

# **Supplemental Handouts**

**For**

## **Module (M.I.T.) 102**

**Lessons 1-6 (Methodologies)**

***Instructions:***

Write a Brief (one paragraph to one page) summary of each attached biblical counseling related article in preparation for Module 103.

**Timberlake Biblical Counseling & Training Center**

- Supplemental articles for each lesson
- Use for enrichment of the Fundamentals Training
- Ignore the page numbers on attached articles

**Instructor: Dr. Mark Hager, Director of Counseling**  
**ACBC – FBC – IABC – TAC Certifications**

# **Supplemental Handouts**

**For**

**M.I.T. 102**

## **Starting Pages: (Packet order)**

Lesson 1 – Illustrative labels & biblical equivalents

Lesson 2 – Words – The Thermometer of Your Heart

Lesson 3 – The Biblical Doctrine of Forgiveness

Lesson 4 – Every Thought Captive!

Lesson 5 – Adultery – Far Worse Than you Think

Lesson 6 – Conflict Analysis Chart

## **Timberlake Biblical Counseling & Training Center**

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**Instructor: Dr. Mark Hager, Director of Counselor**

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# LESSON 1

## 102

### SESSION 8

# FOR BIBLE

## PSYCHOLOGICAL LABELS AND BIBLICAL EQUIVALENTS

### ■ CREATING A BRIDGE

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." Colossians 2:8

### ■ The Problem with Labels

- Plausible and descriptive
- Allows us to make excuses
- Casts us in unchangeable light
- Goes to the level of identity

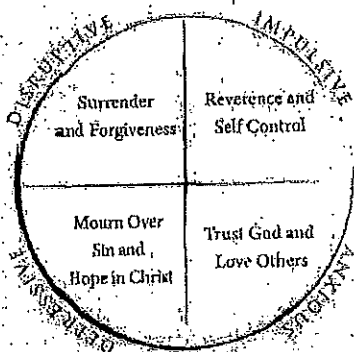
### WORLD'S LABELS



### BIBLICAL LABELS



### A GODLY RESPONSE



of the believer. With a few choice words, we've turned the life-transforming truth of the gospel into nothing more than a motivational speech.

More than twenty years ago, John MacArthur saw the threat that psychology posed to the church. He warned believers not to give credibility to the secular pseudo-science.

Psychology is no more a science than the atheistic evolutionary theory upon which it is based. Like theistic evolution, "Christian psychology" is an attempt to harmonize two inherently contradictory systems of thought. Modern psychology and the Bible cannot be blended without serious compromise to or utter abandonment of the principle of Scripture's sufficiency.<sup>[2]</sup>

At the time, pastors and church leaders were being cowed into surrendering aspects of their leadership to "professionals" who could supposedly better address the emotional and psychological needs of believers.

Evangelical psychological clinics have sprung up. Though almost all of them claim to offer biblical counsel, most merely dispense secular psychology disguised in spiritual terminology. Moreover, they are removing the counseling ministry from its proper arena in the church body and conditioning Christians to think of themselves as incompetent to counsel. Many pastors, feeling inadequate and perhaps afraid of possible malpractice litigation, are perfectly willing to let "professionals" take over what used to be seen as a vital pastoral responsibility. Too many have bought the lie that a crucial realm of wisdom exists outside Scripture and one's relationship to Jesus Christ, and that some idea or technique from that extrabiblical realm holds the real key to helping people with their deep problems.<sup>[3]</sup>

Fast forward two decades and it's no longer a question of surrender. Instead, church leaders have embraced the therapeutic culture and adopted the kind of terminology that appeals to a generation of victims.

Most celebrity pastors today won't talk about sin or repentance or righteousness. Sermons—well, not sermons, *talks*—center on life's journey, fulfillment, and relationship counseling. Christ is a cool guy who set a great example for us. The Holy Spirit is little

modification when he has the tools for spiritual transformation (like a surgeon wreaking havoc with a butter knife instead of using a scalpel)? The most skilled counselor is the one who most carefully, prayerfully, and faithfully applies the divine sanctification—shaping another into the image of Jesus Christ. [6]

from General Revelation "Truth." For him, therefore, psychological truth is "God's truth." One can only wonder at the thinking of English at this point when he, too, speaks of "truth derived from . . . general revelation," which is "not as trustworthy as the truth found in the Scriptures." He proposes, therefore, the "filtering" of "psychological truth through biblical truth."

### *Is "truth" Truth?*

What is truth for English? How can anyone think that "truth" may be untrustworthy -- especially if he adheres to the slogan, "All truth is God's truth"? Truth is Truth. If it is God's Truth given by General Revelation, then it cannot be considered as less "trustworthy" than His Truth given in Special Revelation (the Bible). How can any truth be more or less "trustworthy" and still be God's Truth? All of God's Truth is trustworthy. And, if the Truth derived from General Revelation is from God, how can one speak of filtering it? You can't filter out error from God's Truth because in His Truth there is none! Truth is Truth -- but English doesn't seem to think so. He has two kinds of "truth."<sup>4</sup> How can there be such? What does he mean by *less* trustworthy truth? If it is less trustworthy, but still God's truth, then God's Word (at least in part) is untrustworthy. How can this be? The sloppy thinking that is often found in the integrationist movement makes it difficult to critique. Truth, if it "truly" is Truth, is always trustworthy -- simply because it is Truth.

### *What "truth"?*

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. H. Newton Malony's analysis of Gary Collins' view: "He distinguishes 'TRUTH' from 'truth,' and recognizes that because the various data under examination are from different sources (some revealed and some empirically derived), tension is bound to exist between Christian and non-Christian psychologists." Collins and Malony, *Psychology and Theology, Prospects for Integration*. Abingdon: Nashville (1981), p. 90.

session that followed, an attendee said, "You can't deal with persons who are mentally ill." My reply to this psychologist (who evidently thought the "mentally ill" were in his domain) was, "Neither can you if they are truly ill! Psychologists are not doctors either." Sometimes such people find it convenient to stress one thing, sometimes another.

Now, something of that sort happens when integrationists speak of revelation and of something less trustworthy. English has called the something-less-than-trustworthy material revelation; others, more astute, when convenient, find it necessary to do something else. But when these same people want to gain credibility for their views, they speak of this material as revelation from God which has "equal warrant" for acceptance as does biblical Truth.

The confusion over these matters is obvious. But that confusion is endemic to integrationism. That is because they try but, as they say, "You can't have it both ways." Either General Revelation is truly revelation, or it isn't. If revelation, clearly there is nothing to filter. It is all as pure as the words of Scripture (Special Revelation).

### ***Where is the "truth"?***

All revelation from God is inerrant. This fact poses a new problem for the integrationist. He can call some theory, idea, or method supposedly discovered in nature "God's Truth" if he wishes, but if he thinks for a minute, how is he to establish it as such? In no other field of endeavor has there been so much disagreement. Psychologists retool throughout their lifetimes to keep up with the latest newly-uncovered system (or parts thereof). Think of all those systems

There is trouble in River City! Psychology, thought of as a science, must agree to science's fundamental premise that nothing is final, all is in flux. What today is considered a fact, tomorrow is rejected as disproved. This is true of many once-cherished views. Once, people believed in the Phlogiston theory of negative weight. Bringing this concept into some mathematical equations helped them explain facts having to do with the weight of burned substances before and after the burning process. Since then, it has been held that in burning, something also enters into the material burned, thus causing the residue to be heavier than before burning. Who knows whether or not there will be a later modification of this view? Science changes precisely because, unlike revelation, there is no assurance that what it learns is Truth.

All Truth is Truth. Whatever Truth is revealed in General Revelation must therefore be true—not partially so, or even mostly so. To say otherwise, is to say that in nature, God gave us contaminated truth, or no truth at all. Neither can be correct. Revelation from God is always wholly true. But what truth is revealed through General Revelation? Is it truth about automobile mechanics? About medicine (think of the changes in that field!)? About cooking? Or biology, or -- you name it! Why should psychology be any different? Indeed, there is no proof that psychology -- in any of its parts -- has been *revealed*.

And, if it were true that General Revelation may be found in psychology, we must ask *what* psychology? As has been observed, there are more than 250 differing psychological systems abroad in this country alone, each competing for recognition as the true one. What proliferation! And, who is able in one lifetime to read, understand, and evaluate all of them? 

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the mid-1980s, one version of psychotherapy after another had come and gone in faddish ways”



fall back on to justify their position] has not supplemented the Bible, but supplanted it in many areas."<sup>8</sup>

### ***Revelation is from God***

Revelation then—all of it, so long as it is information truly revealed by God -- is inerrant. Nothing, except that sort of general (nonspecific) revelation of God as the Creator of man and things who holds us responsible for knowing that which is found in the "book of nature," can be said to be inerrant. Indeed, it is entirely false to speak of what science discovers as divine *revelation*. It is human *discovery* -- and that is all. Revelation comes from God; discovery from man. And, the discoveries that are unearthed may or may not be correctly interpreted. Most of the supposed "discoveries" turn out to be nothing more than the views of humans trying to understand nature. Surely, this cannot be rightly termed "revelation."

What is necessary to recognize, then, is that the "facts" unearthed are man's discoveries, not God's revelation. Discoveries come from man at work in his world; revelation comes from God at work in His world. The great difference between revelation and discovery, I repeat, is that the former is always from God; the latter is not.

Having explored this matter somewhat cursorily, I shall now look at some of the supposed "revelations" of psychology.

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<sup>8</sup>Isley, *Op. Cit.*, p.66. Brackets mine.

## THE BENEFITS OF SECULAR COUNSELING ARE AN ILLUSION

Many teachers, practitioners, and authors who *favor* secular counseling and its underpinnings of psychology and psychotherapy have practiced and evaluated these methodologies and results. Much to their chagrin, they cannot verify the expected beneficial outcomes of such "therapy" for patients and/or counselees. In fact, when measured, the predicted outcomes were illusive, and unintended outcomes were useless or harmful.

Note the following observations from secular psychologists who realized the illusion of truth in their professions.

*The following material, listed by page number, is used by permission and is reprinted from Psychobabes: revised and expanded edition, The Psychological Seduction of Christianity by Martin and Deidre Bobgan (Eastgate Publishers, 2012).*

*You may download the book at no cost from <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4119220/pdf>*

*Page 102 - Psychologist Roger Mills, in his article "Psychology Goes Insane, Botches Role as Science," says: The field of psychology today is literally a mess. There are as many techniques, methods and theories around as there are researchers and therapists. I have personally seen therapists convince their clients that all of their problems come from their mothers, the stars, their bio-chemical make-up, their diet, their life-style and even the "kharma" from their past lives.*

*Page 108 - Sir Karl Popper declares that psychological theories formulated by Freud, Adler, and others, "though posing as sciences, had in fact more in common with primitive myths than with science; that they resembled astrology rather than astronomy."*

*Page 109 - Research psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey, in his book The Mind Game, says, "The techniques used by Western psychiatrists are, with few exceptions, on exactly the same scientific plane as the techniques used by witchdoctors."*

*Page 109 - Psychiatrist Lee Coleman titled his book about psychiatry The Reign of Error. In this book he demonstrates that "psychiatry does not deserve the legal power it has been given" and that "psychiatry is not a science." He says, "I have testified in over one hundred and thirty criminal and civil trials around the country, countering the authority of psychiatrists or psychologists hired by one side or the other. In each case I try to educate the judge or jury about why the opinions produced by these professionals have no scientific merit."*

*Page 121 - Psychologist Carol Tavris compares astrology and psychotherapy. She says, "Now the irony is that many people who are not fooled by astrology for one minute subject themselves to therapy for years, where the same errors of logic and interpretation often occur."*

*Page 139 - Dr. Thomas Szasz refers to the dangers of psychotherapy as religion: It is not merely a religion that pretends to be a science, it is actually a fake religion that seeks to destroy true religion.*

*Page 180 - Professor of psychiatry Donald Klein, in his testimony before the Subcommittee on Health of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Finance, said, "I believe that, at present, the scientific evidence for psychotherapy efficacy cannot justify public support."*

*Page 181 - Michael Shepherd from the Institute of Psychiatry in London summarizes the outcome studies in psychotherapy: A host of studies have now been conducted which, with all their imperfections, have made it clear that (1) any advantage accruing from psychotherapy is small at best; (2) the difference between the effects of different forms of therapy are negligible; and (3) psychotherapeutic intervention is capable of doing harm.*

*Page 184 - A book entitled Psychotherapy Research: Methodological and Efficacy Issues, published by the American Psychiatric Association, indicates that a definite answer to the question, "Is psychotherapy effective?" may be unattainable.*

*Page 185 - In reviewing this book (mentioned in previous paragraph), the Brain/Mind Bulletin says, "Research often fails to demonstrate an unequivocal advantage from psychotherapy." The following is an interesting example from the book:... an experiment at the All-India Institute of Mental Health in Bangalore found that Western-trained psychiatrists and native healers had a comparable recovery rate. The most notable difference was that the so-called "witch doctors" released their patients sooner.*

*Page 187 - One group of researchers, after surveying the "best minds in the field of psychotherapy" conclude: It is clear that negative effects of psychotherapy are overwhelmingly regarded by experts in the field as a significant problem requiring the attention and concern of practitioners and researchers alike.*

*Page 188 - Michael Scriven, when he was a member of the American Psychological Association Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility, questioned "the moral justification for dispensing psychotherapy, given the state of outcome studies which would lead the FDA to ban its sale if it were a drug."*

## WHAT ABOUT INTEGRATING SECULAR COUNSELING WITH BIBLICAL COUNSELING?

Believers disregard truth when they attempt to integrate secular counseling and biblical counseling. This integration supposedly produces better results than either counseling approach could achieve alone. However, can integration ever work between two belief systems based on opposing sources of authority and expressed in conflicting methodologies? Can a mixture of divine wisdom and natural wisdom provide the best outcome? Can the "wisdom" of Adler, Freud, Jung, Ellis, Perls, Erickson, Glasser, Kinsey, Lang, Maslow, Rogers, and other leading secular psychologists add to and improve on the wisdom of God? Can a mixture of divine wisdom and natural wisdom provide a better outcome than divine wisdom alone? Obviously not. Integrating biblical counseling with secular counseling cannot glorify God.

Significant questions arise when Christians try to integrate biblical truth with worldly wisdom. How did Christians overcome life's challenges before secular counseling entered the church? Were Christians ill-equipped to deal with problems when their only printed resource was the Holy Scriptures and their only power was the Holy Spirit living within them? Believers who accept secular counseling ignore almost 2,000 years of Christian history in which Christians were more than conquerors without the aid of psychology and psychotherapy.

Still, unbelievers as well as many naive believers trust secular counseling, either by itself or as part of the pseudo-mix of biblical and secular counseling. Today, most Christian organizations, church leaders, and fellow believers approve of adding man's way with God's way in dealing with life's difficulties. Despite this prevailing view, relying on secular counseling demonstrates a lack of trust in God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible.

