

Life Applications

Receiving and Applying God's Healing Truths

This is where "the rubber meets the road" with practical applications of gospel truth to the conditions of daily life. Spiritual truth is never given to satisfy our intellectual curiosity (although it does that beautifully). No, the purpose of truth according to Jesus is for the "setting free" of humanity (John 8:32). We need to know "what's up" so we can get up and get running with Jesus, in tip-top condition as liberated sons and daughters of the Soon and Coming King. Let this wide assortment of topics and perspectives give you fresh traction in the places where you may be stymied or stuck.

These teachings companion the lessons set forth in "Matters of the Heart," our free [eCourse](#) for spiritual growth and emotional transformation. The 24 Main Healing Lessons from the course can be found in the downloads section in PDF and MP3 formats. They are also available in our [Store](#) as an eBook, a 176 page workbook and as CD and DVD sets of 24, 1/2 hour teachings.



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Interested in Going Deeper?

Consider taking our free [eCourse for Healing](#). We have designed a complete series for personal transformation, 'Matters of the Heart,' to help Christians gain emotional freedom and inner healing. In all there are 24 Main Healing Lessons and 24 Head to Heart Guides to help you bring your heart to God and receive His Great Heart for you in return!



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About the Author: [Steve Evans](#)



For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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CHAPTER ONE

Negative Emotions

How Is Your Emotional Intelligence?

The key role of our emotional state: By now perhaps you are seeing that the negative emotions we live with on a daily basis are actually something that the Lord wants to help us live without! Not that we can keep them from ever showing up, but we can certainly learn how to show them the door. So, let's pause in the teachings to explore the realm of emotions. Your emotional state holds the key to:

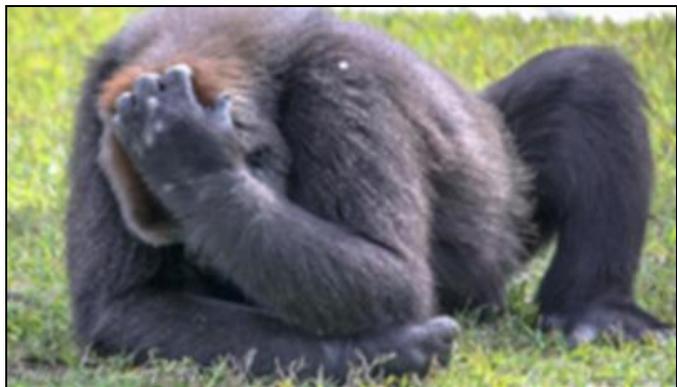
- Your enjoyment of daily life
- Your ability to enjoy the Lord
- Your ability to be guided by God
- Your physical health
- Your relationships with others
- Success in work; fruitfulness in ministry

Definitions of Emotional Intelligence

“Emotional Intelligence” is the ability to understand one’s own emotions and those of others and to act appropriately using these emotions. It includes the ability to exercise sovereignty over one’s own emotional state, carrying every negative emotion (that seeks dominance) captive to Christ and being restored to confidence, trust and peace—His emotional life. Carrying negative emotions captive, exercising sovereignty over them and gaining your release back into the marvelous peace of Christ may be hard work, but it is certainly a sign of intelligence to do it. Like anything worthwhile it requires effort and perseverance to gain the ability. This is why He tells us to keep our hearts with "all" diligence (Proverbs 4:23).

Emotional ABC's

- 1) We are sovereigns over our own hearts.
- 2) We can actually rule over our emotions, rather than be ruled by them.
- 3) Left to itself your emotional state will tend to overrule your reason, will and desires.
- 4) No one can put an emotion in you and keep it there.
- 5) You alone get to decide what goes in, stays in and goes out.
- 6) All negative emotions are lying to you.
- 7) Even positive emotions will lie to you at times.
- 8) All emotions tell us a lot about what we actually believe to be true.
- 9) There is a thought/belief at the center of every emotion.
- 10) Find out what it is telling you and deal with.



- 11) Don't make other people to blame for what you are feeling or you will never get free.
- 12) They don't hold the key to what is in you—you do!
- 13) What you really believe and therefore what you feel is between you and God.
- 14) God has made it that way so that no one can have power over your inner emotional state.
- 15) No one, not even God, can change your emotions or your beliefs without your permission.
- 16) Your will is free. You are free.

We Hold the Keys

That means there is good news: You are sovereign over your emotions! When it comes to your emotional state you are in charge. It may not feel that way at times, but no one else on the planet can force you to have a feeling or keep it in you if you don't want it. You get to choose what you are going to believe in mind and heart—and what you deeply believe ultimately determines what you will feel. Your present emotional reactions are the product of what your heart believes to be true—based on past experiences. These beliefs can be changed! You are actually created with an ability to rule over your emotions—but not as a tyrant. The victory is not won by force of will, but by learning to agree deep down with what you know to be true that God is showing you. As new beliefs become rooted in you, your emotions begin to change.



Ignoring negative emotions doesn't work. Be honest about what emotions you are really feeling. Take a good look at them. Don't try to push them down, deny them, or hide them. You are not responsible for what goes off inside of you (so don't bother denying your feelings or feeling guilty for having them), but you are responsible for what you do in response to the feeling that just showed up. Will you let it rule over you or will you carry it captive to Christ so that He and you can begin to rule over your feelings?

Get the Look that gives a quick shift. In carrying your emotions to Christ, how quickly can an emotional state be shifted? In a heartbeat! How do you shift your emotional state? By getting your eyes back on something about the Lord that releases you and re-empowers you. Just imagine Jesus showing up RIGHT NOW. Would seeing His love for you shift your emotional state? Of course, it would. Well... faith enables us to see Him —and get the shift—whenever we exercise it.

What Good Are Negative Emotions?

Your negative emotions will never help you to rightly understand other people, yourself, God or the world you live in. Negative emotions are no good at telling us about what is really real or really true from God's perspective—and His perspective is the only one that counts or that will be vindicated in the end. Don't keep holding on to an emotional life that will never be vindicated as truth! So what good are they?

Negative emotions reveal our deep beliefs. Negative emotions are accurate indicators of our internal (usually hidden) belief system tucked away in the core of our hearts. This is often the unconverted part of us and it needs to hear and be taught to believe the gospel truths that we are beginning to believe (like trusting God, surrendering to God, forgiving others, accepting yourself, etc.). It is not enough to believe these things only in your head. Once your heart begins to believe them, your emotional response to people and situations will shift, but until then there



will be a battle on the inside to believe truth. And that is because negative emotions lie against the truth.

A Lying Enemy in Hiding

Negative emotions lie to us and misdirect us. Why would an emotion do that? From the perspective of spiritual warfare, the negative emotion is like a glove; the evil spirit is like an invisible hand manipulating the glove. Consider anger with God, hopelessness, fear, self-hatred, and anger with others as you study these four lies that negative emotions promote:

1) The negative emotion wants to convince you that it has a right to stay.

2) It wants to focus you on something or someone else as the problem for why you are stuck with that emotion. It never says: "I'm the problem. Just get rid of me!"

3) It wants to make you think it is up to you to do something about it. It pressures you to be your own savior. It never reminds you to cast that care on the Lord.

4) It wants to get others to agree with it—that it has a right to be in you and should be in you until that problem "out there" is fixed.



Negative emotional re-activity was formed in a cauldron of sin. But you are NOT your negative emotions! God sees you as separate from them. They are a snare of an enemy in hiding. You are not stuck with having to live with them. God has set this thing up so that no one and nothing on earth can control your emotional life but you. Whenever negative emotions or emotional pain come on you (apart from true grief, godly fear or righteous indignation):

- A. It is ALWAYS coming from the enemy's sins against you—so learn to immediately recognize and get indignant at the enemy as the true source (not other people)! AND
- B. If it sticks to you (beyond a day) it is ALWAYS your sin—so learn to recognize your responsibility and carry that negative emotion to Christ to be set free as He shows you.
- C. If you are having a hard time getting free, then the snag is likely coming from deceptive programming the enemy has worked into your innermost beliefs—seek the Lord.

These **strongholds** can come down! Negative programming comes out of past painful experiences of sins against us combined with our own wrong reactions based on false or ungodly beliefs from the fallen nature. These are the strongholds that we have built up over long periods of time and they still trap us at times in the mindset of the old nature. In the lessons to come we will be exploring the strongholds that negative emotions form upon our flesh and show the ways in God that these can be brought down. We really can be the head and not the tail.

And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 28:13-14

True Life Illustration

A Shocking Way to See Negative Emotions: Visitors from Heaven



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CHAPTER TWO

The Disciple's Cross

It Takes 2 Crosses to Save You

The disciple's cross also saves us. By now you may be thinking: "this is a lot of work!" True, it is hard dealing with emotional strongholds, but it is harder still letting them rule over us unopposed. No one wants this battle. It is a genuine cross to bear, but because it is a cross, it is also the power of salvation. And that is because there are two crosses that save us.

The cross of Jesus saves us by getting us to heaven. The disciple's cross saves us by getting a heavenly life into us down here—it is a major key of entry into His Kingdom's way of living. We need to understand, recognize and appreciate the disciple's cross and why the Lord allows it.



Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him (1) deny himself, and (2) take up his cross, and (3) follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 16:24-26

We stumble at accepting the cross. Pay careful attention to the 3 steps Jesus mentions.

1) Deny Himself

We are to trust and submit to Jesus letting Him be Lord—not self. Self wants comfort and immediate gratification, no challenges, struggles or risks. Self wants to be in charge and be at the center. It is only hard to surrender if you have a poor image of God.

2) Take Up His Cross

The cross is where your will and God's will cross. We can recognize the cross by what it costs us. Suffering is having what you don't want and wanting what you don't have. (Elizabeth Elliott). The cross is never a person, but it may be a way about them that you don't like and can't easily live with. We take up the cross by accepting it.

