desire to live and to reproduce itself."

730. Since death is to lead us to a better life, and since it delivers us from the ills of our present existence, and is therefore to be rather desired than dreaded, why has man the instinctive horror of death which causes him to shrink from it?

"We have said that man should seek to prolong his life in order to accomplish his task. To this end God has given him the instinct of self-preservation, and this instinct sustains him under all his trials; but for it, he would too often abandon himself to discouragement. The inner voice, which tells him to repel death, tells him also that he may yet do something more for his advancement. Every danger that threatens him is a warning that bids him make a profitable use of the respite granted to him by God; but he, ungrateful, gives thanks more often to his 'star' than to his Creator."

731. Why has nature placed agents of destruction side by side with the means of preservation?

"We have already told you that it is in order to maintain equilibrium, and to serve as a counterpoise. The malady and the remedy are placed side by side."

732. Is the need of destruction the same in all worlds?

"It is proportioned to the more or less material state of each world; it ceases altogether in worlds of higher physical and moral purity. In worlds more advanced than yours, the conditions of existence are altogether different."

733. Will the necessity of destruction always exist for the human race of this earth?

"The need of destruction diminishes in man in proportion as his spirit obtains ascendancy over matter. Consequently, you see that intellectual and moral development is always accompanied by a horror of destruction."

734. Has man, in his present state, an unlimited right of destruction in regard to animals?

"That right is limited to providing for his food and his safety; no abuse can be a matter of right."

735. What is to be thought of destruction that goes beyond the limits of needs and of safety; of hunting, for instance, when it has no useful aim, and is resorted to from no other motive than the pleasure of killing?

"It is a predominance of bestiality over the spiritual nature. All destruction that goes beyond the limits of your needs is a violation of the law of God. The animals only destroy according to the measure of their necessities; but man, who has free-will, destroys unnecessarily. He will be called to account for thus abusing the freedom accorded to him; for, in so doing, he yields to evil instincts from which he ought to free himself."

736. Are those peoples especially meritorious who, in regard to the taking of animal life, carry their scrupulousness to excess?

"Their sentiment in regard to this matter, though laudable in itself, being carried to excess, becomes an abuse in its turn; and its merit, moreover, is neutralised by abuses of many other sorts. That sentiment, on their part, is the result of superstitious fear, rather than of true gentleness."

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 728-736, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To describe all kinds of destructive calamities
- To understand the importance of destructive calamities for humanity
- To analyze the moral consequence of wars.

METHODS:

1. Begin by asking the participants to give examples of destructive calamities.
2. Divide the class in two groups. Ask them to read their texts and prepare a summary on them to be presented to the other group.

GROUP I - **Destructive Calamities**. Read and discuss questions 737 - 741 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Prepare a summary of it to be presented to the other group.

737. What is the aim of God in visiting mankind with destructive calamities?

"To make men advance more quickly. Have we not told you that destruction is necessary to the moral regeneration of spirits, who accomplish a new step of their purification in each new existence? In order to appreciate any process correctly, you must see its results. You judge merely from your personal point of view, and you therefore regard those inflictions as calamities, because of the temporary injury they cause you; but such upsets are often needed in order to make you reach more quickly a better order of things, and to effect, in a few years, what you would otherwise have taken centuries to accomplish." (744.)

738. Could not God employ other methods than destructive calamities for effecting the amelioration of mankind?

"Yes; and He employs them every day, for He has given to each of you the means of progressing through the knowledge of good and evil. It is because man profits so little by those other means, that it becomes necessary to chastise his pride, and to make him feel his weakness."

- But the good man succumbs under the action of these scourges, as does the wicked; is this just?

"During his earthly sojourn, man measures everything by the standard of his bodily life; but, after death, he judges differently, and feels that the life of the body, as we have often told you, is a very small matter. A century in your world is but the length of a flash in

eternity, and therefore the sufferings of what you call days, months, or years, are of no importance; let this be a lesson for your future use. Spirits are the real world, pre-existent to, and surviving, everything else; they are the children of God, and the object of all His solicitude; and bodies are only the disguises under which they make their appearances in the corporeal world. In the great calamities that decimate the human race, the sufferers are like an army that, in the course of a campaign, sees its clothing tattered, worn out, or lost. The general is more anxious about his soldiers than about their coats."

- But the victims of those scourges are none the less victims?

"If you considered an earthly life as it is in itself, and how small a thing it is in comparison with the life of infinity, you would attach to it much less importance. Those victims will find, in another existence, an ample compensation for their sufferings, if they have borne them without murmuring."

739. Are destructive calamities useful physically notwithstanding the temporary evils occasioned by them?

"Yes, they sometimes change the state of a country, but the good that results from them is often one that will be felt by future generations."

740. May not such calamities also constitute for man a moral trial, compelling him to struggle with the hardest necessities of his lot?

"They are always trials, and, as such, they furnish him with the opportunity of exercising his intelligence, of proving his patience and his resignation to the will of God, and of displaying his sentiments of abnegation, disinterestedness, and love for his neighbor, if he be not under the dominion of selfishness."

741. Is it in man's power to avert the scourges that now afflict him?

"Yes, a part of them; but not as is generally supposed. Many of those scourges are the consequence of his want of foresight; and, in proportion as he acquires knowledge and experience, he becomes able to avert them, that is to say, he can prevent their occurrence when he has ascertained their cause. But, among the ills that afflict humanity, there are some, of a general nature which are imposed by the decrees of Providence, and the effect of which is felt, more or less sensibly, by each individual. "To these, man can oppose nothing but his resignation to the divine will, though he can, and often does, aggravate their painfulness by his negligence."