### THE BIBLE REVEALS THAT NO EARTHLY INSIGHT OR POWER CAN COMPARE TO GOD THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bible presents unalterable and astounding truths about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

#### God of the Bible – Divinity of the Trinity

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/God%20of%20the%20Bible%20-%20Divinity%20of%20the%20Trinity.pdf>

#### God's Attributes (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Gods%20Attributes.pdf>)

Jesus – Who is He? (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Jesus%20-%20Who%20is%20He.pdf>)

Holy Spirit – The Divine Developer (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Holy%20Spirit%20Divine%20Developer.pdf>)

The Bible also proclaims the reality of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus IS Lord (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Jesus%20IS%20Lord.pdf>)

Is Jesus Lord of Your Life? (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Is%20Jesus%20Lord%20of%20Your%20Life.pdf>)

The Bible presents many aspects of a believer's relationship with Christ.

Spiritual Realities Before and After Receiving Christ (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Spiritual%20Realities%20Before%20and%20After%20Receiving%20Christ.pdf>)

Your Identity in Christ (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Your%20Identity%20in%20Christ.pdf>)

Jesus has no deficiencies and possesses strength upon strength. He is perfect. Secular psychology and psychotherapy, two significant examples of the world's wisdom, can never make believers in Christ more like Him.

**1 Corinthians 3:19-20** (NASB), For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; <sup>20</sup> and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS."

### TRUSTING GOD'S WORD IS VITAL

God's Word proclaims truth, but does it contain sufficient truth for all aspects of life and relationships? Scripture answers that question with a resounding "yes."

**Psalms 19:7-11**, The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. <sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup> They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. <sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**Hebrews 4:12**, For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- God's ways *versus* man's ways
- Supernatural change of heart *versus* self-motivated change of habits
- Divine power *versus* human effort
- Christ-reliance *versus* self-reliance
- God's wisdom *versus* man's wisdom
- Biblical authority *versus* psychotherapy and secular psychology
- Prayer to God Almighty *versus* self-oriented meditation
- Christ-like growth *versus* self-oriented changes

The left side of the list identifies eight foundation blocks of biblical counseling. The right side identifies eight pretenders of truth. May God grant each of us the wisdom to distinguish the two sides and to base our spiritual growth and service on the sure foundation of the Word so that God will receive all the glory.

**1 Corinthians 10:31**, Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**1 Peter 4:11**, Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive, biblical information refuting secular psychology and psychotherapy is available on the Psychoheresy website which can be accessed at <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/mainpage.html>  
The free e-book Psychoheresy (468 pages) is at: <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/e-books/PHR-ebk.pdf>  
and 16 free e-books written by the Bobgans are available at <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/bksonline.html>

The above situations illustrate *sinful* counseling. In each of these cases, the counselor encourages another person to sin. The earthly birthplace of sinful counseling is the Garden of Eden. In that idyllic setting, Satan counseled Eve to disobey God's explicit command. Eve foolishly followed Satan's counsel as did her husband Adam. As Adam and Eve discovered, so-called help that disregards God and, instead, appeals to self-centeredness is devastating to lives and relationships.

See *Genesis chapter 3* at <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen.3&version=NASB>

*The End of the Beginning ... The Fall of Adam and Eve* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/End%20of%20the%20Beginning.pdf>

Biblically-based help condemns self-centeredness and always opposes sinful behavior. Real help relies on biblical truth to benefit others and bring glory to God.

#### • PURPOSEFUL COMMUNICATION

The primary purpose of biblical counseling is to glorify God.

**1 Corinthians 10:31**, Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**1 Peter 4:11**, Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

In counseling and in all other areas of life and relationships, God's glory is paramount.

*(Do All for the Glory of God* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Do%20All%20For%20the%20Glory%20of%20God.pdf>)

The vast majority of counseling deals with daily routines, tasks, and responsibilities. Human (natural) wisdom is often useful for these situations. However, challenges involving personal difficulties, relationships, and seemingly unsolvable problems require divine wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-6, 1 Corinthians 3:19-20, 1 Peter 4:11).

**Proverbs 3:5-6**, Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

**1 Corinthians 3:19-20**, For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "*He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS*"; <sup>20</sup> and again, "*THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.*"

**1 Peter 4:11**, Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The first study in this Biblical Counseling series noted that hundreds of counseling perspectives derived from human wisdom compete with one another and contradict God's Word.

See *Counseling ... Based on What?* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Biblical%20Counseling%20-%20Part%20I.pdf>

Biblical counseling, however, provides totally sufficient truth and trustworthy help from the Bible. Such counseling focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ (our eternal Redeemer and the embodiment of divine truth) and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth Who empowers believers to think, speak, act, and live in a manner that glorifies God).

See *TRUTH - The Measurement for All Aspects of Life and Relationships* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Truth.pdf>

#### THE TWO PRIMARY EMPHASES OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The primary emphases of biblical counseling are evangelism (the Gospel/the Good News) and sanctification (growth in the Christ-life).

#### • EVANGELISM

Evangelism presents unbelievers with the Good News of Jesus Christ, offering forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 3:23-24, 5:10-11; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 5:11-12).

**John 3:16**, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**Romans 3:23-24**, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 5:10-11**, For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

## VALID BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Those who counsel biblically realize that evangelism and sanctification are essential to biblical counseling. Valid biblical counseling is not based on professional notoriety, academic degrees, ministry or teaching positions, speaking skills, government licensing, published material, church membership, counseling training, or certification.

*Instead, valid biblical counseling occurs when the counselor (a biblically obedient believer dependent on the Holy Spirit) provides help based on scriptural truth through purposeful communication that glorifies God by emphasizing salvation through Jesus Christ (evangelism) and faithful growth in the Christ-life (sanctification).*

A new Christian's knowledge and use of the Bible will not have the breadth and depth that a mature disciple will have. Nevertheless, *all* believers can counsel biblically to the degree they use scriptural truth and rely on the Holy Spirit to help others glorify God in all aspects of life and relationships.

## COUNSELING BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

Those who seek help with challenges of life and relationships are either believers or unbelievers. When counseling unbelievers, a biblical counselor presents the Gospel in the context of the unbeliever's difficulties. Biblical counselors realize that apart from belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, unbelievers cannot adequately understand scriptural truth concerning life's challenges and relationships.

**1 Corinthians 2:14**, But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

If an unbeliever persistently rejects Jesus Christ, a biblical counselor should patiently focus on the Gospel and the inevitable results of self-centered choices. It may be helpful to ask an unbeliever, "Do you recognize the hopelessness and difficulties you have experienced going your own way and rejecting any consideration of Jesus Christ?"

*At this point, if the non-Christian counselee seems confused or begins to recount his problems and spiritual situation, kindly bring his attention back to the Gospel as the basis for facing and dealing with his life in a manner that glorifies God.*

*(Life's Most Important Decision at <http://www.wordtruth.org/PDF/Life%20Most%20Important%20Decision.pdf>)*

If the Gospel has been faithfully presented many times, yet the counselee still rejects Jesus Christ, a biblical counselor may eventually respond with something like this . . .

"We have reached an impasse in our counseling. Everything I have to offer you from God's Word is linked to your belief in Jesus Christ and the salvation He provides. I will continue to pray that God will help you see the importance of trusting Him and believing the truth of God's Word. If you want, I will provide appropriate material to help you prayerfully reconsider your response to God's love that was demonstrated through the cross of Jesus Christ. I would also consider it a privilege to meet with you again for the specific purpose of reviewing God's plan of salvation and its impact on your life and relationships.

"God's Word says that apart from believing in Christ, you cannot experience God's power to help you overcome your challenges. You also cannot fully understand God's truth in the Bible and its application to your situation. If, by God's grace, you respond to His love and place your faith in Jesus Christ, I will rejoice with you that your sins are forgiven and that you have received eternal life. I would also enjoy the possibility of further counseling with you so we can discover Christ-honoring solutions to your difficulties."

## BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

On the other hand, biblical counseling among believers is beneficial and glorifies God due to:

- a common foundation of salvation in Jesus Christ,
- a common trust in the truth and sufficiency of God's Word,
- a common reliance on the power and leading of the Holy Spirit,
- a common belief in the necessity and benefits of prayer, and
- a common fellowship with other believers that is accompanied by diverse ministries in the Body of Christ.

Most counseling among believers is simply a facet of biblical discipleship, the joyous life-long process of learning God's Word, obeying its truth, and growing in the Christ-life. Communication in this regard can involve encouragement, instruction, rebuke, comfort, restoration, exhortation, and correction, to name but a few benefits of counseling among believers. In various settings and situations, believers can pray for and remind one another to obey God's Word and apply divine truth to all aspects of life and relationships (Colossians 1:9-12).

## The Folly of Good Self-Esteem



educational and psychological circles, one is bombarded with the need for good self-esteem." Never mind that these same schools of thought cannot agree what comprises good self-esteem or how self-esteem can even be defined or pursued. Despite disagreement about what it is or how it can be obtained, good self-esteem is touted as the cornerstone of positive character development.

In all aspects of life, human wisdom cannot be compared with God's viewpoint, since human wisdom is foolishness with God (1 Corinthians 3:19-20). Those who value the Word of God know that self-esteem, good or bad, is not an issue. The Bible, instead, presents an accurate view of "self" that can lead to strong relationships with God and others . . . by dying to self instead of seeing it.

The truth describes the natural self in vivid terms, especially with regard to its inclination to sin and inability to know God. In one's natural state, there is spiritual death, a desire to gratify fleshly lusts, and a willingness to follow Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3). In one's natural state, a person is unable to understand the things God (1 Corinthians 2:14) and faces God's wrath and judgment (Romans 1:18). Religious proponents of the value of self-esteem typically say that humans were created in the image of God, which is true (Genesis 5:1). After Adam sinned, however, his descendants were "after his [Adam's] likeness" (Genesis 5:3), which was marred by sin. This distortion of God's image carried with it a natural bent toward ungodliness, a natural desire to live for self (desire gratification), and an inevitable physical death.

The view of mankind's natural state does not help one have good self-esteem. Scripture makes it clear that, left to ourselves, we are like mist (James 4:14), dust (Psalm 103:14), and just a breath and passing shadow (Psalm 144:4). From God's perspective, we are corrupt (Psalm 14:3), stupid and devoid of knowledge (Jeremiah 51:17a) and unable to direct our own steps wisely (Jeremiah 10:23). We may have some natural talents, but Who gave them to us? All that we have is from the Lord; not ourselves, which should give us a clue as to Whom we should esteem.

When Truth's spotlight shines on the natural state of self, what is there to be proud of? What aspect of self allows any of us to stand before God and claim that, apart from Him, we are truly OK? What is there about self that provides a biblical basis for anyone to have good self-esteem no matter how it is defined? When God's Truth about self is accepted, then efforts to have good self-esteem are proposed as a futile way to give glory to self instead of to Christ. A drive for good self-esteem diverts attention from the two relational perspectives that really matter: loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-39). The Bible gave the answer to the self-esteem question long ago — die to self (Luke 9:23-24). The love of self, however, continues to parade in its costume of good self-esteem, fighting to the death to keep from going to the grave.

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 3:19-20, For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

Ephesians 2:1-3, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

1 Corinthians 2:14, The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 1:18, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Genesis 5:1, This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.

Genesis 5:3, When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

James 4:14, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Psalms 103:14, For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Psalms 144:4, Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

Psalms 14:3, They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Jeremiah 51:17a, Every man is stupid and without knowledge . . .

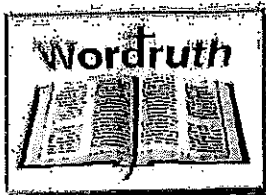
Jeremiah 10:23, I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

Matthew 22:37-39, And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 9:23-24, 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."

# LESSON 2

## 102



## WORDS—THE THERMOMETER OF YOUR HEART

A thermometer is often used when physical illness is apparent. In another aspect of life, there is an overlooked "thermometer" that helps to reveal a person's spiritual health, especially with regard to one's self-centeredness as opposed to Christ-like development. This "thermometer" is accurate and available to anyone within hearing distance. The "thermometer" is our speech!

*Luke 6:45, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." [Emphasis added]*

If you are *not* a believer in Jesus Christ, your words will mirror that spiritual perspective. If you are a believer in Jesus, your words can disclose if your heart (your mind, the "inner you") is currently focused on eternal perspectives or earthly concerns (Colossians 3:2). This focus determines if you are joyfully growing in Christ or spiritually struggling by relying on "self."

*Colossians 3:2, Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

### THE OBVIOUS

Words, along with how you say them, are "verbal vehicles" that transmit viewpoints on:

- \* Relationships (family, friends, business, countries, etc.)
- \* Finances
- \* Marriage
- \* Responsibilities (family, employment, education, neighborhood, etc.)
- \* Daily difficulties as well as prolonged trials
- \* Emotional stability (anger, fear, anxiety, depression, peace, joy, etc.)
- \* Sex
- \* Politics
- \* Race or ethnicity
- \* Business philosophy and work ethic
- \* Personal accomplishments and failures
- \* Health issues
- \* Goals, planning, and use of time
- \* Personal likes or dislikes regarding any subject or person
- \* Spiritual life and beliefs

### THE NOT SO OBVIOUS

The first verse quoted above (Luke 6:45) states that your speech reveals the spiritual condition of your heart, the "real you."

Since words reveal your heart, an accurate examination of "heart issues" is vital. This evaluation requires an infallible standard of truth. The Bible, God's Word, is the criterion by which speech and all other aspects of life and relationships are to be evaluated.

*Hebrews 4:12, For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

When words are scripturally evaluated with regard to one's spiritual condition, the definitions and uses of these words will reveal one's orientation toward "self" or Jesus Christ. Self-centeredness and Christ-centeredness are so



honoring speech follow. All Bible references below have corresponding verses printed at the conclusion of this study.

- Giving thanks to the Lord in every situation (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- Telling others of the difference Jesus has made in one's life (1 Peter 3:15)
- Building up others through wholesome communication (Ephesians 4:29)
- Teaching sound biblical doctrine (Titus 2:1)
- Boasting in the Lord instead of one's self (Jeremiah 9:23-24)
- Giving praise to the Lord continually (Psalm 34:1)
- Returning a blessing when persecuted (1 Peter 3:9)
- Responding gently in difficult situations (Proverbs 15:4)
- Speaking graciously to others (Colossians 4:6)
- Speaking the truth in love in all circumstances (Ephesians 4:15, 25) For further study, see Truth Is Personal, Not Merely a Concept

Christ-honoring speech will also correspond to biblical love, described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 (both passages printed earlier).

#### THE SPEECH AND HEART PRAYER

When the "mirror reflection" of speech and heart is recognized, then one of the personal prayers recorded in God's Word can be seen to emphasize an undivided, God-oriented perspective of life.

*Psalm 19:14, Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer. [Emphasis added]*

#### GOD'S JUDGMENT OF SPEECH

The relationship between "speech and heart" is so reflective of one another that God's judgment of both has eternal ramifications. Jesus stated this reality in rebuking the Pharisees who accused Him of being empowered by Satan.

*Matthew 12:33-37, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. <sup>36</sup> I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." [Emphasis added]*

Believers who realize the correlation between "speech and heart" will use their judgment of personal speech to grow in Christ and joyfully anticipate being with Him forever. In the meantime, a believer will probably realize the tremendous power of words (Proverbs 18:21) and will use them to graciously build up others (Ephesians 4:29).