3) Follow Me

If we are not willing to do 1 and 2, we will be unable to do 3!

The disciple's cross is hard to recognize. Jesus says that in order to become disciples we will have to deny self and take up the cross and follow Him. How can we do that if we cannot recognize the cross or understand what taking up the cross means? The cross is hard to recognize because it looks like death—not life!



Death by the Cross Versus by the Enemy.

Did you know that both the devil and the cross are trying to kill you?

The devil wants to kill all that is good and of God in you.

The Father wants to bring to death all that is wrong
--all that is not of Christ in us.

We are to resist the devil with all that is in us. We are to submit to the Lord entirely. How do you know which is which? How do you know when to submit and when to resist?



We resist the devil in order to embrace the cross.

The cross helps me to say no to myself. The cross includes learning to endure grief, shame and rejection. It hovers between self-sacrifice and self-denial. Through the cross I learn to say no to self (deny yourself) and yes to God (take up your cross) in order to keep walking with my God (and follow Me). The cross looks like it is bringing death, but it really leads to life. A prayer before the cross:

I praise you Lord: This cross (problem) is not going to kill me, it is going to bring me to greater life.

How the Cross Works

The cross identifies and raises up your (hidden) flesh so that you can deal with it if you want to. The enemy will take opportunity by the cross to try to get you to go the wrong way in response to it. Usually, the hidden side of our fallen nature or self-life just seems like us or like common sense thinking in us, but the cross identifies it as not of God or anti-God. Under the cross our spirit man wants to fight Satan even if we don't. Likewise, our flesh will often want to fight (resist) the Lord, even when we want to submit.

What the disciple's cross reveals: The cross reveals my pride, self-will, self-love, self-righteousness and self-protectiveness. So, I hate it. It is not much of a cross if I readily embrace it. Not much of a cross if I don't truly hate and fear it at first—and all the more so because of what it makes me see in me. It is so easy to want to give up or turn back whenever the cross is in our path that we really will need to grow in patience, perseverance and endurance.

How God uses the cross: We hate and fear the cross. We hate and fear the struggle, pain, loss, and risk that comes with it. But God is using the cross two ways:



1) To bring something good into our life we could not have received in any other way

2) To bring to death that life of self in us which hates and fears the cross because this is a part of the self-life in us that doesn't trust the Father's love and wisdom. It needs to be exposed and brought to death for us to live free of those fears. We say "it's killing me," but whatever it is in us that is resisting the cross, needs to die.



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How to Recognize the Cross

- You can't get rid of it faithfully—legally in the law or honorably in the Lord.
- It seems to be killing you (you hear yourself saying: this is killing me!).
- You have to say, “Not my will, but yours be done” in order to find any peace and freedom.
- There is often a restless looking around for a way out or around the problem, rather than an acceptance of what cannot be gracefully removed.

In the absence of something better, we have to accept what is given or presented to us. In the way of things, the cross will either be accepted (now) or repeated (in a later trial).

The great danger in refusing the cross: Jesus goes on to say that whoever seeks His life will lose it (Mt 10:38)—if we seek self and self's desires we will lose His kind of life. If you try to save your life you will lose it. If you try to protect your life from pain or from the call of God or from loving others or from risk and challenge, you will lose it. If you try to take charge of your life (rather than trust to God), you will lose it. Why are you here? What is your purpose in being here? To cater to self? Or have you come to do His will?



True Submission to the Cross

Send whatever You want to send (of blessings—He is the giver of all good gifts).
Allow whatever You want to allow (of pain or problems--He allows free will to operate).
Ask of me anything you desire to ask.
Withhold from me and withhold me from anything you desire.

Father, if it is your will take this cup (the disciple's cross) from me. Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done. I want to surrender to You in complete confidence and trust, willing to obey and follow Jesus in whatever He asks of me.

Anything less than complete submission, is a step towards the Great Rebellion.

We Need Inner Healing and the Cross

Inner healing is very necessary and important, but it cannot take the place of the disciple's cross, not does it remove the pain of the cross. No amount of inner healing will keep us from encountering the disciple's cross in small ways or large or remove our need for such crosses.

However, the healing that comes to us, helps restore our trust in the love of the Father, and that does make it easier to see the cross as life giving—so that we can embrace it more readily. The things that we need healing of are themselves forms of the disciple's cross (while the pain is with us) that He does desire to “train” us by and ultimately lift off of us.



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Little crosses prepare us for larger ones. All of the little crossings of our will throughout the day prepare us for the larger crosses of life and keep us in training at surrendering. Otherwise the flesh would quickly take over with its desire to have everything geared for its own comfort and pleasure. With wisdom we accept the cross for the same reason Jesus embraced and endured His—for the joy set before us!

...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2



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CHAPTER THREE

Contrasting Head and Heart

Why the Heart Matters

Is your head too big, your heart too small? Enlightenment culture and the pride of man have over-emphasized the mind. The mind is a gateway: all thoughts have to pass through it, but the heart is the seat of power and controls the deep issues of life. In your head you may know that Jesus is Lord, but who reigns in your heart: Satan, self, or Jesus?

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts... Mark 7:21

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23



It's not either or: We are contrasting the head and heart in order to highlight their differences, not to choose sides.

Consider these differing qualities and operations: what the head does is vital and necessary; what the heart can do is sublime!

HEAD

Knowledge, facts
Physical sight
Likes
Thinks by logic
Analyzes
Holds consciousness
Ego resides
Center of the mind
Makes identifications
Holds ideas of God
Stores memories
Believes
Hears the words of others
Sees, plans, decides

HEART

Wisdom, understanding
Spiritual insight
Loves
Reasons by feelings
Meditates
Held by conscience
Jesus resides
Center of the spirit
Holds identity
Beholds the Image of God
Treasures remembrances
Trusts
Listens to the hearts of others
Dreams, envisions, determines



CHAPTER FOUR

Convicting vs Condemning

Conviction versus Condemnation -- No Contest!

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner... For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11

Conviction shows us the problem, separates us from it and shows us the way out -- all the while letting us know that we are loved and accepted, nevertheless.

Condemnation binds us to the problem, makes no separation between us and the sin and shows us no way out -- all the while threatening us with judgment and displeasure.



Repenting of true sins brings restoration and freedom from true guilt.

Confess the sin (requires faith in Christ's shed blood) and receive God's mercy.

Resisting the accusation of false guilt produces freedom from condemnation.

Confess the truth (requires courage to live what you believe) and resist the devil.

Conviction by the Spirit

True guilt
Leads to contrition (sorry you sinned)
Targets our sin (that was wrong)
Explains
Illuminates our path
Specific wrong is clarified
Brings repentance
Feels light and right
May not want to repent, but agree with truth

Condemnation by the Enemy

False guilt
Leads to feeling worthless, inept (a sorry sinner)
Attacks our person (you are bad)
Accuses
Darkens our understanding
Fog of general wrongness sinks in
Spreads confusion
Feels heavy and wrong
May be willing to confess to anything, but can get no freedom

Two Simple Tests

False guilt: Conviction brings with it the Holy Spirit's power to repent in matters of true guilt, but no matter how much you attempt to repent of false guilt, you cannot "receive forgiveness" for that which in God's sight has not been sin. To walk in the light as He is in the light, means that the accusations of false guilt must be seen for what they are (lies or half-truths coming from



accusing spirits) and resisted by faith in the truth as you believe God has shown you truth (the courage of one's convictions).

True guilt: However, sometimes condemnation comes not from false guilt, but from situations of true guilt where we cannot forgive ourselves and therefore cannot really believe in or receive God's forgiveness. Freedom will come as we learn to confess our sin, fully receive forgiveness, and forgive ourselves as fully as God does. Then the enemy's voice of accusation can be resisted. You can learn to win this tug of war between conviction versus condemnation!

Three Stages

Figuring this out doesn't come once and for all. At times, you may find yourself going through these stages of progressive faith in the truth you discern

- 1) Confess the truth (God's truth) that you believe, even if you don't feel like it is true.
- 2) Simply know that the truth you believe is true. Rest in knowing it. (Jesus said you will know the truth and the truth will set you free -- He didn't say you will feel the truth.)
- 3) Then, as you relax into just knowing the truth you will eventually begin to feel its lifting power helping you to believe with your whole heart.

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Feelings follow knowing. Knowing follows believing.



Discerning Flesh and Spirits

The Flesh Is a Shadow of Its Past Power

Your flesh cannot be cast out, nor does it need to be. Simply having a fallen nature is not the real problem. In this life it will always be there with its tendency and disposition to sin—like a shadow that trails behind us as we walk in the Light. One day, when we enter into His glory, God will separate us from our fallen nature (1 Corinthians 15:53-54), but until then it is dangerous for us to try to eradicate the flesh ourselves. In fact, to try to eliminate our flesh is an act of unwitting disobedience to God's Word. And this is because Jesus has already defeated it for us.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:5-11



Whenever we trust in and rely on the Lord our flesh (the old man) is laid to rest by His Spirit and the new nature carries us forward in peace and freedom (Romans 8:1-2). Any failing of trust or obedience on our part and the flesh is only too ready to spring quickly back to life. The New Testament scriptures are clear that if what we are struggling with is an issue of the flesh, then we are to put off the flesh like soiled clothing—to just say no and turn from it.

That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:21-24

The flesh is essentially a dead thing, crucified by Christ and, like a shadow, has no power of its own to overthrow those who walk by the Spirit (see [Walking in the Spirit](#)). But if we get our eyes locked onto our shadow we may easily trip and fall! Hence, we are told to keep our eyes on Christ and guard our hearts with trust in Him. Knowing the reality of our flesh and of its total depravity (no redeeming thing about it) will actually help to humble us and remind us to keep our focus on our Savior.



Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. Colossians 3:9-10

Strongholds Are a Different Matter

A stronghold indicates a strong "grip" of the flesh in some area of our life that is still unsundered to the Lord. To the degree that "putting off" the flesh is difficult a "stronghold" has likely been built into our flesh by prior activity of the enemy in our lives. Such stronghold areas of the flesh, when they are touched by present situations (words, events, desires) are very difficult to simply set aside and a struggle ensues within us if the sinful desire of the flesh is to be overcome.

At this level discerning between flesh and spirits is both difficult and unnecessary. It is unnecessary to discern if it is flesh or spirit or both, because this struggle is going to have to be engaged anyway. Deal with it first as a stronghold of the flesh, then the enemy (if present will lose its right to keep oppressing you).

We carry strongholds captive We are told to carry the thoughts of these strongholds captive to Christ—a much more intense image. The truth is we have to learn how to carry the stronghold captive, or its thoughts will carry us captive to the negative emotions and spiritual domination of the flesh (see [Strongholds](#)).

Alien Invaders

In addition, the strongholds may be occupied and defended by alien intruders—the kingdom of darkness whose temptations and deceptions built the strongholds in the first place. Here we are told to resist the devil and he will flee from us and even to cast out the evil spirits in the name of the Lord who conquered them at the cross. The most vigorous language of scripture has to do with opposing the enemy (Ephesians 6:11, 13). Such "occupied" strongholds cannot be defeated by simply shifting our focus back to Christ. They require the harder work of pursuing the steps of repentance and return in order to tear the stronghold down (see [Recognize and Replace!](#)).



Explore Spiritual Landscape

Seven Levels of Reality

Can you see what is real? Only one of these seven realms of Reality is actually observable by our science and understandable by common sense alone. No wonder the unbelieving world is so totally in the dark. Only the grace of revelation can open our blinded eyes to see the realms we are living in close quarters with!



Note the fallen counterparts of spiritual darkness to those of Light (in vertical correspondence) and how both are converging on the earth. Exploring spiritual landscape around us would be all but impossible without the Word and the Spirit to light the way.

1) Heaven

The eternal dwelling of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, angels, saints (1 Peter 3:21)

2) Kingdom of God

The invisible, spiritual realm surrounding earth (Romans 14:17)

3) Church

The Body of Christ, partly visible, humanity organized by God (Matthew 16:18)

4) New Nature

The new creation, Christ's life in us, regenerated spirit
(2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:27)

5) Earth and Its Heavens

Natural/physical realm of 5 senses and matter (Psalm 24:1-2)

6) Fallen Nature

The flesh, Adam's life in us, spiritual death (Romans 8:6-9)

7) World

The *Kosmos*, partly visible; humanity organized by Satan (John 12:31; 1 John 2:15)

8) Kingdom of Darkness

The invisible, spiritual realm surrounding earth (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:13)

9) Hell

The eternal place of punishment for Satan, fallen angels, demons, the damned (Matthew 5:30)



Three Descriptions of Self

There are three ways in which we can see and understand ourselves. This is the ever-shifting reality of our internal life. No wonder that trying to explore the spiritual landscape inside of us (without the Word and the Spirit to guide us) can become so confusing.

1) True Self

Who I am in Christ: new creation life, released by trust and obedience.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

2) False Self

Who I am apart from Christ: fallen nature, restrained by inward crucifixion.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24

3) Actual Self

Who I am at this moment: a mixture of the two, revealed by testing.

And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. Deuteronomy 8:2

I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:10



CHAPTER SEVEN

False Burden Bearing

A Subtle Snare

It is easy to become overburdened, but deadly to be falsely burdened. We may have a right desire in our heart to help others and still be drawn into a heavy snare.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Notice that burdens is in the plural, indicating that it is the specific needs or cares afflicting an individual (their burdens) that we are to bear (or carry)—not the person himself. God gives us grace (strength by His Spirit) to help others with their difficulties and problems. But God does not give us grace to carry the full weight of their life—no matter how much we may want to and no matter how much they may seem to need it! We are not equipped or called to be their savior or redeemer. There is only one Savior who can bear the burden of another's life—Jesus.



**Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of
their riches, none of them can
by any means redeem his
brother, Nor give to God a
ransom for him for the
redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever that he should
continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.** Psalm 49:6-9

A Heavy Yoke

False burden bearing is a heavy yoke upon the believer who is over-involved in trying to rescue another person or in seeking to bear that person's life as their own burden. It may seem very compelling, necessary and right. But Jesus says that His yoke is easy, not heavy—this is the ultimate test of whether the burden we feel is of the Lord or of self.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

Self-imposed burdens are hard and heavy to bear—and difficult to recognize as false ways of caring for another. (This is especially difficult for mothers with their children.) However, learning to cast our cares for others on God is the most responsible thing we can do. Then, if we let Him take charge, His Spirit can and will direct us if there are things He might desire us to do. It is actually a sign of humility when we un-burden to God.



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Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

Signs and Symptoms

Signs of false burden bearing or false responsibility

From [Be in Health](#) class teachings, Pastor Henry Wright

- 1) Anytime or in any way that you need others and their problems in order to feel good about yourself. Using others' needs to meet your needs.
- 2) Doing what others should be doing. Rescuing—trying to save them.
- 3) Co-dependency—covering up for them.
- 4) Boundary trespassing—not watching your own or looking out for theirs.
- 5) Meddling—getting into their stuff when it is none of your business.
- 6) Being someone else's Holy Spirit—a means of control and dependency. (Beware of striving to tell someone what to do—you can barely see your own path, let alone theirs!)
- 7) Accepting too many responsibilities—not being able to say no. (Love is spelled “NO.”)

In your serving of others, if there is driven-ness or fear, frustration or resentment, or a martyr or messiah complex, there could be false burden bearing.

False Burden Bearing Coming out of Rejection:

Because of rejection you may need to have people look to you for help so that you will feel affirmed and needed (not rejected) by others. Or, because of rejection, if you don't know who you are in Christ, you may get your identity out of living through others or controlling them instead of taking care of your own responsibilities. Either way it's a burden you can safely cast off!



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CHAPTER EIGHT

Forgive? Not Optional!

A Matter of Life and Death

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love one another--according to these words of St. John. He is convinced that through Jesus we can love each other and for Jesus we must. Forgiveness is required—it is not an option! He says that to hate a brother or sister is to be a murderer. But we don't hate them—we just haven't quite forgiven them.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 1
John 3:14-15



An unforgiving Christian is a living contradiction. That is why John tells us whoever does not love abides in death. It goes against our very nature as Christians to not forgive, since we ourselves only live by His forgiveness of us. Passing from death to life means really learning to forgive others from the heart.

Watch a short video about forgiveness on our YouTube channel

[Forgiving Cats](#)

A cat's teenage pregnancy led to a very funny encounter with God.

Why Forgive?

We need powerful motivation to practice this! There are Biblical and practical reasons why forgiveness is required. Unforgiveness needs to be removed like a dead tree (Hebrews 12:14-15).

1) Jesus Example

Jesus chose to suffer death on the cross for the sake of our forgiveness.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32



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2) Jesus' Command

If we don't forgive, we will suffer the consequences of unanswered prayers, un-received mercy, and inner torment. He also says that if we love Him, we will obey Him.

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:25-26

Matthew 18:34-35 ' 34" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." Matthew 18:34-35

3) Jesus' Inheritance

We want to see the Lord gain His reward for paying sin's debt for everyone. His reward is the release of sinners to Him for Him to save and redeem.

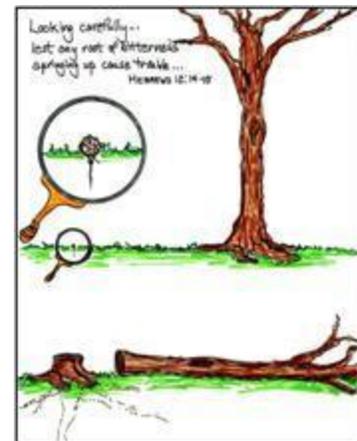
The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Ephesians 1:18

4) Consider What Unforgiveness Does

Un-forgiveness deadens: It deadens our sense of connectedness to life and to God. We feel numb, spiritless, cut off from God, a stranger to joy.

Un-forgiveness darkens: It darkens our understanding of others, God, and life. We spin off on tangents of hurt that we rationalize are right.

Un-forgiveness destroys: It destroys our relationships, careers, even health. We build walls, cut ourselves off—both jailer and jailed are in the same jail.



What Forgiveness Is NOT

Some common misconceptions

1) It Is NOT a Feeling

Forgiveness is an act of the will, not a feeling. We cannot control our feelings, but we can control how we choose to respond despite our feelings being what they are. If you don't feel like forgiving, that should not deter you. It is not hypocritical to forgive people when you don't feel like it. In fact, few people feel like forgiving—that's the whole reason why God commands us to do it (He doesn't have to command us to like ice cream!).



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Hypocrisy is when we don't act according to what we really believe to be true. But as Christians we really do believe in forgiveness for sins, that's why we seek forgiveness from God so often. To not forgive sin in the other person is to be a hypocrite. Un-forgiveness is really trying to take the easy way out--the path of least resistance, a path of spiritual laziness because it lets feelings rule without being challenged by our real beliefs. It causes us to pay a terrible price in the end.

2) It Is NOT Glossing Over

Forgiveness does not pretend the offense was not as bad as it really was. It does not turn a blind eye to real faults or minimize them. It looks at the evil of sin and forgives the person.

3) It Is NOT Nursing the Fond Memory

Real forgiveness does not keep score, hold grudges, or build walls. It is necessary to watch our boundaries, but it is not loving to want to build walls on them!