GROUP II – War. Read and discuss questions 742 - 745 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Prepare a summary of it to be presented to the other group.

742. What is the cause that impels man to war?

"The predominance of the animal nature over the spiritual nature, and the desire of satisfying his passions. In the barbaric state, the various peoples know no other right than that of the strongest; and their normal condition is, therefore, that of war. As men progress, war becomes less frequent, through their avoidance of the causes which lead to it; and when it becomes inevitable) they wage it more humanely."

743. Will wars ever cease on the earth?

"Yes; when men comprehend justice, and practice the law of God; all men will then be brothers."

744. What has been the aim of Providence in making war necessary?

"Freedom and progress."

- If war is destined to bring us freedom, how does it happen that its aim and upshot are so often the subjugation of the people attacked?

"Such subjugation is only momentary, and is permitted in order to weary the nations of servitude, and thus to urge them forward more rapidly."

745. What is to be thought of him who stirs up war for his own profit?

"Such one is deeply guilty, and will have to undergo many corporal existences in order to expiate all the murders caused by him; for he will have to answer for every man who has been killed for the satisfaction of his ambition."

3. Now, after each group presented their synopsis, ask participants to address the following questions in order to recapitulate the study of both groups:

- a. In which way the natural calamities contribute to Humankind's evolution?
- b. What are the physical and moral benefits that destructive calamities bring about to humankind?
- c. How can mankind take precautions from or prevent calamities in general?
- d. Is there justice in the destructive calamities once both good and bad people fall? Explain.
- e. Why do wars still happen in our Planet?
- f. How can we contribute to Peace on Earth?
- g. What is the spiritist view of suffering?
- h. What is the difference between natural calamities and the ones caused by Mankind?
- i. Explain why collective atonement (expiation) may represent the reparation of previous faults.
- j. Explain the affirmative: "Fundamentally considered, suffering is a law of equilibrium and education."
- k. What are the other ways of human progress besides suffering?

4. To conclude this lesson, coordinator shall ask one participant to read the following text from the book Genesis by Allan Kardec:

TIME HAS COME

9. Yes, certainly, humanity change, as it has changed at other times; and each transformation is marked by a crisis which is, for mankind, similar to the crises of the growth of individuals. These transformations are frequently sorrowful and painful, and take along with them generations of people and institutions; nevertheless, they are always followed by a phase of material and moral progress.

“Because earthly Humanity has reached one of these periods of growth, it has been working vigorously at its transformation for nearly a century. Whence we see it stirring from side to side, as if captured by some kind of fever and propelled by an invisible force. In such a state it will remain until it has again stabilized itself on its new foundation. Whoever shall see it then will find it greatly changed in its habits and character, in its laws and beliefs; in short, in all its social state.

One thing that will seem strange to you, although it is the absolute truth, is that the world of the spirits, a world that surrounds you, experiences the aftershocks of all commotions that agitate the world of incarnate beings. I even say that the former takes an active role in these commotions. This fact should bring no surprise to those who know that the Spirits comprise of one body with humanity; that they may leave it, but must eventually return to it. It is thus natural that they should take an interest in the movements that occur among mankind. Be certain that when a social revolution takes place on Earth, it agitates the invisible world alike, wherein all passions, good and bad, are intensified. Just as it happens among yourselves, inexpressible effervescence starts to reign among the community of spirits that still belong to your world and that await the moment to return to it.

As everything is linked together in Nature, to the agitation of incarnate and discarnate beings, quite often, it is added the disturbances of the physical elements as well. Whence, for a while there exists a true general confusion, which passes through like a hurricane. Henceforward heaven reacquires its usual serenity and Humanity, reconstituted on its new basis and imbued with new ideas, proceeds with its new phase of progress.

It is within this period that is now in progress that Spiritism will flourish and bear its fruits. Thus, you are working more for the future than for the present. Still, it was necessary to prepare the work in advance, as it prepares the way for regeneration, through unification and rationality of beliefs. Blessed are those who profit from it today. So much will be gained and so many sorrows avoided.” *Dr. Barry*

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. “The Spirit’s Book”, questions 737-741 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Kardec, Allan. “Genesis”, chapter 18, item 9, edited by the Spiritist Alliance for Books..

OBJECTIVES:

- To define instinct and intelligence.
- To establish the difference between them.
- To explain what is instinct and its purpose.

METHODS:

1. Begin with a brainstorm on: *What is the difference between instinct and intelligence?*
2. Coordinator introduces concepts according to Genesis, Chapter III, items 11 to 12.
3. Organize a big group discussion on questions 702 – 710 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Coordinator will distribute one question of the above to a pair of participants. The pair shall think about the question and try to address it to the big group. Then, coordinator presents the Spirits' answer as stated in The Spirits' Book.

702. Is the instinct of self-preservation a law of nature?

"Undoubtedly so. It is given to all living creatures, whatever their degree of intelligence; in some it is purely mechanical, in others it is allied to reason."

703. To what end has God given the instinct of self-preservation to all living beings?

"They are all necessary to the working out of the providential plans; and therefore God has given them the desire to live. And besides, life is a necessary condition of the improvement of beings; they feel this instinctively, without understanding it."

704. Has God, while giving to man the desire to live, always furnished him with the means of doing so?

"Yes; and if man does not always find them, it is because he does not know how to avail himself of the resources around him. God could not implant in man the love of life, without giving him the means of living; and He has accordingly endowed the earth with a capacity of production sufficient to furnish all its inhabitants with the necessaries of life. It is only that which is necessary that is useful; that which is superfluous is never useful."