*Proverbs 18:21, Death and life are in the power of the tongue ...*

*Ephesians 4:29, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

#### WHY USE THE SPEECH THERMOMETER?

God has ordained that an on-going evaluation of one's speech provides some level of insight into one's self-centeredness, a sinful orientation that hinders growth in Christ. If you, as a believer, will ask the Lord to grant wisdom for you to evaluate your words on a daily basis, you should have further impetus to grow in Christ and give praise to the Lord for His work in your life.

#### A SUGGESTION TO CHANGE THE SPEECH THERMOMETER READING

If you do not know where to begin with regard to changing your speech, consider the following verses.

*Proverbs 10:19, When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.*

*James 1:19, Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.*

*Proverbs 13:3, Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:2, Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.*

*Proverbs 12:18, There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

*Colossians 3:8, But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.*

*Exodus 20:7, You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

*Proverbs 15:4, A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

*Proverbs 16:28, A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.*

*Exodus 20:16, You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

*Ephesians 4:29, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

*Ephesians 4:25, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

*Psalms 10:7, His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.*

*Romans 3:10-14, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."*

*Ephesians 5:4, Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.*

*Proverbs 20:19, Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbler.*

*Jeremiah 9:23, Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches"*

*Proverbs 15:1, A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

#### CHRIST-HONORING SPEECH

*1 Thessalonians 5:18, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Peter 3:15, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*

*Ephesians 4:29, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

*Titus 2:1, But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

*Jeremiah 9:23-24, Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."*

*Psalms 34:1, I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

*1 Peter 3:9, Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*

*Proverbs 15:4, A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

*Colossians 4:6, Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

*Ephesians 4:15, Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.*

*Ephesians 4:25, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

## COMMUNICATIONS (Intimacy)

### SUBJECT: The standard of Relationship (Intimacy)

#### 1 John 1:5-10 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> This is the *message* we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

### SUBJECT: Our relationship to God

- <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
- The word fellowship is *koinia* in the Greek and implies a genuine intimacy and communications in relationship to God and others. (even used as the word; partnership)
  - Saying you have intimacy and functioning like there is no relationship is lying, no matter the sincerity of your testimony.

### SUBJECT: Our relationship to Others

<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

- The fruit of living out our relationship with God is working out our relationship with others.
- Scary Point: Our intimacy with one another usually parallels our intimacy with God!

### SUBJECT: Our relationship to Self

<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- Failing to accept or take responsibility for our part of a failing or unbiblical intimacy is proof we are deceived at some level.
- Minimizing our sin in a failing relationship is also a sign of spiritual delusion and deception of our heart

### SUBJECT: Our relationship to Truth

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- God is faithful and we are not
- God forgives and cleanses on the basis of our confession and repentance
- God gives us a solution to our part of a failing and unbiblical relationship: Repentance

### SUBJECT: Our relationship to Death

<sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- When we deny any wrong doing or sin, we are dead to Christ
- The 90/10 rule applies: we always work 100% of our efforts on our part – to correct the relationship

## **Good Communication – Unit 4, Part 1 (SWBC)**

### **The Truth of Communications:**

1. Proverbs 18:21      Psalm 19:14
2. James 3:1-12      Matthew 12: 35-37
3. Prov. 34:13      Mark 7:20-23

### **The Power of Words:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### **The Importance of Right Words**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### **I. Practical Theology of Good Communications:**

1. Remember rule #1 of resolving conflict – focus on solving the problem and not blaming each other. (Adams, pg.)
2. Remember rule #2 of resolving conflict – Romans 12:14-19 (You do your part in resolving conflict and trust your spouse with God.)

## Good Communication – Unit 4, Part 1 (SWBC)

### 1. Listening

Being a good listener is one of the best ways to be a good communicator.

No one likes communicating with someone who only cares about putting in her two cents, and does not take the time to listen to the other person. Instead, practice active listening. Active listening involves paying close attention to what the other person is saying, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person says to ensure understanding ("So, what you're saying is..."). Through active listening, you can better understand what the other person is trying to say, and can respond appropriately.

- Active Listening Skills
- Listening Skills

### 2. Nonverbal Communication

Your body language, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone all color the message you are trying to convey. A relaxed, open stance (arms open, legs relaxed), and a friendly tone will make you appear approachable, and will encourage others to speak openly with you. Eye contact is also important; you want to look the person in the eye to demonstrate that you are focused on the person and the conversation (however, be sure not to stare at the person, which can make him or her uncomfortable).

Also pay attention to other people's nonverbal signals while you are talking. Often, nonverbal signals convey how a person is really feeling. For example, if the person is not looking you in the eye, he or she might be uncomfortable or hiding the truth.

- Nonverbal Communication Skills

### 3. Clarity and Concision

Try to convey your message in as few words as possible.

Say what you want clearly and directly, whether you're speaking to someone in person, on the phone, or via email. If you ramble on, your listener will either tune you out or will be unsure of exactly what you want. Think about what you want to say before you say it; this will help you to avoid talking excessively and/or confusing your audience.

- Verbal Communication Skills

## Good Communication – Unit 4, Part 1 (SWBC)

Convey respect through email by taking the time to edit your message. If you send a sloppily written, confusing email, the recipient will think you do not respect her enough to think through your communication with her.

### 9. Feedback

Being able to appropriately give and receive feedback is an important communication skill. Managers and supervisors should continuously look for ways to provide employees with constructive feedback, be it through email, phone calls, or weekly status updates. Giving feedback involves giving praise as well - something as simple as saying "good job" to an employee can greatly increase motivation.

Similarly, you should be able to accept, and even encourage, feedback from others. Listen to the feedback you are given, ask clarifying questions if you are unsure of the issue, and make efforts to implement the feedback.

- Motivational Skills
- Team Building Skills
- Teamwork Skills

### 10. Picking the Right Medium

An important communication skill is to simply know what form of communication to use. For example, some serious conversations (layoffs, changes in salary, etc.) are almost always best done in person. You should also think about the person with whom you wish to speak - if they are very busy people (such as your boss, perhaps), you might want to convey your message through email. People will appreciate your thoughtful means of communication, and will be more likely to respond positively to you.

# LESSON 3

## 102

### The Biblical Doctrine of Forgiveness

#### Student Notes

(Scripture all NASB, 1977, unless otherwise noted)

#### Introduction

#### Overview

- Counseling is a Theological Task
- All of Life is Theological
- Theological Pyramid
- Tools for your Toolbox

Module 2 – Methodology we are seeking to give you some tools for your tool box as you seek to be an instrument in the Redeemer's hands as you come alongside of others to minister the Word of God to hurting souls to the praise of His glory.

#### Forgiveness

- What is it Not
  - The World's Definition
  - Examples of
- What it Is
  - Old Testament
  - New Testament
- Confession of sin
- The Pattern of Biblical Forgiveness
- Applying the Word

#### Recommend Resources

#### Questions / Comments

Your ACBC exams are in two parts: first part, theology exam (open book), and second part, counseling exam (open book). Simply shows the importance and priority that ACBC places upon theology in Biblical counseling.

### **Tools for your Biblical Counseling Tool Box**

There is an old saying that a man is as good as his tools.

Meaning: 1) if you don't have the right tools you cannot get the job done right.

2) if you do not know how to use the tools you have you cannot get the job done right, either.

We want you to be good theologians and good Biblical counselors. Methodology is giving you the tools you need to be a good Biblical counselor. These are tools derived from the Bible. It is your Biblical theology and Systematics APPLIED (theology)

### **Forgiveness- What It Is NOT**

Not how the world defines it.

The world apologizes.

The word 'apology' is not found in the English Bible nor is the word 'sorry.' You will find sorrow or sorrowful, but not 'sorry.' The word "apology" does appear in the New Testament Greek. απολογία (apologia) translated as apology. The word 'apology' (or a form of it) is found in the Greek scriptures which are translated below in English.

Acts 19:33 "and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly."

Acts 22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer you."

Acts 25:16 "...before the accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges."

Phil. 1:7 "...because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of grace with me."



**Problem: we Christians often don't get it right either according to God's Word.**

## **Forgiveness – What It Is**

### **Old Testament**

Deuteronomy. 21:8b 'and the blood guiltiness shall be forgiven them.'

To appease, make an atonement, cleanse, disannul, forgive, pardon

*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*

כִּפָּר CAPHAR (or KAPHAR ...KIPPOR) Literally, atone for or make atonement. Atonement literally means "covering" for sin.

You have heard of Yom Kippor- meaning Day of Atonment

Psalms 51:1 "According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions."

מָחָה MACHAH to abolish, blot out, erase, wipe away

### **New Testament**

Luke 6:37 "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (NKJV)

απολυω apoluo to release, to send away

Eph. 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the richness of His grace."

αφεημι apheami to send away

Hebrews 9:22 "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (or 'remission').

αφεσις aphasis freedom, pardon, deliverance, remission

- a. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9
- b. Repentance – an endeavor to turn from my wickedness/ unrighteousness and aim to please God in all things regardless of how I feel. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." 1 Peter 2:24

Secondly, to those whom we have sinned against.

### The Pattern of Biblical Forgiveness

<sup>30</sup>Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. [Forgiven is charizomai]

Relational – we are called by God to do this action towards one another. One of 30 'one anothers' of Scripture. If you strive to fulfill the second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" in order to please the Lord, you will be a forgiving person.

Our "forgiving each other" other is based upon how God in Christ has forgiven us Christians.

How and in what ways has God forgiven us?

1. In Christ. No other way of forgiveness.
  - John 3:16
  - Rom. 5
  - Eph. 1:7
  - Heb. 10:17
  - Acts 3:19
  - Eph. 1:3-14 Nine spiritual blessings we have **in** Christ

"The closer you take your counselee to the Cross, where the Savior hung there for their sin, the more of reality it becomes, that we are undeserving of our own forgiveness, thus that reality is providing the humility necessary to forgive others!"

2. God's promises of forgiveness:
  - a. "As far as the east is from the west so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).
  - b. "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sin" (Isa. 43:25).
  - c. "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:34)

## Luke 17:3-10

### Forgiveness

*(Helps for Counselors – A Mini-Manual for Christian Counseling by Jay Adams)*

- I. Jesus says that the counselee must be willing to forgive.
  - A. He must grant forgiveness whenever a brother says that he repents.
  - B. He must do that as often as he says he repents (7 times a day).
- II. Jesus accepts no excuses for failing to forgive.
  - A. Not "when he shows fruit appropriate to repentance."
    - 1. Not required for granting brotherly forgiveness.
    - 2. Seven times a day precludes this idea.
    - 3. Must take him at his word: If he says, "I repent."  
Can judge words and actions; not heart. Give benefit of doubt.
  - B. Not "when I get more faith."
    - 1. Not a matter of more faith; a question of obedience.
    - 2. A faith as small as a mustard seed can do wonders.
  - C. Not "when I feel like it."
    - 1. Slave tired and hungry.
    - 2. Didn't feel like preparing and serving meal before resting and eating.
    - 3. Did anyway, because his lord commanded.
    - 4. It is not hypocrisy to obey God against feeling (you do this when you get up in the morning). Do this against feeling, to please God.
- III. Jesus says forgive because He commands it.
  - A. Forgive out of love for Christ.
  - B. Forgiveness is a promise that can be made and kept regardless of fruit, faith, or feeling. The promise: I will remember your sins against you no more."
  - C. The promise involves three things:
    - 1. I won't raise these matters with you again.
    - 2. I won't tell others about them.
    - 3. I won't dwell on them in my own mind.
  - D. Keeping this promise leads to forgetting.

REMEMBER: WHEN YOU FORGIVE, EACH OFFENSE IS NOT THE SEVENTH, FIFTH, ETC.; IT IS ALWAYS THE FIRST.

WE MUST FORGIVE BECAUSE WE ARE A FORGIVEN PEOPLE. HOW MANY TIMES HAS GOD FORGIVEN US!

3

3

3



## PSALM 56 JOURNEY OUT OF BITTERNESS

1. Read Psalm 56:1-2, 5-7

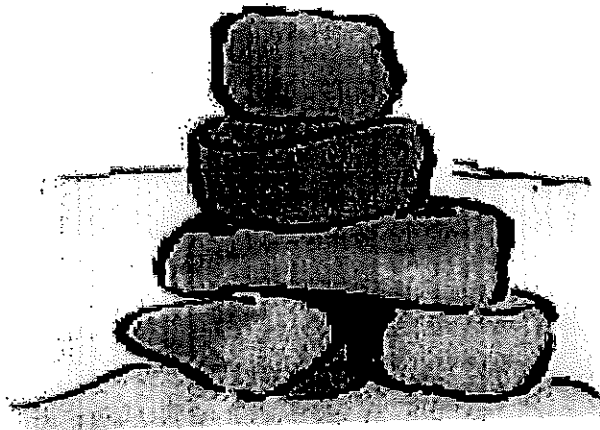
Describe your situation by writing out each of the ways in which you identify with David in these verses.

2. Read Psalm 56:3-4, 10-11

Cry out to God earnestly. What am I tempted to put my trust in, or long for, instead of (or more than) trusting God by crying out to Him? List these desires and confess them to God as idols.

3. Read Psalm 56:8-9 and Psalm 63

Reflect on God. Write words on the stones that capture God's character and works.



4. Read Psalm 56:12-13 and Psalm 63:1-8

Replace bitterness with submissive praise in words and actions.  
What will I say to God?

What will I say to others?

What will I do for others?



## Forgiving Others: A Believer's Response of Thankfulness\*

Those who do not believe in Christ legitimize their refusal to forgive others for self-oriented reasons. Believers in Christ can also fail to forgive because of self-interest.

Believers, however, primarily refuse to forgive biblically because they do not realize the magnitude of their forgiveness from the Lord. As a result, they do not fully appreciate God's work on their behalf.

Jesus addressed this issue in Matthew 18:21-35 in response to a question from Peter, notably the most outspoken of the original twelve disciples of Christ.

Matthew 18:21-35, Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."<sup>23</sup> Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.<sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.<sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything."<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.<sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, "Pay what you owe."<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you."<sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison, until he should pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me."<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

In this parable, Jesus reminds us that each person's debt of sin is beyond one's own ability to redeem. To demonstrate this truth, Jesus said the "impossible debt" was ten thousand talents, an amount estimated to be as high as 70 million dollars. God, the king in the parable, mercifully released the debtor from this overwhelming debt of sin.

Yet, when this forgiven debtor had opportunity to forgive another person of a much smaller debt of 100 denarii (estimated to be about 70 dollars), his lack of awareness and thankfulness for his own debt-free status was profound!

Think about it . . . forgiven of \$70,000,000 yet unwilling to forgive \$70! That is hard to believe, isn't it? Yet, believers in Christ who refuse to forgive others are similar to the unthankful debtor in the above parable.

Believers who will not forgive display staggering ingratitude for God's forgiveness of their overwhelming debt of sin pardoned through the sacrifice of Jesus. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this sacrifice in Romans 5:7-10 and Ephesians 1:7.

Romans 5:7-10, For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Ephesians 1:7, In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

### A believer's forgiveness of others expresses thankfulness for personal salvation

The most profitable step believers can take when faced with the supposed "impossibility" of forgiving others is to review their own salvation and the price Jesus paid to forgive them.