4) It Is NOT Excusing

True Christian forgiveness needs no reasons or excuses in order to forgive, because it is mercy based, not justice based. There are always reasons why we do wrong, but reasons do not excuse us. Christian forgiveness begins where excusing ends. Reasons help us to understand and excuse, but God does not excuse our wrong-doing. He atoned for it at the cross of Jesus. Sin is sin—it can only be forgiven.

5) It Is NOT a Reward

Christian forgiveness is not something earned by being sorry or by efforts to change. It may be wholly undeserved, unmerited. In fact the less deserved it is, the more it is genuine, mercy-based forgiveness when it is given. If you deserve forgiveness, then there is justice in forgiving you—not mercy.

6) It Is NOT a Divine Pardon

Forgiveness is not letting the other person "off the hook"; it is taking them off our hook and putting them in God's hands for redemption. It is the most responsible thing to do with sin.

7) It Is NOT Blindly Trusting

Forgiveness creates no obligation to trust the offender. Trust has to be earned; forgiveness is a gift commanded of us. Jesus trusted Himself to no one, but He lived in forgiveness and love with everyone. He still does. Aren't you glad He forgives you, even though He can't trust you never to betray his love? He evidently thinks forgiving us is a small price to pay for the joy of loving us. And there is no one else in the universe with a freer, more joyful heart.



What Forgiveness Is

Forgiveness means being open to loving and even liking the other person, accepting them just as they are—just as we would desire to be accepted and loved if we were them. It means releasing them, setting them free, letting them go, letting them be themselves—and setting our own hearts free in the process. Forgiveness is giving your pain and offense to God and trusting Him with it.

Who to Forgive?

We need to spread it around evenly wherever it is needed.

1) Others

most frequently. An old prayer of mine: “God don’t let anyone offend me today, I don’t have time to deal with it.” It rarely got answered!

2) Self

Not nearly as easy as you think. Unless you have low expectations of yourself, a very weak conscience, or a great hold on grace, it can be hard to really forgive yourself. Yet, even here forgiveness is NOT an option. We simply must get good at forgiving and accepting ourselves, or we will never have any lasting peace and pleasure. You are a sinner! So what can you do about it? Hate the sin and love the sinner!

3) God

Don’t underestimate the need for this. If God is all-powerful and all-loving (which He is), then the pain of what He allows can be a very real hurt or source of offense to us. He is absolutely innocent of any evil or wrong-doing, but our hearts may be holding hurt or unforgiveness nevertheless and the need to release Him can be real.

4) Nature

Rare, but real. Events, animals, objects all may need to be released by forgiveness.

How to Forgive?

If you break a hard job down, it's easier to do.

1) Seek Grace

Ask God to help you by the power of His Spirit to make a real commitment of your will to do His will. If you really want to obey Him, then He will empower you.

2) Acknowledge the Pain

Sin hurts. Sin is injustice. It is wrong. It grieves God and us.



3) Ask God to Forgive Them

Really mean it. He already does, but you need to express it.

4) Ask God to Forgive You (for judging them)

Believe that He has and gratefully receive it.

5) Choose to Forgive Them

Pray it and say it by an act of your will; put your heart in it.

6) Choose to Forgive Yourself (for prolonging the pain)

Accept it. Release the pain.

7) Choose to Believe

God's promise of redemption is for you (Romans 8:28). Believe it with your whole heart. Rejoice in it.

8) Pray for Them

Pray for your "enemies" all of the blessings you would like God to bestow on you.

9) Thank God

By faith thank God for His wisdom and goodness in all He allows and re-surrender.

God is seeking a people after His own heart—a people willing to keep their hearts open and loving, no matter what the cost. His call to forgive is an invitation to pass from death to life. Don't let this opportunity slip away. Purpose in your heart to truly forgive those who have wronged you. Put the offense and the person under the Blood at the foot of the Cross as often as needed until even the memory of the event no longer gives pain. It begins as an act of the will. Feelings follow. Experience the peace and release of finally letting go.

Say yes to life!



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CHAPTER NINE

Good Grief

The Way We Grieve

“Today was a good day, until I felt the grief hit me.” By such subtleties we unwittingly make grief into the enemy. Yet grief is not an evil thing; it is good, a great good from which blessing is promised to flow. Even our holy God grieves: hence there can be nothing evil about it. It is, of course, because we feel pain when we grieve that grieving itself becomes “bad” in our minds, ruled as we are by our own feelings at the center of our moral universe: if it makes me feel good, it can’t be all bad; and if it makes me feel bad, then there can’t be any good in it. Such is the simplicity and tenacity of our emotional logic. Yet grieving is actually what God gives us to do so that our hearts can mend from the real evil—the tearing away from us by death of someone we love.



Death and loss are the work of a very real enemy who comes to kill, steal and destroy whatever it is that we and God rightly love (John 10:10). Just consider this: if you had a stab wound that needed fresh bandages, soaking and cleansing daily, you would be foolish indeed to make the doctor and what he is doing to mend you into the enemy, rather than the one who thrust in the knife! Yet, the deceiver turns our righteous indignation away from what he did, to the pain it still causes us and in so doing, makes our Healer and His ways of helping us grieve seem like an enemy and an intruder. And so we lament, “If only the grief would leave me alone so I can get back to my life” -- never realizing that it is only through fully embracing the grief that we can be truly mended and restored to life.

The Way God Grieves

Let us give God our tears. The grief of a great loss is way too big to move out of our hearts at once. So it happens day by day, sometimes moment by moment. It seems as if there are a certain number of tears that the grieving need to cry each day -- perhaps a differing amount on any given day -- and if we don't cry them, we slowly start becoming heavy laden and sluggish, the fog of grief sets in and we become numb. Tears release something from our hearts to His and into the resulting opening of our spirit He pours -- what? -- divine sympathy, compassion, subtle comfort, release, peace and renewed hope. In small measures or large. In ways that can be sensed and no doubt in many ways we are not aware of at all.

Grieving is His graced means for healing broken hearts and He has had to lead many people through it. He knows it well. His own heart has had to travel that path times beyond knowing (Isaiah 53:3-4). And He is in sovereign charge of the process—that is why grieving seems to have a life of its own and work itself out by its own inner wisdom uniquely suited to each individual. The temptation is to mistakenly think that you are caught in a cycle. That the grieving is going nowhere. That the same tears are being shed time and time again to no purpose. In



reality we are being led somewhere—to the place of rebirth on the other side of the valley (Psalm 84:5-7).

It does help to imagine, know and believe the Truth—that the Man of Sorrows draws very near to us when we grieve (and all the more tenderly so if He sees we cannot sense His presence). It does help to realize that He is asking us to give Him our tears and our sorrow so that He can begin to lift them. If we were to believe otherwise, a tendency to withhold our tears from Him could develop: for why would you want to cry—if you had to weep into an empty universe? Or why would you want to shed the same tears over and over again—if it could do you no good? In fact, our universe is filled with the infinite compassion of our God who feels these sorrows far more keenly than we ever can or will. And every tear is a liquid prayer, releasing some anguished message from our hearts for which He is intently listening to hear and to answer. Great good will come of our grieving, because He has purposed to use it as His preferred means of bringing His comfort and His redemption (Matthew 5:4).

It Takes Time to Heal

Happily, there is a God, a kind and compassionate Father who has blessed our tears as His graced means of healing us. Jesus said emphatically: blessed (how happy, how highly favored) are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. He says in Psalm 30:5 that our grieving is intended by Him to be replaced by rejoicing—that sorrow may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning (and our Morning of new life lasts into an eternal Day!). He says that God draws near to the broken hearted. This is always and forever true of Him. He weeps with those who weep and commends us to do the same. Yet, tragically the broken hearted often draw away from God or allow other elements to seize their hearts that create a separation inside of them from the very One who seeks to heal them. When this happens, they don't even want to face or feel their grief, because to do so would awaken the pain and conflicted emotions of their buried "issues" with God. We must learn to deal with these contaminants.



Contaminants to Grief

Eventually, the pain of grief brings the suffering heart to God, because it is only God who can mend us of the losses that we encounter through the death of loved ones. No other remedy can do that job. Lesser griefs may be mended by lesser means, but only a great God can heal the heart of the loss of a great love. Once it becomes clear that there is nothing else on earth that can remedy the death of someone on earth, we are compelled to turn to heaven for an answer. This may come in the first few moments or it may take many years. And when the process of grieving does its task of bringing us closer to God, it may be only then that we will notice that there are contaminants in our grief that spoil, hinder or block the relationship with God that we desire to have or need to discover.

In the light of Christ, we come to see the contaminants as the fallen, sin-darkened things that they really are. Until we want God more than these contaminants, we will make room for them, excuses for them, allowances for them. But once we begin to want God and His peace again, we know intuitively (by the Spirit) that we will have to let them go. Good grief is meant to bring us to the place where we are willing to accept all that the Father has allowed to take place and

trust ourselves once again to His goodness and wisdom. With such acceptance, we are ready to go forward and encounter life again under His loving care.

The Cross of Grief and Loss

Accept it as fully as you can and bear it as bravely as you can. It is NOT true that this loss is destroying you. Jesus says that the cross of loss (as with all crosses) will bring you into greater life, resurrection life, His life. His life wants to resurrect out of the ashes of death and loss—from the inside of our lives. All that is needed is our trust and surrender and our willingness to believe for resurrection. Their resurrection is not the issue—not if we have prayed and committed them into His Hands. It is our resurrection from the cross of their death that is in question. Will we trust and believe, release the loss to Him, and see what God can do to bring us fully back to life?