705. Why does not the earth always produce enough to provide mankind with the necessaries of life?

"It is because man ungratefully neglects that excellent nursing-mother! Moreover, he often accuses nature of what is the result of his own unskilfulness or want of forethought. The earth would always produce the necessaries of life, if men could content them-selves therewith. If it does not suffice for all his wants, it is because men employ, in superfluities, what should be devoted to the supply of necessaries. Look at the Arab in the

desert; he always finds enough to live upon, because he does not create for himself factitious needs; but when half the products of the earth are wasted in satisfying fanciful desires, ought man to be astonished if he afterwards runs short, and has he any reason to complain if he finds himself unprovided for when a famine occurs? I repeat it; nature is not improvident, but man does not know how to regulate his use of her gifts."

706. By the term 'fruits of the earth,' should we understand merely the products of the soil?

"The soil is the original source of all other productions, which are, in reality, only a transformation of the products of the soil; for that reason, by 'fruits of the earth' are to be understood everything enjoyed by man in his corporeal life."

707. There are always persons who lack the means of existence, even in the midst of abundance. Who is to blame for this?

"In some cases, the selfishness which too often prevents men from being just to others; in other cases, and most often, themselves. Christ has said, 'Seek, and ye shall find;' but these words do not imply that you have only to cast your eyes on the ground in order to find all that you may desire, but rather that you must seek for what you want, and not indolently, but with ardor and perseverance, and without allowing yourselves to be discouraged by obstacles that are often only a means of putting your constancy, patience, and firmness to the proof." (534.)

708. Are there not social positions in which the will is powerless to obtain the means of existence, and in which the privation of the barest necessities of life is a consequence of the force of circumstances?

"Yes; but such a position is a trial which, however severe, the party who is subjected to it knew, in the spirit-state that he would have to undergo. His merit will result from his submission to the will of God, if his intelligence does not furnish him with the means of freeing himself from his troubles. If death supervenes, he should meet it without a murmur, remembering that the hour of his deliverance is approaching, and that any yielding to despair at the last moment may cause him to lose the fruit of his previous resignation."

709. In critical situations men have been reduced to devour their fellow--men, as the only means of saving themselves from starvation. Have they, in so doing, committed a crime? And if so, is their crime lessened by the fact that it has been committed under the excitement of the instinct of self-preservation?

"I have already answered this question in saying that all the trials of life should be submitted to with courage and abnegation. In the cases you refer to there is both homicide and crime against nature; a double culpability that will receive double punishment."

710. In worlds in which the corporeal organization of living beings is of a purer nature than in the earth, do these need food?

"Yes; but their food is in keeping with their nature. Their aliments would not be substantial enough for your gross stomachs and, on the other hand, those beings could not digest your heavier food."

4. Coordinator shall conduct an overview of the study by asking participants to address the following questions:

- a. What is the use of the automatism that Spirits are subject since their origin?
- b. Do only human beings have intelligence?
- c. What do we understand by instinct of conservation?
- d. Why is the instinct of conservation a divine or natural law?
- e. How does the instinct of conservation favor human evolution?

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 702-710 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To establish a comparison between necessary and superfluous.
- To explain the means used by humankind to preserve and/or increase the social well-being.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall ask each participant to address the following question:
How do I collaborate with the social well-being?
2. Ask participants to form two groups:

GROUP I – Make a list of what you consider superfluous. Explain why.

GROUP II – Make a list of what you consider necessary to the social well-being. Explain why.

3. Now, coordinator shall ask groups to present their lists with explanations.
4. Form one group of discussion as you read questions/answers 715-717 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec.

715. How can men know the limit of what is necessary?

"Wise men know it by intuition; others learn it through experience, and to their cost."

716. Has not nature traced out the limit of our needs in the requirements of our organization?

"Yes, but man is insatiable. Nature has indicated the limits of his needs by his organization; but his vices have deteriorated his constitution, and created for him wants that are not real needs."

717. What is to be thought of those who monopolize the productions of the earth, in order to procure for themselves superfluities, at the expense of others who lack the necessities of life?

"They forget the law of God, and will have to answer for the privations they have caused others to endure."

There is no absolute boundary-line between the necessary and the superfluous. Civilization has created necessities that do not exist for the savage and the spirits who have dictated the foregoing precepts do not mean to assert that civilized men should live like the savage. All things are relative; and the function of reason is to determine the part to be allotted to each. Civilization develops the moral sense, and, at the same time, the sentiment of charity, which leads men to give to each other mutual support. Those who live at the expense of other men's privations monopolize the benefits of civilization for their own profit they have only the varnish of civilization, as others have only the mask of religion.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 715-717 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define 'self-imposed' suffering (Privation).
- To understand self-imposed suffering that give merit to the individual progress.
- To make comments regarding the importance, or not, to eat animal meat by Humankind.

METHODS:

1. Begin the study by asking the participants to answer the following questions (Brainstorm format):

- Define privation.
- Define voluntary privation.
- Give examples of voluntary privation that helps human progress.

2. In a big group discussion (or divided in two groups), read and discuss questions/answers 718 - 727 of *The Spirits' Book* by Allan Kardec. As a complementary material, read also the text from the *Gospel Explained by Spiritism* – "*Voluntary trials.*" - Chap V. item 26 by Allan Kardec.

Text 1- The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec

718. Does the law of self-preservation make it our duty to provide for our bodily wants?
"Yes; without physical health and strength, labour is impossible."

719. Is it blameable in a man to seek after the comforts and enjoyments of corporeal life?

"The desire of corporeal well-being is natural to man. God only prohibits excess, because excess is inimical to preservation; He has not made it a crime to seek after enjoyment, if that enjoyment be not acquired at another's expense, and if it be riot of a nature to weaken either your moral or your physical strength."