As believers grow in their understanding of God's forgiveness, their thankfulness will increase accordingly. Their growing thankfulness for Christ's sacrifice on their behalf will overshadow any personal cost they may incur in forgiving others.

There is no activity of Christian life that is more closely aligned to the love of God and the willing sacrifice of Christ than forgiving others. Believers who consistently forgive others are simultaneously demonstrating thankfulness to Jesus Christ for His sacrifice that provided forgiveness to them.

\*Excerpted from Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility



## Forgiveness—Know the Basics from God's Perspective \*

Forgiveness is, literally, at the heart of Christianity. Its meaning is not difficult to understand, but "to forgive" as a way of life is not something one does naturally. Forgiveness means "to cancel a debt" or "to set aside." It is not based on feelings instead, involves a choice that is, basically, a matter of the will.

**Biblical context of forgiveness—Sacrificial Love**  
1 John 1:9 Word presents forgiveness in the context of sacrifice, a perspective that greatly impacts the decision to forgive. With this spiritual basis, only certain people can faithfully forgive as the Bible teaches. These persons must first respond to God's love that is preeminently displayed by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:6-10, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [Emphasis added]

Those who accept the love of God described in the above passage will believe in Jesus Christ, realizing that Jesus gave His life to provide forgiveness for their sins.

Ephesians 1:7, In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:4, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

**The Example and Standard of Forgiveness**  
The demonstration of God's love—the sacrifice of Jesus—is the perfect example of forgiveness that sets the standard by which God's children are to forgive others.

Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. [Emphasis added]

The previous verse indicates that a person must receive God's forgiveness in order to know how to forgive others biblically. In the framework of sacrificial love, biblical forgiveness becomes the "possible impossibility" for believers in Christ who trust God to help them forgive others.

### Characteristics of God's Forgiveness

Since forgiveness begins with God, believers should know the characteristics of

divine forgiveness in order to understand and practice forgiveness of others. Verses referenced earlier reveal aspects of divine forgiveness and, simultaneously, unmask misconceptions of forgiveness. For example:

- God's forgiveness is freely offered but its cost is beyond our full comprehension.

#### See *The Cost of Forgiveness—We Can Only Imagine*

- No one is worthy to receive God's forgiveness since potential recipients are weak, sinning, unworthy enemies who should receive God's wrath. God willingly offers forgiveness to those who are truly unworthy to receive it.
- God demonstrated His willingness to forgive due to His love, mercy, and grace. His willingness to forgive is part of His nature and is not conditioned by someone's confession or deeds of repentance.
- God grants forgiveness initially to those who believe in Christ. Believers are given eternal life, and a new relationship begins between them and their Heavenly Father.

And, there is more . . .

- God is able and is ready to forgive every type and any amount of sin except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 12:31, "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."

When God forgives a person, He no longer relates to that person on the basis of past sinfulness.

Psalms 103:10, He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

- God always forgives when personal sins are truthfully confessed. The relationship between God and a believer in Christ can be vibrant as a believer responds in everyday life to God's readiness to forgive.

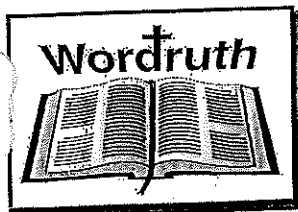
1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- God removes all guilt (judicial, not emotional) when He forgives.  
Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Believers maturing in Christ realize that forgiveness patterned after God's example is to be integral to their lives. As a follower of Christ, pray for His help and rely on His power to help you forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven you.

\*Excerpted from *Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*

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# Forgiveness: How to Ask for It

Excerpted from *Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*

One of the most overlooked aspects of forgiveness is how to ask for it. Asking for forgiveness should not be done according to human wisdom nor simply generated by emotional intensity. Asking for forgiveness should, instead, be based on biblical truth, especially with regard to personal responsibility and esteeming others as more important than one's self. Any important endeavor of life requires planning, and forgiveness is certainly one of those undertakings.

If you are a believer in Christ and ask another person to forgive you, be sure to speak the truth about your sin(s). Truth means "bringing everything to light." In the Bible, this is described as being verifiable, indisputable, without pretense or deception, devoid of any hint of falsehood, unconcealed, and complete with all the facts.

For further study on this topic, see *Truth is Personal, Not Merely a Concept*

**Ephesians 4:25**, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

The following examples demonstrate how scriptural guidelines can help you realize God's purposes through biblical forgiveness. The examples demonstrate that there is more to biblical forgiveness than the question, "Will you forgive me?"

- Since asking for forgiveness involves your mention of personal wrongdoings, do not judge or bring up another person's failures in your confession. For example, you could say, "Please forgive me for slamming the door in your face." Do not say, "Please forgive me for slamming the door in your face when you called me stupid." Since there is no valid excuse for sinning, do not give excuses for failing to be Christ-like. For example, you could say "Please forgive me for using unwholesome words." Don't say, "Please forgive me for using unwholesome words, but I was having a bad day."<sup>1</sup>

**1 Corinthians 10:13**, No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

- A presentation that includes the Lord, personal responsibility, specific sins(s), repentance, Christ-honoring intentions for the future, and asking for forgiveness might be stated: "I recognize that I have sinned against the Lord and you by *(name the specific sins)*. It is my intention never again to repeat this offense against you or anyone else. I repent and will change by doing the following. *(Explain your specific plan for change)*. I have asked the Lord to forgive me, and I want you to know that I desire your forgiveness as well. Will you please forgive me?"<sup>1</sup>

**1 John 1:7-8**, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**Matthew 7:12**, So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**James 5:16**, Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

- It is often helpful to practice asking for forgiveness by first writing it and, then, saying it out loud. In addition to practicing what you will say, prepare for various responses from the other person by writing and rehearsing what you would do and say if the other person replies with statements such as "Oh, that's all right" (minimizing sin) or "Don't worry about it" (avoiding a commitment to forgive) or "People do that all the time" (making excuses for sinful behavior) or "I will not forgive you" (refusing to reconcile) or "I'll forgive you, but I won't forget it" (harboring a grudge).<sup>1</sup>
- As a believer, when you ask for forgiveness, stay focused on Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2) and be ready to explain the difference Jesus has made in your life (1 Peter 3:13-17).

**Hebrews 12:1-2**, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the





## God's Word Speaks on Forgiveness

Forgiveness is at the heart of God's message to you in His Word and in His Son. It is a time to rest in God's comfort and assurance as you review some of the countless aspects of His forgiveness provided through Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 1:7**, In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.  
**Romans 2:13-14**, And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncleanness of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

**Matthew 5:6-10**, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—<sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

**Psalm 32:1 & 5**, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. . . . I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.  
**John 1:9**, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Isaiah 55:6-7**, Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

**Psalm 103:10-12**, He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

**Psalm 130:3-4**, If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.  
**Mark 11:25-26**, And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

For a comprehensive study on the many aspects of biblical forgiveness, see *Forgiveness: The Possible and the Impossible*.

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## God's Word Speaks About the Love of God

The love of God is demonstrated in many ways, foremost of which is His love for the world that is expressed in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Take a few moments to review some of what the Bible says about God's love. You'll love it!

**John 3:16**, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**1 John 4:7-10**, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**Romans 5:8**, God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Ephesians 2:4-5**, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

**1 John 4:16**, So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

**Galatians 2:20**, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Ephesians 5:2**, And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Psalms 36:7**, How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

**Psalms 51:1**, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**, Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

**Romans 8:38-39**, For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For a "daily life" appreciation of God's love, see *God's Love is Personal*.

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## The Futility of Forgiving Yourself

One of the most well-known, yet false, concepts is the need for believers in

Christ to "forgive themselves." Yet, if it is necessary for a believer to "forgive

themselves" in addition to receiving God's forgiveness, then a believer is actually saying

that God's plan for forgiveness is insufficient. Here is why:

1. Receiving God's forgiveness is not a matter of "feeling forgiven," rather, it is a matter of trusting God and His promises (Romans 5:1-2, Colossians 1:21-23).

2. Since God says there is no condemnation (no guilt, but complete forgiveness) for one who is in Christ, then believers should not trust personal feelings (Romans 8:1). Instead, they should trust God's Word. Forgiveness from God is a matter of faith, not feelings (Hebrews 11:6).

When God says that He forgives a believer and provides cleansing from all righteousness (1 John 1:9), what more could a mere mortal do to complete His work?

The "need" to "forgive yourself" typically indicates that one has a sense of guilt over past sins. Feeling remorse over past sins is not necessarily detrimental, especially if it reminds a person of the consequences of sin and helps one not to repeat previous mistakes. However, dwelling on personal failures or being controlled by feelings of guilt over previous sins are contrary to God's plan for a believer to face and deal with past sins.

God's plan for a believer to be an overcomer in Christ involves a confession of one's sins to Him (1 John 1:9) and, if necessary, a confession of sin(s) at an appropriate time to others (based on Proverbs 25:11; Matthew 7:12; James 5:16). Inherent to authentic confession is repentance (Proverbs 28:13, Corinthians 7:9-10), which is a turning away from sin to follow Christ. In following Christ, a believer will put off old ways of thinking, speaking, and acting in order to put on Christ-likeness in every dimension (Ephesians 4:22-24), all of which contribute to an on-going renewal of one's mind (Romans 12:2).

"Forgiving self" is an expression of natural wisdom and is an outgrowth of a humanistic philosophy. God's Word has only two perspectives on forgiveness:

1. A person needs to be forgiven by God (Colossians 1:13-14, 1 John 1:9).
2. A believer is to forgive others, following the example of God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus (Matthew 18:32-33, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12-13).

**NOTE:** For an expanded study on the subject of "Forgiving Yourself," go to *Rejecting Popular Untruths*.

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Romans 5:1-2, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Colossians 1:21-23, And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 11:6, And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Proverbs 25:11, A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

Matthew 7:12, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Proverbs 28:13, Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10, As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Ephesians 4:22-24, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Colossians 1:13-14, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 18:32-33, "Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'"

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

Colossians 3:12-13, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

When I stand before the throne  
Dressed in beauty not my own;  
When I see Thee as Thou art,  
Love Thee with unsinching heart;  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—  
Not till then—how much I owe.

Someday we will know...

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<sup>1</sup>*Here I am to Worship* by Chris Tomlin.

<sup>2</sup>*Morning and Evening*, June 30 morning devotional, Charles Spurgeon, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, 4<sup>th</sup> printing.

The bottom line is this: Any professing believer who teaches that "forgiving one's self" is necessary for a vibrant walk in Jesus is falling short of biblical truth. Christian teachers should be diligent to search the Scriptures as the basis for all they present (James 3:1). Believers who are being taught also have the responsibility to "test the spirit" of the teachings presented to them as being in accordance with God's Word (Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1).

To illustrate the untenable and biblically unsupported position of "forgiving self," imagine that a person was guilty of a specific crime yet, in spite of his judicial guilt, the highest court in the land granted that person a pardon. If this person did not "feel forgiven" after receiving such a merciful verdict, would that person then petition a lower court to grant him an additional pardon because of uncomfortable feelings?

Similarly, would we encourage a pardoned believer to appeal to a lower court (one's self) after God Almighty had granted full pardon through the sacrifice of His Son? Instead of encouraging believers to search for the nebulous and irrational concept of "forgiving self" after receiving God's forgiveness through the Cross, believers should be encouraged to trust God's promise of complete forgiveness while, simultaneously, concentrating on their daily walk in Christ.

Also, if it was actually possible to "forgive yourself," what aspect of "self" forgives the sin of another part of "self"? The concept of "forgiving self" either has to assume there is a part of "self" that corresponds to a "judge" that is untouched and above the part of "self" that sinned; OR that, somehow, atonement is granted when the "sinning self" forgives the "sinning self." This may sound confusing, but the teaching of "forgiving self" demands this type of convoluted, unbiblical "logic."

Before accepting the theory of the need to "forgive self," a believer should consider the following: If the theory of "forgiving self" is biblically correct, there should be *at least one verse* in the Bible that supports it... there is not!

### FORGETTING YOUR SINS

What does Scripture teach with regard to "forgetting your sins"? Does God's Word teach that a believer is "to forget these sins" with the meaning of "not being able to recall personal sins" or "not having a remembrance of those sins"? One will look in vain to find biblical support for the necessity of "being unable to recall" or "to lose remembrance" of one's own sins in order to grow in Christ. In fact, the memory of certain sins, even though forgiven by God, is often important for training in righteousness and frequently helps to remind a believer

not to repeat sin in this way.

### BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF "FORGETTING"

On the other hand, there IS a biblical definition of "forgetting" that should be understood and practiced by every maturing believer in Christ. Basically, Scripture uses the term "not to remember" as meaning "not to mention or bring to mind" or "not to keep an account." For instance, David requested the Lord "not to remember" (literally, "not to mention") the previous sins of his youth (Psalm 25:7).

In a similar perspective, Scripture uses "forget" in the sense of "escaping notice." Case in point — the Apostle Paul could remember (bring to mind) his earlier sins (1 Timothy 1:12-15), yet he confidently proclaimed "to forget" (not take notice) of those things that were behind in order to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

Instead of looking to his past, the Apostle Paul concentrated on Christ and what was ahead. Paul listed many of his past sins, but these significant failures did not inhibit his present growth in Christ. On the other hand, if a believer remembers past sins but is expected and taught to have a blank memory about these failures, a needless tension results that can inhibit one from growing in Christ. A believer can needlessly question, "Why can't I forget my past sins?" and, without knowing it, can place undue attention on past sinfulness at the expense of cooperating with Christ's present work in his or her life. A believer is burdened with an unnecessary prerequisite for spiritual development if required to "have a blank memory" about past sins.

There is no question that past sins can be shameful and painful. However, any past sin does not have to thwart a believer's on-going growth in Christ. As in all challenges, the key to being an overcomer is to fix our eyes on Jesus, to rely on God's empowering Holy Spirit, and to follow Scripture with regard to daily living. Instead of having a goal of "being unable to recall" past sins, a believer would find lasting benefit and relief by diligently learning more about the power of the Cross and its effect on daily living.

If there was any person whose past sins could have thwarted on-going spiritual progress, it was the Apostle Paul. Yet, he triumphantly proclaimed, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2) and "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The Apostle Paul's perspective refutes the need to "be unable to recall past sins."

There is no question that sin's consequences often last a lifetime; but there is no act of sin with enough power to

**Romans 12:2**, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Philippians 3:13-14**, Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

**Hebrews 12:1-4**, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

**Colossians 3:2**, Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

**Colossians 1:13-14**, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

**Matthew 18:32-33**, Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

**Ephesians 4:32**, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

**Colossians 3:12-13**, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

**James 3:1**, Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

**Acts 17:11**, Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**1 John 4:1**, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

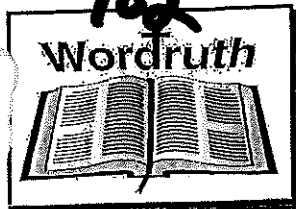
**Psalms 25:7**, Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

**1 Timothy 1:12-15**, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

**Philippians 3:13-14**, Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

# LESSON 4

102



## Every Thought Captive!

Guest article from Give Me That Book

"In their uncompromising determination to proclaim truth, Christians must avoid the intellectual flabbiness of the larger society. They must rally against the prevailing distrust of reason and the exaltation of the irrational. Emotional self-indulgence and irrationalities have always been the enemies of the gospel, and the apostles warned their followers against them." ... Herbert Schlossberg

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5**, The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Paul declares that we are in a great battle for truth. The foundational beliefs of the Enemy are rooted deep with the belief systems of our world. And, that system is not passive. It seeks to overwhelm us and our children through deceitful and powerful arguments. If we are to win this battle and demolish its strongholds, we must "take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ."