What the Crisis Reveals

Once the crisis of grief comes it is too late to prepare for it. The crisis of grief (like any other crisis) reveals the true state of our heart and of our spiritual life at that particular moment in time and we have to accept that we are just as it reveals us to be. Often, we discover that we are not as spiritually fine-tuned or mature as we had thought, certainly not as we needed to be. The temptation is to blame shift, rather than enter into the kind of honest confession of our weaknesses that would bring liberating humility before God. Mercifully, God doesn't hold anything against us that the grief reveals of our imperfect spiritual condition. Rather, He meets us, accepts us and comforts us right where we are—and He works with others to help them see our own particular needs and weaknesses so that they can take care not to bruise us as they seek to comfort us. Try to keep in mind that the great thing is not whether we are having the “right” feelings, but whether we are choosing to do the right thing with the feelings we keep having.

It may be humbling to realize that you are not as advanced as you thought you were. But that humbling enables us to learn from grief—if we are willing—and to walk in humility with our God, letting Him set the pace and show us our steps through the valley. It is ever one day at a time, one step at a time and the starting point is always right where we are, not where we wish we were, or imagine ourselves to be. Good grief eventually will make you a realist about yourself and bring you to many points of self-realization and honesty. The pain of it simply keeps pressing reality down upon us and the Spirit helps us confess up!

Grief Is Not an Illness

Do the next right thing. It is important to remember to tell people to stay anchored in doing the next right thing as they seek to go into the grief whenever it presents itself—otherwise they may get engulfed in the grief and find it hard to progress through it. There is a ditch on either side of this unwanted and difficult path—and we can fall into either side very easily if balance is not achieved with the Lord's help: either we may get too busy doing the next right thing in a misguided effort to avoid the grief; or we may let go of faithfulness altogether (abandon doing the next right thing) and just wallow in the grief. Admittedly, it is hard to walk in an upright way through the times of deep grieving, but many good things in life are hard (parenting is hard) but that is no excuse for not embracing the challenge to do it as well as we can. Not to live and



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grieve in a faithful way makes life harder on us and on our friends and family—as they see us damaging our lives (and wounding our relationships with them) by grieving badly or not at all.

What to Do for Those Who Grieve

Give the grieving your tears. What? It would seem that tears are the last thing that they need—they already have so many of their own. Would it not be like carrying water to the ocean? Or throwing matches into a fire? And yet tears (if you truly carry them for the one they have lost) are exactly what they need from you. God is in your tears. He dwells with the broken in spirit. So, in giving the grieving your tears you give them something graced by His presence. Such tears are the very Word made flesh—a word of tender compassion from the Man of Sorrows, delivered in person through His Body on earth. In fact, He says to weep with those who weep. He does already. Will you join Him and share His heart which is also touching yours with your friend? Let that touch go full circle! Remember that when Job's friends huddled mournfully and silently around him in the time of his great sorrow, they did well. It was when they tried to speak, to explain, to vindicate God (by condemning Job!) that their words only succeeded in wounding him more. Many are those who give the grieving their words—but where, oh were, are those who give them their tears? How the grieving yearn for more tears!

Handle with care: People who are grieving, or worse, carrying grief but not releasing it through grieving, are very tender to the touch. Their hearts ache for the touch that they have lost and would welcome the right touch of heart or hand by others, but they require special handling, because they are, well, so touchy. It is easy to arouse a grieving person to anger— tread lightly! Pray much, but even more intently, when you see that there is no other way to “touch” their place of need. Never doubt that God can do more from heaven by His Spirit than we can by all our efforts!



CHAPTER TEN

Hope for the Hopeless

The Secret of Hope

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

I know what it is like to live without hope. For ten terrible years before becoming a Christian the only thing that kept me going was that I feared death more than I hated living. I didn't hate life itself—what I hated was my life, because I had lost all hope for either my present or my future. Then I asked Jesus into my life and hope just seemed to explode within me. Over all my earthly horizons a vast cloud was lifted, and I could see that a glorious destiny lay before me in heaven—and on earth a fresh chance to begin again.



You would think that such an experience would have taught me all I needed to know about hope. But it didn't. I had yet to learn the secret of how to hold on to the hope I had been given (Hebrews 10:23). As a new Christian I treasured faith. I worked hard at knowing and believing God's Word. Yet I had very little understanding about the place and power of hope. For that I would have to learn to find hope in a "hopeless" situation.

The Necessity of Hope

Hope is precious and priceless. It is divinely powerful. If our heart is full of hope, the future indeed looks bright before us and we see the present as a pathway into God's good plans for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11). On the other hand, if we lack or lose hope, nothing in the present can console us. All seems lost and thoughts of the future fill us with dread.

You can live over a month without food and a week without water, but just try to live one day without hope. Losing even a little hope can immediately cause our spirits to sink. Losing a lot can cause our souls to fall into despair and depression. There is a saying that where there is life there is hope. Yet it is also true to say that where there is hope, there is life and where there is no hope, there is no life.

Hope is one thing everyone on earth can have and have in abundance. It is one thing we can all richly enjoy. No one on earth can keep us from being filled with hope; nothing on earth can steal this priceless gift from us. Our God loves us so much He always keeps hope well within our reach (Hebrews 6:18). Yet it can quickly slip out of our grasp.



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The Problem with Hope

In practical terms the problem with hope is that it is so easily and painfully dashed. Old Job spoke with vehemence about the misery of shattered hope and his torment was magnified because he imagined that God was somehow set against him:

He breaks me down on every side, And I am gone; My hope He has uprooted like a tree. Job 19:10

Job got it wrong. God is never against us—only against our sins. If He were ever against us, we could have no hope. The heart break comes because His ways are just not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts—yet we keep setting our hopes on what we think God will do. Then, when things don't go as we imagined, our hope crumbles into dust. If this happens often enough we lose heart, become discouraged and join the unhappy throng who try to guard their hearts by not getting their hopes up too high.

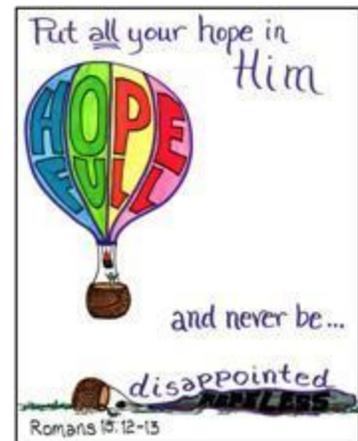
Beloved, we are meant to live in better things than resignation and discouragement! If we want to live with a high-flying hope that can't be shot down, we will simply have to learn how to take better care of it. We cannot go on placing something as precious and powerful as hope in the wrong things.

The Place for Hope

The time of discovery came for me during the fall of 1985 while my first wife and I were serving as missionaries in Honduras. It was a year in which we felt like we were going way out on a limb for the Lord—and the limb was about to break. I came to the place where I had no idea how to pray. Many things that had to do with our family and my hoped-for future as a priest were put in great jeopardy. I could see no way out of the difficulties. What was worse, I had no idea what to hope for.

I realized two things with tremendous clarity: First, I could not live without hope. I could exist, but I would be rendered useless as a witness, if I couldn't find a way to keep Christian hope alive in my heart. Otherwise, what did I have to share (1 Peter 3:15)? Second, the Lord wasn't making me any specific promises about how things were going to turn out. And I had no desire to place my hopes on something that wasn't in God's plan, something that wasn't meant to be.

In my desperation I turned to His Word. I read Romans 10:11 with fresh eyes: whoever believes in him will not be disappointed (NAS) and the light of heaven broke through. I realized that the Lord was directing me to put all my hope in Jesus alone. It was as if God was saying to me:



Son, if you try to hope in this or that outcome, you are taking a great chance you will be disappointed down the road. But if you hope only in what Jesus will do with these situations—if you hope only that He will have His way to His satisfaction—you will always be satisfied with the outcome and your hope will never be disappointed.



The Purpose of Hope

The hope God gives is a tremendous, powerful and indestructible anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19), but only if we learn the purpose for which it was intended. It was not primarily given to us so that we could set our desires on certain things and raise our hearts by hoping for them to come to pass. Hope was given so that we could anchor our every concern firmly in God and protect our hearts—even if we never see our desires come to pass in this life.

The joy that hope releases is what happens automatically within us whenever our hearts are beholding the unchanging reality of who our God is to us and who we are in Him. This has nothing to do with seeing our desires come to pass for hope that is seen is not hope (Romans 8:24). It has everything to do with seeing Him who is the source of our hope and the end of all our desires. Since this Reality never changes our hopes can be safely anchored there, sheltered in the midst of every storm. There is always hope for hopeless situations, because with God there are no truly hopeless situations!

Simply put, if I see no hope for myself, it is only because I am not looking to Jesus and seeing Him as He really is. If delays, detours or difficulties disappoint my hope it was because I was not hoping for His will to take place, only my own. Each fresh wounding of hope is meant as a loving reminder by God to rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

The Power of Hope

What I want to do next is give you something like spiritual dynamite so that you can clear out huge hidden pockets of unbelief that may imprison your hope in a world of lies. But you have to be willing to use it yourself. I have. And I know it is dynamite. However, to you it may just look like a couple of funny red tubes with strings at one end. Give it a go anyway. Just put the light of your faith to it with real conviction and see what it can do.

The first stick of dynamite is what I call looking through to heaven. Sometimes the quickest way to have my vision restored for life on earth is to get my eyes off of the apparently hopeless situation that surrounds me. I close my eyes to the present and look into that matchless future that the Father promises to all who believe in His Son. I keep looking until I see that Jesus will wipe away every tear as He shows me how even my bitterest defeats and worst sufferings were redeemed by Him. Once I see that I will have great joy over my life in the future (because of His work), I am ready to come back into the present with renewed hope and joy!