720. Are voluntary privations, in view of a voluntary expiation, meritorious in the sight of God?

"Do good to others, and you will thereby acquire more merit than is to be acquired by any self-imposed privations."

-Is any voluntary privation meritorious?

"Yes; the self-privation of useless indulgences, because it loosens man's hold on matter, and elevates his soul. What is meritorious is resistance to the temptation that solicits to excess or to indulgence in what is useless; it is the cutting down even of your necessities that you may have more to give to those who are in want. If your privations are only a vain pretence, they are a mere mockery."

721. At every period in the past, and among all peoples, there have been men who have lived a life of ascetic mortification; is such a life meritorious from any point of view?

"Ask yourselves to whom such a life is useful, and you will have the reply to your question. If such a life is only for him who leads it, and if it prevents him from doing good to others, it is only a form of selfishness, whatever the pretext with which it is coloured. True mortification, according to the dictates of Christian charity, is to impose privation and labour upon yourselves for the good of others."

722. Is there any foundation in reason for the abstinence from certain aliments practiced among various peoples?

"Whatever man can eat without injury to his health is permitted to him. Legislators may have prohibited certain aliments for some useful end, and, in order to give greater weight to their prohibitions, have represented them as emanating from God."

723. Is the use of animal food by man contrary to the law of nature?

"With your physical constitution, flesh is useful for nourishing flesh; without this kind of Sustenance man's strength declines. The law of preservation makes it a duty for man to keep up his health and strength, that he may fulfill the law of labor. He should therefore feed himself according to the requirements of his organization."

724. Is there any merit in abstinence from any particular kind of food, animal or other, when undergone as an expiation?

"Yes, if undergone for the sake of others; but God cannot regard as meritorious any Abstinence that does not impose a real privation and that has not a serious and useful aim. This is why we say that those whose fasting is only apparent are hypocrites." (720.)

725. What is to be thought of the mutilation of the bodies of men or of animals?

"What is the use of asking such a question? Ask yourselves, once for all, whether a thing is or is not useful. What is useless cannot be pleasing to God, and what is hurtful is always displeasing to Him. Be very sure that God is only pleased with the sentiments that raise the soul towards Him. It is by practicing His law, and not by violating it, that you can shake off your terrestrial matter."

726. If the sufferings of this world elevate us through the manner in which we bear them, are we elevated by those which we voluntarily create for ourselves?

"The only sufferings that can elevate you are those which come upon you naturally, because they are inflicted by God. Voluntary sufferings count for nothing when they are not useful to others. Do you suppose that those who shorten their lives by superhuman hardships, like the bonzes, fakirs, and fanatics of various sects, advance their progress

thereby? Why do they not rather labor for the good of their fellow-creatures? Let them clothe the naked; let them comfort those who mourn; let them work for the infirm; let them impose privations upon themselves for the sake of the unfortunate and the needy; and their life will be useful, and pleasing to God. When your voluntary sufferings are undergone only for yourselves, they are mere selfishness; when you suffer for others, you obey the law of charity. Such are the precepts of Christ."

727. If we ought not to create for ourselves voluntary sufferings that are of no use to others, ought we to endeavour to ward off from ourselves those which we foresee, or with which we are threatened?

"The instinct of self-preservation has been given to all beings to guard them against dangers and sufferings. Flagellate your spirit, and not your body; mortify your pride; stifle the selfishness that eats into the heart like a devouring worm; and you will do more for your advancement than you could do by any amount of macerations out of keeping with the age in which you are living."

TEXT-2 (From The Gospel According to Spiritism Chap V item 26 - FEB)

VOLUNTARY TRIALS. THE TRUE SELF-SACRIFICE

You ask me if it is licit for a man to lessen his own probation. This is equal to other questions such as: is it licit for a drowning man to save himself? Should he take a thorn from his hand? Should he call a doctor when he is ill? The reason behind our trials is to help us to use our intelligence, patience and resignation. It may happen that a man is born into a difficult and painful situation precisely to make him look for the means of alleviating these problems. The merit is in suffering the consequences that cannot be avoided without complaining, in persevering with the fight and in not allowing oneself to become desperate when one is not successful. It is never to be found in negligence, which is more laziness than virtue.

This quite naturally leads to another question: if Jesus said 'Blessed are the afflicted,' can merit be gained by seeking afflictions which could aggravate our trials by means of voluntary suffering? To this we can reply very decidedly: yes, there is great merit in this, provided the suffering and privation are of benefit to others; this is charity through suffering. But not when the suffering and privations are of benefit to the inflictor; this would only be fanatical selfishness.

It is necessary to make a clear distinction in this matter. Regarding yourself personally, be content with the trials and problems which God sends. Do not seek to increase this volume, as it alone may at times be extremely heavy to bear. Accept it without murmuring but with faith; that is all that God asks. Do not weaken your body with useless privations and mortifications that have no objective, because you will need all your strength if you are to fulfill your work here on Earth. To torture and martyr the body voluntarily is to go against God's Law. He has given Man the means to sustain life, so to weaken the body needlessly is true suicide. Use it, but do not abuse it; that is the law. The abuse of the best thing God has given you will bring inevitable consequences as a punishment. But quite the contrary occurs when Man imposes suffering upon himself in order to alleviate that of others. If you support cold and hunger with the object of offering heat and sustenance to another, thereby causing your body to be affected, you are making a sacrifice which God will bless.