God is the Great Mind of the Universe. He has created man in his image. God gave us a mind so that we could think his thoughts after him. In Isaiah 1:18, God says to his people: "Come now, let us reason together." God has purposed to share his wisdom with his people. "For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). Christians should be the best thinkers on the planet!

Before the Word of God penetrates the heart, it first passes through the head. We are commanded to hear and understand with the mind what the Lord is saying. A quick survey of the New Testament will show how important this is. The first and greatest commandment tells us that we are to love God with all of our mind (Matthew 22:37). In the book of Acts we find six incidents where Paul is found reasoning with Jews and pagans in order to convince them of the truth of the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 14:20, Paul writes, "Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." In Paul's letter to Corinth he repeats this phrase 14 times: "Do you not know?" In Romans 12, it is the renewal of the mind that is the secret to overcoming a militant culture's attempt to shape us in its mold. To Timothy, his son in the faith, he writes these last words: "Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this" (2 Timothy 2:7). The apostle Peter joins in and admonishes the Church to "prepare your minds for action" (1 Peter 1:13, NASB).

Today, it is common among our secular critics to make light of the intellectual achievements of Christianity. It is implied that it is built on myths and wishes rather than on hard and clear thinking. Professor J. P. Moreland rejects this characterization and cites the history of Christian thinking to back up his objection: He writes,

"...we need to celebrate the absolutely unequalled history of the intellectual life in the Christian Church. If an alternative community of atheists, Buddhists, or anything else can rival the rich cultural and intellectual leadership in church history, let them come forth and demonstrate it. The intellectual life is our heritage as Christian, and it is time to remind ourselves of this."

I recently read of a time in the 1700's when it was said that the Church could out think its critics. I don't think we can say that today. The statistics do show that there are a lot of Christians out there. Mega churches and TV ministries give the impression that Christianity is strong and growing. But where is the Church's impact upon the thinking of her culture? I think the Gallup Poll of 1980 may help us understand the problem. It stated: "We are having a revival of feelings but not of the knowledge of God. The church today is more guided by feelings than by convictions. We value enthusiasm more than informed commitment." Does that not describe the Church of today? I think it does.

It is my take that when most churches gather together, thinking is not the priority. Too many church services are built around pleasant experiences rather than serious exposition of God's Word. Sharing has replaced declaring. Leaders feel pressured to appeal to the "felt needs" of constituents. They can see a world that is addicted to entertainment and feel they must duplicate that environment in order to be relevant and attractive. One pastor evidenced this when he explained his rationale for using drama, skits, media and humor to make an impact. He said, "We are dumbing down the

## Biblical Thinking

### Checklist

1. **Resist** temptation with biblical Truth (1 Cor.10:13; Matt.4:4)
  2. **Redirect** your thinking to Truth. (Eph.4:20-24; 2 Cor.10:4-5)
  3. **Remember** to trust God in the process and for the results (Josh.1:6-9)
  4. **Repent** of sinful thinking and actions (James 4:7-8)
  5. **Repeat** Scripture to yourself by memorizing targeted passages (Ps.119:11)
  6. **Rehearse** what is true and what is right (Phil.4:8)
  7. **Resolve** to protect your heart above all things (Prov.4:23)
  8. **Restore** your thinking in the Spirit (Rom.8:5-8; Heb.5:14; John 17:17)
- Pray: Ps. 139:23
  - Call a Christian friend for support & encouragement
  - Practice the "R's"
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## **“Put Off” – “Put On” Dynamic**

**by Martha Peace**

This Bible study is for the purpose of teaching Christians how to deal practically with their sin. Many times we are aware that changes need to be made in our lives and we confess the appropriate sins to God. However, we may find ourselves committing those same sins again and again. Habitual sin is especially difficult because we automatically respond wrongly, without thinking. Therefore, it is important to learn exactly what God has to teach us through His Word about establishing new habit patterns.

Before you begin this study, pray and ask God to show you the truth of His Word.

Begin by looking up the following Scriptures and write out the answers to the questions.

1. How do we become aware of sin?
  - a) Hebrews 4:12
  - b) John 16:7-8
2. Do we *have* to sin? Explain. (See Romans 6:6,7,14.)
3. Describe what the “old self” was like. (See Ephesians 4:22.)
4. Describe what the “new self” is like. (See Ephesians 4:24.)
5. What are we to “put off” and what are we to “put on”? (See Ephesians 4:22,24.)
6. What are we to “put off” (lay aside) according to Colossians 3:9?
7. What are we to “put on” according to Colossians 3:10?
8. This “new self” is to be renewed. How? (See Colossians 3:10.)



As we have seen earlier, God gives Christians the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and to help them carry out God's desires. As a result, is there anything that God requires that a Christian cannot do? (See Philippians 4:13.) Hence, God will never ask us to do something that He will not give us the grace to carry out. Sometimes we may not feel like obeying God; however, if we do obey (in spite of our feeling), God will give us grace.

Write down the specific sins in your life you know need to be "put off".


Take time now to confess these sins to God.

Write down what you are to "put on" (biblical antidote) in your life in the place of these sins:


Write down some practical actions you can do to "put on" godly character:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Based upon what you have learned in this study, write out your prayer:

5. ***Captured and calmed evil*** – The raging sea is calmed once and for all at the throne of God. Whatever evil rages in your life, here before this throne it's like a big Swarovski crystal sea, reflecting all that is beauty and power. ***Rest in calmed evil.***

Name three evil choices you have previously made, that are calmed when God rules your life.

6. ***Wonderful worship*** – Seven creatures dance in wild, zany, indescribable worship - the lion with its power, the strong eagle with its renewed youth, the dear calf with its hope and promise, the man with all his wonder. What metaphor describes you? ***Worship the Holy God.***

What acts of obedience would evidence that you are worshipping the God who is holy?

The story breaks here. All heaven and earth pauses. There is no one to take up the rolled scroll and let the rest of the story be told. The elders weep. The story teller weeps.

This is where the door opens and we walk in. That scroll holds the story of our redemption, of our salvation from hell, of our freedom from bondage to addictions, of our healing from pettiness. Who will open the scroll? I weep. You weep.

7. ***The Lamb, slaughtered and standing*** – Jesus Christ, victorious, ruling, conqueror over sin, over addiction. Everywhere else we read about Him seated at the right hand of the throne, but now He stands. When it comes to unrolling the scroll of your story, He stands and watches. He died for you. You do not need to ever respond in guilt or shame again. What you confess He covers with the blood of His slaughter. He rose for you. You can live in His victory. You can extend His mercy in every situation. In His resurrection, you have freedom from slavery to bondage or bitterness. He stands watching, to see you love Him, to see you say no to sin and yes to love. Love the Lamb.

What's the next thing to do? Think and meditate about God on His throne. See the beauty. Bow before the authority. Embrace the power. Walk in the wisdom. Rest in calmed evil. Worship the Holy God. Love the Lamb.

Once your mind is changed, your actions will change. Renew your mind so that you see God on His Throne. The natural progression will then be that, instead of reaching for a crutch, responding in bitterness, or walking in sinful relationships, you will love God by loving others. You will bless others. You will pray for others. You will be kind to others. You will live pursue peace and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Hallelujah, you are a new creation, with your mind set on things above, where Christ is, at the right hand of the Throne of God.

## LESSON 5 102



# Adultery... Far Worse Than You Might Think

It is safe to say that hundreds of millions of people around the world know of someone who has either committed adultery or has experienced the trauma caused by a spouse's marital unfaithfulness. Sadly, adultery has become part of the fabric of life in countries and cultures across the globe.

In spite of its prevalence, however, the complete sinfulness of adultery remains largely overlooked and even camouflaged by supposedly less offensive terms such as "having an affair" or "stepping out" or "sleeping around." As a result, adultery is often glamorized, legitimized, and/or fantasized by those who, sadly, are spiritually deluded, self-centered, unloving, and relationally short-sighted. These characteristics make one vulnerable to Satan's diabolical and spiritually numbing plan to cripple people, families, and relationships through adultery.

The goals of this study are:

- to present clear, biblical teaching on adultery;
- to identify some of the many sins that accompany adultery;
- to reveal the typically incomplete confession of adultery by the guilty participants;
- to review consequences of adultery, some of which last a lifetime; and
- to help you realize that there is more—much more—to adultery than the physical act of sexual infidelity.

In contrast to adultery's destructive aftermath, this study will also provide biblical assistance to those reeling from the impact of adultery's betrayal by:

- recognizing the primary evidence that demonstrates an adulterous spouse has truly repented;
- confronting a primary challenge faced by an adulterous spouse who repents;
- noting two of the greatest challenges a betrayed spouse faces;
- emphasizing the importance of prayer and scripture memory in adultery's aftermath; and
- providing hope to become a "covenant couple" once again.

### GOD'S STANDARD FOR SEXUAL PURITY

Scripture condemns all sexual immorality, of which adultery is but one aspect. The following verses show that sexual sins can be expressed externally (physical acts) and internally (self-centered desires). Followers of Christ are to flee both types of sinful expression.

**1 Corinthians 6:13b**, ...The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

**Galatians 5:19-21**, Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Ephesians 5:3**, But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

**Colossians 3:5**, Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-8**, For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

### IS ADULTERY MERELY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

Marriage is a covenant of companionship between a male and female that allows them to leave former family

**Jeremiah 3:6-10**, The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that *faithless* one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the *whore*? <sup>7</sup>And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her *treacherous* sister Judah saw it. <sup>8</sup>She saw that for all the *adulteries* of that *faithless* one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her *treacherous* sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the *whore*. <sup>9</sup>Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing *adultery* with stone and tree. <sup>10</sup>Yet for all this her *treacherous* sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD." [emphasis added]

Even though adultery and idolatry can both be described as faithless, treacherous whoredom, this evil is not greater than God's mercy. God's mercy is demonstrated by His gracious forgiveness and continued help to anyone who repents of even the worst of sins. This reality is seen in subsequent verses in Jeremiah 3. (*The importance and demonstration of authentic repentance before the Lord and others will be reviewed later in this study.*)

**Jeremiah 3:11-13**, And the LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. <sup>12</sup>Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 'Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. <sup>13</sup>Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the LORD.'"

Adultery, like idolatry, is a matter of choice. The people of Israel willfully abandoned their unique, holy, and divinely ordained covenant with the Lord. In its place, they embraced defilement, faithlessness, and the sensual gratification of harlotry. As a result, the worthy (Creator and Redeemer) was replaced by the unworthy (stones and trees), and God's sacrificial love was abandoned for their own self-centered lust.

Similarly, adultery is an abandonment of commitment to one's marriage companion that results in moral and spiritual defilement. This defilement comes through a self-oriented, sensual gratification that is chosen in place of one's marriage covenant.

God's Word teaches that adultery is not mere "sleeping around" or "having an affair." God equates adultery with "whoredom." Such wording spotlights the immorality of adultery and emphasizes the self-indulgence and faithless betrayal that are characteristic of this treacherous sin.

### **JESUS EXPANDED THE DEFINITION OF ADULTERY**

Jesus emphasized that adultery also includes illicit desire. In other words, a person commits adultery within one's self before any sexual act occurs with another person.

**Matthew 5:27-28**, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

From a practical standpoint, no one has ever committed physical adultery before committing mental adultery (adultery of the heart), defined by Jesus as "looking with lustful intent." This lustful intent can occur instantly with great emotion or grow with intensity toward sexual gratification over a period of time.

The steps from mental adultery to physical adultery have produced worn pathways of shame and emptiness throughout history. Perhaps the most well-known scriptural narrative in this regard is King David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). While walking on the palace roof one evening, David saw Bathsheba, a beautiful married woman, bathing. He inquired about her and then sent messengers to bring her to his house, where he committed physical adultery with her. To make matters even worse, Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, one of David's trusted military men. Trying to cover up his adultery, David orchestrated the murder of Uriah in a futile effort to hide the sin. When the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to expose and rebuke David's adulterous behavior (2 Samuel 12), David did repent and was forgiven by the Lord. The consequences of his sin, however, were both immediate and long term. God's immediate judgment involved the death of the child born out of the adultery, and His long term judgment declared there would be perpetual hostility and division among those in the lineage of David. This narrative shows that adultery produces consequences that can never be foreseen.

### **THE TWO BATTLE LINES OF MENTAL ADULTERY**

King David had no idea of the consequences that began with a look of lustful intent, but his folly should warn others about this downward spiral. When you understand the connection between sight, emotion, thoughts, and physical adultery, then *what you look at* and *what you think about* become the two battle lines on which the war against mental adultery is won or lost.

**Hebrews 4:12**, For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Those who regularly participate in mental or physical adultery have departed from faithful obedience to the Word of God. They may read it or listen to sermons from it; but they don't consistently live by it. This characteristic is expected from unbelievers, since they have little or no understanding of Scripture. On the other hand, when professing believers depart from God's Word by giving lip service to its truth instead of loving obedience, they become easy prey to sin's deception and resultant entrapment. When a believer departs from God's Word, that person trusts in natural wisdom, lives according to fleshly desires, and no longer honors Jesus who died to release us from sin's bondage.

**Romans 6:10-14**, For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup>Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup>Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

### MANY SINS ACCOMPANY ADULTERY

People who neglect or depart from God's Word will, as a result, be susceptible to committing any number of sins. Many of these sins are associated with adultery. For example, notice the following passage in Proverbs 6 that lists the "sins of abomination" that the Lord hates.

**Proverbs 6:16-19**, There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: <sup>17</sup>haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup>a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, <sup>19</sup>a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Adultery is typically accompanied by at least four of the seven abominable practices mentioned above, specifically "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked plans, and feet that make haste to run to evil." Other verses describe these sins in the context of adulterous behavior.

*(haughty eyes)* **Job 24:15**, The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight, saying, 'No eye will see me'; and he veils his face.

*(lying tongue)* **Proverbs 5:21**, With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.

*(a heart that devises wicked plans)* **Proverbs 23:27-28**, For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well. <sup>28</sup> She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.

*(feet that make haste to run to evil)* **Proverbs 7:11-12**, She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; <sup>12</sup> now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.

Adultery is dramatically expressed in lying and stealing. The initial lie of someone committing adultery involves a denial of one's marriage vow to be faithful for "as long as we both shall live." Subsequent lies are used to cover up the many aspects of on-going adultery, such as inappropriate conversations, misuse of time, one's whereabouts, financial expenditures, and relational interests. Stealing is also basic to adultery since a married person gives away one's body to another when one's body has been pledged and is reserved only for one's marital companion (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

**1 Corinthians 7:2-5**, But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup>The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup>Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (emphasis added)

Referring again to Proverbs 6:19, adultery is sometimes the backdrop for a person to be a "false witness who breathes out lies" by, for example, using the perceived failures of one's spouse as a supposedly valid excuse for being unfaithful. Adultery is also a predictable catalyst for "discord to be sown among brothers" as adultery continues or the aftermath of adultery begins to unfold. In other words, adultery can contribute to the fruition of six of the seven sins God considers an abomination to Himself.