O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. Psalms 130:7

The other thing that really works has been to make strenuous use of Romans 8:28. I am so thankful that God inspired Paul to declare that we can know that all things work together for good to those who love God. How do we know this? By faith in God's Word.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

If we will just do the hard work of believing (John 6:29), we will discover this incredible word is true. And is it ever dynamite! This one promise alone guarantees our hope—absolutely

everything, no matter how bad or bleak it may seem, no matter whether it is in our daily life or our inner life—everything is being made to work for good! Make all of your discouraging thoughts bow before this one and you will never regret it. Cling to it with determined faith and may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). This is truly the secret to always having hope for hopeless situations.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Learn to hold on to your hope in God and watch how He works to raise you up!



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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Inner Vows

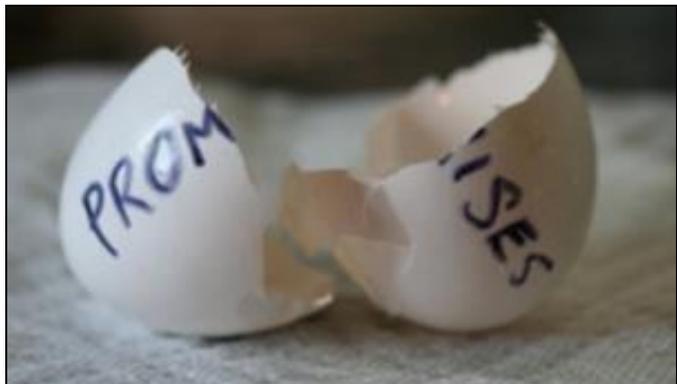
Bound by Rash Vows

By the gift of free will God made us sovereign over our own hearts. This allows us to live in inner freedom even under conditions of outward bondage, as Paul and Silas experienced when in prison (Acts 16:25). However, it also creates the possibility that we will live with inner bondage even under conditions of outward freedom. Sometimes it is not the choices we make in the present that limit our freedom, but ones we have rashly made in the past.

It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows. Proverbs 20:25

The Invasion of Innocence

We have been given free will in real world in which an invisible enemy has been at work to ensnare us as captives to his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26). One of the ways the evil one ensnares us is by the invasion of innocence. When hurt or injustice happened to us as children, if we were left uncovered (if there was no wise and understanding adult with us who was able to guide our heart through truth), we may have been led astray in our innocence and ignorance of God's ways into making inner vows suggested to us by temptation.



Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because they have no knowledge. Isaiah 5:13

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6

Without knowledge we may also have formed bitter root judgments that caused us to make inner vows, thus placing our future in bondage and captivity to the past. This seems so entirely unfair! And yet God has created us in His image as a people of the word. Our words and the agreement of our wills with them have tremendous life-shaping power, whether we wish it were so or not.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21

Inner Vows Backfire

Inner vows are misguided attempts to avoid repeating behaviors we reject or dislike in others or to avoid situations that we hate or fear (Such as: "I'll never speak in public again!" or "I'll never become a drunk like my father!"). They can be a way of trying to break generational patterns or correct our behavior in our own strength—but the bitter root judgment binds us to the pattern

and the vow inadvertently puts all the burden of transformation on self instead of upon the Lord and therefore blocks the one who vowed from being able to receive the grace (God's help) needed to overcome the behavior. Inner vows, like outer vows, are very binding as the scriptures reveal:

When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth. Deuteronomy 23:21-23

Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You. Psalms 56:12

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed — Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

The Way of Escape

Fortunately, the Lord our Father and Husband has preserved a way to annul our rash vows prompted by the enemy's deceptions, by bringing them to Him (see Numbers 30:1-8). If we are willing to repent of any bitter judgements that may have prompted us to make the rash vow in the first place, forgiving all concerned and giving the situation entirely to the Lord for Him to redeem, then we can with confidence repent of and renounce the inner vow and command it to be broken off of us.

Discernment and recollection are needed. The only difficult part to breaking inner vows is realizing where we have made them. Ask the Lord for discernment and recollection. Discernment because there are vows that we may have made as freewill offerings to Him—these we would be wise to keep. Recollection because there may be other vows that the enemy used to bring us into agreement with his plans for our life that have been hidden by him in our forgetfulness—these the Father disallows if we renounce them.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Praying Through to Peace

Inward Release and Heart Peace

'Praying through' means that we persevere in prayer until the release and peace come from the Lord and the burden is so fully and finally lifted to Him that we see no reason to take it back. We are actually at peace with the situation God has allowed.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

How the Lord Cultivates a Prayer Life in Us

1. God wants to do something in the world -- my world and His.
2. He opens my eyes to an area of concern. I typically I see it as a problem -- my problem!
3. I take the concern to heart and begin to worry about it (don't you?).
4. He reminds me to pray.
5. I pray but the worry remains and becomes a burden to me. I just can't trust Him with it.
6. He reminds me to pray through -- to really give it to Him, not just tell Him about it.
7. I pray until the burden is lifted out of my heart into His Hands. I have momentarily let it go.
8. He gives me the peace that passes understanding as a sign He has "heard" my prayer.
9. Later I see the concern again, lose the peace, and take the burden back! (Been there?)
10. He reminds me to pray through until I fully accept whatever He may choose to do. I do it.
11. Now that it is finally in His Hands, He can have His way with it.
12. Later, sometimes much later, He shows me how the answer has come.



Our God Wants to Go to Work!

The Lord puts the burden on our heart because He wants to act in the situation that concerns us. When we hold on to it, we actually hinder His work. Not only that, but if we aren't trusting the Lord, He often uses the "problem" to work on us -- to restore us to surrendering all to Him (Psalm 51:10). When we are trusting, God acts upon that which we have entrusted to Him. When we wait in expectant faith, God works for us, not on us. Such waiting is not resignation; it is filled with bright hope in God.

For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. Isaiah 64:4

The main indicator of an effective prayer life is freedom to trust God with all the concerns of life—the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). This peace does not come to us without the surrender of our burdens and concerns to Him, as well as our graceless strivings to rescue the concern with our own hands.

Clear Pride Out of the Way

We have to commit it to Him for Him to take care of it. Do we really want Him to take charge? Do we really want His will His way -- however that may work out? Truly giving our concern to God is what praying through accomplishes. This explains why the enemy is so dead set on defeating us in prayer by getting us to hold on to the burden after we have prayed it. Praying through means that time and time again we will be in a position of having to 'bet' our very lives and the lives of our loved ones on God's ability to come through for us. Like Paul we will need to learn how to commit our burdens to the Lord.

...nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Timothy 1:12

How can the Lord ever prove to us how faithful He is at 'handling' our concerns if we keep them stuck in our own hands? We may not see it at the time, but by 'casting' the heavy burden of worry and anxiety on ourselves, we are saying that we trust ourselves more than we trust God. It is an act of pride not to trust God with our cares and concerns -- and go back to trying to "trust" self instead. That's why we are told to humble ourselves under the 'mighty hand of God' -- whatever it is that He has allowed that we cannot change -- and cast those cares on the Lord. Or do we not believe that He cares for us?

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

This does not mean we don't work, but that we are content to do the part we see that we can do (with His peace in our hearts) and are equally content to leave the rest to Him (rather than worry about it). Ironically, it is only after we trust the Lord with our concern, that He is able to use us as His servants in the troubling situation. Until we surrender to Him, we are secretly seeking our will our way, even if we are doing it in His name. Pray the way Jesus prayed when He was strongly tempted to take control of His life and of His loved ones away from The Father:



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...and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luke 22:41-42

Why “Pray Through”?

Praying through is about two highly important things:

- 1) Our freedom of spirit
- 2) God's freedom to act



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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Reconciliation with Others

Becoming a Peace Maker

If you have taken this course and done the forgiving, then the Holy Spirit may raise in your heart a desire to recover some lost relationships. Or you may now find yourself in situations of conflict and want to become a peacemaker and restorer of others -- rather than run away. How to go about it? First of all, we need to know that it doesn't all depend upon us.

Reconciliation with others begins with us-- that much is required of us. That much is under our control. But we cannot control how the other person will respond.



If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18

Are You Reconciled to God?

If you or I are holding any blame or judgments against someone in our hearts, we are not yet fit candidates for the work of reconciliation, because we are ourselves un-reconciled to God. This does not mean we cannot be used, but we need to go forward in brokenness and contrition over our failings, well aware of our own need to be shown mercy by all concerned, especially the Lord. Being aware of our own great need of correction actually enables us to speak to others from a position of humility, rather than censoriousness.

Check List for a Would-be Agent of Reconciliation

- Are you reconciled to all the people involved?
- Do you honestly want their good above your own?
- Are you playing favorites, championing some and bashing others?
- Can you honestly pray blessing for everyone and mean it?
- Do you fear anyone that is involved?
- Are you holding hurt yourself?
- Are you driven to resolve other people's emotions, or drawn to it?
- Have you made your peace with God over His allowing of the wounds?

The Necessity of a Pure Heart

Only a heart that is purified of the contaminations of bitterness, accusation, blame, anger, fear and self-righteous offense can speak the truth in love to another person by the power of the Spirit. For it is especially in the context of reconciliation where there is so much opportunity for



miss-cues and miscommunication that the spirit of the enemy takes advantage of every sinful attitude in our own heart to derail the process of healing.

- If I am laden with fear, I will beat around the bush when there is only a small window of opportunity opened for dialog. Trust is often so slight that only words of simplicity and directness can be heard or received--if they are not spoken up front the window may slam shut
- If I am in any way carrying blame, it will seep out, but what seeps out is always sniffed out! With situations that need to be reconciled the accuser is always at work and no one likes the way it feels on the inside. Self-blame already abounds. To add even a little more is to ask for an explosion of self-defensiveness.
- If I am carrying offense and anger, very likely I will not be able to contain it. The things I have not made my own peace with before God will find me out, despite my best efforts to hide them and if I am not well-guarded my tongue will set loose what my heart has been storing.