When you leave your perfumed homes to go to an infected hovel so as to console, or dirty your hands to treat wounds, or lose sleep so as to hold vigil at the bedside of the sick, who after all are your brothers and sisters in God, or put your health in jeopardy for the purpose of practicing good, then it is here that you find your hair shirt, the true and blessed hair shirt. You have not allowed the delights of this world to shrivel your heart, nor have you slept upon the voluptuous breast of riches. Rather you have become a consoling angel to the sadly deserted. Therefore, what utility is served by those who retire from the world so as to avoid its seductions and live in isolation? Where is the courage to face their problems? They have merely run away from the fight and deserted the combat.

If you wish to make a sacrifice, then apply it to your soul and not to your body. Mortify your Spirit and not your flesh; whip your pride, receive humiliations without murmur, scourge yourself of self-love, harden yourself against the pain of insult and slander which is more pungent than physical pain. It is in these things that you find your true hair shirt, whose wounds will be taken into account because they will testify to your courage and submission to God's Will. - A GUARDIAN ANGEL (Paris, 1863).

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 718-727 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Kardec, Allan. "The Gospel Explained by Spiritism", chapter 5, item 26, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand our equality among humankind before God.
- To explain the reasons why we have different attitudes.
- To tell why men and women should be considered equal.
- To identify the need of the diversity of experiences for the Spirit who goes through reincarnations in different sexes.

METHODS:

1. Brainstorm on the question: *Can all Human beings be considered equal? How?*
2. Coordinator shall give a brief introduction on history of Human rights.
3. Divide participants in two groups:

Group I: Natural Equality, Inequality of Aptitudes. Read questions/answers 803 to 805 of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec. Prepare a presentation of a summary addressing the following points:

- Understand our equality before God.
- Explain the reasons why we have different aptitudes.

803. Are all men equal in the sight of God?

"Yes, all tend towards the same goal; and God has made His laws for the equal good of all. You often say, 'The sun shines for all;' and, in saying this, you enunciate a truth much broader, and of more general application, than you think."

All men are subjected to the action of the same natural laws. All are born in the same state of weakness, and are subject to the same sufferings; and the body of the rich is destroyed like that of the poor. God has not given to any man any natural superiority in regard either to birth or to death all are equal in His sight.

804. Why has God not given the same aptitudes to all men?

"All spirits have been created equal by God; but some of them have lived more, and others less, and have consequently acquired more or less development in their past existences. The difference between them lies in their various degrees of experience, and in the training of their will, which constitutes their freedom, and in virtue of which some improve themselves more rapidly; hence the diversity of aptitudes that you see around you. This medley of aptitudes is necessary, in order that every man may concur in working out the designs of Providence, within the limits of the development of his physical and intellectual strength. What one cannot do, another does; and thus each contributes his share of usefulness to the general work. Besides, all the words of the universe being united by solidarity, it is necessary that the inhabitants of the higher

worlds, most of which were created before yours, should come and dwell in it, in order to set you an example."

805. Does a spirit, in passing from a higher world to a lower one, preserve, in their integrity, the faculties he had previously acquired?

"Yes; we have already told you that a spirit who has progressed cannot again fall back. He may choose, in his spirit-state, a corporeal envelope more benumbing, or a position more precarious, than those he quits; but all this is so combined as to teach him some new lesson, and thus to aid his future progress."

The diversity of human aptitudes is thus seen to be the result, not of any diversity in the creation of men, but of the various degrees of advancement attained to by the spirits who are incarnated in them. God, then, has not created the inequality of human faculties, but He has permitted spirits of different degrees of development to be thus brought into contact with each other, in order that the more forward may aid the more backward, and also in order that all men, having need of one another's help, may arrive at the practical comprehension of the law of charity that is destined to unite them.

Group II: Equality of the Rights of Men and Women. Read questions/answers 817 to 822 of *The Spirits' Book* by Allan Kardec. Prepare a presentation of a summary addressing the following points:

- Tell why men and women should be considered equal
- Identify the need of the diversity of experiences for the Spirit who goes through lives in different sexes.

817. Are men and women equal in the sight of God, and have they the same rights?

"Has not God given to them both the knowledge of good and evil, and the faculty of progressing?"

818. Where does moral inferiority of women come in some countries?

"From the cruel and unjust supremacy which man has usurped over her. It is a result of social institutions, and of the abusive exercise of strength over weakness. Among men but little advanced morally, might is mistaken for right."

819. For what purpose is woman physically weaker than man?

"In order that to her may be assigned certain special functions. Man is made for rough work, as being the stronger; woman, for gentler occupations; and both are differenced that they may aid each other in passing through the trials of a life full of bitterness."

820. Does not woman's physical weakness make her naturally dependent on man?

"God has given strength to the one sex in order that it may protect the other, but not to reduce it to servitude."

God has fitted the organization of each being for the functions which it has to discharge. If God has given less physical strength to woman, He has, at the same time, endowed her with a greater amount of sensibility, in harmony with the delicacy of the maternal functions and the weakness of the beings confided to her care.

821. *Are the functions to which woman is destined by nature. as important as those which are allotted to man?*

"Yes, and still more important; for it is she who gives him his first notions of life

822. *All men being equals according to the law of God, ought they also to be such according to the law of men?*

"Such equality is the very first principle of justice. Do not unto others what you would not that others should do unto you."

- *In order to be perfectly just, ought legislation to proclaim an equality of rights between men and women?*

"Equality of rights, yes, but not of functions. Each should have a specified place. Let man busy himself with the outer side of life, and woman with its inner side; each sex according to its special aptitude. Human law, in order to be just, should proclaim the equality of rights of men and women. Every privilege accorded to either sex is contrary to justice. The emancipation of woman follows the progress of civilization; her subjection is a condition of barbarism. The sexes, moreover, exist only through the physical organization. Since spirits can assume that of either sex, there is no difference between them in this respect, and them ought consequently to enjoy the same rights."