In fact, adultery can even lead to murder ("hands that shed innocent blood"), as we see in the scriptural narrative regarding King David and also in news headlines and court cases around the world.

If sins associated with adultery are described as "abominations" in Proverbs 6:16-19, can adultery be any less depraved?

## NO SIMPLE SOLUTION TO ADULTERY'S AFTERMATH

When you become aware of the characteristics of an adulterer, when you learn of the many sins associated with adultery, when you realize adultery's blatant disregard of biblical love, and when you realize an adulterous person's disregard of God Almighty, then you can understand why this treacherous betrayal cannot be remedied simply by stopping sexual misbehavior and renewing marriage vows. Instead, one who has committed adultery must become aware of the grievous sins committed against a holy God as well as one's lifetime companion, one's partner in adultery, and, when applicable, the co-adulterer's lifetime companion. An adulterer must also realize that adultery creates disillusionment, confusion, and emotional distress in the lives of other friends and family members.

A person who commits adultery can deal biblically with the magnitude of adultery's aftermath only by repenting before the Lord and relying on God's adequate and sufficient resources to institute personal Christ-like changes in every aspect of life. Those not committing adultery but who stagger from adultery's devastation also need help from the Lord. Biblical direction and encouragement from committed followers of Christ are often welcomed by those having to deal with adultery, one of the greatest trials of life.

## PRACTICING ADULTERY IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH SALVATION

Persistent adulteries (with many sinful partners) or adultery that persists (with one sinful partner) can be an indication that a *professing* believer may never have had a spiritual new birth (1 John 3:8-10). The severity of sin is not an indication of whether or not one is a believer in Christ. Rather, persistent sinfulness that is legitimized, embraced, and excused throughout one's entire life—practicing sin as a way of life—is the hallmark characteristic of a non-believer. Adultery is but one possible indication of purposeful and deliberate on-going sinfulness.

**1 John 3:8-10**, Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. <sup>10</sup> By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

The possibility of a *professing* believer not having an authentic belief in Christ should be considered if that person unhesitatingly continues to pursue adultery in spite of clear admonitions from God's Word. Such behavior may indicate a lack of understanding of divine truth. A notable characteristic of an unbeliever is the *consistent* inability to understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). On the other hand, such purposeful belligerency could also be obstinate disobedience by a wayward, self-oriented believer, which invites the discipline of the Lord (Hebrews 12:5-6).

**1 Corinthians 2:14**, The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**Hebrews 12:5-6**, And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

If a *professing* believer willfully continues to sin or gives excuses for not dying to self in order to live for Christ, then concerned believers should help that person examine the reality of an authentic walk with Christ. This action is often part of the church discipline and restoration process.

**2 Corinthians 13:5**, Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

See Church Discipline and Restoration Process

As a starting point, the foundation of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection with regard to spiritual life should be reviewed. It should be apparent that any *professing* believer who continues in willful sin cannot legitimately claim to be following Christ (John 8:34-36; Romans 6:1-2, 12-13).

**John 8:34-36**, Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin (in an on-going manner or as a way of life) is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (explanation added)

**Romans 6:1-2**, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? . . .

**Romans 6:12-13**, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your

**Romans 14:13, 19,** Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother ... So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

**1 John 5:3,** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8a,** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.<sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.<sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

*NOTE: A complete confession that reveals sexual unfaithfulness along with all associated sins should not be expected from a person currently practicing adultery or from a person who will not repent of past adulterous behavior. Such a person will not initially tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." In fact, this person cannot do so.*

See *Telling the Truth is Naturally Impossible*

*On the other hand, a person who has committed adultery and wants to confess will always confess sexual infidelity. A complete and truthful confession that exposes all other sins associated with adultery, however, is impossible apart from an authentic commitment to the Lord. This commitment will include a period of significant biblical self-evaluation that results in a wholehearted practice of following Christ by obedience to Scripture. As the Holy Spirit works in the repentant person's life there is an expectation of conviction of other sins, many of which were related to adultery. These sins should be confessed at an appropriate time.*

The appropriate time for a more complete confession from an adulterer to his/her spouse is determined largely by two factors:

- (1) the readiness of the adulterous person to give as complete a confession as possible and
- (2) the willingness of the betrayed spouse to grant biblical forgiveness (*see NOTE below*).

Not only is a complete confession often difficult to accomplish, but the willingness to grant biblical forgiveness can be a significant challenge as well.

See *Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*

*NOTE: If the betrayed spouse is an unbeliever, then understanding and granting biblical forgiveness is impossible, since an unbeliever cannot understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). If the betrayed spouse is a believer who indicates an unwillingness to forgive an adulterous companion, then further teaching and encouragement by fellow believers should be offered with regard to obeying God's Word concerning forgiveness.*

*In either of the above situations, a repentant adulterer may be willing to state a complete confession to his/her spouse, but the spiritual readiness of a spouse to hear such a confession has not developed. As a result, a complete confession may have to be postponed. In fact, a complete confession may never be stated to a betrayed spouse due to persistent unbelief in Christ or on-going unwillingness by a believer to grant forgiveness. Since Proverbs 15:23 reminds us that "a word in season is good," a complete confession spoken at the wrong time is problematic at best and detrimental at worst. This reality does not mean that a marriage cannot be restored to some level, but a marital restoration linked to both spouses being fully committed to Christ and God's Word will be delayed.*

*Part of the motivation for a complete confession is not only for an adulterous person to acknowledge the wide spectrum of past sinfulness, but it also provides opportunity for the betrayed spouse to grant Christ-honoring forgiveness. Simply going through the motions of a complete confession when the betrayed spouse is either an unbeliever or an unforgiving believer will produce an incomplete outcome that may be even more troublesome than the present situation.*

*Even if a complete confession is not stated to one's spouse, an adulterous spouse claiming to be a believer should confess adultery's associated sins to at least one other believer of the same gender for purposes of restoration to the Lord and the development of a practical, biblical plan for all of life.*

See *Personal Communication that Requires Wisdom and Prayer*

A complete confession, heard by the offended spouse and/or another believer, can be a significant step that furthers a restored walk with Christ by a professing believer who has committed adultery.

**Proverbs 28:13,** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Should my adulterous spouse have freedom to travel alone and meet with other people?  
 Who should have open communication with my adulterous spouse and who should not?  
 May fellowship resume with some of our friends, and what are the parameters of interaction?  
 What level of accountability is appropriate for someone who has proven to be untrustworthy?  
 How much information should be shared with our children about their adulterous parent?  
 How can I know that my adulterous mate is telling the truth now and from this point on?  
 How can I be sure if I should stay in this marriage or pursue a divorce?  
 How should I respond to the many reminders of adultery that surface in everyday life?  
 What assurance do I have that my spouse is not communicating with the adulterous partner?  
 What communication guidelines with others should be instituted for me and my spouse?  
 What steps can I take to stay in our home when I am sickened to be around my spouse?  
 Are there legal steps to get custody of the children and move away from my spouse?  
 When I talk with my friends, are there aspects of the adultery that should not be mentioned?  
 Is there a prayer plan or specific verses that provide help and comfort after adultery?  
 I still love my spouse. What are the best ways to demonstrate this?  
 How is it possible for the beauty of marital sex ever to be restored after this defilement?  
 What if my spouse will not agree to be tested for a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?  
 If my spouse has a STD, what do I have to do to be tested and receive medical treatment?  
 How can I demonstrate that I have truly forgiven my adulterous spouse?  
 If my spouse will not repent, how do I participate in the church discipline and restoration process?  
 Whom should I talk to about my situation and whom should I not talk to?  
 Since I don't know what to do next, where in the Bible can I find specific guidance?  
 How can I be sure that my adulterous spouse has discarded all memorabilia (notes, clothes, gifts, everyday items) associated with adultery?

#### From the couple

What can be communicated to those who ask us about the adultery and our future plans?  
 Who can provide biblical counsel to help each of us grow in Christ after this marital catastrophe?  
 Should legal matters (divorce, child custody) be explored and is this helpful or harmful?  
 How can we raise and discipline our children as needed when we are no longer a united couple?  
 Which fellow believers can be contacted to provide biblical help when things seem hopeless?  
 Where in the Bible does it say what can be done with a marriage after adultery has occurred?  
 Is it better to move apart and decide months later about marriage and/or family restoration?  
 If our marriage is restored, should we move out of the area to have a fresh start?  
 If we can't move away, how should our parameters of daily life and our relationships change?  
 Should we leave our current church (or job, school, employment, etc.) in an effort to "start over?"

#### From the adulterous spouse (a professing believer)

Am I truly born again, or have I been mistaken about my own salvation?  
 Should I confess details of my sin as I remember them or wait to state a complete confession?  
 Should I try to contact my partner in adultery by myself and ask for forgiveness?  
 If my adulterous counterpart contacts me, what should be my biblical response?  
 If I have contracted a sexually transmitted disease (STD), should I or the doctor inform my spouse?  
 If my confession is so horrific that my spouse is unable to hear it all, do I try again later?  
 How should I respond in daily activities when my spouse wants nothing to do with me?  
 What can I do to convince my spouse that I want to stay in our marriage?  
 What is my response when I recognize my spouse's continuing anguish over my sin?  
 If my spouse files for divorce, how should I respond when I don't want a divorce?  
 What can I do to let other believers know I need help to be restored to Christ and my mate?



weeping when they talk with a couple impacted by adultery. Others will commit to pray, some will phone, some will write, some will volunteer to help with daily chores or child care, some will invite the aggrieved couple to dinner, and others will admit they don't know what to do but will privately reaffirm their love to the couple whose marriage has been devastated by adultery.

Since the discovery of adultery within a relational network can engender various responses from many individuals, it is impossible for relationships to be the same as they were before adultery was discovered in the fellowship. By God's grace, many of these relationships will eventually come to honor the Lord and be an encouragement for others to grow continually in Christ. Adultery is committed privately, but its aftermath has public ramifications that can last for decades.

Thankfully, believers have God's grace, the abiding presence of Jesus, the guidance of God's Word, and the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit to help them be overcomers in the aftermath of adultery. Even though Satan is a destroyer, believers can rest in the promise of 1 John 4:4, "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

- Besides impacting relationships that can be observed externally, there is an unseen battle that occurs in the hearts (minds) of those affected by adultery. The three major tests in this regard are **Memory, Reminder, and Imagination (M.R.I.)**. *The following is based on pages 5-6 of Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*

The betrayed spouse as well as a repentant adulterer are especially vulnerable to losing a consistent, Christ-like focus because of the potential anguish related to **memories, reminders, and imagination** associated with adultery. These mental challenges are areas in which concerned believers can prayerfully encourage those impacted by adultery to stay focused on Christ.

**1 John 5:3-5**, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup>For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

**Hebrews 12:1-2**, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, *looking to Jesus*, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. *(emphasis added)*

Memories related to adultery can resurface and be significant hindrances for a believer to practice biblical forgiveness. These memories often focus on painful situations that were accompanied by significant emotions and/or distress. For example, a betrayed mate might remember when his adulterous partner vehemently denied any wrongdoing in a relationship with the person who later proved to be a partner in adultery. Other memories involving suspicious or strange messages, missing telephone bills, absences not accounted for, missed or inexplicable cancellation of appointments, unanswered phone calls, unexplained gifts, and schedules that were not followed are all memories that can resurface at unexpected times. Also, an adulterous spouse who repents can experience sorrow and feelings of guilt whenever memories resurface of personal, overwhelming self-centeredness that resulted in lies, purposeful deceit, and sexual betrayal.

Reminders of past sins can be triggered by situations in everyday life, and their appearances often are unexpected.

*To minimize unexpected reminders of adulterous behavior, a person can eliminate some of them in advance. For example, any reminders of adultery such as clothing, pictures, memorabilia, letters, or gifts should be discarded. Any locations, events, stories, or songs that are associated with adulterous life should be avoided. Some reminders of past sins, however, are out of anyone's control and can surface without notice. Because of their unexpected occurrences, reminders that are associated with adulterous behavior are especially troublesome to those recovering from adultery's treachery. Since the world has such a casual perspective toward adultery, a person impacted by marital betrayal is bombarded with persistent references to adultery in pictures, humor, movies, music, books, daily news, television shows, and conversations of others. These everyday reminders of marital unfaithfulness present some of the most significant hurdles to overcome in order to maintain growth in Christ.*

*\* One of the most impacting reminders of adultery for someone who has committed adultery is to inadvertently encounter the adulterous partner in situations of everyday life. A repentant adulterer must develop a contingency plan of response to this situation prior to such an encounter. This plan must be based on prayer and "departing" (actually fleeing) as quickly as possible with no unique, personalized communication such as "how*

thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**1 Thessalonians 5:22**, Abstain from every form of evil.

- In addition to **M.R.I.** challenges, sorrow can often overwhelm those impacted by adultery and, in turn, affect relationships, health, appetite, work habits, and sleep patterns. Some aspects of sorrow can even last a lifetime. Every facet of daily life and relationships, however, is addressed in the Bible. Believers impacted by adultery can turn to God's Word to learn how to address sorrow in a biblical manner in order to bring honor to Christ and grow in Him.

Refer to *Sorrows that Last a Lifetime*

- Sometimes, to protect fellow believers and to better encourage Christ-like growth in all concerned, an adulterous person may be asked to leave the church family/group. This possibility only occurs when both participants in adultery are part of the same church.

This prayerful decision obviously affects the spouse of the adulterous person as well as other family members. This action is considered only after consistent prayer, biblical study, and purposeful evaluation by the spiritually mature believers who have the best interests of the couple and group in mind.

*If you have not heard of this type of decision before or do not understand the scriptural basis undergirding it, please study Adulterous Church Members ... Should They Stay or Leave? and When and How to Leave a Church ... Or Not, especially pages 10-11.*

- Adultery undermines one's testimony for Christ. The marriage relationship is designed to reflect the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church. Take time to review Ephesians 5:22-34, especially verses 31-32 (below), to be reminded of this divinely ordained reflection.

**Ephesians 5:31-32**, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

By God's design, a Christ-centered husband and wife have a powerful relational platform of loving devotion and commitment to one another from which to live for Jesus and share His Good News with others. In addition, a Christian married couple can vividly demonstrate the sacrificial love and unity that Christ extends to His people, which is a bold contrast to the worldly understanding of love that is rooted in lust and self-fulfillment.

When adultery shatters a marriage, however, the authenticity of a couple's past Christian witness can easily be brought into disrepute. It would be understandable for non-believers to conclude, "Why listen to them? They are no different from anyone else" or "What's the big deal with believing in Christ? It didn't help them all that much."

Part of the evil of adultery is not only that it destroys families, but it also undercuts the validity of the Gospel message. On the other hand, a couple recovering biblically from the horror of adultery can demonstrate Christ-likeness in the restoration of their marriage.