The Snare of Hidden Motives

One of the difficulties of reconciliation is that we often have to engage in it with very impure hearts, because we need to talk things through with the other(s) involved in order to get our own cleansing. This should never be because we think that they owe us something and we want to make them pay. They may have indeed sinned against us, but this is an issue which the Lord says belongs to Him and needs to be settled with Him. We go to another because we need to offer our own apology or because we held back something that really does need to be shared for their sake, not ours. A good rule of thumb is if we just can't wait to tell them what we think we had better wait; if we are reluctant to risk spoiling our relationship with them, it just may be time to move forward. Nevertheless, we would be wise to be aware of the danger of rushing things too quickly to resolution.

Sometimes a rush to resolution presses us to attempt reconciliation with others before we have really come to terms with the underlying issues of our own loss of inner peace. If we cannot live with unresolved situations, it is because we have not yet learned how to make our peace with God -- who lives with them all of the time all over the world. We would do well to learn by His example and seek to receive for our self the peace He desires to give in the midst of any conflict, so as to place our self under His sovereign rule, rather than at odds with what He has allowed. The peace of God does not keep us from being involved -- it allows us to act with great freedom in very tricky, emotionally laden situations.

What Is Forbidden Us

- It is not allowed to force another's will.
- It is not allowed to condemn, cast blame, accuse or judge.
- It is not allowed to hold hurt or bitterness or anger after the day of injury.
- It is not allowed to bind someone to their sins.
- It is not allowed to sow division and further discord.
- It is not allowed to take justice into our own hands.



What Is Allowed Us

1) Effective Prayer

We simply must come to the place where we realize that the most powerful thing we can do about situations needing reconciliation is to bring our own hearts in prayer to God. The necessity of getting our hearts restored and cleansed, so that we can be fully trusting and fully obedient to God (the 1st commandment) and fully loving of all involved (the 2nd commandment) should be reason enough to see the importance of prayer. But with this cleansing comes the transfer of the burden of our heart into God's Hands. This is true spiritual power and one of the keys of the kingdom.

When our deepest concerns are translated into genuine praise and thanksgiving, the actual reconciliation is only a matter of time, now eagerly and expectantly awaited. Until then our prayers often have the unrecognized character of a complaint against God's sovereignty. The burden for any wrong is the Lord's who knows exactly why He allowed those very situations which grieve and vex us, and unless we give it to Him, the weight of it will throw our efforts to remedy things out of balance.

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. Hebrews 5:7-8

2) Speaking the Truth in Love

In my experience people usually say they have tried this and it didn't work, but the reality is that it is by no means easy to accomplish. Nevertheless, learning to do it is a command and not a suggestion of scripture. We have not "grown up" until we master it (Ephesians 4:15). Speaking the truth means speaking the whole truth which is never separated from the truth of God's love and compassion for the person we are at odds with.

Speaking the truth means saying what we believe Jesus would want us to say without fear or favor -- and in a way that would honor Him. Speaking it in love means our whole desire in speaking it is to help the other person hear something they may really need to hear for their own sake. The Spirit within us does this all day long. He leaves us free to reproach His inward counsel, neglect it, or even argue with it. Yet, we couldn't bear it if He tried to force truth on us, or badgered us, or condemned us. Ultimately, we listen and turn. Speaking the truth in love actually works to change people -- that's why God does it!

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:15-16



3) Sharing the Hurt of Our Heart

This also is divinely powerful. Did you know that the Spirit of God not only speaks the truth in love inside of us daily, He also grieves at times within us as a way of calling us back to our right mind? So, likewise we are allowed to express our grief and pain to one another as a way of eliciting change. When we see how what we have said or done has actually hurt someone in ways we never intended or comprehended, we begin to change.

The tricky part is to share our heart without dumping our negative emotions on the other person. If they sense blame or accusation very likely their walls will go up and their defenses will keep them from hearing our pain or seeing and taking responsibility for their part in it. Yet, it is just as much a hindrance to reconciliation to pull back from letting our hurt be known, either because we don't want to be hurt again or because we have misguided sympathy for the other person and don't want to "burden" them with our pain. Because Nathan wisely opened David's heart first to feel the pain and injustice of a wrong done by a certain "man," David was finally able to see his own sin in the light of the harm he himself had done.

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! 2 Samuel 12:5-7

4) Loving Unconditionally

If we imagine that this in any way comes naturally to us, then Jesus died in vain. Through faith in His death and resurrection, God has given us a new heart and a new spirit so that we can learn to live and love as He does. The sad truth is that by nature our love is selfish and self-centered, so much so that the perfect love of the Father is genuinely hard for us to understand, even though we experience it and believe in it. We spend our Christian lives trying to figure out why He loves us so much, even though we "know" that unconditional love is a gift that has nothing to do with the recipient and everything to do with the One who unstintingly pours out such an overflow of love.

Accordingly, unconditional love is highly attractive. It is so completely foreign to our usual experience that it always works to arrest the attention of the one receiving such undeserved care and affection. That is why it is written that love never fails -- this love can break through hardened hearts and minds like nothing else. But all lesser forms of love can and do fail, since love that is not truly unconditional is mingled with the selfish desires of our fallen nature.

Love is patient and is kind; love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 WEB



5) Living Sacrificially

Dying to self and embracing the cross for the sake of how God will use our submission to Him and obedience to Him for the sake of the one who is wounding us is the most radically effective way to position our self before God for change. Again, Jesus would not have led the way if it were not effective.

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Luke 9:23-24

Love's Desire

To pray effectively, to be able to speak the truth in love, to kindly disclose the hurt of one's own heart, to love unconditionally and to be willing to live sacrificially bring us into true Christ-likeness, a goal that is the heart desire of all true Christians. But we didn't want to become Christ-like through such wounds and battles! Still it remains true that by patient perseverance we receive what is promised for God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

To accept these constraints is to enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God to pursue Love's desire to seek and save those who are lost and to be positioned to act and speak in such a way that the un-reconciled ones may be enabled to hear what they need to hear so that, if it is possible for them at that time, they can give a right response to God through us.

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:24-26

A Root of Bitterness

Most of the emotional hurt and pain people carry beyond the day of injury is self-inflicted and self-sustained. This is not our normal way of seeing it, but the Bible has a different perspective. If I hurt you, regardless of how I hurt you (whether it came out of my sin or out of my obedience to Christ), you are given one day to deal with the hurt and anger. Once you let the sun go down on your anger, it becomes your sin. You then become the one responsible for holding on to your own pain to your own continual hurt.

Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor. For we are members one of another. "Be angry, and don't sin." Don't let the sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the devil. Ephesians 4:25-27 WEB

I am required to repent to God and to seek to make amends with you (if it was indeed my sin originally) and to seek reconciliation in any event. But your peace and painlessness do not at all depend on me. Whatever is in your heart is under your sovereignty entirely and you are responsible for it before God to bring it to Him. He wants to restore you to His peace -- regardless of what I do or don't do. This ensures that no one's interior life can ever be controlled by the actions or inactions of another. This is very good news for those who want to

live continually in the peace of Christ. Nothing and no one can ever do anything to separate us from the love of God or the peace He gives to those who are willing to put their trust in Him and forgive as He requires.

Does this leave us defenseless -- with no recourse to change those who hurt or offend us? By no means. But it does mean that if we want to be agents of reconciliation, we have to understand God's justice system. The person bound by bitterness over pain and offense is not an innocent victim (see Matthew 18:21-35). Our place is to have compassion for them, to show them sympathy and understanding, and to seek to help them be delivered from that snare of the enemy by which they have become bound.

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

Hebrews 12:14-15

It needs to be said however that there are always some people, so ensnared by sins of bitterness and accusation that they defy every honest attempt to reconcile. Having failed at reconciliation, we may feel so inwardly accused by the hurt we feel for them that we still feel pressured to do something to lift the burden of their pain. If they will not respond to us or take the first steps themselves, we may cast around to find someone whom we can prod into being the catalyst for change. This may work at times. But often what we need is discernment about what the Lord is asking of us in the moment. Often all that can be done can only be done through prayer, because the root of such problems lies with the one who has become bitter and unless their heart opens to grace there is nothing anyone can do to relieve their misery. God uses effective, believing prayer to work wonders.



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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Retaining Your Healing

Eunice Waye Evans

Guarding Your Heart Against an Invisible Enemy

Now that you have received inner healing and deliverance, what now?

How do you keep the evil spirits from returning?

How do you retain healing and deliverance?

Gaining Freedom Is Only the Beginning

Stay positioned in Christ to be ready for any attack. Keep the main thing (your relationship with Jesus) the main thing by making sure your safety nets are in good repair—the [five essentials of connecting](#) with Christ: prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship and service. Pursue trust and obedience to Him on a daily basis (see [Spiritual Warfare 101](#) and [Walking in the Spirit](#)). Then you will be in a good position to do the warfare necessary to retain your healing or deliverance!



The Warning of Jesus

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Luke 11:24-26

The Spiritual Battle

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Our Place of Authority

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.



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Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:17-20

How to Begin Ministry to Others or Self-Protection

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-8

The Weapons of Our Warfare

1) Praise and Worship

Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute on them the written judgment — This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord! Psalm 149:5-9

2) The Name of Jesus

We run to His Name that we may call upon Him. We call upon His Name that we may stand by His grace. We stand by His grace that we may command by His Name.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

3) The Word of God

Quote the word to the enemy; stand upon it in your heart.

But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" Luke 4:4

4) The Blood of Jesus

Use the blood as a covering; plead the blood of Jesus over yourself, family, property, body, soul, spirit, mind and subconscious mind.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11-12



5) The Angelic Shield

Ask God to send angels for protection.