4. Coordinator shall conclude the study by giving a synopsis of the lesson, according to the objectives of it.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 803-822 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

**LAW OF EQUALITY:
Social Inequality, Inequality of Wealth and
Trials of Wealth and Poverty**

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain the causes of social inequalities.
- To understand why wealth and poverty are difficult trials and why wealth is the most risky of them.
- To analyze on the Spiritist view the following Jesus' saying: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matthew, 19:16-24).

METHODS:

1. Brainstorm on the following question:

Is the inequality of social conditions a law of nature?

2. Divide participants in two groups:

GROUP I – Inequality of Wealth. Read the following questions/answers of The Spirits' Book (808-812) and discuss them with your group. After discussion, prepare a presentation that addresses the following questions:

1. What is the cause of inequality of wealth?
2. Is the equality of wealth possible?
3. What are the main consequences of the abuse of wealth?

808. Is not the inequality of riches a result of the inequality of faculties, which gives to some persons more means of acquiring than are possessed by others?

"Yes, and no. And knavery and robbery? What do you say of them?"

- But hereditary riches are not the fruit of evil passions?

"How do you know that? Go back to their source, and you will see whether it is always pure. How do you know whether they were not, in the beginning, the fruit of a spoliation or an injustice? But, without speaking of their origin, which may have been bad, do you think that the hankering after wealth, even when most honestly acquired, the secret longings to possess it more quickly, are laudable sentiments? These are what God judges; and His judgment is often more severe than that of men."

809. If a fortune has been ill-gotten in the beginning, are those who subsequently inherit it responsible for this?

"Most certainly they are not responsible for the wrong that may have been done by others, and of which they may be altogether ignorant; but you must understand that a fortune is often sent to such and such an individual for the sole purpose of giving him the

opportunity of repairing an injustice. Happy for him if he comprehends this! If he does it in the name of him who committed the injustice, the reparation will be counted to both of them; for it is often the latter who has endeavored to bring it about."

810. We may, without infringing legality, dispose of property more or less equitably. Are we held responsible, after death, for the disposition we have made of it?

"Every seed bears its fruit; the fruit of good deeds is sweet that of others is always bitter; always-remember that."

811. Is an absolute equality of riches possible? Has it ever existed?

"No, it is not possible. The diversity of faculties and characters is opposed to it."

- *There are men, nevertheless, who believe it to be the remedy for all the ills of society. What do you think of them?*

"They are framers of systems, or moved by ambition and jealousy; they do not understand that the equality they dream of would be speedily broken up by the force of things. Combat selfishness, for that is your social pest; and do not run after chimeras."

812. If equality of riches be not possible, is it the same in regard to well-being?

"No; but well-being is relative, and every one might enjoy it if men had arrived at a good understanding among themselves. For true well-being consists in employing one's time according to one's bent, and not in work for which one has no liking; and as each has different aptitudes, no useful work would be left undone. Equilibrium exists in everything; it is man who disturbs it."

- *Is it possible to arrive at this mutual understanding?*

"Men will arrive at it when they practice the law of justice."

GROUP I – Inequality of Wealth. Read the following questions/answers of The Spirits' Book (814-816) and discuss them with your group. After discussion, prepare a presentation that addresses the following questions:

1. What is the purpose in the trial of poverty?
2. What is the purpose in the trial of wealth?
3. What are the wrongdoings that can come from the trials of poverty and wealth?

814. Why has Cod given wealth and power to some, and poverty to others?

"In order to try them in different ways. Moreover, as you know, it is the spirits themselves who have selected those trials, under which they often succumb."

815. Which of the two kinds of trial, poverty or riches, is the most to be dreaded by man?

"They are equally dangerous. Poverty excites murmurings against Providence; riches excite to all kinds of excesses."

816. If the rich man has more temptations to evil, has he not also more ample means of doing good?

"That is precisely what he does not always do. He often becomes selfish, proud, and insatiable. His wants increase with his fortune, and he never thinks he has enough, even for himself."

Worldly grandeur, and authority over our fellow-creatures, are trials as great and as slippery as misfortune: for the richer and more powerful we are, the more obligations we have to fulfill, and the greater are our means of doing both good and evil. God tries the poor through resignation and the rich through the use he makes, of his wealth and power.

Riches and power give birth to all the passions that attach us to matter, and keep us at a distance from spiritual perfection: this is why Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. (266.)

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 808-816 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify marriage as one of the path for human progress.
- To list the main purposes of marriage.
- To explain the reasons for marriage as trial or expiation.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall begin study with a brief introduction to the topic. Focus on the reasons for marriage to exist in our society.
2. Coordinator divides participants in two groups.

GROUP I – Read The Spirits’ book (by Allan Kardec) questions/answers 695-697 and how marriage can contribute to Human progress. Present it to the other group.

695. Is marriage, that is to say, the permanent union of two beings, contrary to the law of nature?

"It is a progress arrived at by the human race."

696. What would be the effect, upon human society, of the abolition of marriage?

"A return to the life of the beasts."

The free and fortuitous union of the sexes is the state of nature. Marriage is one of the first results of progress in the constitution of human society, because it establishes fraternal solidarity, being found among every people, though under different conditions. The abolition of marriage would therefore be a return to the infancy of the human race, and would place man even below certain animals that give him the example of constant unions.

697. Is the absolute indissolubility of marriage to be found in the law of nature, or is it only an ordination of human law?

"It is a human law, altogether contrary to the law of nature. But men may change their laws; those of nature are alone unchangeable."