**Colossians 3:12-14**, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.<sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

- Another far-reaching consequence of adultery is that it diminishes the time and effort that believers can invest in ministry and evangelism. When adultery occurs in a marriage, that couple now has to concentrate most, if not all, of their time to deal with adultery's aftermath. Supportive believers also have to commit time to come alongside those impacted by adultery, diverting time and energy from sharing Christ with unbelievers as well as encouraging other believers to grow in Christ.

On the other hand, the efforts expended by those in the family of God to help restore another's marriage exemplify what it means to love others (1 Peter 4:8), restore the fallen (Galatians 6:1-2, and respond to others as they would want others to respond to them (Matthew 7:12).

Humbly considering others as more important than one's self will become paramount.

**Philippians 2:3-4**, Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Telling the truth will become a way of life.

**Ephesians 4:25**, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

God's Word will be applied to daily life when a believer wholeheartedly trusts God instead of one's self.

**Proverbs 3:5-8**, Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. <sup>7</sup>Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. <sup>8</sup>It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

**Psalms 119:165**, Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

In pursuit of Christ-like growth, fellowship with mature believers will be sought.

**Hebrews 10:24-25**, And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Since repentance involves change, and change is a process, a repentant believer can benefit from a biblically based plan that focuses on practical growth in Christ ("putting off" sinful behavior and, in its place, "putting on" Christ-honoring practices).

*See You Can Change ... One Step at a Time*

#### **SOME WORDS OF CAUTION REGARDING REPENTANCE**

Results of repentance do not follow a predictable pattern, so one should not assume that repentance is false when some areas of life seem to change and others are perceived to remain the same for a period of time. Often, one or two behavior patterns will dramatically change toward Christ-likeness, and these observable changes indicate that a person is turning from sin and associated self-centeredness in order to live for Christ.

The results of repentance also do not follow a specific timeline. Authentic repentance will eventually encompass much more than one or two specific sins that are put off initially out of love for the Lord and His Word. As a repentant person dies to self and takes biblical steps to live for Christ, many self-centered aspects of life and relationships will be put aside as Christ-honoring attributes take their place. Even though a betrayed spouse will want "things to be fixed" right away, Christ-like character change in a repentant adulterous person takes time. A betrayed spouse can faithfully pray for an adulterous mate to repent fully while, simultaneously, trusting God that His work of restoration will be completed according to His divine timetable.

#### **THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO AN ADULTEROUS BELIEVER WHO WILL NOT REPENT**

It is not surprising that adulterous unbelievers will continue in sinfulness and do what they feel like doing even though they are creating untold difficulty for themselves and their families. Drug addicts and alcoholics are prime examples of this type of on-going physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational self-destruction. Similar self-destruction is also characteristic of people who persist in sexual expression outside of the marriage relationship.

Unbelievers do not understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14) and remain enslaved to sin apart from believing in Christ for salvation (Romans 6:6-7, 2 Peter 2:19b). Realizing an adulterous unbeliever's lack of spiritual insight and power, a believer should present the Good News of Jesus Christ (John 3:16) in the context of reviewing the difficulties that adultery has precipitated.

**1 Corinthians 2:14**, The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**Romans 6:6-7**, We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For one who has died has been set free from sin.

**2 Peter 2:19b**, ... For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

**John 3:16**, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

should concentrate on three critical aspects of following Christ. The first is to be ready and willing to grant forgiveness. The second is to grant and maintain forgiveness from the heart. The third is to faithfully demonstrate Christ-honoring love as a way of life.

*See Forgiveness—Granting It and Maintaining It and True Love is Not Based on Feelings*

Love and forgiveness are foundational to God's relationship with His children (John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Colossians 2:13).

**John 3:16**, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**Romans 5:8**, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Colossians 2:13**, And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

Divine forgiveness provides the pattern for believers to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32).

**Ephesians 4:32**, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Divine love also sets the example for believers to follow in loving others (Ephesians 5:2, 1 John 4:7).

**Ephesians 5:2**, And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**1 John 4:7**, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Since biblical love and biblical forgiveness are vital to one's understanding and practice of following Christ, the following studies are provided for review and application:

*Loving an "Unlovable" Mate*

*Are You a Loving Person?*

*Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*

*God's Word Speaks—Forgiveness & God's Love*

## **PRAYER: EVER-PRESENT COMMUNICATION WITH GOD ALMIGHTY**

When significant challenges occur, there is an impetus to pray. When problems of life become almost overwhelming, prayer—sometimes treated as an option—becomes a necessity. As a believer grows in Christ, prayer will become more spontaneous, more meaningful, more worshipful, more thankful, more dependent, more persevering, and even more necessary. Predictably, a couple that overcomes the devastation of adultery to develop a Christ-honoring marriage will be as spiritually dependent on prayer as they are physically dependent on breathing.

*See: Prayer—A Viable Option or an Absolute Necessity and A Prayer Pattern to Help Structure Your Life*

When one's marriage is the focus of prayer, the most pressing concern is, understandably, the anticipated answers to prayer. Hindered by limited wisdom and boundless emotion, we often want God to answer our prayers quickly and according to our perspective. Yet, God answers prayer in a greater dimension than anyone can comprehend (Ephesians 3:20-21).

**Ephesians 3:20-21**, Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,<sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

In His loving sovereignty, God's answers to prayer bring Him glory. His answers to prayer show His gracious consideration of the request. His answers also demonstrate His loving care for the person voicing the request, the people who are the focus of the request, and others affected by the request. Believers in any trial are to trust the Lord and pray with persistence and in faith.

*See: God Always Answers Prayer but Not as We Think*

## **SCRIPTURE MEMORY: THE EVER-PRESENT WORD OF GOD**

Both the betrayed spouse and the repentant spouse can enhance spiritual growth in Christ by memorizing Bible verses that deal with God's love, grace, mercy, restoration, and forgiveness. Verses that focus on other aspects of one's walk in Christ are also of great value.

like growth in their individual lives is to blossom through their marriage relationship so that the love and unity with one another will reflect the relationship of Jesus and His Church.

#### SUMMARY

1. Adulterous behavior, which may not even involve sexual relations with another person, is a disavowal of the marriage promise to keep and cherish the marital covenant of companionship.
2. Any perception that a person has with regard to wholeheartedly following Christ and obeying God's Word while in an adulterous relationship is delusional and contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. In reality, a person in an adulterous relationship is living according to fleshly desires and following Satan's plan to destroy marriage relationships.
3. A Christian couple's witness for Christ is severely hampered, sometimes for many years, when either partner becomes entangled in adultery.
4. The numerous sins that *always* accompany adultery have to be addressed if a person who has committed adultery is to be restored to right relationships with God and others in every area of life.
5. Adultery produces some consequences that can never be reversed. Sin inevitably produces horrendous results, and various aspects of life and relationships will always carry the scars inflicted by sexual infidelity.
6. People—marriage partners, family members, friends and often an entire church—who are devastated by adultery's consequences can continue to follow Christ wholeheartedly and, by God's grace, can confidently proclaim His goodness, mercy, forgiveness, and love while in sorrow.
7. In spite of the horror and consequences associated with adultery, God's promises of "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20) and "all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28) provide hope for everyone impacted by adultery.
8. All individuals affected by adultery who faithfully continue to abide in Christ and obey the Word of God will receive the blessings of the Lord (John 15:7, James 1:25).

**John 15:7**, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**James 1:25**, But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Adultery is far worse than you might think. God's grace, forgiveness, and restoration, however, are all much greater than you can imagine. Nothing can separate us from God's love, and what He has purposed for one's spiritual benefit—even out of tragedy—He will accomplish. Pray that the horror and devastation of adultery will never be visited on you, your family members, or your friends. If this catastrophe does occur, however, know that God can still be glorified as His children rely on His power and His Word to bring them to a place of confidence and overflowing thankfulness for His continued work in their lives.

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1. Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical theology: <http://www.studylight.org/dic/bed/view.cgi?number=T361>
  2. J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 901.

*Romans 8:26-27, Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

#### **SIXTH ANCHOR OF HOPE**

**God works out every situation in a believer's life toward the goal of becoming more like Christ.**

*Romans 8:28-30, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

#### **SEVENTH ANCHOR OF HOPE**

**You can be an overwhelming conqueror in any trial, since nothing can separate you from the love of God.**

*Romans 8:31-39, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

#### **EIGHTH ANCHOR OF HOPE**

**Trials and tests are integral to authentic faith and on-going growth in Christ.**

*Acts 14:22b, ... through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

*Romans 5:1-5, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*2 Timothy 3:12, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

*James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

#### **SUMMARY: LET'S HOLD FAST OUR ANCHORS**

Many believers initially see no benefits in trials. God, in His sovereign wisdom, has designed life otherwise. From a natural perspective, we humans typically view trials with ourselves in mind. God calls us to view trials with Christ in mind. When we, as believers, accept God's truth in this matter, we will trust Him, obey His Word, and rely on His power to make the Christ-like changes He desires in our lives. May we, by God's grace, learn to welcome life's challenges as opportunities to display His character and presence in each circumstance as we grow into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and soon coming King.

# LESSON 6

## 102



### CONFLICT ANALYSIS CHART



Topic of argument:	
How argument began:	
<b>HUSBAND / EMPLOYER / FRIEND #1 / PARENT</b>	<b>WIFE / EMPLOYEE / FRIEND #2 / ADULT CHILD</b>
Clearly articulate your wife, employee, friend, or child's position:	Clearly articulate your husband, employer, friend, or parent's position:
How long before resolution was initiated:	
Resolution was initiated by:	
Husband/employer/friend #1/parent _____	Wife/employee/friend #2/child _____
(Who was first to move together?)	
How argument finished:	
<b>HUSBAND</b> (Ephesians 5:25-33a, 1 Peter 3:9) Love my wife as myself by:  Wash her with Word by:  Protect her from sin by:  Bless when I am cursed by:	<b>WIFE</b> (Ephesians 5:22-24, 33b, 1 Peter 3:9) Submit to my husband by:  Adjust in order to respect my husband by:  Bless when I am cursed by:
<b>EMPLOYER</b> (Colossians 4:1, 1 Peter 3:9) Treat my employee justly and fairly by:  Bless when I am cursed by:	<b>EMPLOYEE</b> (Colossians 3:22-23, 1 Peter 3:9) Obey my employer without hypocrisy by:  Bless when I am cursed by:
<b>FRIEND #1</b> (Romans 15:2, Philippians 2:3, 1 Peter 3:9) Please Friend #2 for their good by:  Consider Friend #2 as more important by:  Bless when I am cursed by:	<b>FRIEND #2</b> (Romans 15:2, Philippians 2:3, 1 Peter 3:9) Please Friend #1 for their good by:  Consider Friend #1 as more important by:  Bless when I am cursed by:
<b>PARENT</b> (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21) Encourage my child up in nurture and admonition of God by:  Not provoke my child by:	<b>ADULT CHILD</b> (Deuteronomy 5:16) Honor my parents by:  (Young children do not analyze conflict, they either obey or disobey)
Our solution is:	
Goal for our life, based on what we learned from this conflict, is:	

Signature #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## DEALING WITH CONFLICT

**Conflict breaks out between two people**

*Philippians 4:1-7*

Vs. 2 There is dissension between Euodia and Syntyche

Vs. 4 Told to rejoice in the Lord

Rejoicing is a choice that one makes; the manifestation of what is going on in our minds.  
Complaining is the opposite of rejoicing.

Vs. 5 Told to be gentle because the Lord is at hand

Gentleness means laying down my opinions for Lord's truth. Not being gentle means speaking what I think (my opinion).

Vs. 6 Told to not be anxious

Anxiety, worrying, fretting, despair, being troubled about something

Vs. 7 Peace of God will guard hearts and mind in Christ Jesus

This peace is missing when there is conflict, it is the opposite of conflict or dissension

**Jesus addresses a potentially explosive situation**

*Luke 10:38-42*

Notice the pattern that led to anxiety:

Vs. 40 Martha was distracted

She didn't focus on the true, noble, just, pure, lovely, things of good report, things of virtue, praiseworthy according to Phil. 4:8

Vs. 40 Martha became discouraged

Vs. 41 Martha got disgusted

Vs. 40 Martha was in despair

Martha was anxious and troubled. If she had continued to express her opinion there could have been conflict. However, Mary did not get caught up in the conflict because she was too focused on the Lord. Her gentleness kept her silent.

Horizontal focus on people	Vertical focus on Christ
Conflict, dissension	Peace guarding the inner man
Being anxious, worrying, despair	Praying faithfully
Talking about our lives, giving our opinion	Being gentle – laying down my opinion, speaking of Christ who is at hand
Complaining	Rejoicing

**When there is conflict or dissension between you....**

- Confess that you have become anxious by becoming distracted (due to thinking wrong), discouraged, disgusted, in despair.
- Confess that you have not laid down your opinion, that you have not been gentle. (Eg. Husband, confess that you have not spoken the truth or washed her with God's Word.)
- Confess that you have complained instead of rejoicing.





## JAMES AND CONFLICT

### I. The context of conflict and problems (James 1:2-12):

#### A. What does the Bible teach?

1. **General context:** God sends us circumstances to help us become more like Christ.
2. **Understanding temptations and trials (v. 2):** Trials must be considered with intellectual joy, understanding that God is working through them on my behalf.
3. **Understanding the journey toward Christ-likeness (v. 3-4):** God knows what's lacking in my inner man. Going through the situation is a gift of God to help make up what's lacking so I become more Christ-like. This trial is necessary for me, therefore I can count it joy, recognizing God's faithfulness in giving it to me.  
*When the vacuum won't work because a part is missing, you have to go to someone who knows the parts necessary for it, and they can send them to you.  
When life doesn't work, God knows what's missing and is sending trials to fill in that part.*
4. **Understanding the desire for wisdom (v. 5-8):** If I try to address the situation my way, that's not God's wisdom, it's the second plan, its double mindedness. I must ask Him for the wisdom to make up what is lacking in me.
5. **Understanding the problem of money (v. 9-11):** The challenges of both poverty and wealth may be a great source of trial.
6. **Understanding the reward (v. 12):** Trial helps me have the lacking pieces as I seek wisdom vs. my way of dealing with it. When I endure, and am changed, there is a reward.

#### B. Read the passage and answer the following questions:

1. Where have you not tended to consider your circumstances pure joy?  
Consider the difference between "emotional" joy and "intellectual" joy? *Counting* it pure joy means having a sense of always coming out ahead, not a sense of loving the circumstances.
2. The process only works with endurance (patience must have her completed work).  
Identify areas in which you need to be patient as God works on you through trials.