For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone. Psalm 91:11-12

6) The Armor of God

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:10-19

7) Praying in the Spirit

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18

8) Binding the Strong Man

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. Luke 11:21-23

9) Binding and Loosing

Bind what heaven has bound and loose what heaven has loosed.

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19



The Challenge

Do You Have What It Takes?

Do you have what it takes to live your life with a heart on fire for God? Every Christian at new birth needs and gets the starter kit: faith in Christ and the Bible. But the starter kit doesn't keep the fires burning after the honeymoon is over. Do you have what it takes to stay on fire with a great love for Jesus?

It takes two things that every Christian has and no Christian wants. What are they? A sin nature as deep and dark as hell itself and a world of troubles!

1. Steady Access to Mercy

According to Jesus those who are forgiven much love much, so it is helpful that we realize afresh each day the reality of our depravity so that we can reap the enjoyment of His mercy being made new to us every morning! The truth is that every temptation to sin and every glance at the ruin of the self-life apart from God *can be* a spring board which sails us up into the heavenlies in heartfelt appreciation for the love and mercy that covers us every instant of our lives.

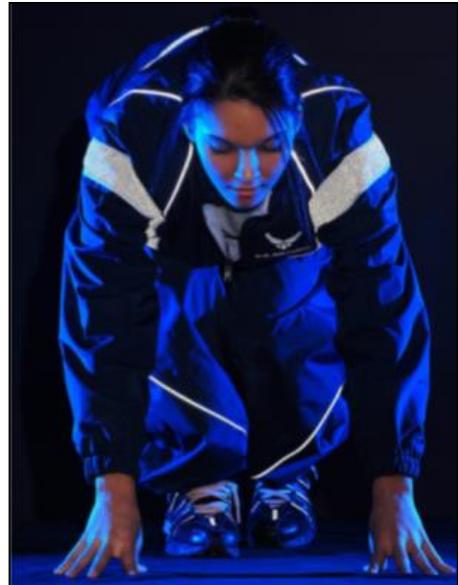
The ones who know that their sinfulness and weaknesses are incorrigible and without excuse are actually set free to live a life of grace supported by grace alone -- if they do the work of believing that His mercy and love are as good as He says they are.

2. Steady Access to Help

Likewise, we all need troubles to free us from seeking to be our own savior and bring us into a place where we fully trust His power at work. But for this we need troubles that are too big (in our own eyes) for us to handle -- otherwise we will keep on stressing ourselves trying to manage our own lives in our own strength.

The ones who know that their troubles are way beyond their abilities are finally set free to live a life of grace, confidently supported by His unfailing guidance power and promises.

Nobody said that these are "gifts" that you are going to want to have. Who wants to be so desperately sinful that calling on God for mercy (often) is necessary Nobody wants to be so weak and foolish that calling on God for help (often) is the only way that they can get through daily life. But if this is you (and since it really is all of us), why not relax and accept it that you need God as much as you do and rejoice that He has everything you need. Then really get happy that at least your tremendous need is keeping you connected to the Source of Life.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Godfather Offer

The Hidden Potential of Your Past

Your past now holds the promise of giving you a great future! It may seem strange, but the problem is *never* our past. It is our inability, so far, to reap the hidden blessings our past contains, for it holds the God-given potential of perfectly preparing us to live as more than conquerors in our present and future. How can this be? It will happen in two ways:

1) An Overcoming Mercy

We will reap this promise as we finally come into obedience where mercy is concerned and have forgiven all of the ones who have failed us *and* fully received release over all of the ways we have failed God, others and ourselves. By doing so we will have gained a graced ability to give and receive forgiveness at the level everyone needs in order to live in the glorious liberty in present day encounters with the sins of others or of our own doing.

The very fact that we carry pain, anger and shame out of the past proves that we are ill equipped to live in the present and have not grown the spiritual “muscles” needed to move without fear into our future. So long as our past is



un-mended by total forgiveness it is secretly screaming at us that God cannot be trusted because He allows people to hurt us in ways we “can’t get over” and that we can’t be loved because we did the “unforgiveable.” This binds all kinds of fears and insecurities inside us as well as the pain of unreleased wrongs.

2) An Overcoming Faith

We will reap this promise as we learn to fully believe Romans 8:28 over everything that has ever happened to us in the past. By this we gain the ability to believe it over our present and future troubles -- of which there are sure to be plenty. Unbelief over the past binds us to unbelief in the present and keeps us from living that life of faith and grace which is entirely dependent upon God fulfilling His promises to us.

Our confidence in Him is what releases us to live in childlike simplicity of trust in the present, knowing that whatever He allows, He is always ultimately working it for our good and His glory. So, there is never a reason to fear the future once we have become free of the past.

It's an offer you can't refuse! from the original God Father!



www.healingstreamsusa.org
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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Snare of Introspection

The Snare of the Fowler

Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD. Psalm 124:7-8

Even this equipping can be used against you. The teachings on the strongholds, discernment, and carrying thoughts captive to Christ are indeed helpful, but these good things can be subtly used against us by the enemy—if we begin to lean on our own understanding, thinking that it is up to us to deliver ourselves. The truth is that we will indeed be able to recognize and defeat the enemy's attacks in many areas at many times thanks to the equipping we receive. However, there will always be some attacks of the enemy that slip in under our radar, for which we do not yet have sufficient discernment and therefore really can't recognize what is getting a strong hold upon us.

Beware of this Snare!

If we have not learned this, then we may slip into the snare of introspection —trying to be our own light of revelation and conviction of sin on the inside of ourselves. We begin looking inside trying to find the place that is keeping us bound, the thing that is wrong. This is like going in to a dark, junked-up basement, looking for a lost coin with a dimly burning flashlight. The harder you try to find “the sin” you need to confess and deal with, the more freedom seems to slip away. Then discouragement and self-condemnation begin to come in. Why can't I get free? Why isn't God helping me? This is the snare of introspection coming in on top of whatever it was that was making you feel bound in the first place.



Jesus is the Light of the world (John 9:5). We need to learn to recognize that once we see we are snared in a way that we cannot escape, we have to look to Him to rescue us. Only the Lord can turn the lights on so that we can see clearly what we need to confess and repent of (Jeremiah 17:10). Once we see it, we will know what to do with it to co-operate with Him, but until the Lord shows us we are held captive by darkness.

If we don't wait for His light, we will find ourselves hacking away at chains we cannot see to little avail, or worse, adding new chains of self-reproach, confusion and increasing bitterness and fear. Our own understanding is good for a lot of things—we are told to get as much understanding as we can, but we are warned not to lean on our understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). When we don't see the way, we are to lean hard on Jesus, acknowledging Him as our light and our deliverer, and letting Him direct our path.



You Can't Save Yourself

Jesus alone is our Savior. He delights in rescuing us. He always has a good plan to give us a future and a hope in the midst of the struggle (Jeremiah 29:11). He says, “Look to Me and be saved” (Isaiah 45:22). Just by remembering to look to Him and call upon Him to deliver us the heaviness of the snare of introspection begins to lift. We begin to turn from self as savior to Him Who alone is Savior. With that settled, we can release the concern and go on our merry way, trusting Him to guide the process of deliverance by His Spirit—in His time.

Meanwhile, learning to turn from self and look to Him, deals with a much deeper issue all on its own. Why was it we were snared by introspection in the first place? Because inside our heart of hearts we “naturally” trusted to self more than to Jesus! This is one of the deepest issues of the fallen nature—trying to be as God (Genesis 3:5). So, it is good to train our eyes to look to Jesus for our deliverance and wait for Him to come.

The snare of introspection, now that it is overturned, is being made to work for our advantage (Romans 8:28)! Looking to Him for deliverance will grow our spiritual eyes to behold Him in greater ways as our true Deliverer from all such snares and our love and appreciation for His salvation will greatly increase.

Rejoice! —He is making good progress with you!



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Your Heart on Pilgrimage

Put these "Tools" in Your Knapsack

This portion of our teaching comes down the road as you exercise faith to believe for freedom even under attack and keep pressing forward. Emotional freedom is the ability to know with confidence that God loves you, is present with you and is eager to help you—no matter what you are feeling or going through.

Our life is a journey, but our heart is also “set on pilgrimage” to recover an established faith in the truth of who our God really is--and through that graced connection, discover joy daily in our relationship with Him.



Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.
Psalm 84:5-7

1) Our journey takes flight as we begin to really cultivate a love for Truth. A heart on pilgrimage LOVES learning the truths of God and rejoices at what believing truth does on the inside of us.

Your statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage. Psalm 119:54

2) Stay focused on truth. Walking out these teachings is a process of [renewing our minds](#) (Romans 12:1-2).

...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind... Ephesians 4:22

3) Resist [stronghold thinking](#) Remember to take every thought captive to Christ.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ... 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

4) Know the tricks of the enemy -- [practice separating](#) the person from the sin (remember Romans 7)!

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. Matthew 7:1-2



5) When you fail, apply the [steps to freedom](#) —seek the refreshing that comes by repentance.

Come, and let us return to the LORD...Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain... Hosea 6:1-3

6) Forgive yourself, rise in faith and press forward.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

7) Be willing to go into the fire —don't "waste your trials" by running from them—stand fast. Do it afraid, if you have to, but keep doing it.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1-2

8) Refuse to accept programmed behavior coming out of your past--you are a [new creation](#) (see also Colossians 3:3-5).

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh [not even ourselves]... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

9) Don't make an idol of your illness, addiction or issues. God is always sending good gifts into our lives—focus on them.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. James 1:17

10) Give yourself and the Lord time. God is working even when He doesn't seem to be.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

11) You are not alone —stay in fellowship with believers who are also on pilgrimage (Hebrews 10:24).

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another... 1 Thessalonians 5:11

12) Behold Him! Stay in the grace of believing that His love and mercy for you will never fail--[look to see Him](#) as He really is.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