GROUP II – Read the text extracted from The Gospel Explained y Spiritism (chapter 22, items 3-4) and address the following questions:

*Which aspects of marriage can be interpreted as part of Divine Law, and of Human Law?
What are the implications of the distinction between Divine and Human Laws?*

Present it to the other group.

WHOM GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT APART

But in the union of the sexes, apart from the Divine material law common to all living creatures, there is another Divine law which is immutable, as are all of God's laws, one that is exclusively moral, which is the law of love. God wishes all beings to unite themselves not only through the ties of the flesh, but also through those of the soul, so that the mutual affection of the spouses be transmitted to the offspring and that it should be two, and not just one, who love them, look after them and help them progress. Is the law of love taken into consideration in ordinary conditions within marriage? Not in the least. The mutual sentiments of two beings who are attracted one to the other are not consulted, since in the majority of cases this sentiment is severed. What is looked for is not the satisfaction of the heart but that of pride, vanity and cupidity; in a word, all material interests. When everything goes well according to these interests, it is said to be a marriage of convenience: when the pockets are well lined, it is said that the spouses are equally harmonized and should be very happy.

However, no civil laws nor the obligations which these laws determine can replace the law of love. If this does not preside over the union it frequently happens that *those who were forcibly united separate themselves*. The oath sworn at the foot of the altar, when pronounced as a banal formula, then becomes a perjury. For that reason we have unhappy marriages which end up becoming criminal, which is a double disgrace that could have been avoided if, on establishing the conditions for that marriage, the law of love which is the only law sanctioning the union in the eyes of God, had not been abstracted. When God said: "And they twain shall be one flesh," and when Jesus said: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder," these words should be understood as a reference to the union according to God's immutable law and not according to the mutable laws of Man.

Is the civil law then superfluous and should we go back to matrimony according to Nature? Certainly not. Civil law has the object of regulating social relationships and family interests in accordance with the requirements of civilization. Therefore it is useful and necessary, although variable. It must be provident because civilized Man must not live as a savage. However, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which prevents it being an inference of God's law. All obstacles against the execution of this Divine Law stem from prejudices and not from the civil law.

These prejudices, even if they are still alive, have lost much of their predominance amongst the enlightened peoples of this world. They will come to disappear with moral progress, which in fact will open the eyes of mankind to the countless evils, to the failings and even crimes which result from unions which are contracted on the exclusive basis of material interest. One day Man will ask if it is more humane, more charitable, more moral, to chain one being to another when they are unable to live together, than to restore their liberty; whether the prospect of an indissoluble prison will increase the number of irregular unions.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 695-697 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Kardec, Allan. "The Gospel Explained by Spiritism", chapter 22, items 3-4, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain in which condition celibacy is an act of love to our neighbor.
- To identify signs of social under development in polygamy.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator shall give an introduction reviewing last lesson.

2. In pairs, discuss the following question:

Why polygamy represents a social underdevelopment?

3. The coordinator shall conduct a discussion of the following questions/answers (698-701) of The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec:

CELIBACY

698. *Is voluntary celibacy meritorious in the sight of God?*

"No; those who live single from selfish motives are displeasing to God, for they fail to perform their share of social duties."

699. *Is not celibacy, on the part of some persons, a sacrifice made by them for the sake of devoting themselves more entirely to the service of humanity?*

"That is a very different thing; I said 'from selfish motives'. Every sort of personal sacrifice is meritorious when it is made for a good end; and the greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit."

God cannot contradict Himself, nor regard as evil what He himself has made, and therefore He cannot regard the violation of His law as meritorious. But although celibacy, in itself, is not meritorious, it may become much when the renunciation of family-joys is a sacrifice accomplished in the interests of humanity. Every sacrifice of personal interests, when made for the good of others and without any reference to self, raises him who makes it above the level of his material condition.

POLYGAMY

700. *Is polygamy or monogamy most in conformity with the law of nature?*

"Polygamy is a human institution, the abolition of which marks an era of social progress. Marriage, according to the intention of God, should be founded on the affection of the beings who enter into it. In polygamy there is no real affection; there is only sensuality."

701. Is the almost exact numerical equality existing between the sexes an indication of the proportions according to which they ought to be united?

"Yes; for every arrangement of nature has a specific purpose."

If polygamy were in accordance with the law of nature, it ought to be possible to establish it everywhere but it would be physically impossible to do so, owing to the numerical equality of the sexes. Polygamy must therefore be regarded as a mere custom, adapted to the present state of certain peoples, and that will gradually disappear with the progress of their social improvement.

3. Ask participants to address the following questions:

- In which conditions is celibacy a manifestation of love?
- How can celibacy be an expression of selfishness?
- Why is not polygamy a natural law?

4. For closing remarks, read the following text extracted from the book **Life and Destiny**, chap 25, by Leon Denis

LOVE

Love, as generally understood on earth, is a sentiment of impulsion between two beings who desire a closer union. But in reality, love is clothed in infinite forms, from the most vulgar to the most sublime. Principle of life universal, it procures for the soul in its highest and purest manifestation that intensity of radiation which warms and vivifies all and everything about it; and by its power the soul feels itself closely united to Divinity, the ardent center of all life and love.

God is love: it was through love He created beings to associate them with His joys and His works. Love is a sacrifice. God poured out His own life to give it to souls. At the same time with the vital effusion, they received the effective principle, destined to grow and blossom in them through duty and sacrifice to others. So are they ennobled and glorified as they approach the Supreme Center. Love is an inexhaustible force - it constantly renews itself, and at the same time enriches those who give and those who receive. It is by love, the sun of souls, through which God acts in the world. By it He attracts to Himself all the poor beings delayed by human passions and made captive by matter! And He lifts them, and leads them up the spiral of infinite ascension toward the splendors of light and liberty. It has disciplined and fashioned the human soul, and helped to turn the entire race from sensualism and bestiality.