## II. The Heart of Conflict (James 1:13-18):

### A. What does the Bible teach?

1. **General context:** James clearly identifies the problem as our heart. Every time I sin, the problem is my heart. God never causes me to sin.
2. **God is not tempted with evil and does not tempt any man (vs. 13):** Enticed is a fishing term, goal is to make the lure look real, as soon as grabbed, hook gets set. The desire is what hooks the temptation, resulting in sin.  
*Tackle box of lures, influences = what does your heart respond to in longing?*  
*Food, no food, Budweiser, Starbucks, Ice cream, cigs, chocolate, \$, family, drugs, body image, degree, entertainment, people's affection, attention, etc.*  
*It's not in the situation, it's in my heart. It's what happens if I don't get the influencer or object? It's a different influencer in each life. Not the object but what my heart does with it.*
3. **Temptation is always a manifestation of the heart (v. 14):** Heart presents trap and lure. Drawn away is a hunting term. Hunters try to make traps look good. Our hearts set the trap.
4. **When desires are not challenged by God's Word, conflict (sin) is inevitable (vs. 15-16):** Now James moves into a conception / birth metaphor, where the inevitable result is still birth. The desire that is going after the bait must be challenged by God's Word, or sin is inevitable.
5. **We must understand our circumstances in view of God's sovereignty and nature (vs. 17-18):** In our serious situation, God only brings good gifts – namely, the situations and trials that help us have the missing pieces.

### B. Read the passage and answer the following questions:

1. Responsibility for the conflict or any sin lies not in the circumstance but in my heart. Have you attributed to God evil intent and blamed Him for your misfortune? Identify ways I have blame shifted for the conflict.
2. Where in your life have you allowed the "lure" or "desire" to influence you to "throw caution to the wind?" For what "lures" or "desires" do you need to be on guard?

Check off which of these desires you believe to be important in your life.

- ☐ I want the affection and approval of the people in my life. Acts 5:29
- ☐ I want a partner. Matthew 10:34-39 James 3:14
- ☐ I desire public admiration. Phil. 2:3,4
- ☐ I must be thought well of. John 13:1-17, James 2:1-9
- ☐ I should have control of every aspect of my life. Matthew 7:25-34, Ephesians 6:4

### III. The Progress of Conflict (James 4:1-10):

#### A. What does the passage teach?

##### 1. Identify your desires (vs. 1-3):

- Conflict comes from unmet desire (epitheméo). Your heart grabs around the desire and will sin to get it. The problem with personal desires is that many times we want our plan more than God's plan for our life.
- The purpose of conflicts is clear. You want what you want, therefore you have conflict.
- The minute a desire controls your heart, your look at people in one of 2 ways: "I like you because you help me get it," or "I don't like you because you don't help me get it."

*Out of prideful desire, the heart grips harder and harder around whatever hooked it (Starbucks coffee cup with white knuckles), until there's fighting.*

##### 2. All human conflict is rooted in spiritual apathy (vs. 4-6):

- We can't be the bride of Christ and have a relationship with Mr. World.
- Whoever wants something more than Christ-likeness becomes an enemy of God.
- God brings his forces against the proud. Pride is the root of conflict.

##### 3. God provides the help we need (v. 7-10):

Submit to God	Resist Satan
He will _____	Pray, d_____ to God, pray
He f_____	C_____ sin
P_____	P_____ hearts
Be w_____	A_____
He will e_____ the humble	M_____ Weep with single mindedness
	H_____ yourself

#### **IV. The Tool of Conflict (James 3:1-12):**

##### **A. What does the passage teach?**

1. **General context:** The tongue is a vital tool in creating or resolving conflict.
2. **Beware (vs. 2):** Your tongue reflects your heart.
3. **The tongue has incredible ability to do damage (v. 5-6):** From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Beware of sarcasm, a cleaned up way of sinning.  
*Picture a bit in a horses mouth, put a pencil in the side of your mouth, pull and your head turns. That's what desire does. Little fire, think of a forest fire it kindles. Bit tugboat, little rudder. Mixing in my opinions hurts God's glory.*
4. **No one can tame the tongue (vs. 7-8):** It is an unruly evil, the battle will be ongoing until glory.
5. **The inconsistency of the tongue reveals the inconsistency of the heart (vs. 9-12):**  
We bless and curse with the same tool.

##### **B. Implications for your life:**

1. What is said and not said are equally important.
2. There is never any excuse for the believer to "speak his or her mind." There is never a right to "get it off your chest."
3. When trying to resolve conflict, it is wise to think through what you want to say before you confront or respond.
4. Deal with it in your heart before making it a matter of discussion.
5. Know and live by the four rules of communication from Ephesians 4:25-32.

##### **C. Homework**

1. Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Memorize the 'Four Rules of Communication.'
2. Log the daily application of these 4 rules for God's glory.

## VI. Wisdom in Conflict (James 3:13-18):

### A. Exegetical Notes

1. **General context:** The truly wise person demonstrates the ability to work through conflict in a God-honoring way.
2. **Wisdom goes beyond intellectualism to skill in relationships (vs. 13):** Relational conduct in conflict proves whether meekness of wisdom is present.
3. **Earthly or false wisdom (vs. 14-16):** Bitter jealousy and/or selfish ambition is the opposite of meekness. They are also different from the righteous jealousy God has for His honor and the faithfulness of His people. Earthly or false wisdom are rooted in the desires of a self-focused heart that seeks self-glory and self-honor above God's honor and glory.  
*"Disorder" implies a chaotic frenzy of fighting. The meekness of wisdom removes the anxiety caused by self-promotion. Homes or minds ruled by being upset are evidence of the wrong kind of wisdom, and the fruit of a heart rooted in self-desires.*
4. **Heavenly or true wisdom (vs. 17-18):** The legacy of peace is motivated by God's honor.

### B. Implications for your life:

1. True wisdom is demonstrated and measured by the depth of a person's Christ-likeness.
2. Unless one is motivated by purity, the desire to be God's kind of man or woman, it is impossible to resolve conflicts with true peace.
3. God's laws of sowing and reaping are manifest in the possibility of resolving conflict. Where there is envy and self-seeking, there will be confusion and evil.
4. The characteristics of true wisdom act as a symphony of godliness, by which the person in conflict can glorify God as resolution is achieved (2 Peter 1:5-8).

### C. Possible Homework

1. Line up characteristics in 2 columns: wise and unwise
2. Evaluate your behavior in relation to the 2 columns.

Wise	Unwise
Understanding	Jealousy
Good conduct	Selfish ambition
Meek	Boastful, false to the truth
Comes from above	Earthly, unspiritual, demonic
Pure	Disorder, confusion
Peaceable	Every vile practice, evil
Gentle	Quarrels
Open to reason	Fights
Full of mercy	Passions at war
Full of good fruits	Desire
Impartial	Covet
Sincere	Friendship with world
Harvest of righteousness	Enmity with God



## THE PRACTICE OF PEACEMAKING

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9*

### I. DEFINE THE PROBLEM

#### A. Establishing the peace of God in a world of war and hate.

- Jesus Christ's kingdom is one of peace, and His disciples are to be keepers of peace by choosing to endure the suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others.
- The trouble, according to Scripture, is in the heart of man, and until the heart of man is changed, you will never solve the problem by trying to make manipulations on the surface.

### II. DEFINE PEACEMAKERS: Bring love not bitterness into relationships

#### A. Not excuses, peace at any price, anything to avoid trouble

#### B. What then is it to be a peacemaker?

- Passive: peaceable as quarrelsome people can't be peacemakers
- Active: not content to let sleeping dogs lie, not concerned re: status quo, desires peace and does all he or she can to produce and maintain it.

#### C. What is required to be a peacemaker?

1. An entirely new inlook
  - Merciful (John 8:32)
  - Poor in spirit: "wretched man that I am"
  - Mourn because of the blackness of your heart
  - Hungered and thirsted for righteousness, hate my sin
2. An entirely new outlook
  - Pure in heart: new nature, view of others
3. An entirely new view of the world
  - Only one concern: the glory of God
  - Prepared to suffer wrong & injustice in order that peace may be produced & God's glory magnified.

#### D. It's in problems you prove whether you're a peacemaker or not

1. You learn not to speak.
2. Where is God in this? You learn to think, not just feel.
3. Means and methods of making peace become positive and active.
4. Endeavor to disperse peace no matter where you are.

### III. DEFINE BENEFIT: Shall be called sons of God.

#### A. Why are peacemakers blessed? New nature: justified and adopted! No longer selfish, but selfless.

1. Fellowship (1 John 1:7)
2. Protection (Philippians 4:7)
3. Wisdom (James 3:16-18)

Peacemaker? Finish with self, and follow Jesus!

Now, "dumbing down" the gospel may attract unbelievers, but it will never make disciples. It may create mega churches, but it will never impact our communities. It may create pleasant experiences for the members, but it will never transform the beliefs of our culture. It may produce happy feet, but it will never produce transformed minds (Romans 12:1-2). It may provide our youth with Christian rock and roll, but it will never give them rock solid truth that will enable them to demolish the strongholds of the Enemy.

**Romans 12:1-2**, Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (*Emphasis added*)

I think we have given our kids enough Christian celebrities and sports heroes to emulate. We need to give them more heroes who are Christian scholars. Have you ever seen any church bring to its platform a Christian thinker with the purpose of urging its youth to emulate the speaker's love for God's truth and ability to express that truth in the secular marketplace? I have yet to see that.

A group of modern day prophets recently wrote: "The church's extinction will not come by sword or pillory, but by the quiet death of irrelevance. But let the church step off the reservation, let her penetrate once more the culture of the day and the...face of secularization will change from a benign smile to a savage snarl."

I, for one, would like to see that snarl if it means that we are penetrating our culture with truth. A church that is irrelevant is a church without salt, good for nothing. We need to wake up to the call of these insightful men. The secular influence is taking its toll not only upon our leaders but upon our youth. If we don't train our young people to think clearly, rooted and established upon the wisdom found in God's Word, they will be swept away by the flood of secular forces they face every day in school and media.

Carl Henry is right when he states, "Training the mind is an essential responsibility of the home, the church, and the school. Unless evangelicals prod young people to disciplined thinking, they waste—even undermine—one of Christianity's most precious resources."

How will our kids do when the biology teachers insist that science has proven evolution and that we are mere products of time and chance? How will they do when their philosophy professors, with all of their prestigious degrees, use the arguments of Nietzsche or Bertrand Russell to ridicule their "simplistic" faith? How will they do when their comparative religion class insists that all religions are true and any claim to ultimate truth is intolerant and arrogant? How will they do when all of their classmates are engaging in sex and pressuring them to join them? How will they do when they are bombarded by deceitful messages embedded in modern day music set to the movement of alluring bodies and seductive beat? And, when they do go into the world, how will they respond when faced with a hostile, militant culture? Will they be intimidated into silence or swept into unbelief? Or, will they stand like a rock, demolishing "arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God."

They will stand strong and articulate God's truth clearly and boldly if the Church will return to making it a priority to teach them God's truth. Then they will be enabled to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). May God raise up a generation of Christian thinkers who clearly and boldly proclaim the truth of God's revelation.

As Harry Blamires said in *The Christian Mind* (p. 40), "The sphere of the intellectual, the sphere of knowledge and understanding, is not a sphere in which the Christian gives ground, or even tolerates vagueness and confusion. There is no charity without clarity and firmness."

his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

*1 Peter 5:8-11, Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.<sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.<sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.<sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

#### TRIALS ARE NECESSARY TO DEVELOP CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

God's thoughts and ways are far beyond our full comprehension (Isaiah 55:8-9). If believers fail to trust the Lord in a time of distress, they will "default" to the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God (1 Corinthians 3:19-20). On the other hand, as believers grow in Christ through their obedience to God's Word, they will rejoice in trials since these situations are used by the Lord to foster spiritual growth, prove faith's validity, and bring glory to Christ (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:6-7).

*Isaiah 55:8-9, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*1 Corinthians 3:19-20, For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."*

*Romans 5:3-5, More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*1 Peter 1:6-7, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

#### TRIALS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW CHRIST'S EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING

Believers experience tribulations as part of life. Even so, Jesus promised peace to His disciples in any situation (John 16:33). Believers learn that the joy Jesus experienced in His suffering (Hebrews 12:1-3) is also available to them when they face difficulties. Jesus suffered unjustly and continued to trust God (1 Peter 2:19-25), setting an example for His believers to follow (Hebrews 12:3). With Christ in mind, believers can rejoice as they share His sufferings (1 Peter 4:12-13).

*John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

*Hebrews 12:1-3, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.<sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. [Emphasis added]*

*1 Peter 2:19-25, For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.<sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.<sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.<sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.<sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.<sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.<sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. [Emphasis added]*

*1 Peter 4:12-13, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*



righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

*Philippians 4:19, And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

#### **TRIALS GIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST TO MINISTER TO FELLOW BELIEVERS**

Believers are to come alongside fellow believers who experience trials (Galatians 6:2; Romans 15:1). Prayer coupled with the encouragement of Scripture is always appropriate (Ephesians 6:16-18, James 5:16, 2 Corinthians 1:11, Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Additional responses may be needful as well, such as restoring the fallen (Galatians 6:1) or providing physical necessities (1 John 3:17-18).

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

*Romans 15:1, We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

*Ephesians 6:16-18, In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. [Emphasis added]*

*James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

*2 Corinthians 1:11, You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

*Romans 15:4, For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

*Galatians 6:1, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

*1 John 3:17-18, But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

#### **TRIALS PROVIDE AN AVENUE FOR BELIEVERS TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS WITH OTHERS**

More often than not, believers do not experience painful trials in a vacuum. Others become aware of these difficulties and often notice the responses of believers. Believers are to be watchful for opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ that are afforded in the midst of personal trials.

*1 Peter 3:13-17, Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (Emphasis added)*

#### **TRIALS OF BELIEVERS CAUSED BY DIFFICULT PEOPLE PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHRIST-LIKE RESPONSES**

Many challenges of life result from the behavior of self-centered people against others. When difficult people precipitate trials in the lives of believers, then believers can respond lovingly.

*Luke 6:27-28, "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."*

*Romans 12:18-21, If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

#### **TRIALS OF BELIEVERS OFTEN CONTAIN BENEFITS THAT ARE ALSO DESIGNED FOR OTHER BELIEVERS**

In God's economy, He allows trials to come into the lives of faithful believers so that others in the family of God

Hebrews 11:32-38, these three types of victory are mentioned.

*2 Corinthians 1:10, He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

*John 15:1-2, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

*James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*Philippians 1:19-21, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,<sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.<sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*Hebrews 11:32-38, And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—<sup>33</sup>who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,<sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.<sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.<sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—<sup>38</sup>of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

(See The Three Victories in Trials at WordTruth — <http://www.wordtruth.net>)

#### TRIALS PROVIDE AN AVENUE IN THIS LIFE TO RECEIVE ETERNAL REWARDS FROM THE LORD IN THE NEXT LIFE

While rewards for believers may not be evident in this life, they are promised by God in the life to come (James 1:11-12, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 2:10).

*James 1:11-12, Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. (emphasis added)*

*2 Timothy 4:7-8, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

*Revelation 2:10, Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

#### SUMMARY

With so many sovereign purposes related to trials, believers are to trust the Lord for His will to be done in and through every aspect of life (Proverbs 3:5-8). Believers cannot initially know the scope of God's purposes in trials, but they can be assured that God's Word provides sure guidance in all of life's challenges (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In every trial, believers can rejoice, be patient, and continually pray (Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:4-7) while demonstrating their love for Christ by remaining obedient to Scripture (John 14:15).

*Proverbs 3:5-8, Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

*Romans 12:12, Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

*Philippians 4:4-7, Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.*