We feel that all are enveloped by the divine magnetism, by the breath of love which fills space. Apart from this powerful tie, souls also constitute separate groups of families, which are formed during centuries by the community of joys, sorrows, and trials. The real family is that of space, and the one of earth is but an image - a feeble reflection, as are all the things of earth, compared to those of heaven. The true family is composed of spirits who together have climbed the rude paths of destiny, and who have learned how to understand, and how to love. Who can describe the intimate and tender sentiments which unite these beings - the ineffable joy born of the fusion of their minds and consciousness, the fluidic union of souls under the smile of God? These spiritual groups are the hallowed center where selfishness vanishes, where hearts dilate, and where the souls that have suffered and are delivered by death come to rejoin their beloved ones.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 698-701 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Denis, Leon. *Life and Destiny*, Love, Chap XXV, SAB 2002.

OBJECTIVES:

- To discuss about the spiritist view on family planning
- To reflect on the main obstacles to human reproduction
- To analyze the role of anti-conceptional in family planning according to Spiritism
- To define the differences between therapeutic and non-therapeutic abortion
- To explain the consequences of each type of abortion

METHODS:

1. The coordinator shall begin with a brief introduction on the topic Union of Spirit and Body (The Spirits' Book, questions/answers 344-356) and definitions of contraception and abortion and its different methods.
2. In a group discussion, work on the following text 1 (from the book After the Storm by Divaldo Franco/Joanna de Angelis, pages 44-46) and text 2 (The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec, questions/answers 357-360).

TEXT 1 – Family Planning and abortion¹

Man may and should plan the family he wants to have, such as the number of children and the right period for maternity. But he can never evade the compelling expiations that are his to fulfill in relation to previous lives.

Yet, it is preferable to use contraceptives than resort to abortion....

Children, however, are not the product of mere chance, resulting from random events in life. They come according to pledges accepted before reincarnation by both future parents, in order to build the family needed for everyone's progress.

Parents have the choice to postpone receiving the Spirits with whom they had previous links. They can even totally refuse their incarnation through them. But how foolish an act this would be; for the Supreme Laws of life will see to it that the rejected ones knock at the door of their debtors and creditors under different and possibly very painful, circumstances. Add to this the complication caused by the irresponsibility of a couple who would have acted in open disregard of the divine laws.

It is claimed that having children and not being able to educate them, simply to increase the world population, would mean poverty for them, and a bleak future for society....

Even this argument bears a materialistic sophistry, which also

inspired the unfortunate views of Malthus and later the neo-Malthusianism...

No one can have a perfect vision of Humanity's future. Those who attempted it were confused with their own predictions on observing the succession of events during their own lifetime...

Each day a new method and a new solution are presented for the problems of humanity. However, the scarcity of love in the hearts of people, the lack of affection and mercy, cause a hunger for brotherly feelings and are responsible for widespread misery.

We won't take into account the great wars which man has devised and which Divine Providence utilizes to keep the demographic balance. Nor do we refer to the seismic catastrophes that bring ravaging destruction every day, thus inviting man to constructive reflections...

When a child is born into a home, it brings the elements needed for this child's inner and outer progress...

Keep the moral codes etched in your spirit and plan your family with confidence, surrendering your affairs to God and trusting in all things good, for ultimately everything proceeds from Him, the watchful Father of us all.

TEXT 2 – Abortion²

357. *What are, for a spirit, the consequences of abortion?*

"It is an existence that is null, and must be commenced over again."

358. *Is artificial abortion a crime, no matter at what period of gestation it may be produced?*

"Every transgression of the law of God is a crime. The mother, or any other, who takes the life of an unborn child, is necessarily criminal; for, by so doing, a soul is prevented from undergoing the trial of which the body thus destroyed was to have been the instrument."

352. *In cases in which the life of the mother would be endangered by the birth of the child, is it a crime to sacrifice the child in order to save the mother?*

"It is better to sacrifice the being whose existence is not yet complete than the being whose existence is complete."

360. *Is it rational to treat the fetus with the same respect as the body of a child that has lived?*

"In the one, as in the other, you should recognize the will and the handiwork of God, and these are always to be respected."

3. After reading the texts, the coordinator will conduct a Case Discussion on the following 10 cases. Evaluate the following situations according to the Spiritist teachings:

Case 1: Overpopulation

"We decided not to have more than two children in order to avoid overpopulating the planet."

Case 2: Self-planning

"I want to have a baby only after I graduate."

"I want to have a baby only after I am established."

Case 3: Anticonceptional

"I am going to on the anticonceptional pill just to make sure nothing happens."

Case 4: Morning-after Pill

"I had unprotected sex last night. Should I take the morning after pill?"

Case 5: Abortion

"Oops! I did it again. I got pregnant! Now, I have to get an abortion."

Case 6: Choices

"I am pro-life but I respect the ones who are pro-choice."

Case 7: Life-threatening pregnancy

"I am having a life-threatening condition during my pregnancy. I need to choose between my life and my baby."

Case 8: Abortion after Rape

"I was raped and I cannot bear having this child of a monster."

Case 9: Child's disability

"I got the lab results and my baby will have some disability. What now?"

Case 10: Couple's choice

"My partner wants me to make an abortion."

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan. "The Spirit's Book", questions 357-360 edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
 2. Franco, Divaldo. After the Storm (by the Spirit Joanna de Angelis), pages 44-46, LEAL.
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